

Ways of Perceiving

Curation Essay

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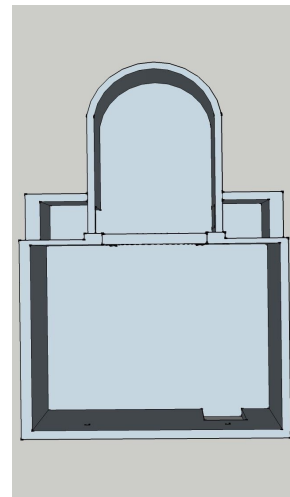
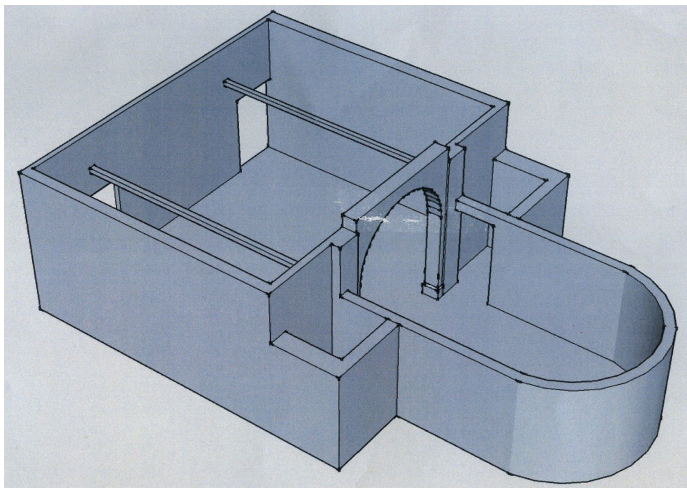
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I aspire to curate an exhibition that uses different sensory stimuli to evoke nostalgia from retro video games, my exhibition will be titled “*The History and Nostalgia of Video Games*”.

To begin, my exhibition will take place at the Mission Gallery in the Swansea Maritime Quarter and will feature 4 different sources of art to convey the emotion that I wish to portray. The floorplan is shown below.



I will first describe the main emotion I wish to portray in my exhibition, nostalgia.

Nostalgia is a very powerful emotion that is practically a homesickness for a specific place or time. The etymology of the word ‘nostalgia’ comes from the ancient Greek language, *nostos* meaning ‘returning’ and then *algos* which means ‘suffering’. The website *kotaku.com* states that “the term was invented by Swiss doctors in the 17th century to describe a condition afflicting Swiss mercenaries who longed for their home while they fought in wars abroad” (Knorr, 2019).

In an article describing nostalgia in video games named “Why Old School is “Cool” A Brief Analysis of Classic Video Game Nostalgia”, scholar Sean Fentry states that “*video games are places - they are states of being; and because they are stored, unchanging data, they tease with the hope for a possibility of return, if only we can gain access to them*”. I believe that nostalgia is strong due to many people’s relation with that emotion to reminisce of an ‘easier time’ or when the ‘world was just a simple place’, and even to this day I still feel these emotions while booting up an old game or listening to an old soundtrack. My opinion here is supported by two quotes stating, “*Indeed, for some, classic video games have become powerful nostalgic artifacts, not only as reminders of another time and place (a tether to a longed-for past) but as yearned-for states of being, desired spaces in and of themselves—digital homes to which gamers yearn to return.*” (Fentry, 2008) and “*Nostalgia is the emotional by-product of change. People feel nostalgia—the yearning to return to some past period or irrecoverable condition—because the current condition is somehow different.*” (Fentry, 2008).

I have decided to give my exhibition a unique curation style as I do not wish for my exhibition to be similar to a museum where visitors can see but not interact with the art, but my space will be a close to exact recreation of old classic arcades, visitors will be able to touch, feel and play the arcade machines - I wish for my exhibition to convey nostalgia for the people that enter, and I feel like an interactive experience will show the greatest results for my goal. Below is the style I would like for my exhibition floor, with

enough machines to support many different visitors with many different game genres, to incorporate as many old gamers, as the diversity of games are vast.



This style of curation is also my first art piece, it does not own itself to one specific owner, so there cannot be any credit, but it evokes my purpose with my intended theme of nostalgia.

My second piece of art is actually a bit different to the 'norm'. The 'Legend of Zelda Main Theme (Overworld Theme)' (Kondō, 1986) from the legendary game The Legend of Zelda, which was made for the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1986 is going to be the main source of nostalgic immersion in my exhibition, I will do this by placing speakers in every corner of the space, and it will play this soundtrack on repeat throughout the experience.

This soundtrack has a special place in every retro gaming enthusiast's heart, even though I personally am too young to have experienced this game during its release - emulation software has become very accessible over the recent years, so games like this one are easily experienceable by any age of gamer. Regardless of your history, this soundtrack always seems to portray a sense of nostalgia and it evokes a sense of a 'simpler time', which was stated previously.

"The Legend of Zelda is filled with tunes that are adored on a universal level. The single piece of music that stands at the forefront of these works is legendary composer Koji Kondo's overworld theme, which also serves as the main theme of the overall series. The piece perfectly captures the thrill of being a hero on a grand adventure that's full of both awe-inspiring discoveries and formidable foes." (Shimazu. 2019). Shimazu further proves my point, as an older gentleman, he still has the same views as I, in that it is "adored on a universal level". He also has another quote that talks a little about the detailed side of the soundtrack, which even further enforces my statement, *"Koji Kondo's overworld theme is remarkable for how many different emotions it condenses into such a small amount of musical material. What's more, he manages to do this without making the theme feel cluttered or illogical."*

My third piece of art ties into the previous as *The Legend of Zelda* was released in 1986 and is widely considered to be a pioneer of sorts of the *Role Playing Game (RPG)* game genre. Around 18 years later, on the 23rd of November 2004, the world-renowned and

famous *Massively Multiplayer Online RPG (MMORPG)* World of Warcraft was released and took the world by storm. Ever since the release of World of Warcraft, it has topped the charts of the MMORPG sales with no other game getting close, and to this day is still number one best selling, but this raises the question of why? The benefit of an MMO, is that you can connect to worldwide servers and see, talk and duel with any person, albeit close or far geographically, this was the first game to do it so well that had people addicted to not only the gameplay, but the social aspect: which World of Warcraft become famous for.

“WoW was seen as so ubiquitous in Silicon Valley circles it built a reputation as a kind of 'new golf'. A place where people would meet and hang out. Run a dungeon together. Do some fishing. Some of that may have been all talk, but in my own experience as an early-career tech and games journalist I did make friends with future colleagues through the game. I joined a guild and spent time regularly with people I'd met in the industry, which helped solidify work contacts and networks. If I'd started World of Warcraft in more recent years, the years since automated random dungeon and raid queues, and tools that let you group with people without ever needing to type a word or know their names, I don't feel like I'd have built such friend networks through the game so easily.”

(Byrne, 2019). This quote truly encapsulates the whole social aspect of this game - I too can agree to this quote as I have and currently do play this game. To show this in my exhibition, various screenshots of the sense of community this game offers will be shown. See below.



Figure 1



Figure 2



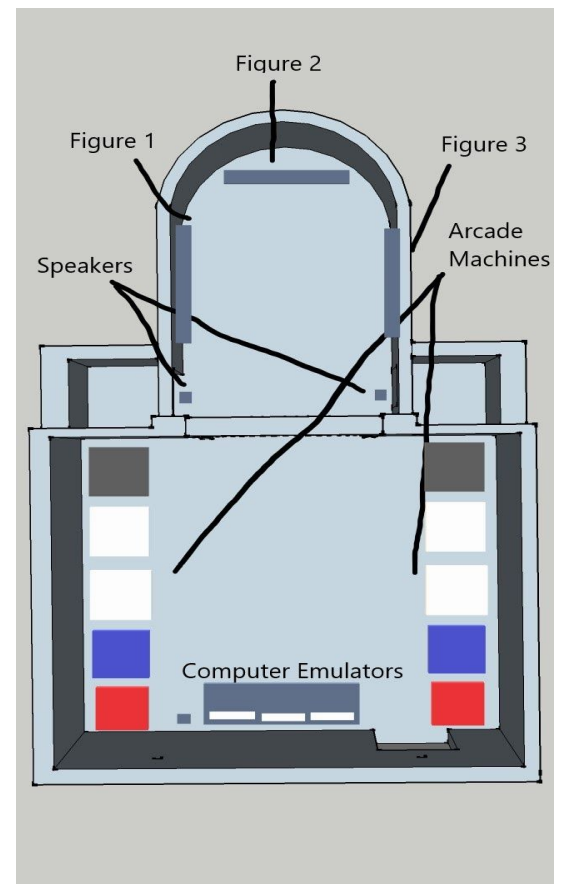
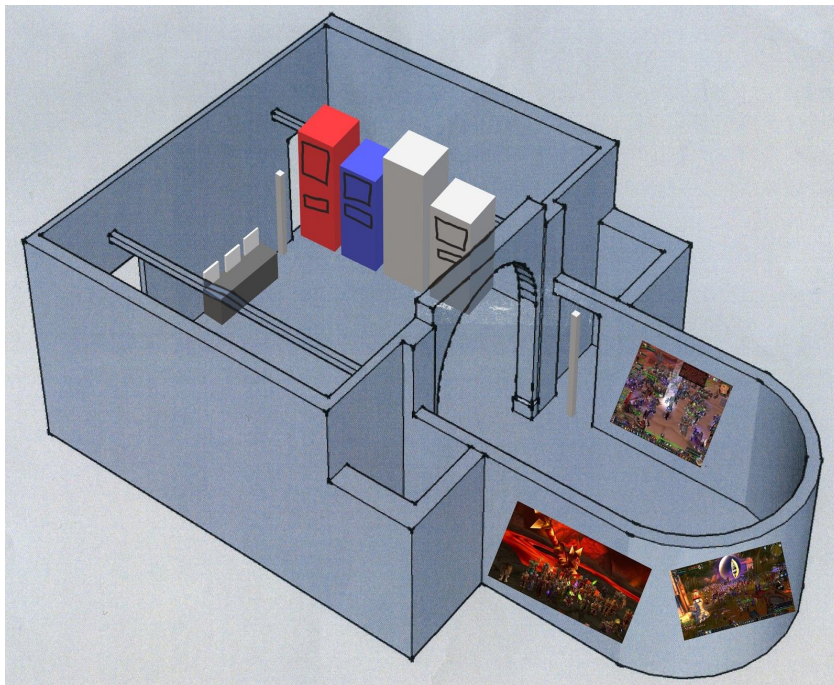
Figure 3

Every avatar/character you can see in these pictures, is a real, singular person from somewhere in the world. You all experienced the same epic boss fights, the laughs and

the spoils together. In my opinion, nothing makes me feel more nostalgic than these pictures.

The final piece to my exhibition is again interactive. There were two sides of old gaming enthusiasts, one who would go to arcades and play, and those who would play handheld or home consoles. I personally experienced the handheld world of games when I was younger, with my first ever game being *Pokemon Yellow* for the *GameBoy Color* handheld console, created by Nintendo. This game was released in 2000 for European countries and I can safely say it changed my whole life as I know it. Before I could even remember, I used to enjoy many different sources of the Pokemon franchise, from the animated series, to toys and eventually this game that was passed down to me by my older cousin and it introduced me to the world of gaming, therefore this game will forever hold a special place in my heart. A review for this exact same game further proves my point - *“Having grown up on the Pokémon animated series before getting into the games, Pokémon Yellow was always going to be the one for me. It put me in the shoes of a young trainer, given a Pikachu who liked to stay outside of his Poké Ball, and allowed me and allowed us to travel the world together. I was able to collect Bulbasaur, Squirtle, and Charmander without having to trade for them, much like Ash in the show. The faceless Team Rocket goons from Pokémon Red and Blue were replaced with Jessie and James from the show, bumbling from place to place with their perpetually inept team. And I got to see the world of Pokémon depicted in colour, which was a huge plus at the time.”*

Along with this quote, I have no doubt that other people like me started on these games too, so my final addition to my interactive display will be 3 computers running emulation software to play these games - users can interact and see how the world of gaming has exponentially increased in both quality and quantity.



This is my finalised plan for my exhibition - with the detailed plan view showing that there is only one door, therefore it is the only way in or out, the entrance and exit.

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