Media Aesthetics

06 Games: Technology, Industry, Culture

01: Introduction

- Exceeded those of the movie and music industries in US: $74 billion in 2011
- Features of game (Jesper Juul 2005)
  1) rules
  2) variable, quantifiable outcomes
  3) valorization of outcomes
  4) player effort
  5) player-attached outcome: emotionally, challenging
  6) negotiable consequences: with or without real-life consequences
- Types of games and game platforms
  1) arcade games: coin-operated games in public places
  2) console games: Sony Playstation, Microsoft Xbox, Nitendo Wii, connected to another device (TV, Internet)
  3) PC-based games: CD-ROM or the internet
  4) handheld games: Nintendo DS
  5) mobile games: smartphones, tablet computers, app stores than games distributors
  6) games within social media platforms: 'social games', Farmville, etc. Zynga through Facebook, Google+, Tencent

- **Gamification**: the use of game mechanics and game design techniques <u>in non-game contexts</u>, such as education, corporate training and financial management
  1) <u>direct spin-offs</u>: for technological innovation and consumer demand relating to computer processing, demand for broadband services, mobile telecommunications and digital content
  2) <u>indirect spin-offs</u>: as diverse as real estate and travel, military training, healthcare, intelligence testing, corporate training
- The rise of games and **gaming culture**: MMOGs→ online virtual communities, participatory media culture, user-led-innovation
- **Tensions and contradictions** in the games industry
  1) the <u>ownership</u> and control of <u>user-generated content</u>
  2) poor <u>working conditions</u> and burnout among those working in games production
  3) ecological consequences of <u>waste</u> associated with continuous upgrading of games consoles and devices commonplace
  4) connections between <u>violence</u> in games content and violence in society: its policy implications [?]

02: games history

- Early computer games developed by **the military-industrial-academic complex** with researchers in the US nuclear program at MIT generating games such as the joystick-based Spacewar (1962) and the paddle-and-ball game Tennis for Two (1958, 1968) in their spare time.
- Mass market success: Pong by Atari 1972, Space Invaders by Midway 1978
- **Arcade-based games** on coin-operated machines in public places: Monaco GP, Pac-Man 1980s
- In 1982, worldwide home sales of video games were about US$3 billion, arcade games US$8billion (international popular music US$4billion)
- A bust in the mid-1980s, too many poor quality titles and Atari's losses
- but a shift to **home-based games entertainment (video games)** by Nintendo Entertainment System in 1985
  : Super Mario Bros. : quality of titles, improved pacing, visuals, sound and dynamism: greatly enhancing the experience of play → nurtured a gaming subculture: children's TV cartoon show, Hollywood film, T-shirts, comic books, removable tattoos, lunchboxes and so on.
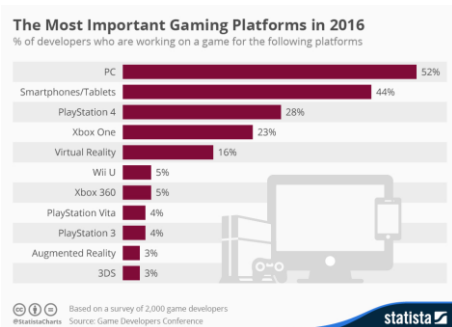
- **1990s**, Sega: 16-bit **Genesis console**'s microprocessing capability → bigger animated characters, better backgrounds, faster play and better sound: attract games developers (Electronic Arts gaming company: third-party publishers for Sega)
  : Sonic the Hedgehog 1991, Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat
- Sega's **GameBoy**: the thumbs 1989-1990
- 1994, **Sony PlayStation**: from cartridges to CD-ROMs,
- **Computer-based gaming**: Wolfenstein 1991, Myst 1993, Doom 1994, Quake 1995 :much more adult
  : Doom by id Software released their source code online → players to develop their own levels of the game, extending and modifying the game itself.
- By early 2000s, the console-based games industry
  1) games distributors or publishers: Acclaim Entertainment, Atari, Capcom, Eidos, Electronic Arts, Midway, Namco, Take-Two Interactive (also, Sony, Sega, Nintendo, MS)
  2) games hardware producers: Sony Playstation 2, 1999, MS Xbox 2001
  : the emerging broadband internet environment
  : subcontracting, licensing and fee-for-service arrangements
  : 5 to 20 % successful titles cross-subsidise the 80 to 95 % → games distributors vs. games developers

- 200s the growth of **online games, or MMOGs**
  1) Ultima Online 1997: 250,000 subscribers in 2001
  2) EverQuest 1999 by Verant Interactive (Sony): adopt avatars
  3) Dark Age of Camelot, The Sims Online, Star Wars: Galaxies
  4) In Asia, Lineage: 4 million subscribers by 2002 (17 million South Koreans in PC Baangs)
  5) Blizzard's World of Warcraft, 2004
  : Consoles to online environments: still PSP, Wii
- Recently, **mobile games** from app stores accessing from social media sites as casual gaming
  : no long-term time commitment or special skills to play, lower production and distribution costs

The Most Important Gaming Platforms in 2016
% of developers who are working on a game for the following platforms

Platform	%
PC	52%
Smartphones/Tablets	44%
PlayStation 4	28%
Xbox One	23%
Virtual Reality	16%
Wii U	5%
Xbox 360	5%
PlayStation Vita	4%
PlayStation 3	4%
Augmented Reality	3%
3DS	3%

Based on a survey of 2,000 game developers
@StatistaCharts   Source: Game Developers Conference

statista

03: games industry

- Most game titles do not realize a <u>profit</u>: <u>10 to 20% of titles only</u>
- Tensions between <u>innovation and conservatism</u> in game development: it is best to focus upon the 'hardcore gamer genres'-action, sport, racing, first person shooter, role-playing games
- **Value chain players** in the traditional games industry
1) <u>game developers</u>: content creation (designing, prototyping, pre-producing, testing): independent third-party developers/production teams within publishing companies, console producers themselves (Nintendo), Blizzard Entertainment (Warcraft, Diablo, StarCraft), Activision (Call of Duty, Guitar Hero), Ubisoft (Assassin's Creed, Just Dance), Rockstar Games (Grand Theft Auto, Max Payne), Electronic Arts (FIFA series, Madden NFL, Harry Potter, The Sims), Konami (Metal Gear), Valve (Half-Life, Counter-Strike, Left 4 Dead)
2) <u>game publishers</u>: developing titles, financing development costs, acquiring intellectual property rights, licensing those rights, marketing to distributors, retailers and end-users: multinational companies for multiple platforms, overlapping development and publishing (Nintendo, EA(also distributors and retailers), Activision Blizzard, Ubisoft, Take-Two Interactive, Sony Entertainment, MS
3) <u>game distributors</u>: EA, digital distribution has been relatively slow to develop in the traditional game industry relative to other digital creative industry
4) <u>game retailers</u>: major department stores (Walmart, Carrefour, electronics shops)
5) **<u>game consumers</u>**: computer-based game since the mid 1990s, whole new games emerged out of modifications, or modding, of existing games by core users

- : Half-Life → <u>user modification or mod</u> → Counter Strike : breach of the original developer's copyright
- : <u>partial conversions, or the addition of new items</u>, weapons, characters, enemies, models, modes, textures, levels, storylines and game modes <u>by players themselves</u>
- : WOW, Star Wars, Doom, Command & Conquer, Battlefield 1942: <u>actively promoted and assisted user modification</u>, and <u>very lively online user communities</u> exist to provide tools and software to assist.
- Major console sellers: <u>middleware </u>(development of games engines including physics engines that can be repurposed for different games): RenderWare and other software tools [now, unity 3D]

04: game cultures

- A distinctive form of cultural engagement with media: differ from both traditional media and the often more instrumental uses that we made of the internet
- How games should be analyzed
  1) **narratologists**: the unique forms of storytelling within games: narrative was the key organizing principle of games, and that they could be evaluated for their narrative complexity alongside other media such as films and literature
  2) **ludologists**: the players are themselves actors, immersed in and actively shaping the games environment. The player is the performer, and the game evaluates the performance and adapts to it: the need to incorporate elements of play theory into games studies
- The Player invest in games has relevance in other areas of social life.
- South Korea and Japan: PC-based games dominant, a strong culture of games being played together through online interaction and being physically co-located in internet cafes and games rooms.
- US: console-based gaming dominant, in the home
  : ESA 2012 study into US game players

Conclusion

- [Game Studies](#)
- [International Game Developers Association](#)