



Press Release

Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt

Room 39 and the North Court

8 September 2018 – 24 February 2019

vam.ac.uk/videogames | [#DesignPlayDisrupt](https://twitter.com/DesignPlayDisrupt)

Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt celebrates the innovative and rapidly changing design field of videogames. The exhibition explores how contemporary designers, players and critics are pushing boundaries in playful and radical new ways. Rare glimpses from the creative process of developing games such as *The Last of Us* to *Kentucky Route Zero*, including original prototypes, early character designs and notebooks, are on show alongside cultural inspiration from a Magritte painting to a viral cat video.

From blockbuster titles produced by leading studios such as *Splatoon* from Nintendo, to independents such as *Journey* by thatgamecompany, the exhibition explores the craft and skill of creating ground-breaking videogame design. These examples are presented alongside large-scale immersive multimedia and interactive installations from *Minecraft* to *League of Legends* and investigations of the social and political issues in the field, offering an insight into the design process, community and culture of videogames.

The exhibition explores videogame design since the mid-2000s, when major technological advancements, such as increased access to broadband, social media and newly available means of making, transformed the way games are designed, discussed and played. With at least 2.2 billion players worldwide, the reach and range of gaming is examined within creative online player communities who modify games and create fan art; spectators and competitive performers at large scale esports stadium events and surprising spaces of the niche DIY arcade scene. *Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt* builds on the V&A's activity as a space for contemporary debate, which actively collects, displays and programmes digital design.

Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A said: “*There is a rich universality to videogames in contemporary culture. This is the right time for the V&A to be building on our active interest in videogames to investigate this exciting and varied design field at the intersection between technology, engineering and broader visual culture, presenting the influences, inspiration and debates that define it. There is a wealth of creativity to explore, from the craft of the studios to the innovation of the audience as players. This exhibition provides a compelling insight into one of the most important design disciplines of our time.*”

Exhibition Overview

The first section of the exhibition examines the design inspirations, craftsmanship and creative practice behind a series of individual games. These are created by a new generation of designers from large established studios to solo independent designers, as well as from a range of other creative disciplines such as new media and music composition. Highlights include character design sketches, a motion capture suit, animations and working notes of the creative director from *The Last of Us* from Naughty Dog. A visually stunning post-apocalyptic blockbuster, this title is comparable to a Hollywood production in ambition and scope. Other exhibits include prototypes, design drawings and desert research footage from *Journey*, a smaller independent game, demonstrating how videogames can evoke emotional concepts of friendship, connection, positivity and love. Also shown are works that have influenced creators such as Magritte's painting *Le Blanc Seing*, the inspiration for the parallax scenography of *Kentucky Route Zero*.

Videogames have the potential to consider complex and sensitive subject matters such as representation, race, sexuality and geo-politics. As tools to make games have become more available and distribution has broadened, game designers have begun to engage more widely with social and ethical debates. The next section presents interviews and opinion from influential game makers and commentators who are leading this discussion such as developer Rami Ismail and advocate Tanya de Pass. Here ideas about videogames and what they should be are challenged - as well as how this relates to society as a whole. A selection of works illustrates such themes including *how do you Do It*, a semi-autobiographical game by Nina Freeman which tackles the discovery of sexuality through dolls and *Phone Story* by Molleindustria, a satirical mobile video game which invites players to consider negative effects of their consumption on people in the globalised world.

The third section celebrates the dazzling imagination and collaborative creativity shown by videogames players in real and virtual communities, transcending the role of the designer to democratise design on a vast scale. The double-height exhibition space in this section features a dramatic and immersive installation that explores the role of the player as co-creator. This shows the astonishing feats of engineering and construction undertaken in Minecraft from the recreation of the continent of Westeros in Game of Thrones to the mass spectacle of esports tournaments such as League of Legends World Championships. There are examples of fan art and cosplay created by enthusiasts who interpret the medium in their own style and create costumes and accessories to represent themselves, or even their pets as characters.

The playful finale looks at the rise of the grassroots DIY arcade scene, showcasing handmade arcade cupboards and interactive installations of spectacle and performance. Unusual and remarkable games made by DIY enthusiasts and creatives are on show such as *Bush Bash* by SK Games, played in a sedan car cut in half and fitted with a display for two players to shoot and drive. Visitors can also play games such as *Line Wobbler* by Robin Baumgarten. Created from a custom-made spring controller and a several metre-long ultrabright LED strip display, it was inspired by a viral video of a cat playing with a door-stopper spring.

The V&A actively collects digital design and is expanding its collection extensively in this area, exploring how videogames as digital objects can be preserved and exhibited. Related activity has included a videogames-themed Friday Late in September 2017 which attracted nearly 8,000 visitors, held in collaboration with a major conference *Parallel Worlds: Designing Alternative Realities in Videogames*. Other activities have included the V&A Digital Design Weekend which features creators sharing their creative process, workshops for young people about careers in games design, community projects and digital learning programmes.

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS

- *Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt* is on from 8 September 2018 – 24 February 2019 in Room 39 and the North Court
- Advance tickets are £18. V&A members go free.
- Advance bookings can be made by calling 0207 942 2000 (booking fee applies). Tickets released at vam.ac.uk/videogames
- The exhibition is accompanied by a new V&A publication designed by Darren Wall and a series of related events, courses and creative workshops
- *Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt* is curated by Marie Foulston, Curator of Videogames and Kristian Volsing, Research Curator
- The exhibition is designed by Pernilla Ohrstedt Studio in collaboration with Squint/Opera
- AV Software Design and Production by Squint/Opera with graphic design by Julia and sound design by Coda to Coda
- For more details on the Videogames residency, visit www.vam.ac.uk/residencies

Design, Architecture and Digital Department

The Department for Design, Architecture and Digital promotes the study of contemporary design and architecture and its impact on society. It also stimulates new modes of collection, curation and public engagement. The department is responsible for the V&A's Rapid Response Gallery, which displays items collected as evidence of social, political and economic change, forming a permanent legacy of objects that represent the world we live in today.

Support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition supporter, the Blavatnik Family Foundation.

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For further PRESS information about *Videogames: Design/ Play/ Disrupt* please contact Eva Field or Helen Jones at Noisy Communications on 07814 039983 / eva@noisycommunications.com / hels@noisycommunications.com or the V&A Press Office on 020 7942 2502 / press.office@vam.ac.uk (not for publication).

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