Impact through Exhibition

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ABSTRACT
This paper outlines the authors’ experiences and best practices for organizing a variety of game exhibits for small and large scale events. The perspectives are provided as cross-disciplinary views, drawing on the decade long experience of the curators of the Smithsonian American Art Museum’s Indie Arcade (IndiePopup.com), Blank Arcade (blankarcade.criticalgameplay.com) and game installations at the Smithsonian Natural History Museum, the Newseum and others. The goal of the paper and presentation is to inspire others to create such activities, facilitate the productive expansion of such work and to help others learn from our experiences. The author has co-organized events with others attracting more than 11,000 visitors in a single day. Heuristic based evidence is provided.

Curating games comes with its own challenges and opportunities, but this presentation goes beyond the obvious. It discusses:

- Games as Cultural Artifact
- Curating the game player experience
- Curating is not Judging
- Games as series (like works of art)
- Community building through collaborative curation
- Inspiring institutional support
- Unconventional exhibition – stepping beyond the arcade and showcase
- Intersection of contemporary art and games

The presentation provides 3 distinct perspectives, as academics in game studies, event and exhibition organizers, and as exhibiting artist. The goal is to provide a range of exhibition venues, curatorial challenges and strategies and heuristic analysis. Examples of such events are shown in figure 1.
It is our belief that the future of games is not only about discussing work, but about enabling and supporting a diverse set of game-makers with the ability to exhibit games. This paper examines the benefits physical exhibited work, included value in social capital and structured experience. As such this paper outlines the curatorial strategies, lessons learned and successes of game exhibits held in cities, focusing primarily on North American and European events.

![Figure 1: Examples of the range of curated exhibitions discussed. Sample game exhibition discussed (names and photo credit redacted for anonymity). A large scale public exhibit organized by authors with major cultural institution (left), exhibition at private museum in Asia, private warehouse exhibition organized by authors (bottom).](image)

**BIO**

Lindsay Grace is an associate professor at American University and founding director of the American University Game Lab and Studio. His game designs have received awards from the Games for Change Festival, Meaningful Play, Advances in Computer Entertainment and Gamescape. His creative work has been selected for showcase in more than eight countries and 12 states, including New York, Paris, Rio De Janeiro, Singapore, Istanbul, Sao Paulo, Chicago and Vancouver. He has given talks at the Game Developer's Conference (GDC), SXSW, Games for Change Festival/Tribeca Film Festival, the Boston Festival of Independent Games and many others.
Blank arcade, curated exhibit at the Hannah Maclure Centre, Dundee Scotland.
Indie Arcade, Smithsonian American Art Museum
Indie Arcade, Smithsonian American Art Museum
Indie Arcade, Critical Gameplay, Wait, being played at Smithsonian American Art Museum
Indie Arcade, Smithsonian American Art Museum
SAAM Indie Arcade evening attendees
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Critical Gameplay Big Huggin’ Being Played
Blank Arcade Dundee
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Critical Gameplay game, Bang! on display at the Art-Science Museum in Singapore. In Bang!, players can shoot non-player characters, but when they do, they must watch a wedding-montage styled movie of that character’s life in reverse.

3-wall Interactive Installation at Blank Arcade, Salt Lake City, Utah (artist based in Denver)
Interactive objects game at Blank Arcade, Germany.

Blank Arcade, Salt Lake City, installation.