

Games don't want to be Art. Like popular film and music, we just want art's *stuff*. Respect, protection, preservation, due consideration. To reach a cultural stature such that when we put sophisticated messages into our games, there's someone out there who actually expects to find them. We're not interested in asking whether games are art (in the categorical sense), but whether videogames are really worth a damn (in the evaluative sense). To paraphrase Alfred Steiglitz-- can videogames have the *significance* of art?

In order to come up with a reasonable "playlist" for the Art of Play Arcade, some amazing games had to be left out. We had to decide what, for practical purposes, art was going to be. It was not enough to be innovative -- innovation alone might make something good, but does not make something art. We had to find the works that showed something deeper, which stuck with us long after we played them, and had a quality to them above what you would expect to find -- perhaps games which could give you a new perspective on the world. Or at least the world of games.

These games all address games' potential in some significant way. Some (like those of Jason Rohrer or Rod Humble) take formal approaches, others (like those of Jason Nelson or thatgamecompany) explore different phenomenological or representational strategies -- but some affect us in some way not so simple to articulate. They prompt discussions about the medium's potential as an expressive form -- and, after all, isn't that what Art is all about? So we've included games that have an inarticulable aesthetic impact -- games in which it was difficult to pinpoint exactly why the work was significant, but which produced a singular engagement or experience.

Games need some articulation, some discussion, and some revaluing of what they mean to us. That critical literacy has to originate from games themselves; from the experiments, explorations and risks taken by visionary game creators. If we want art's stuff, we also need to take on art's responsibility to engage the world in a profound way. But we must be careful not to make games art at the expense of what makes games games.

Which is why it's important to bring these works together. We can talk about them, argue about them, critique them, experience them — but most of all, we can *play* them. Because if our irrepressible urge to play these games isn't enough, what is?

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