



This is not a game

Hypertext is not a game

- “It's not a game,” says Swigart. Nor, apparently, is it interactive fiction as we have come to know it. “There is no parsing language in *Portal*,” he adds, “no puzzles to solve.” — *The Status Line*, 1987
- “This is not a game.” — John McDaid, Stuart Moulthrop, Michael Joyce, et al, 1988-9?
- “[T]hough it is true that in my own fiction, *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, there is in fact a puzzle.” — McDaid, 1993
- The experience of play, but not a game.

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DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

THIS IS NOT

Soundtrack Album on Warner Sunset / Warner Bros. Records

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JUNE 29

A GAME

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The Beast is not a game

- Promotional game for movie *A.I.* — but no name, no marketing, could not be purchased, existence not acknowledged, no official beginning.
- Players began playing when an odd credit was noticed in a trailer. Months later, at hype's height, "THIS IS NOT A GAME" in television ad.
- "This message has since become the mantra for both players and developers of immersive entertainment. To 'TING' a game now means to explicitly deny and purposefully obscure its nature as a game" — Jane McGonigal, 2003
- Smudging magic circle. And no rules or clear outcomes.



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The Sims is not a game

- “The #1 best selling game of all time” — Electronic Arts, 2004
- But some say *The Sims* doesn’t meet formal definitions. For example, outcomes not quantifiable enough.
- It also doesn’t meet some informal definitions: “With the first game, people complained that *The Sims* was more like a toy than a game.” — *Yahoo! Games*, 2004
- “Open-ended simulation games such as *The Sims* change the classic game model by removing the goals, or more specifically, by *not* describing some possible outcomes as better than others.” — Jesper Juul, 2003



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Façade is not a game

- Instead, an “interactive drama” — a drama along the lines of “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf.” A different form of digital entertainment.
- However, *Façade* was nominated for the top prize at the 2004 Independent Games Festival, held at the mainstream Game Developer’s Conference.
- Mateas and Stern have come to use the term “game” — *Façade*’s “affinity game,” general “head games.”

— and that's fine —

If not *games*

- The preceding may not be games, or some may be.
- What I'm working on as an artist may not be games.
- But one interesting thing about all of these is how they are *played*.

Perhaps *playable*?

- Helps me think about my artwork — “how is this played?” more than “is this a game?”
- Clarifies my scholarly interests (e.g., *First Person’s* inclusion of classical games, “not games,” and playable art).



Playable as terminology

- “Playable” is broader than “game” — it includes hacky-sack, not just football.
- “Playable” is more specific than “interactive” — we could argue whether a love letter is more interactive than a computer game, but probably not whether it is more playable.
- A quality, rather than a category.
- We play (with) more than games and toys — also instruments and compositions.

The logics of play

- Once we're focused on questions such as "How is this played?" we can investigate the structures that underly this play.
- Most games are built on a narrow set of graphical logics — primarily navigation and collision detection.
- I'm interested (as are Mateas and others) in building play experiences on alternative logics — especially textual ones.

Linguistic logics?

- Rather than only play text along graphical logics — also linguistic and literary logics?
- One approach: take logics used for batch mode natural language processing/generation (from CS or John Cage or...) and use them for performative text instruments.
- For example: n-grams.

Regime Change



New window's paragraphs each n-gram continuations of clicked words, generated from a different document. (3- and 4-grams.)

Thanks

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