



Press conference: Wednesday 18 December at 11.00 am
Opening: Wednesday 18 December at 7.00 pm

Barcelona, 19 November 2019.- The CCCB presents the exhibition ***Gameplay. Video Game Culture***, which is open to the public from 19 December 2019 to 3 May 2020. The exhibition is curated by **Óliver Pérez Latorre**, a lecturer in audiovisual communication studies, advertising and public relations, and computer engineering at Pompeu Fabra University, and **Jérôme Nguyen**, an expert in communication sciences, a ludologist and a trainee curator and researcher at the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe. *Gameplay. Video Game Culture* is an expanded adaptation of *Gameplay. The Next Level*, conceived and first presented at the ZKM. The exhibition is supported by the Banc Sabadell Foundation.

Gameplay journeys to the origins of video games, analyses their language and highlights the impact they have had on popular digital culture and on art and society. The exhibition is designed as a space for recreation and reflection where visitors can play and (re)discover video game culture.

Ever since video games became popular in the 1970s and 80s, they have developed as a medium of expression and entertainment and now occupy a central space in our imaginary, so much so that it is impossible today to understand contemporary society and culture without relating them with video gaming.

The exhibition also raises the issue of the increasing gamification of society: from mobile games to YouTubers and electronic sports (esports) to so-called serious games, educational video games with applications that go beyond entertainment.

Gameplay features works by artists such as Mary Flanagan, Joan Leandre, Harun Farocki, Lawrence Lek, LaTurbo Avedon, Mónica Rikić and Blast Theory.

With 28 game points, from the first arcade and computer games to the new immersive options, *Gameplay* is designed to be an exhibition where visitors can play and, at the same time, understand and enjoy video game culture from a critical viewpoint.

The show pays particular attention to Catalan production, especially pioneering works, recent indie creations and local artists, and university projects.

Exhibition itinerary

The exhibition invites visitors to (re)discover and (re)play the video game culture through five different ambits:

Level_1. Replay. The Origins of Video Games

Video games grew out of three technologies: computer games, coin-op machines (pay-to-play) and consoles. However, the history of the origins of video games is a history in which technological evolution is interwoven with social changes, the development of the early 'genres' characteristic of the medium, and the emergence of new imaginaries for children and teenagers, in which Nintendo became the new Disney. This seminal period of video game culture (the 1970s and 80s) has traditionally been told from the angle of Japan and the USA, but pioneering creators and companies in Spain and Catalonia played an interesting role during this era that needs to be highlighted.

Contents: The success of Pong (1972) as a mass-market commercial product; legendary Japanese and American games of the 1970s and 80s; the early home consoles; the visual parallels between silent movies and video games; and the golden age of Spanish video games.

Level_2. Liquid Narratives

The video game is a medium that is both narrative and playful, a medium for which creators can structure the design of the rules of play and the game mechanics (patterns of interaction), the non-linear narrative and the depiction of imaginary worlds in order to provide us with unique interactive experiences. At the same time, the 'language' and culture of video games have always been closely linked to their connections with popular narratives and analogue games. Notwithstanding this, in the popular imaginary, video games are associated with the pleasure of deciding, a certain 'rhetoric of decision-making' characteristic of video game advertising: "[in video games] you are free, everything depends on you".

Contents: Board and role-playing games, the popular imaginary, science fiction, and comic and manga superheroes as a source of inspiration for video games; video game rules; and the way gamers deal with decision-making and cope with defeat. Works by Mary Flanagan and Joan Leandre.

Level_3. Art and the Gaming Essay

Innovation and aesthetic experimentation in the field of video games are a response to complex overlaps between art, technology and play. In recent years, a new generation of independent creators and indie game authors has been exploring game styles that are alternative or opposed to the mainstream or detached from it. Alongside this, some video games that have left their mark on the imaginary of the medium are based on relatively simple yet ground-breaking concepts of play thanks to technologies, interfaces and/or forms of

interaction that seem to invite us to simply ‘play for play’s sake’ but in a novel and riveting way.

Contents: Benchmark indie video games (Limbo, Journey, What Remains of Edith Finch and Gris); and a bank of video games that visitors can play using large-format screens.

Level_4. Breaking the ‘Magic Cercle’

Historically, video games have been criticised for being an escapist medium, for being set in a ‘magic circle’ that cuts us off from real life. Even so, they are exerting an increasingly powerful influence on the way many people perceive and interpret the world. This impact of video games on the social imaginary is not simple, nor is it only one-way: video games reflect the tensions and concerns of the day, meaning that in some respects they can reinforce dominant ideologies (or even bolster retrograde views). However, they can also communicate alternative discourses, feminist or green messages, and can convey critical thinking on a range of themes, among them technological capitalism itself and the video game industry.

Contents: The capitalist spirit reverberates in many popular video games, but they can also be a cultural space for activism: feminist videos; new gender roles; the role of women in contemporary video games; and the potential of video games as a means to generate empathy with a social emphasis. Works by LaTurbo Avedon, Paolo Pedercini and Anna Anthropy.

Level_5. Ludopolis. Gamified Lives

Contemporary society has become ‘video-gamified’. Video games have infiltrated people’s lives at different levels and in very different ambits: gamified design now permeates all kinds of social media, digital apps and even workplaces; and video games are increasingly used in education and vocational training. At the same time, the audience for video games has expanded and the uses and enjoyment of video games have become more diverse: mobile phone games, the YouTuber phenomenon and esports (video game competitions) are three key vectors for the rise of video games in entertainment today.

Contents: Educational and military video games; games for architects or for learning how to perform surgery; and games to help youngsters with autism to socialise. Works by Roc Herms, Harun Farocki, Lawrence Lek, Mónica Rikić and Blast Theory.

Activities

The CCCB is running an extensive programme of activities featuring debates, workshops, audiovisual pieces and digital content that will offer a range of perspectives on thinking regarding the nature of video games and about the place they occupy in today’s imaginary and their impact on society.

For further information and visual material, click [here](#)

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