

Exhibition Highlights

Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt

Room 39 and the North Court

8 September 2018 – 4 February 2019

vam.ac.uk/videogames | #DesignPlayDisrupt

1. René Magritte, *La Blanc Seing (The Blank Signature)*, 1965

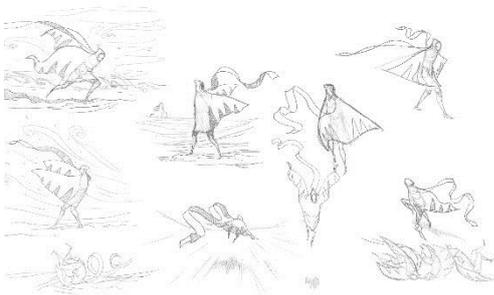
2. *Kentucky Route Zero (Cardboard Computer)*, 2013



A key loan item secured for the exhibition was René Magritte's *La Blanc Seing (The Blank Signature)*, a surrealist painting of a woman riding a horse through a forest both in front of and behind the trees, playing with the viewer's perception of reality. Magritte's optical illusion influenced the parallax scenography in the forest scene from Act II of magical realist

adventure game *Kentucky Route Zero* (2013) by Cardboard Computer, who were also influenced by theatre, set design, typography and Brutalist architecture in their approach. The creator's playful use of 3D graphics tricks the player's perspective to create a real-time, interactive homage to the painting.

3. Character sketches from *Journey*, thatgamecompany, 2012



Journey, developed by thatgamecompany, is a beautifully expressive and lavishly visual game in which anonymous players online control a robed figure through a vast desert towards a mountain, with the chance to emotionally connect with companions along the way. The pencil character sketches show the important aspects of creating dynamic character

designs that artistically define movements within a virtual landscape. The mechanical elements of the game were tested through developing a basic 2D prototype, also presented in the exhibition, bringing together the dual dynamic of art and engineering in the medium.

The pencil character sketches show the important first aspect of this design process in developing an authentic portrayal of the hero's journey.

4. *Splatoon*, Nintendo, 2015



A compelling example of the innovative approach that makes their videogames appeal to a wide audience, *Splatoon* reflects Nintendo's ability as a design company to reinvigorate genres, in this case the online third-person shooter, and discover new gameplay types. The game, by a young design team, is representative of the new wave pushing

the boundaries of the medium, centres around characters that transform between human and squid forms, shooting ink to splat their turf and aiming to cover the largest area. It gives players the opportunity to portray themselves in street style influenced by contemporary fashion and level design that reflects urban cool. The exhibition will show a selection of process materials from the game such as moving footage and concept art.

5. Ellie and Joel character sketch from *The Last of Us* (Naughty Dog), 2013



The exhibition features original character sketches from Naughty Dog's visually stunning blockbuster *The Last of Us*. With storytelling and characterisation equivalent to a Hollywood production, this post-apocalyptic blockbuster follows the relationship between companions Ellie and Joel who travel across a ravaged US over the course of a year.

This sketch was developed to illustrate the emotional development and dynamic between the lead characters.

6. *how do you Do it?* 2014. Freeman, Butler, Kittaka, Coss



Nina Freeman works with small teams of artists and programmers to make games which often explore sex and relationships. *how do you Do It?* is a semi-autobiographical game which puts players in the role of a curious 11-year-old girl exploring the idea of sex. Using her dolls as plastic surrogates to investigate, the game allows the audience to understand the discovery of sexuality from the perception of

a young girl. It will be playable in the exhibition.

7. *Phone Story*, Molleindustria



Phone Story is a satirical game for smartphone devices that attempts to provoke a critical reflection on its own technological platform. Footage from *Phone Story* within the exhibition invites viewers to explore the negative effects of their consumption on people in the globalised world, referring to sensitive subject matters such

as child exploitation and worker suicides. It constitutes a series of mini-games that illustrate the stages of coltan extraction in Congo, outsourced labour in China, environmental waste in Pakistan and the Western obsession for gadgets.

8. League of Legends World Championships at the Bird's Nest Stadium, Beijing, China



An example of the mass spectacle of esports, (multiplayer games played competitively), the League of Legends World Championships tournament attracts tens of thousands of spectators to watch the professional players in a live atmosphere such as the Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium as well as a global online audience of millions. Footage from the event will be

shown as part of the immersive installation.

9. *Game of Thrones*, WesterosCraft



The building of the continent of Westeros from *Game of Thrones* in Minecraft represents the pinnacle of what is possible to create in virtual communities. Footage will be shown of the vast scale and incredible detail of the engineering and construction created by a dedicated community of hundreds of people working collaboratively to

build castles, mountains and cities, block by block.

10. Arcade Backpack by UCLA Game Lab



Resembling a miniature replica of an arcade machine, the Arcade Backpack was created to show a rotating selection of independent and experimental video games in surprising settings. The backpack represents the rise of a grassroots DIY arcade scene and has enabled impromptu videogames play in a variety of venues from nightclubs to museums, enabling

unexpected social interactions. At regular intervals, visitors will be able to play the backpack which will be roaming around the exhibition.

PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

1. Le Blanc Seing, 1965 by Rene Magritte. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington
2. Kentucky Route Zero. Courtesy of Cardboard Computer
3. Character sketches, Journey™ ©2012, 2014 Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC. Journey is a trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC. Developed by Thatgamecompany.
4. Splatoon © 2015 Nintendo
5. Character sketch, The Last of Us™ ©2013, 2014 Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC. The Last of Us is a trademark of Sony Interactive Entertainment LLC. Created and developed by Naughty Dog LLC.
6. Game screenshot, how do you Do it?, 2014. Freeman, Butler, Kittaka, Coss
7. Phone Story, Molleindustria
8. League of Legends, Worlds 2017. Riot Games
9. Winterfell, Westeroscraft © Minecraft
10. Arcade Backpack, UCLA Games Lab (Photo by Robin Baumgarten)

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