

games: IMPROVING ART



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In the beginning, there was Pong's black screen and white cube. Today, video games are not only works of art themselves; they influence other art forms. Game plots now show on big screens at movie theatres and earn recognition at film festivals. Acclaimed film and television directors are also entering the world of video game design, recognizing the synergy that exists between the media.

Additionally, the artwork that makes computer and video games so compelling is also becoming a respected artistic genre of its own. Galleries now feature game artwork in a number of exhibits, and entertainment software serves as a new medium for emerging artists.



VISUAL ART: EDUCATION AND DESIGN

Educational institutions across the nation provide young people with advanced artistic training in computer and video game design. 343 American colleges, universities and technical schools, including New York University, the Art Institute of Seattle and Marist College, will offer programs and courses in video game design, development and programming during the 2011-12 academic year, including 301 undergraduate programs and 42 graduate programs. This list includes the Game Design and Development program at Rochester Institute of Technology, the Game Development program at DePaul University and the Serious Game Design program at Michigan State University. These same institutions also offer similar undergraduate programs.

New York University, long known for its film school, also operates the NYU Game Center. The center is a multi-school center for the research, design and development of digital games, and offers additional courses that complement the existing game-related classes currently available at the university. The center also hosts an annual spring exhibition of independent games, commissioned by the center and designed specifically for a gallery setting.

343

The number of undergraduate and graduate programs in video game design, development and programming American colleges, universities, art and trade schools will offer during the 2011-12 academic year.

The NYU Game Center is not the only facility to acknowledge video games for their cultural and artistic value. Art exhibits across the country and around the world display, publicize and feature video game graphics and designs. In July 2011, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) hosted a special evening of interactive game play with gamer magazine *Kill Screen* as part of the museum's "Talk to Me" exhibit, which explores how people communicate and interact with objects and devices such as video games, websites and computers. MoMA invited guests to play a collection of 12 games spanning three floors of the facility that were selected for both their aesthetic features as well as their innovative and forward-thinking designs. The "Into the Pixel" traveling art exhibit, cosponsored by the Entertainment Software Association and the Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences, showcases a series of conceptual and production work from current and future video games. In addition, the Smithsonian Institution's American Art Museum in Washington, D.C. will open the exhibit "The Art of Video Games" in March 2012, which will showcase the evolution of video games as an artistic medium with a focus on striking visual effects and the creative use of technologies.

26,000

The number of electronic games and game-related historical materials on display at the International Center for the History of Electronic Games in Rochester, New York.

This recognition of video game art has also spread to the U.S. government. The National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency that supports artists and art organizers across the U.S., recently expanded its submission guidelines for the category formerly called "Arts on Television and Radio" to include interactive games. Renamed "Arts in Media," the category extends the eligibility for grant money to media produced for the Internet, interactive and mobile technologies, and digital games.



CINEMATOGRAPHY AND LITERATURE

The entertainment software and movie industries have influenced each other's storylines for years. Now, increased demand for video games provides Hollywood producers, directors and actors with additional ways of forming partnerships.

Movies and video games routinely borrow characters and subjects from each other to produce hits and unique roles for actors. *Beowulf*, produced by video game publisher Ubisoft, reprised the role of Anthony Hopkins virtually through innovative digital technology. Eidos Interactive's *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*, inspired the movie "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" with Angelina Jolie. Pierce Brosnan and Shannon Elizabeth also provided likeness and voice work for Electronic Arts' *James Bond: Everything or Nothing*, reprising their work on the movie screen.

The relationship between games and film continues to expand. The 2011 Tribeca Film Festival featured a special preview of Rockstar Games' *L.A. Noire* and a panel discussion about the game's technology and narrative, marking the first time the prestigious festival included a video game. A number of box office hits are released as video games, including the recent films "Transformers: Dark of the Moon," "Captain America," and "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2." Production companies may also use original games to promote their films. Sony Pictures released a nine-week episodic online game to stir audience interest in "Salt" before it hit theaters in July 2010.

Some video game companies are even beginning to produce their own films. Ubisoft launched Ubisoft Motion Pictures in May 2011, and plans to develop feature films from its

11,000

The number of people who attended the first Video Games Live performance, which took place on July 6, 2005, at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles with the L.A. Philharmonic. The concert celebrated its 200th show this summer at the E3 Expo in Los Angeles.

Assassin's Creed, *Splinter Cell* and *Ghost Recon* games. Microsoft Corporation also produced several anime short films based on its *Halo* game series, and Electronic Arts is working to develop an animation film based on *Mass Effect*.

Additionally, book publishers collaborate with video game makers to push original written works across multiple platforms. Popular author James Patterson's entertainment company began producing video games as well as books, television shows, and movies. The company released three video games based on Patterson's "Women's Murder Club" murder mystery book series, *Women's Murder Club: Death in Scarlet*, *Women's Murder Club: Crimes of Passion* and *Women's Murder Club: A Darker Shade of Gray*, in which players assume the roles of Patterson's heroines. In addition, Random House and THQ Inc. established a partnership to bring authors and game makers together to create an array of products that includes novels, graphic novels and digital books, as well as online, console and mobile games.



MUSIC AND VIDEO GAMES

Video games encourage creativity not only in the visual arts, but in music as well. Popular video games provide both aspiring and established musical artists with access to a broader audience, with pop and punk music enjoying the most success.

Not only have full-body, music-based video games like *Rock Band* emerged as popular activities at social gatherings, but the genre also provides musicians a fresh avenue to reach fans. It also opened revenue streams for music labels seeking to create new ways to generate revenue.

Pop and rock are not the only types of music finding new audiences through video games; many of the latest games come with originally composed classical music. According to a July 2011 article in *The Washington Post*, classically trained composers find new outlets for their creative works in video games. While game soundtracks were once a cacophony of beeps and bleeps, composers now match the nuances of percussion, strings and brass to the nuances of the complex characters and situations of today's video games. The field has even attracted some of the most prominent film composers, such as Danny Elfman, Howard Shore and Hans Zimmer.

The scores in popular video games also provide the music for Video Games Live, a concert tour of top orchestras and choirs that include the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The two-hour show, which has toured the world and sold out venues for six years, includes video footage and musical arrangements, synchronized lighting, solo performers, electronic percussionists and interactive segments - put together to create a unique experience for gamers and music lovers. The "Video Games Live: Volume One" album, released in the summer of 2008, debuted on the Billboard Charts at #10. It was the first video game compilation album released worldwide.

New video game consoles also provide inspiration for musicians to create innovative, easy-to-use instruments. According to a July 2011 article in *The New York Times*, Russ Maschmeyer, a graduate student at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, rewired his Microsoft Kinect to follow his body and turn his movements into music notes. Using the console, Maschmeyer can pluck notes from the air as if he were playing a harp.

80

The number of video games the Smithsonian Institution's American Art Museum will feature in its 2012 exhibit, "The Art of Video Games."



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