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EDITORIAL

INQUIRING THE INTERSECTION OF GAME AND PLAY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY ARTISTIC PRACTICES

HUGO BARATA

CICANT, Lusófona University

RUI ANTUNES

CICANT, Lusófona University

Once largely confined to the domains of entertainment and leisure, games and play have increasingly occupied a central position within contemporary cultural, artistic, and critical discourse. In recent decades, games gained recognition as complex systems of meaning, capable of articulating aesthetic propositions, social relations, and ethical concerns. This shift has prompted renewed scholarly attention to the ways in which game design intersects with artistic practice, critical theory, and participatory forms of experience. Within this expanded cultural landscape, the rapid evolution of digital technologies (Molnár & Szűts, 2019) has significantly reshaped game design, positioning games as relevant sites for artistic experimentation and critical reflection (Díaz & Tungtjitharoen, 2015). Beyond their status as entertainment, games mobilize mechanics, narratives, and aesthetic systems that can challenge established artistic conventions and enable participatory, reflective forms of engagement. As suggested by Nguyen's notion of motivational inversion (2018), play can reorient attention, values, and agency, opening spaces where artistic autonomy and rule-based systems intersect. From this perspective, games function as cultural dispositifs through which social relations, ethical questions, and modes of perception can be explored, negotiated, and transformed, situating game design at the crossroads of contemporary art, critical practice, and social inquiry.

This issue of IJGSI explored the intersection of games and play through the lens of contemporary artistic practices, questioning the general divide between art and entertainment. Drawing on several theoretical perspectives, it frames play as an active, participatory alternative to passive spectacle, and situates contemporary art as a field that oscillates

between the production of forms and their critical interrogation. Within this context, games emerge not merely as entertainment artifacts, but as critical and aesthetic devices capable of reshaping artistic, cultural, and social frameworks, crossing contemporary art and games.

The article by Simone Downie presents *Shadow Castle*, a two-player interactive storybook game that combines digital projection with tactile materials, proposing a reconfiguration of reading as a collaborative, sensory, and playful experience. Drawing on practice-based research and co-design sessions with university students, the author demonstrates how the integration of physical materials and technology can foster intrinsic motivation and narrative engagement, particularly among illiterate readers.

The contribution by Maryam Faeahani and Ian Scherbruck offers an innovative reflection on the aesthetics and usability of solo board games, drawing on psychological and aesthetic frameworks. The authors introduce the concept of I-position as a design strategy for fostering self-engagement, identity multiplicity, and inclusion for neurodivergent and disabled players, as well as introverts who may prefer solo play.

In Maria Manda's article, games are examined as artistic and political devices through the tension between immersion and estrangement. Grounded in Viktor Shklovsky's concept of *ostranenie* and Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, the author argues that the most powerful game designs emerge from a dialectical relationship between emotional engagement and critical disruption. Drawing on her own art game practice, the

article demonstrates how estrangement can function as an ethical and didactic mechanism.

The article by Pablo Gobira, Emanuelle Silva, and Eduardo Séllos situates itself within the field of digital arts, proposing an analysis of volumetric technologies and their expressive potential in digital games. Based on the experiences of the Laboratório de Poéticas Fronteiriças (LabFront), the authors discuss how emerging three-dimensional technologies can enhance the poetic, visual, and social impact of games, understood as a significant facet of contemporary digital arts.

In Raquel Pereira's article, video games are examined from a museological perspective, addressing the theoretical and practical challenges involved in exhibiting games within art museums. The author analyses issues such as interactivity, technological obsolescence, materiality, preservation, and institutional mediation, drawing parallels with debates in New Media Art and curatorial theory.

In turn, in a position paper departing from her own praxis, Linda Loh engages in a discussion that goes behind the game engine (Unreal Engine) as a tool remediating former media, to posit it as a fully-fledged environment for a studio practice, allowing possibilities of experimentation, abstraction, and transcendent digital art rather than classical gameplay or narrative simulation.

Taken together, the contributions assembled in this issue affirm games as a multifaceted and expanding field of research in which artistic, narrative, pedagogical, and technological practices intersect. Rather than approaching games as fixed

cultural objects, the articles foreground them as processes, environments, and dispositifs through which agency, perception, and meaning are continually negotiated. This number of IJGSI thus offers a critical and heterogeneous perspective on the role of games within contemporary culture, emphasizing their capacity to foster inclusion, reflection, and transformation, while underscoring the importance of situated, practice-informed, and interdisciplinary approaches to game studies at the intersection of art and play.