NAEA, 2022
Support Toolbox

Gaming Your Pedagogy: Games and Game-Design Basics for All
Learn some fascinating facts about the role of games throughout history and art history, followed by playful practical approaches to help any art teacher incorporate game-design basics into art curriculum.

Saturday
01:00:PM - 01:50:PM

This professional support toolbox will provide art teachers with an understanding of the role of games through history, and across culture and art, as well as playful, engaging games and activities, that will help to develop game literacy, and a foundational understanding of game-design principles. These approaches to game-design can be incorporated into curriculum easily, and without the need of technology.

The order of things:

- Anecdote: My cousin violet had Siamese fighter fish as center pieces at her wedding. When I let my cousin and uncle know that they were territorial and would fight if in the same bowl…. Well let's just say that the next thing I knew, wagers were being placed (don't worry, no fish were harmed in the end – females are less prone to fight)

- Games and gambling have been around forever – like art, games and play are a huge part of what it means to be human (though animals play too of course) – this image is of dice players from an ancient roman fresco in pompei – older than 79 AD

- Queen Neferatari is depicted playing the game senate in her tomb Circa 1279 – 1213 BC

- Dice are thought to date back at least 8000 years! Shamans would cast bones as a divination tool (as well as sticks, rocks, or even animal entrails) for *divination*, the practice of telling the future by interpreting signs from the gods. – knuckle bones generally from sheep, goat or pig

- This image is of ancient roman dice from 1st – 3rd C AD

The line between divination and gambling is blurred. One hunter, for example, might say to another, "If the bones land short side up, we will search for game to the south; if not, we look north," thus using the astragali to plumb the future. But after the hunt, the hunters might cast bones to determine who would go home with the most desirable cuts.

The magic and power of chance, and the ways in which chance can usurp habitual ways of thinking and doing is also a technique that many artists have taken advantage of and truly owned over time.

Games, game inspired tools and play have much to teach us as artists and humans!

L// chance to dice/casting bones – and this continual thread of delight and learning that comes from chance.

- Examples of oldest games – possibly dating back 4500 years or MORE!

  - Senet; Royal game of UR & Mancala / Wari + GO

  - Senet: 3100 BCE: originating in Egypt, initially as a fun game, Senet slowly evolved to reflect the religious beliefs of the Egyptians. The pieces represented human souls and their movement was based on the journey of the soul in the afterlife.
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  - The Royal Game of UR: 2500 BCE: 4500 years old! Originating in Mesopotamia, This is probably the oldest game that we know the rules for! The author speculated on the astronomical significance of the 12 squares at the center of the 20-square board and explained how certain squares portended good fortune: one square would bring "fine beer"; another would make a player "powerful like a lion."

  - Mancala/ Wari: May day back to 5870 BC, which would make it almost 8000 years old though unconfirmed – believed that Arab traders brought to Africa

  - Mancala is a game where players "sow" and "capture" seeds.
  - Historians believe that mancala may have originated with the dawn of civilization as a record-keeping technique, a harvesting ritual, or a divination tool.

  - Go = thought to have originated 2356 BCE 4000 years ago, in Ancient China According to legend, the game was created as a teaching tool after the ancient Chinese Emperor Yao 堯 (2356–2255 BCE) designed it for his son, Danzhu 丹朱, to learn discipline, concentration, and balance. Another suggested genesis for the game is that Chinese warlords and generals used pieces of stone to map attacking positions. Other plausible theories relate Go equipment to divination or flood control.

  - Card games from Tang dynasty china 6th – 9th C AD
  - 4 suites invented in France 1480 by **Étienne de Vignolles**
  - cribbage likely the oldest card game (Bridge 19th C AD)
  - First vg not on a computer but cathode ray amusement device patent 1947
  - 1950s computer games on mainframe systems
  - Magnavox odyssey 1972
  - Arcade games pacman, space invaders, 1978

- Games in art: Dada, surrealism, fluxus

DADAISTS AND SURREALISTS

- Many games rely on combinations of chance and strategy.
- The phrase "as beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and umbralla on an operating table" (lautremont, 1868), became the catchphrase for the surrealist belief in objective chance – they valued the way unexpected juxtapositions of objects, concepts, or ideas could interfere with preconditioned ways of thinking – being a surrealist meant throwing oneself into situations that invited the unexpected – everyday practice involved daily meetings in "disreputable cafes" and walking around the city of paris seeking out the "golden fleece of everyday magic" (rosemont 1978 p. 52).
  - Breton considered the ring-leader of the surrealist literally invited chance into his bed by sleeping with his hotel door open fuller, 2018)
  - The surrealists of course played exquisite corpse, a fairly well known game in art and art education circles
  - they played many other collective "chain games" that involve concealment, often of text, in order to reveal/elicit surprising, often rather humorous or profound results.
  - In "Definitions/ Questions and Answers" one player writes a question, folds the piece of paper, and passes it to another player who writes an answer. "What is reason? A cloud eaten by the moon." (Broachie, 1995, p. 26).

SITUATIONISTS
- Existed from 1957 – 1972
- Largely known for derivé and detournement techniques
- Detournement – translate as rerouting or hijacking: reutilising plagiarised material (literary, artistic, cinematic, etc.) for a new and usually radical purpose
- Examples of this in a contemporary context are the work of Barbara Kruger and Adbusters
- Derivé translates as drift: as a mode of experimental behavior where situationists would wander like clouds through the urban environment for hours or sometimes even days on end playfully interacting with surroundings
- The art educator Anne Thulston implemented the concept into her school of the poetic city curriculum, inviting students to playfully engage with their city as they explored together – based on several open ended directives such as "index the city; situate your body in the city; embellish the city

FLUXUS
- For Fluxus artists in the 60s and 70s, play undermined the seriousness of "high" art in its humor and irreverence and encouraged participants to celebrate everyday actions instead of static, valuable art objects.
- *Fluxus artists made countless games, from larger, multiple-player events to smaller, more individualized objects.*
- Largely known for their events, scores, and instruction pieces these were first conceived as or alongside of games
- For example:
- Draw a map to get lost.
- Play baseball with a piece of fruit.

- Games transform sets of instructions into phenomenological experience. They are vehicles for spontaneity, novelty, and creative play.
- Games encourage sensual engagement, both with the art object and with others who play.
- Fluxes held several events called Fluxfests. The Fluxfest held at Douglass College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in February 1970
- Examples of games played on the night of the Flux-Sports event include soccer played on stilts, a javelin toss with a balloon, and table tennis played with paddles with holes in the center or metal cans (to be filled with water) attached.
- "Slow Speed Cycle Contest," in which the goal was to ride a bicycle at the slowest possible pace to reach the finish line last, … participants ran "while drinking vodka, eating porridge, eating ice cream, spitting, playing musical instruments, writing, operating film camera[s], grinding coffee, undressing, shouting, counting, etc
- Many of the more intimate Fluxus games were boxes containing "scores," or playing instructions, altered decks of cards, or manipulated chess sets

- All of these movements had in common the goal of dissolving the boundaries between art, play, and everyday life

I am now going to talk about more contemporary work related to video games: Game art, art games, artist's games – these definitions and examples are taken from John Sharp's book: Works of Game: on the aesthetics of games and art

Game art: appropriation of tools of game industry for artistic purposes
Julian Oliver 10q3aPaint, 2010 – exploited a well known bug in Quake 3's game engine to produce these painterly graphic images

Art games: artists use the tools of game design unconventionally to do the kinds of things that works of art do often communicate something profound

Jason Rohrer game Gravitation is an autobiographical game where the in-game Jason has to balance family obligations with creative urges; player character has 2 tasks – keep his son content by playing catch, which produces love in the son, or following creative urges by climbing up into a verticaol maze to collect stars that become blocks back on the ground that need to be pushed into the hearth in order to pvoide for the family; the happier the son is the more of the world the player can see; the sadder, the more restricted the view becomes; the players task is a balancing act between keeping son happy and keeping home fires burning

Artist's games

- "games and their play can be a medium concerned with an aesthetics of performed experience"

- Often works take place within everyday context, and are participatory and sometimes site specific
- Mary Flanagan: Giant joystick, 2006 = 10 foot talk Atari joystick attached to an Atari to play classic games like asteroids but you can't play with the oversized controller and push the button – experience becomes collaborative – this reimagining of the scale of the game opens up a new space of possibility "that critically engages notion of game-design, interface, co-play and the contexts of play

Gaming Literacy

- Eric Zimmerman, a game designer and educator, argues that gaming literacy will be the key literacy for the 21st Century.
- He frames systems, play and design as the key components of this new literacy
- He asks : what does the world look like from the point of view of gaming?
- He stands for a new set of cognitive, creative and social skills – a cluster of practices he calls gaming literacy
- "gaming a system = finding hidden shortcuts; bending and modifying rules; possibly changing the system for the better "bending and breaking rules, playing with our notions of what literacy has been and can be"

- **Gaming literacy:**

1. **Understanding systems** – understanding world as dynamic sets of parts with complex, constantly changing interrelationships. Process vs answers; dynamic relationships vs fixed facts; improvisational problem-solving skills;

2. **Play:** human effect of rules set into motion – often transcending the systems from which it emerges; rules are closed and fixed, but play is improvisational and uncertain. Def: **free movement within a more rigid structure**.

    a. "we must learn to approach problem-solving with a spirit of playfulness; not to resist, but to embrace transformation and change"

3. **Design:** the process by which a designer creates a context, to be encountered by a participant, from which meaning emerges" – games well suited for studying how meaning is made. Design is about creating a set of possibilities. Game design mediates between structure and play.

    a. "Game design as the investigation of the possibility of meaning truly gets at the heart of gaming literacy and ties together systems, play and design in a unified and integrated process"

- In the spirit of the artists who have used games, it is fun to develop game literacy by playing and **experimenting with game concepts,** which is what we are going to do

now…. Not only important to gaming literacy, but also another tool to incorporate into art practice … particularly socially engaged art – what can you bring people together to do?

ACTIONS:

- Challenge #1: Dissection
- take a simple game – in this case, rock, paper, scissors. With your students you can try simple card games like go fish for this as well. Play a few rounds of r, p, s with the person to your right right now

  - What are the **rules** of R, P, S?
      i. at an agreed upon count (4 = rock, paper, scissors, shoot!) players make the hand signal that represents a rock or paper or scissors.

  - **What is the win condition? What is the lose condition?** Win conditions: rock beats scissor, scissor beats paper, paper beats rock. You win if your signal beats the other person, you lose if theirs beats yours, you tie/redraw if you play the same signal.

- Games are largely based on cause and effect or **if/then statements**

  - R,P,S: if choice 1 is rock and choice 2 is paper then paper wins
  - Sorry: if a player lands on another, the player landed upon has to go back to their home base.
  - If you draw the jail card in monopoly then you go directly to jail and miss a turn.

- What are some of your favorite well known games? Who can identify some if then statements?

CHALLLENGE # 2: *The goal of the game*

- I am going to give you a goal and your challenge is to create a game to achieve that goal. With the same partner, between the 2 of you, using the materials you have on you, or no materials at all choose one of these prompts and create a game that could be played right now:

Have them choose a card (but also make list available if they get stumped)

1. Create a game where the goal is to hit/reach a target.
2. Create a game where you accumulate points for doing something and the person with the most points wins
3. Create a game where something has to be accomplished in a certain amount of time

4. Create a game where the first person to accomplish something wins
5. Create a game that involves engaging with a stranger
6. Create a game where you have to collaborate to achieve a goal

CHALLENGE #3: Rejig

Now I am going to give you material to start with. Either a simple game that already exists OR a classic game tool/object – your goal is to create your own game starting with the material.

1. What are the rules
2. What are the if/then statements
3. What are the win/lose conditions

- Check out my 4 part PAEA blog posts from the summer Gaming your pedagogy: Taking inspiration from games, toys and play in the art classroom and my Arcade our Way project website – more resources are being developed for teachers, and you can play The air we breathe designed in collaboration with grade 8 students about climate change