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UCLA Game Art Festival to showcase cutting-edge games and game art

One night only! 7-10:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 18, at the Hammer Museum

Featuring more than 40 playable computer games, tournaments, live performances, board games, machinima screenings, and other game art installations.

Los Angeles, CA – Now in its fourth year, the 2015 UCLA Game Art Festival is a lightning-round, everything-at-once approach to showcasing a curated, international collection of new and experimental games and game-based art. The festival is one night only, 7-10:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 18, at the Hammer Museum, in Westwood, Calif. Admission is free.

Sponsored by the UCLA Game Lab in conjunction with the Hammer Student Association, the UCLA Game Art Festival will feature more than 40 playable game installations, large-screen projections showing game art, an artist-made board game lounge, machinima screenings, a food game lab, and live performances of game tournaments, puppet shows, and music on stage.

As with previous festivals, the focus remains on sharing an eclectic mix of cutting-edge, independent game projects that may not otherwise reach the public. "One of our ongoing goals for the festival is to examine independent games and game art within a multidisciplinary context," said Eddo Stern, UCLA Design Media Arts professor, artist, and director of the festival. "Several themes we are highlighting in this year's Festival include: a selection of game projects examining the politics around gender, immigration and violence, the relationship between food and games, experiments in theatre and gaming, and games in the context of contemporary art."

Stern is one of several curators working to assemble such an eclectic mix of game art. Additional curatorial programs contributed by Lee Tussman, independent game curator and Isabelle Arvers, a French machinima artist and curator. Additionally, portions of the festival are guest-curated by Pasadena-based Hypercube, an art and technology meet-up organization, and by Glitch City, an indie game-making collective in Culver City.

Arvers and Bittanti have been especially instrumental in enhancing the festival's machinima programming this year. Machinima, a filmmaking technique that uses videogame engines to create animated sequences, will be featured in several screening programs at the festival.

New to the festival this year is a separate food games area, which will feature a selection of games that are fully playable communal meals using cooking and eating as a central mechanic of play. Inspired by diverse intersections with food culture, such as drinking games, molecular gastronomy, the Italian Futurists' dinners, and the slow and DIY food movements, these food games investigate ways in which the rituals of food and gaming intertwine. A ticket is required to participate in the food games, which can be purchased at the festival.

One of the most exciting and unique aspects of the festival is the live-performance program that runs throughout the evening. The main festival stage will feature a variety of game projects that explore intersections of performance art, theater, puppetry, live music, and e-sports.

Also during the festival, attendees can slip away to the Board Game Lounge to play the latest new games, including: a series of reinterpreted chess games in which the moveable pieces have been redesigned to express how the pieces can be moved; a game that challenges players to overcome relationship conflicts while completing missions at Ikea; a board game about territoriality and surfing in Los Angeles; and a game about the illicit, long-lost joys and rich vernacular of the cigarette-smoking subculture in high school.

Returning again this year will be the always-lovable UCLA Game Lab Arcade Backpack, a roving, human arcade machine with a number of games installed. Other games feature new electronic interfaces, custom designed arcade cabinets, and other challenges to video game conventions.

Selected featured projects:

First Person Shooter (Aram Bartholl)

http://datenform.de/fpseng.html
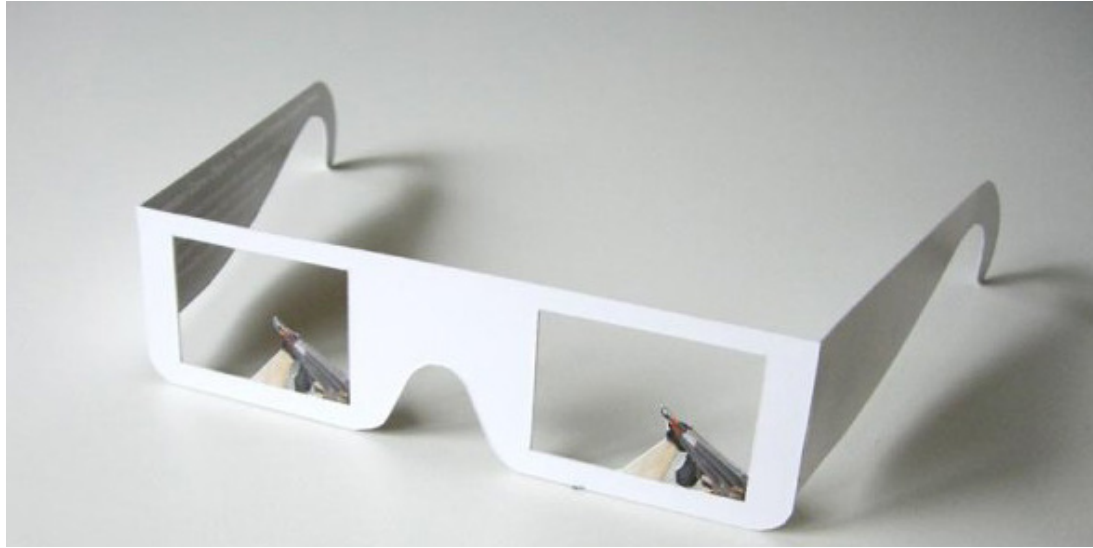
In the wearable game art project *First Person Shooter*, the conventional avatar arm extending into view from the bottom of the screen is transferred to a pair of DIY eyeglasses, enabling the wearer to convert everything into an FPS perspective. The weapon in the video game Counter-Strike (Valve 1999) is transferred into physical space. The project consists of a do-it-yourself kit allowing users to create a pair of glasses bearing the arm with the weapon.

Rooftop Cop (Stephen Clark)

http://eselsi.itch.io/rooftop-cop
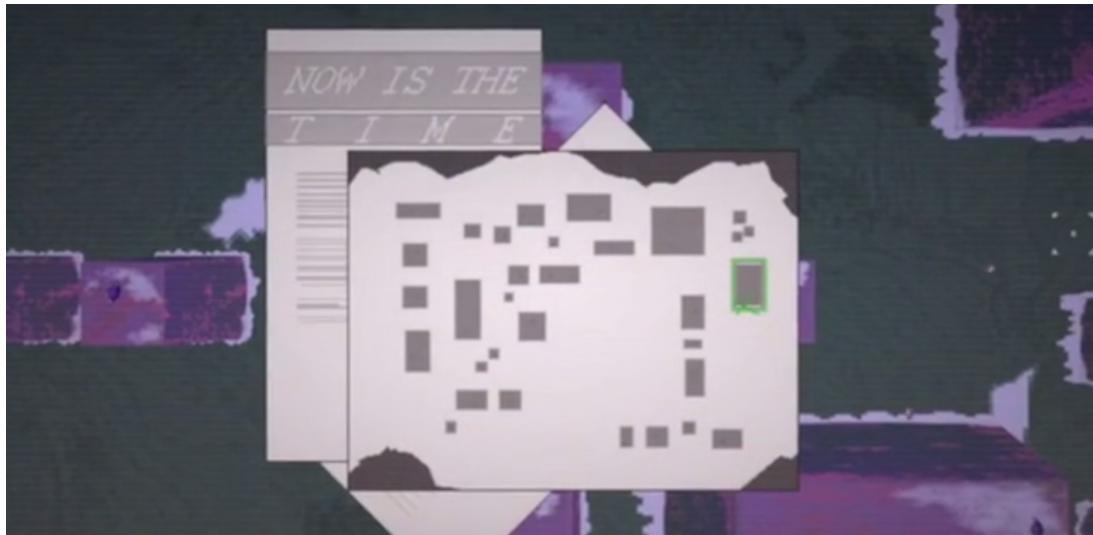
Rooftop Cop is a game designed to be a formal exercise in the art of video games. Originally themed around the idea of a "police cult," *Rooftop Cop* mutated into a game about, as its creator Stephen Clark says, "standing on weird structures built up over time by malcontents and rules-abusers." The game's companion music collection, "Doesn't Speak, Doesn't Listen," is an equally personal look at the creative process.

Cos-Mo Cap Astrodrome America (Isla Hansen)

Cos-Mo Cap Astrodrome America is a live multiplayer game performed on stage. As players battle against gravity, their performances are mediated through a motion capture system that challenges the typical interactive relationship between player and screen. Accompanied by live music and real-time analog graphics, the *Cos-Mo Cap Astrodrome America* system suggests an alternative to the central processing unit as we know it.

Orthogonal/Diagonal (Nova Jiang)

http://games.ucla.edu/game/orthogonaldiagonal/

Orthogonal/Diagonal takes inspiration from regional variants of chess found in Asia. While classic chess has a rigidly defined aesthetic and rule system derived from northern Europe, *Orthogonal/Diagonal* instead takes these little known variants as inspiration to reinterpret the game's movement mechanics. Each piece is resculpted with the goal of conveying the motion and rules that govern it in the variant's rule set.

Chinese Democracy and the Last Day on Earth (Federico Solmi)

The video short *Chinese Democracy and the Last Day* on Earth is a humorous look at power-hungry businessmen and the cause of the apocalypse. Full of youthful, organic textures and oddly animated 3D models, the nine-minute video is a parodic look at what the future may bring if power continues to be held by ruthless corporations and cutthroat governments. Although the video itself is not serious in tone, it creates a darkly funny mood that gives the work a sense of gravity.

Adam Killer (Brody Condon)

Adam Killer is a modification of Half-Life created with the intention of breaking its engine. In the modded version, the player shoots at the 3D portrait of Adam, creating blood splatters and a surreal background of bodies. Originally released as a video performance about the separation of meaning from media images, *Adam Killer* is now being released in its game format to allow others to experience the glitchy, psychedelic joy of killing Adam.

Guattari Hero (John Brumley)

http://games.ucla.edu/game/guattari-hero/

Guattari Hero is a one-player online shopping experience that replaces the busy and maximalist interface design of Amazon.com with an alternative, 3D landscape. Sparse hill-like ground and platforms are generated by QR codes which in turn are generated by the currently selected item users are shopping for on Amazon's website. By using a virtual viewfinder, the user can spy other items related to the current stage. The user must time their movements to teleport towards the desired item without falling off the platforms. After reaching the item, a new stage is generated and users can explore new related items, creating an endless landscape of shopping and exploration.

**Sandswitch (Hsin-Yu Lin, Lillian Kris, Sofia Staab-Gulbenkian)**

Sandswitch is a game about food culture, sandwich building, and theft. Each player begins with a character card and matching bread describing the sandwich of a typical eater. Players roll a die and moves around the board in any direction, choosing ingredients that match their character's description. However, they must be prepared to defend their choices! Additionally, powerups let players snatch whole sandwiches away from one another, adding a competitive element to a friendly lunch. Is Jhe best sandwich the one that sticks to stereotypes? Or is it worth breaking stereotypes to get the best sandwich for you, regardless of winning the game?

Pin Pon (Theo Triantafyllidis)

http://games.ucla.edu/game/pin-pon/
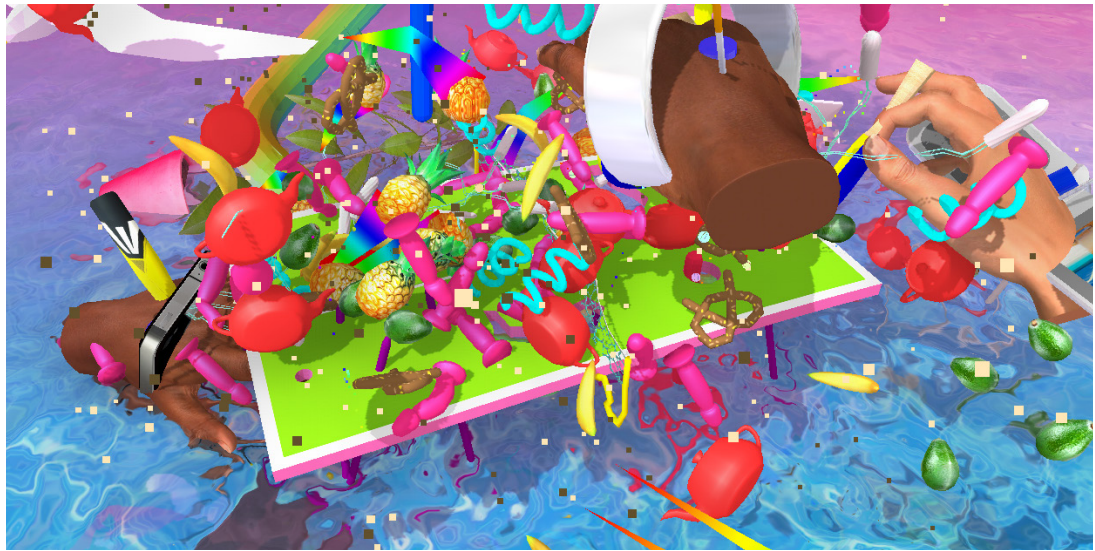
Pin Pon is a two-player game about online dating. Using a Leap Motion controller, players try to bounce stuff off their part of the table and onto their opponents' side. Graphics are generated through a combination of the players' hand movements and a database of pineapples, phones, and other surprises. And there's no need to worry about skill-level parity between players—*Pin Pon* it's always a match!

Sneaky Cactus (Nick Crockett)

http://games.ucla.edu/game/sneaky-cactus/

Living cacti serve as your controller in this game of stealth and speed for two players. Players touch cacti to move their character left and right, avoiding the juice-slurping bugs that litter the landscape. While touching the cactus flesh will move your character, the spines will hurt your hands and leave you vulnerable to pursuing enemies. Created using a MaKey MaKey and eight succulents, *Sneaky Cactus'* controller is an innovative use of punishment and reward in gameplay.

***Killbox (Joseph DeLappe, Malath Abbas, Tom Demajo and Albert Elwin)***

"Killbox" is the military term used to describe an area on a grid map in which a mission planner designates targets to be destroyed. *Killbox* the game is an interactive installation that critiques the nature of drone warfare, its complexities and consequences. Based on documented drone strikes in Northern Pakistan, *Killbox* is a fictionalized experience that explores the use of technology to transform and extend political and military power, and the abstraction of killing through virtualization.

Vietnam Romance—Live! (Eddo Stern, Nick Crockett, Steven Amrhein, Jessica Hutchins, Lucas Near-Verbrugge)
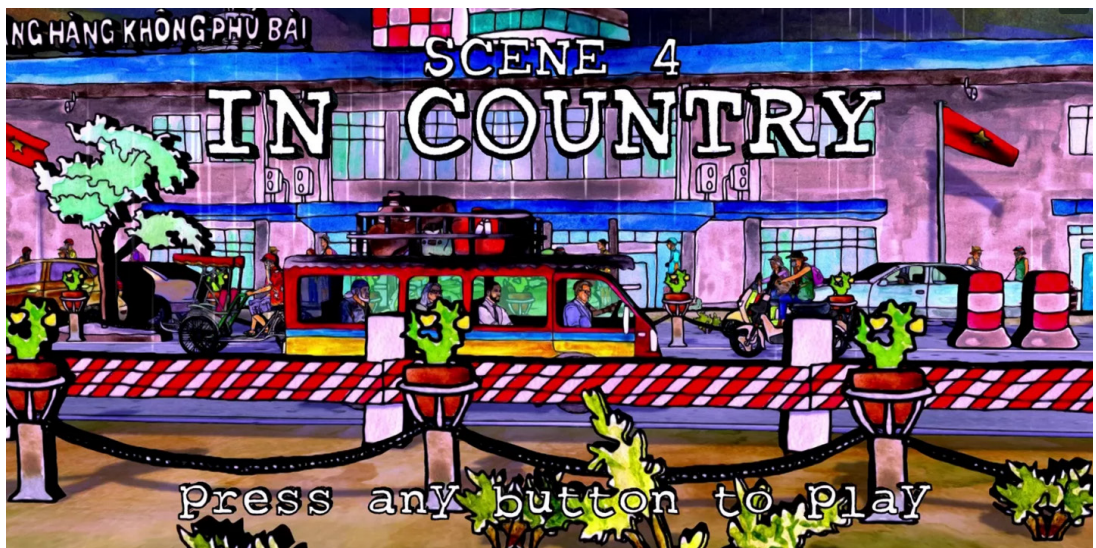
Vietnam Romance is a computer game performance and installation, a tour of nostalgia for romantics and Deathmatch veterans pitting tourists vs. adventurers, history vs. its fantasies, and games vs. cinema. The live performance, featuring Lucas Near-Verbrugghe as Viet Rom Agent, involves live improv, multiplayer gameplay, music, collectable cards, multiscreen projection mapping and stage sets. Film critic Ed Halter described a film version of the project as exploring "a peculiarly American memory-trip, one in which the legacy of a gruesome war has become indistinguishable from pleasurable, if mythic-tragic, entertainments."

Penis Paint (Jeremy Bailey)
http://jeremybailey.net/
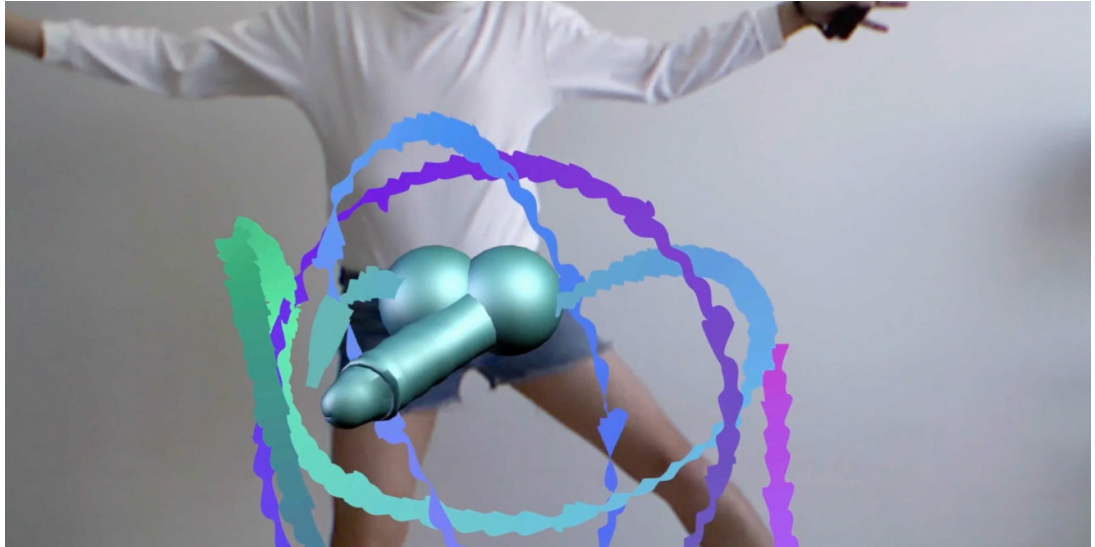
Penis Paint explores issues of gender and digital embodiment by attaching a 3D, virtual reality phallus to the wearer's crotch. Moving the body can swing the VR penis about to "paint" in the virtual environment. "It's actually really difficult to do well," Bailey offers.

UCLA Arcade Backpack (UCLA Game Lab)
http://games.ucla.edu/game/ucla-game-lab-arcade-backpack/

The ultimate, portable arcade machine designed to be worn as a backpack will feature *Space "Invader"* (Kristen Sadakane), a polemical video game that parodies the classic Space Invaders game but with a colonialist narrative.

The 2015 UCLA Game Art Festival is a project of the UCLA Game Lab, sponsored by the School of Arts and Architecture and the School of Theater, Film and Television, in conjunction with the Hammer Student Association.