Intro to Art Games

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Art Games Help You Answer:

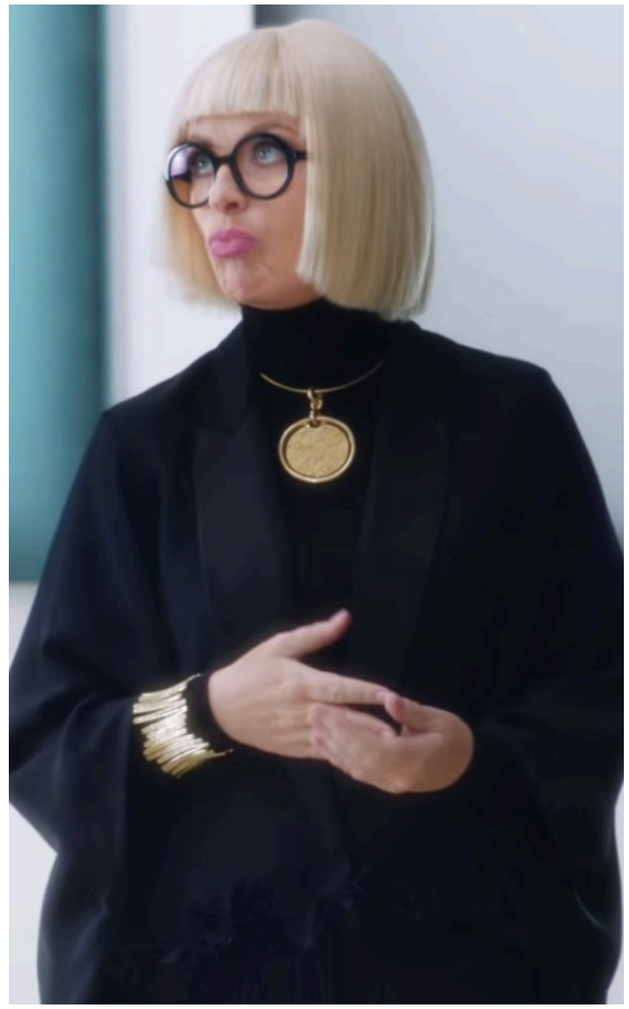
- How can I grow as a designer/programmer?
- How can I innovate rather than imitate?
- How can I advance games as a medium?

Talk Overview

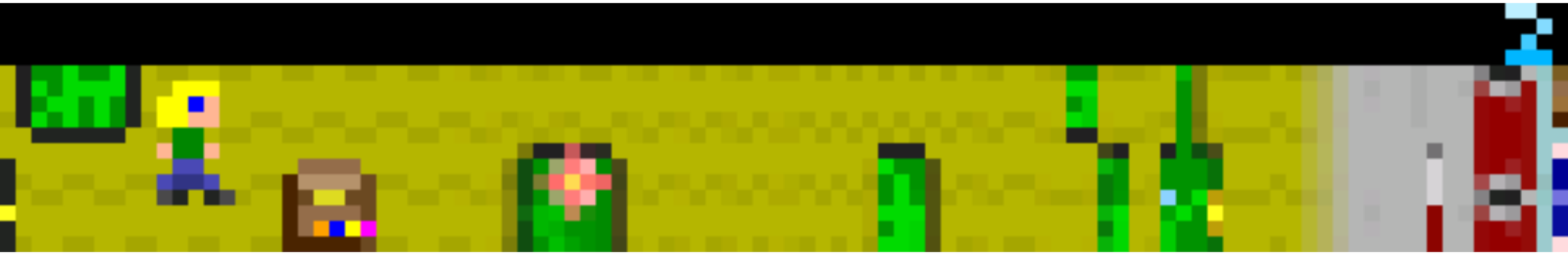
- What is Art?
- Advancing an artistic medium
- Formal vs. Political Art
- Flow and Painting
- Formal Art Games

Art through a populist lens

- pretentious
- unconvincing (in appearance)
- privileged
- club to bludgeon the masses



Art through a populist lens

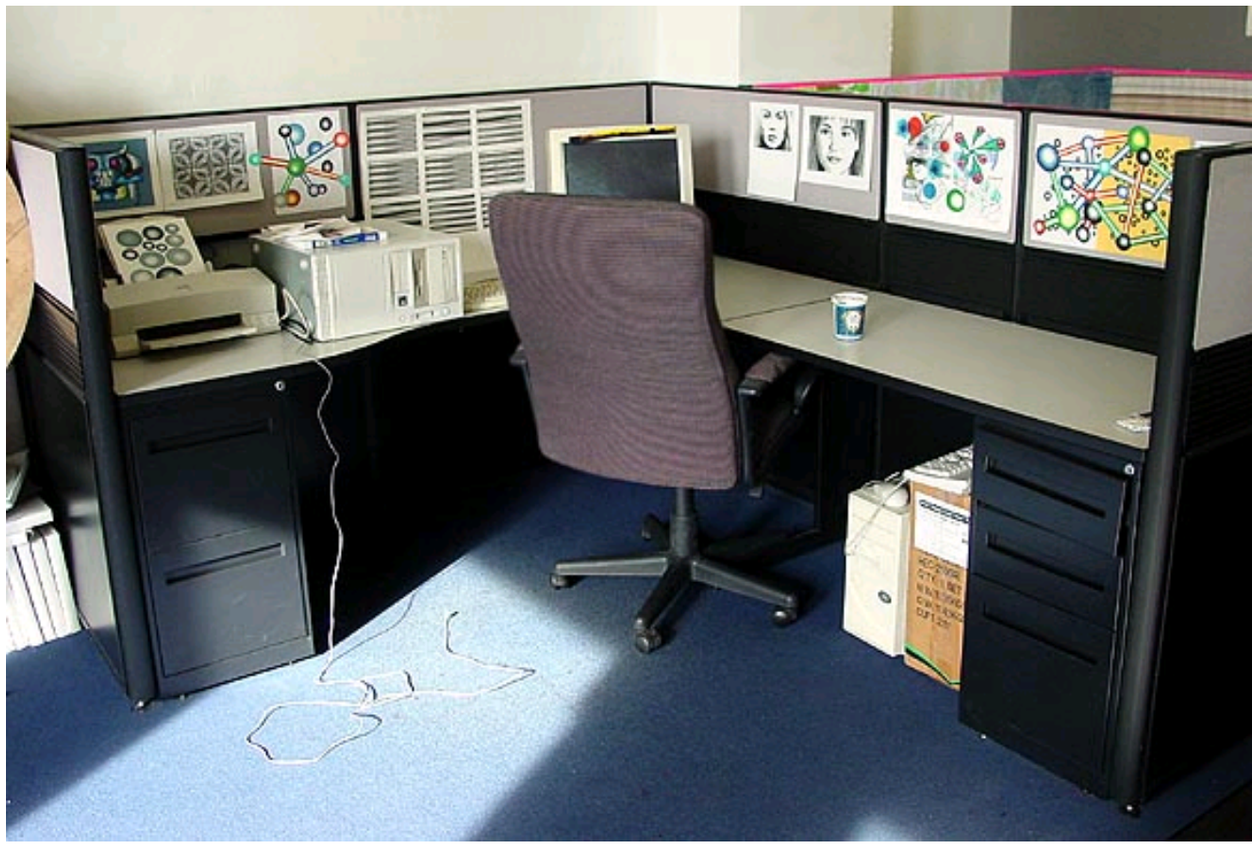


“Jason Rohrer’s game, *Passage*, by virtue of being entirely unenjoyable as an actual game, is transparently a didactic experience about the transience of life. It is self-important and condescending. It is as if a big neon sign has lit up: ‘Pay me heed, for I am art!’”

—Edge Magazine

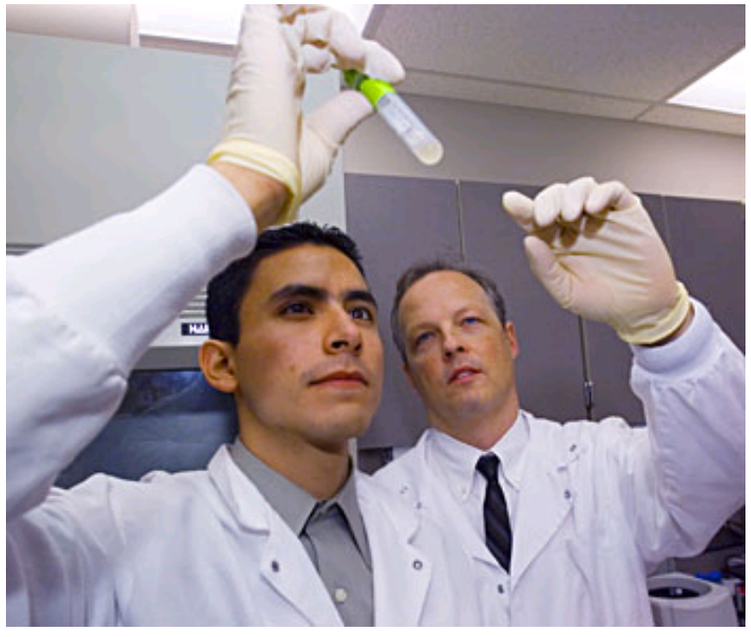
Art through a corporate/academic lens

- art reduced to design
  - game artist = “content” artist:
- model/texture/animate
- characters
- environments
- sound effects
- music

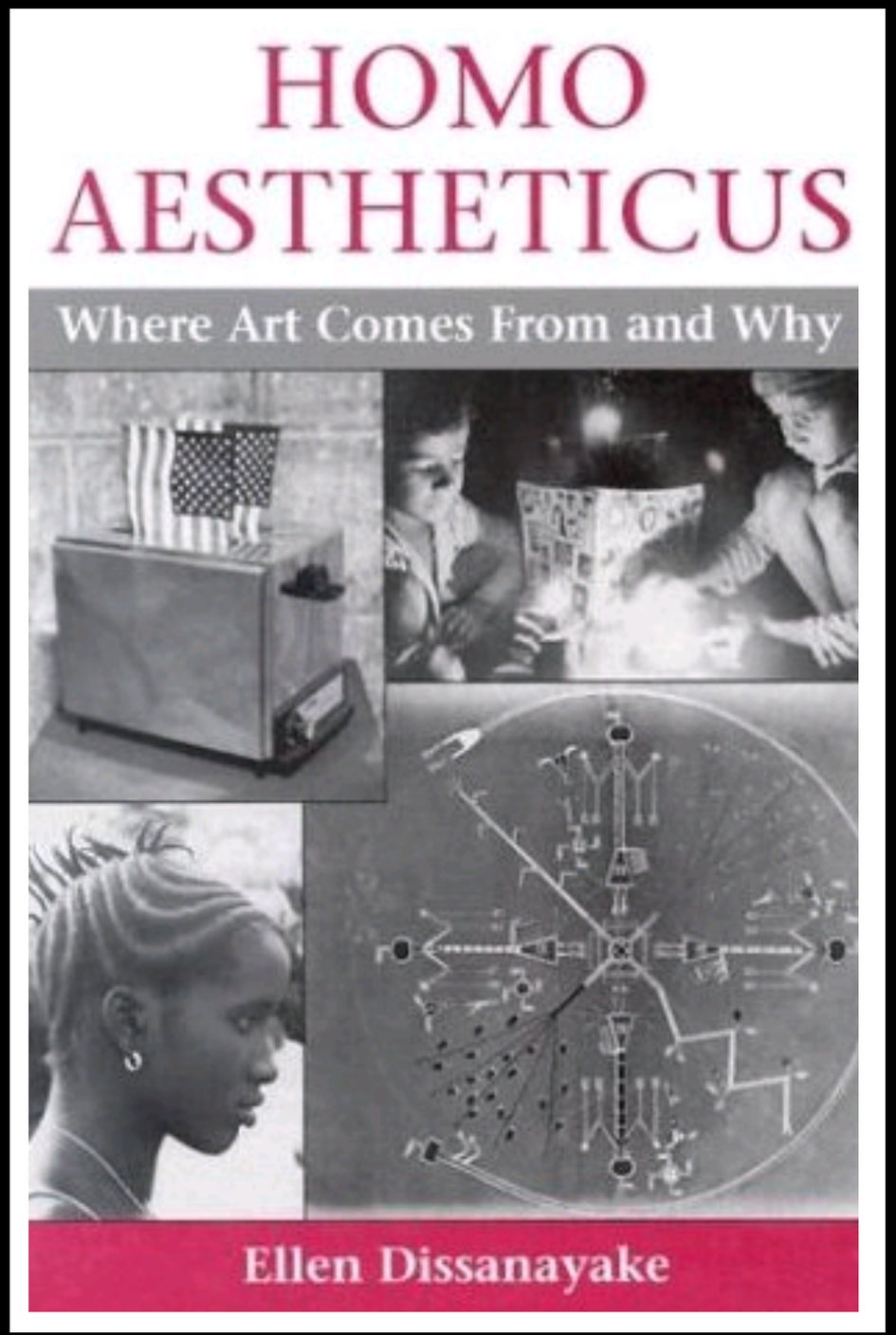


Art through a Western/scientific lens

- Art is
- separate,
- exclusive,
- specialist



Art through an anthropological lens…



"Art is as universal, normal, and obvious in human behavior as sex or parenting."

—Dissanayake

Art through an anthropological lens

Definition of art is “making special.”

Art heightens and elevates experience, making it more memorable and significant.

Art is a necessary *behavior*.

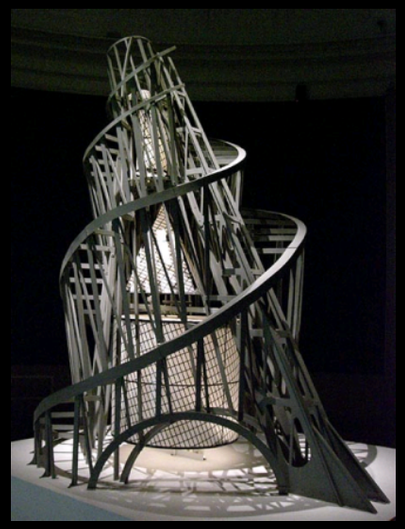
Art through an anthropological lens

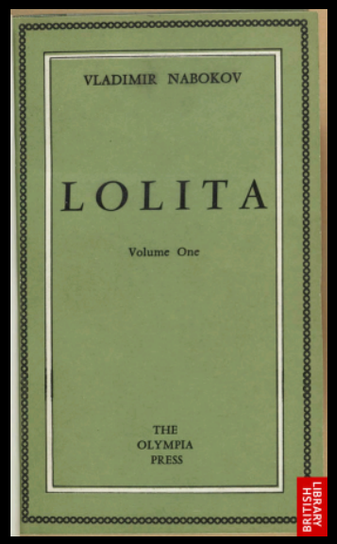
Art helps disrupt other programmed responses: fight, flight, shock

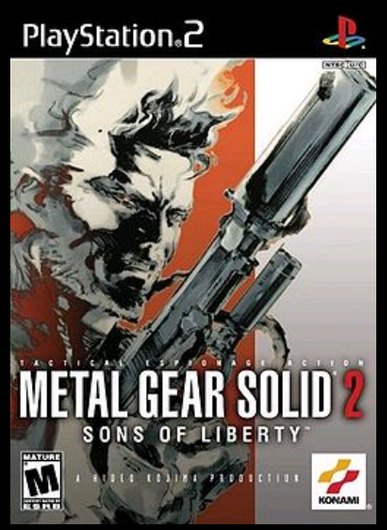
Capacity to experience a transformative state

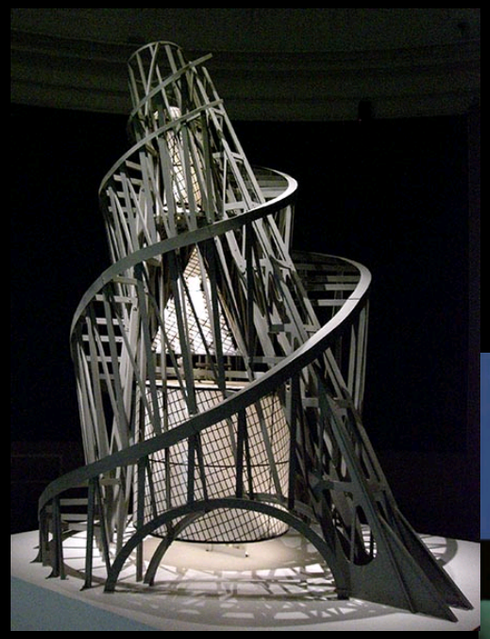
Social cohesion through social memory

Art slide from a Jason Rohrer Talk

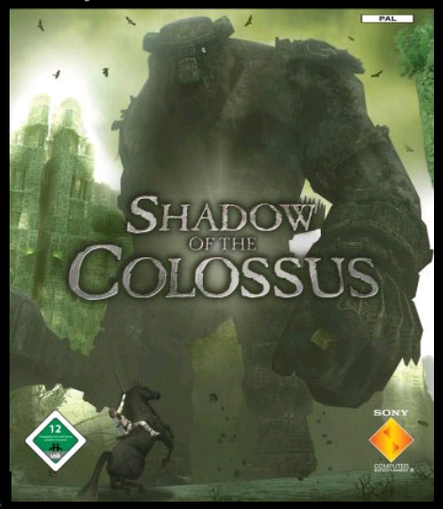


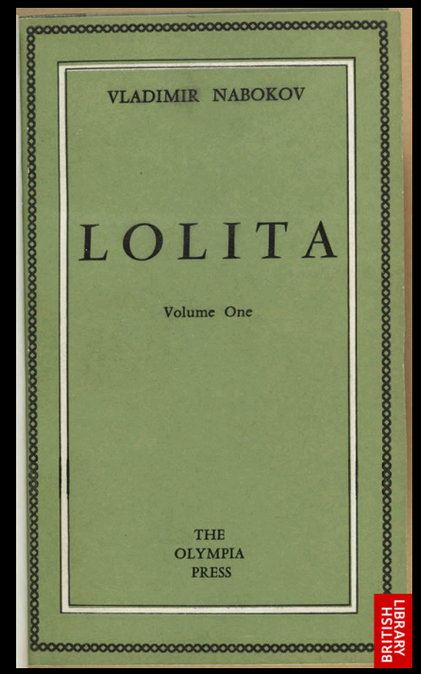






PlayStation 2





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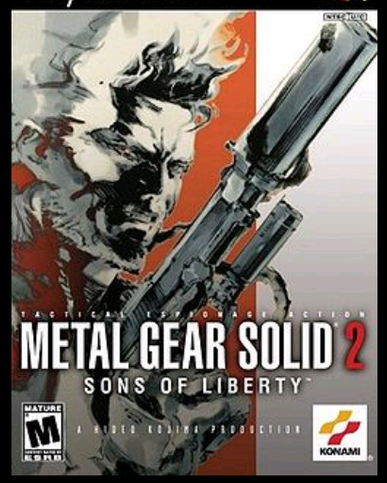
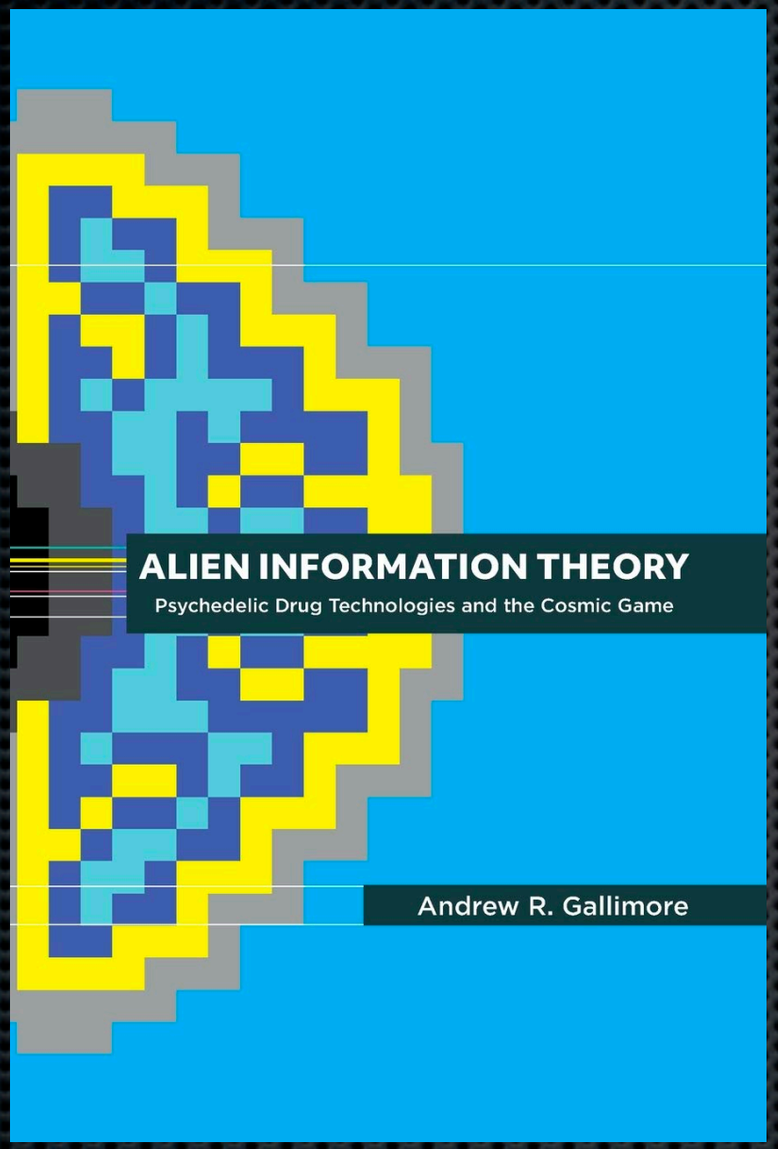


question break...

Alien Information Theory



Temple OS

TempleOS

TempleOS
Trivial Solutions
Keyboard Ctrls
Mouse Ctrls
Keyboard-Mouse
TempleOS V1.00
Public Domain
Operating System
Trivial Solutions
Tip of day
(SHIFT-ESC) to exit.
EOF

After
Egypt

Talk Overview

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- Advancing an artistic medium
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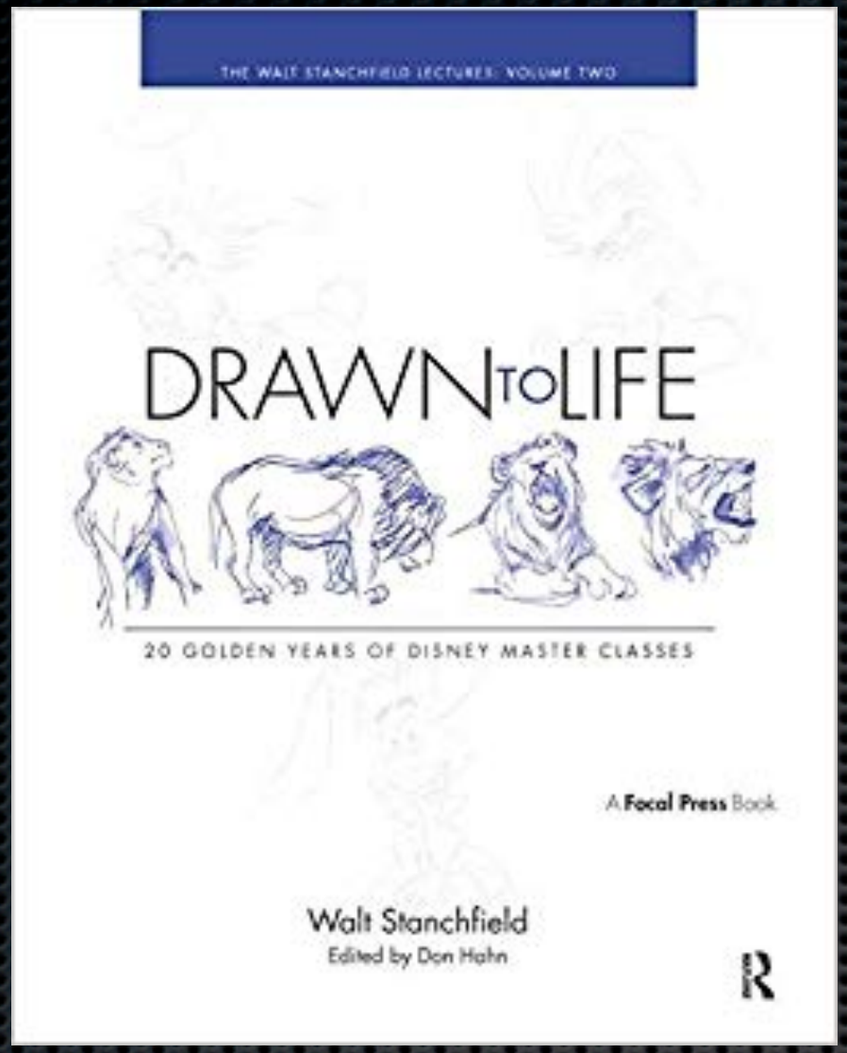
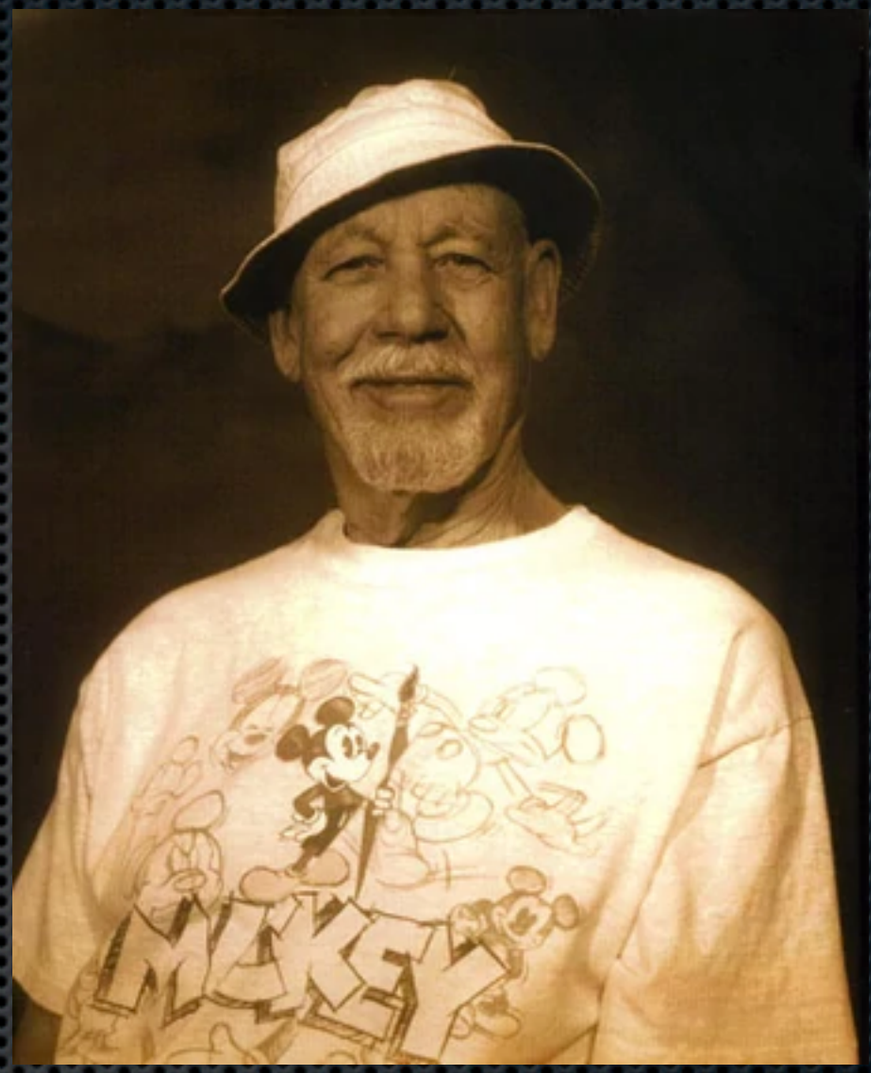
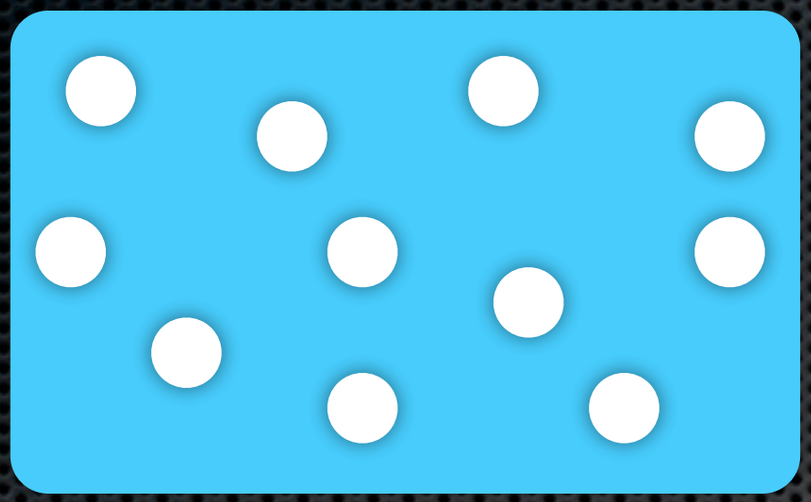




"We all have 10,000 bad drawings in us. The sooner we get them out the better."

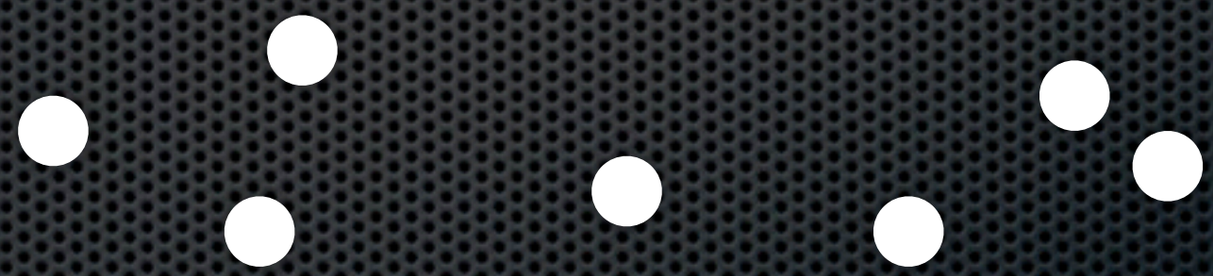
— Walt Stanchfield, Disney animator

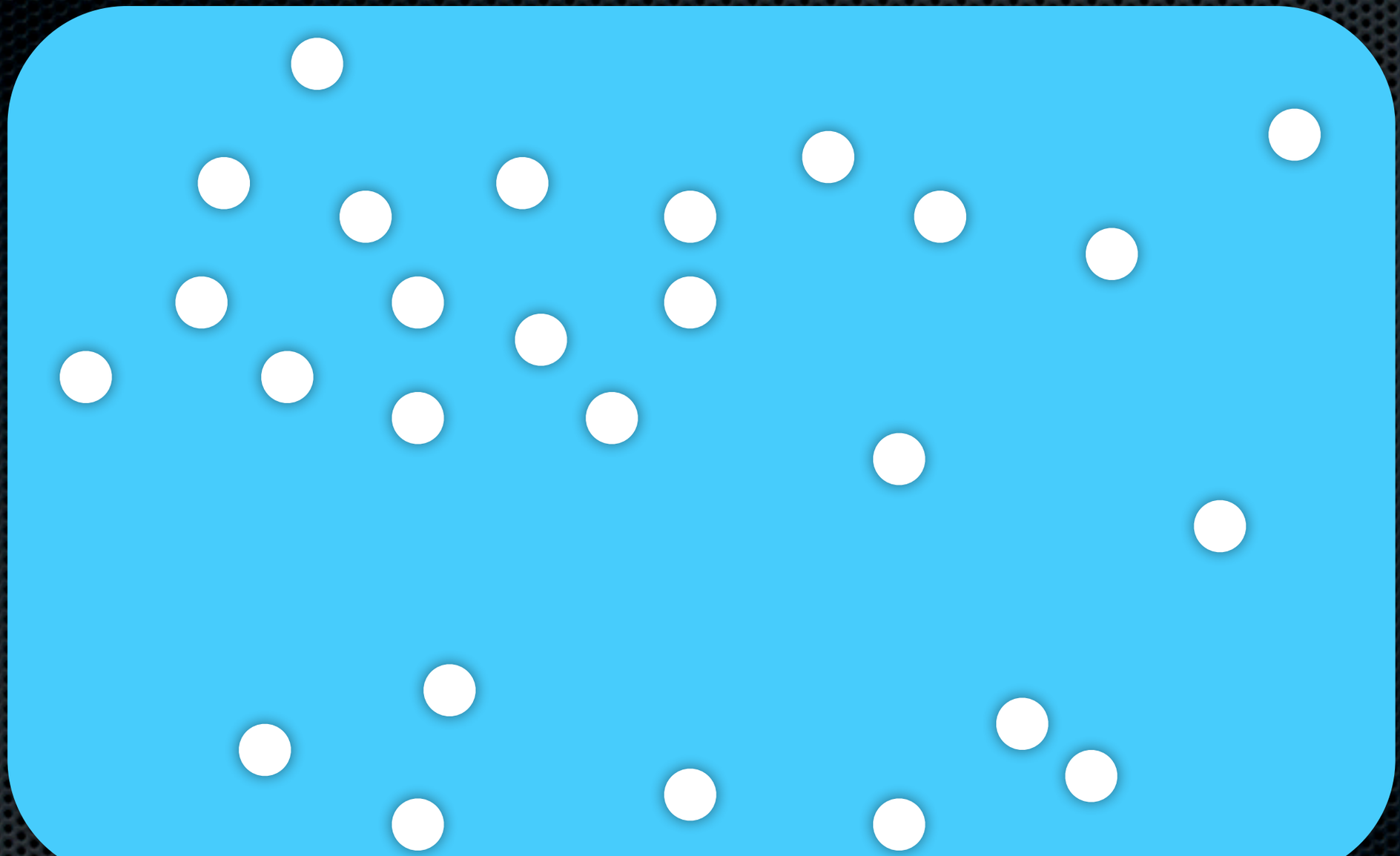
Artists and Failure



Boundary of Art Medium

Boundary of Art Medium





New Boundary of Art Medium

New Boundary of Art Medium

question break...

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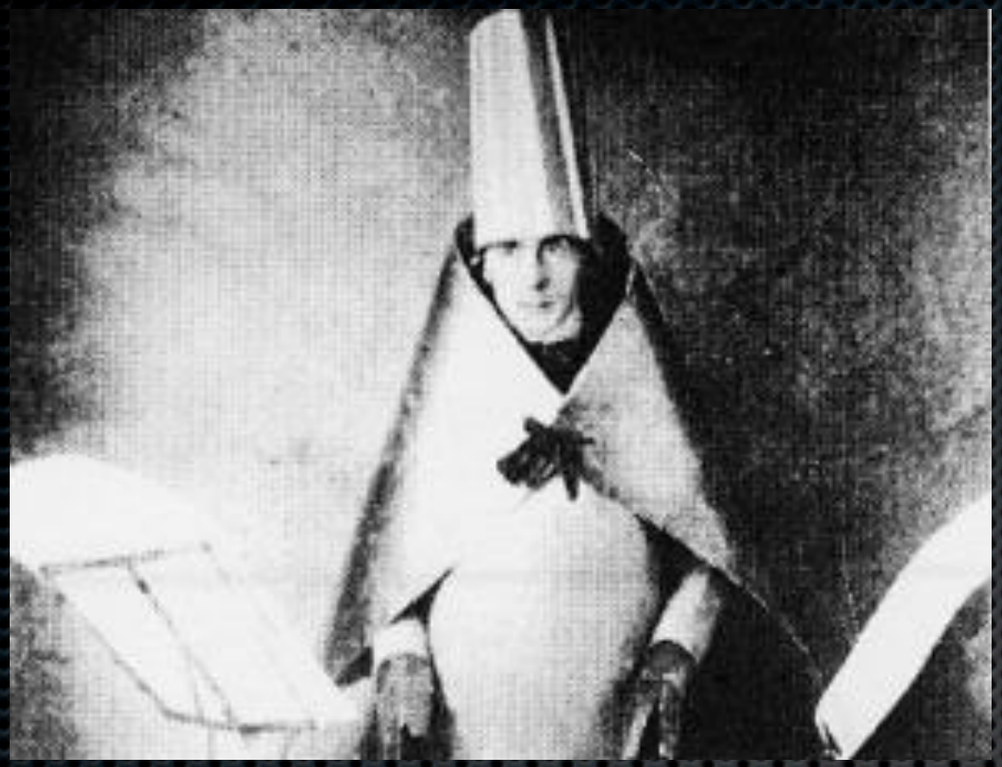
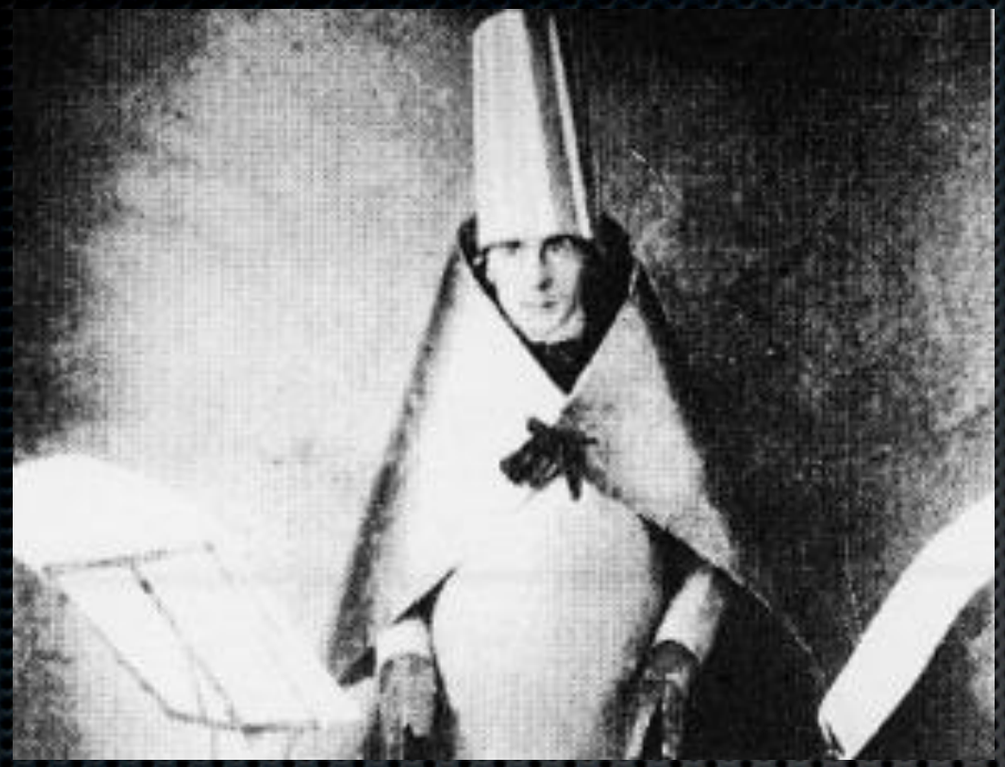
Range of (Avant-garde) Art

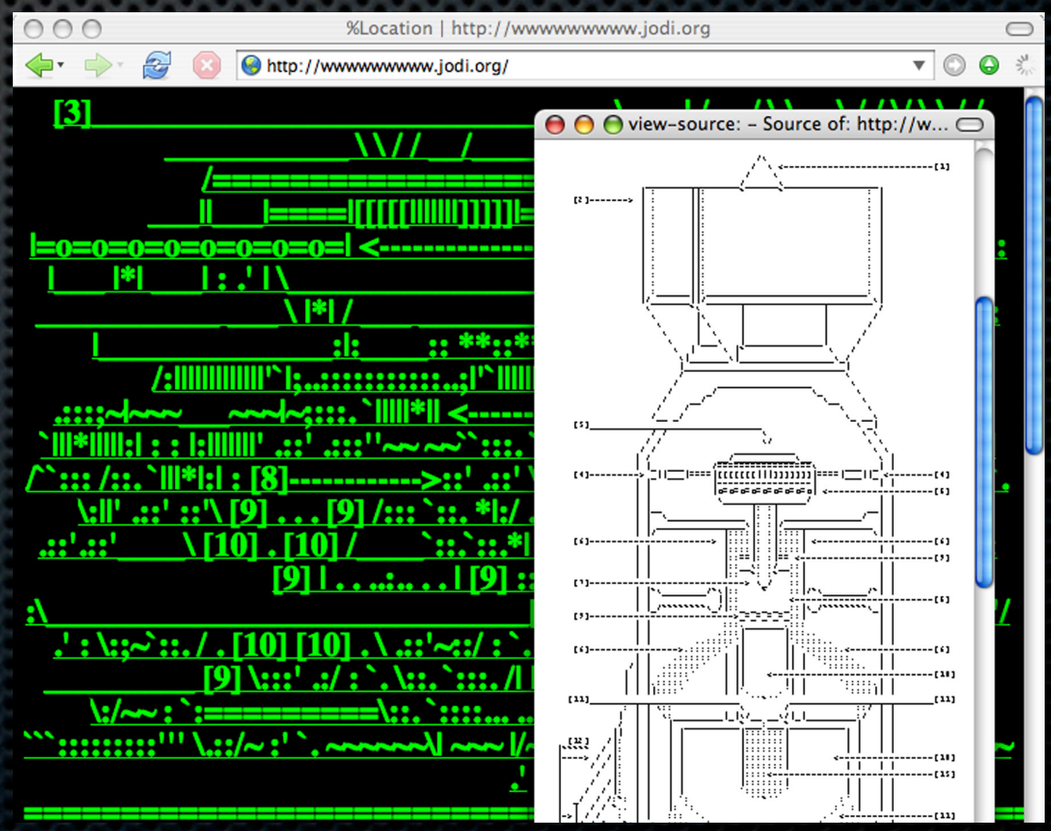
Political ⟷ Formal



Political ⟷ Formal



Political ⟷ Formal



Range of Art Games

Political ⟷ Formal

Magic Circle

Flow

today we're talking about

Magic Circle

Flow

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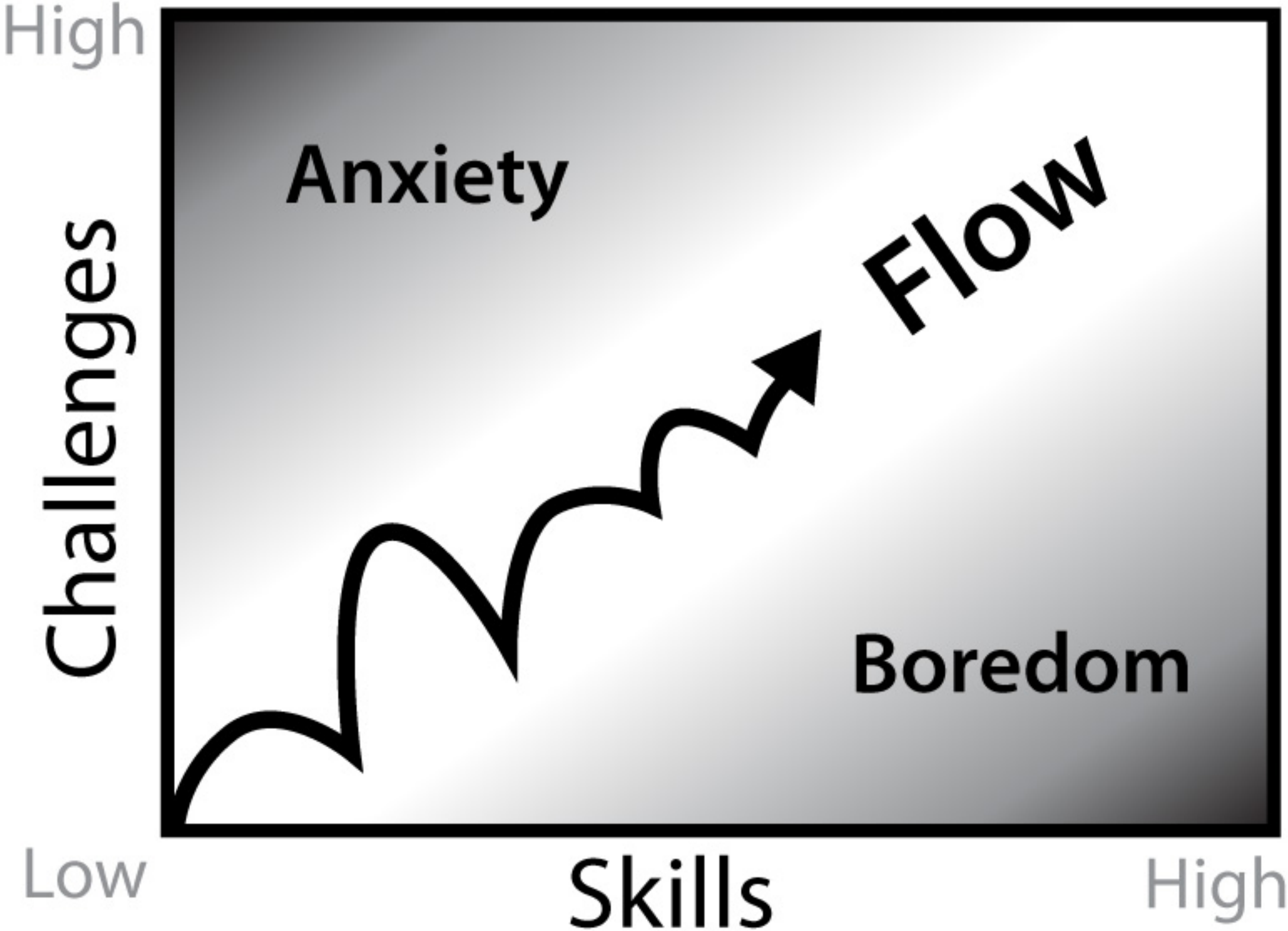
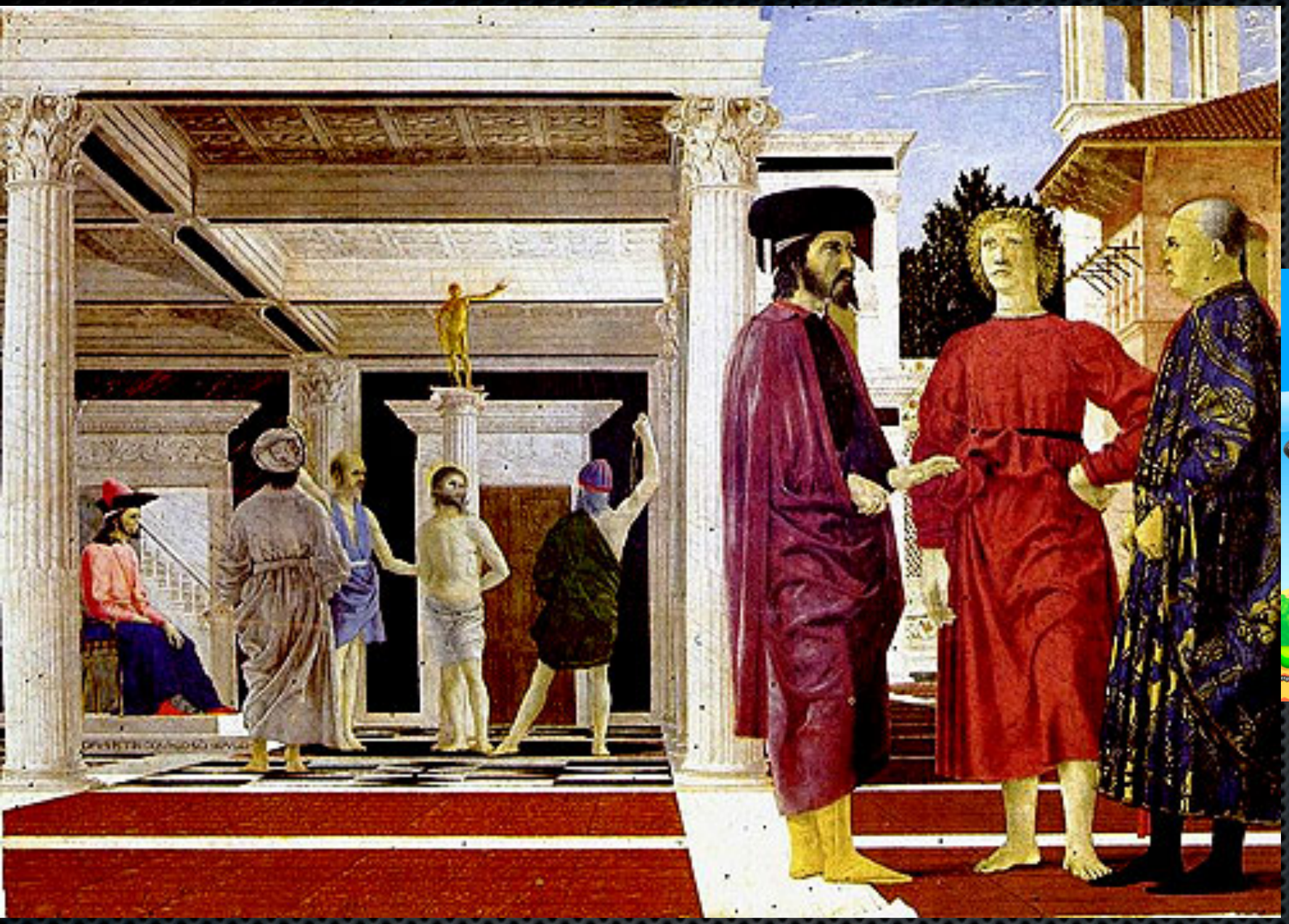
Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

-Csíkszentmihályi


High
Challenges
Anxiety
Flow
Boredom
Low
Skills
High

NINTENDO DS.
New SUPER MARIO BROS.
http://mario.nintendo.com



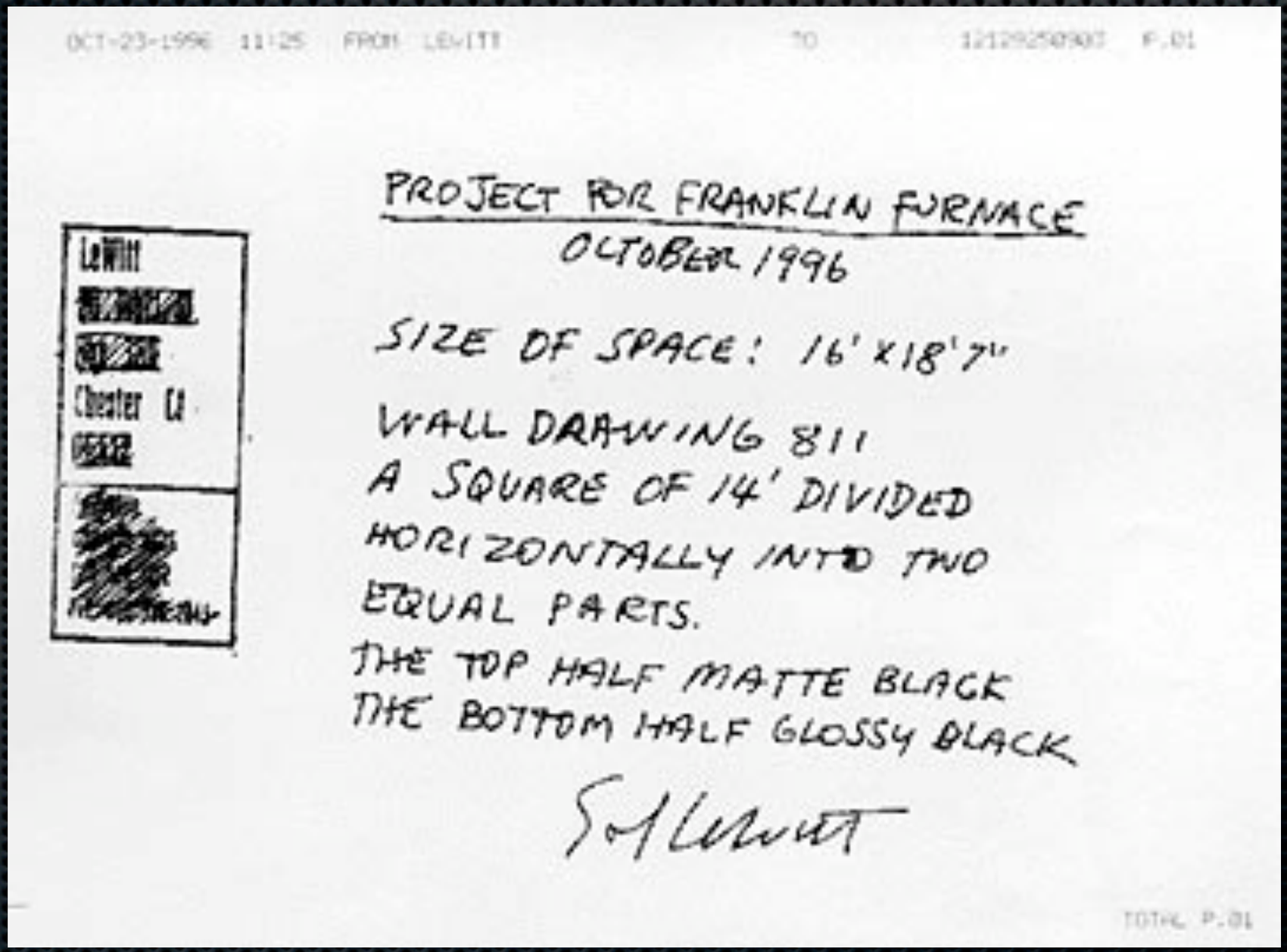
Renaissance perspective is like optimal gameplay flow

Modern painting was about the history of painting

Modern painting was about
the playing with act of looking at painting

Modern painting was about the materials of painting

Modern painting was about the procedure of painting



OCT-23-1996 11:25 FROM LEVITT TO 12129250903 P.01

LeWitt
Chester Ct

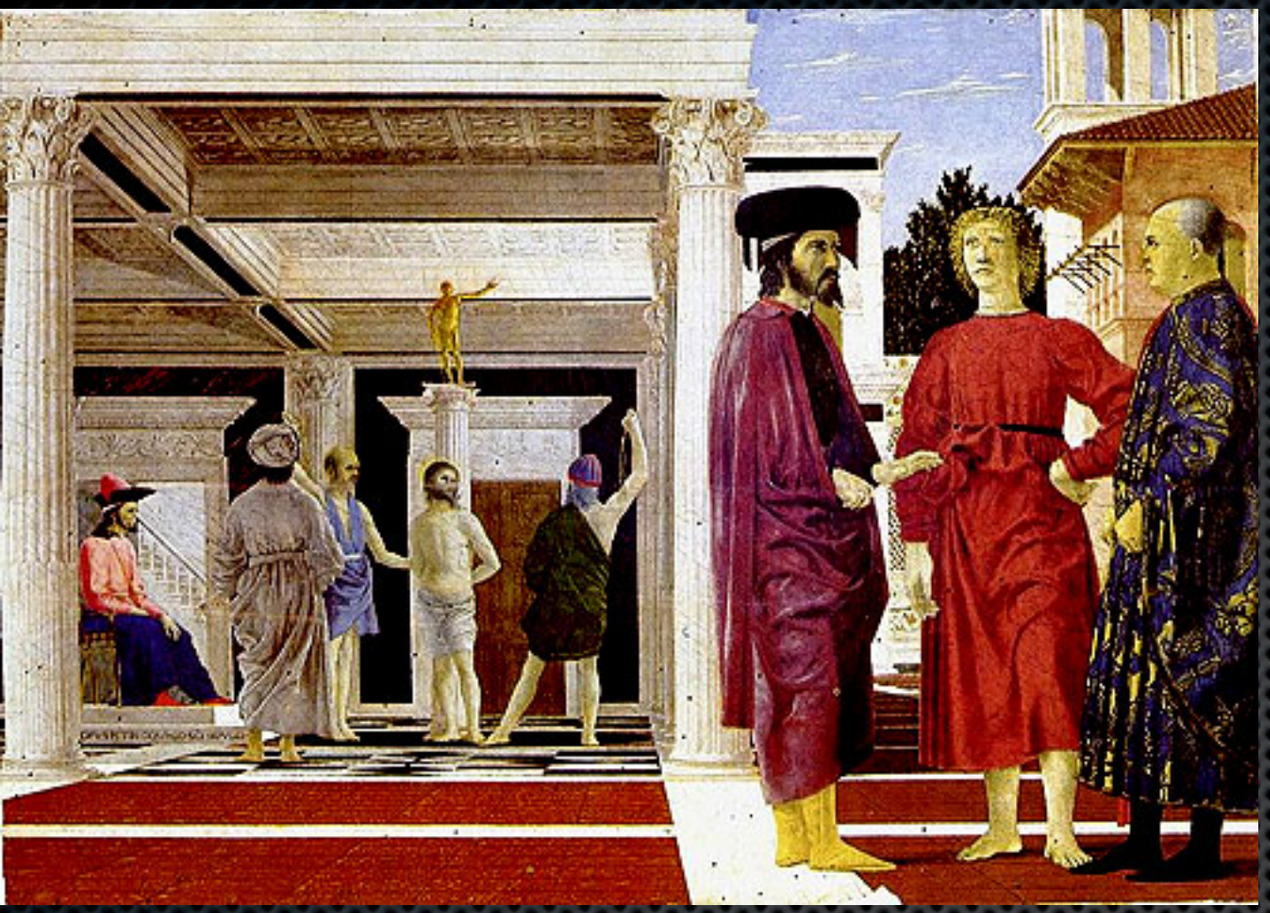
PROJECT FOR FRANKLIN FURNACE
OCTOBER 1996

SIZE OF SPACE: 16' x 18' 7"

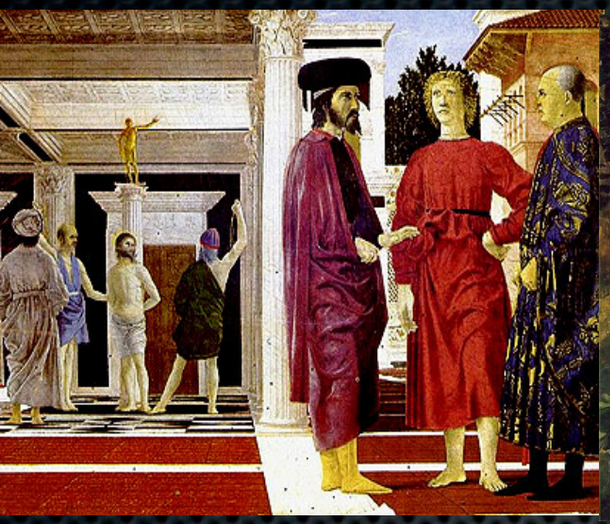
WALL DRAWING 811
A SQUARE OF 14' DIVIDED
HORIZONTALLY INTO TWO
EQUAL PARTS.
THE TOP HALF MATTE BLACK
THE BOTTOM HALF GLOSSY BLACK

Sol LeWitt

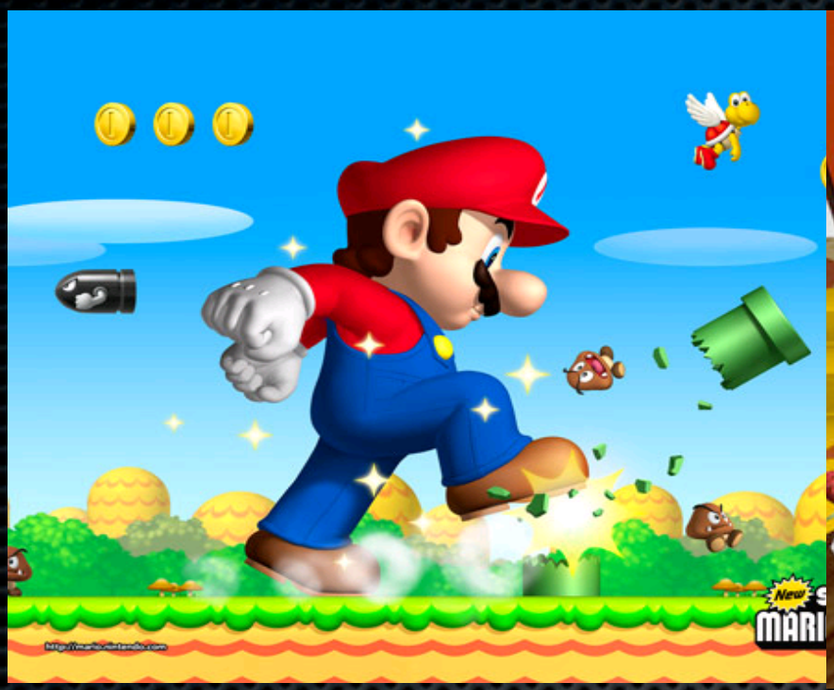
TOTAL P.01



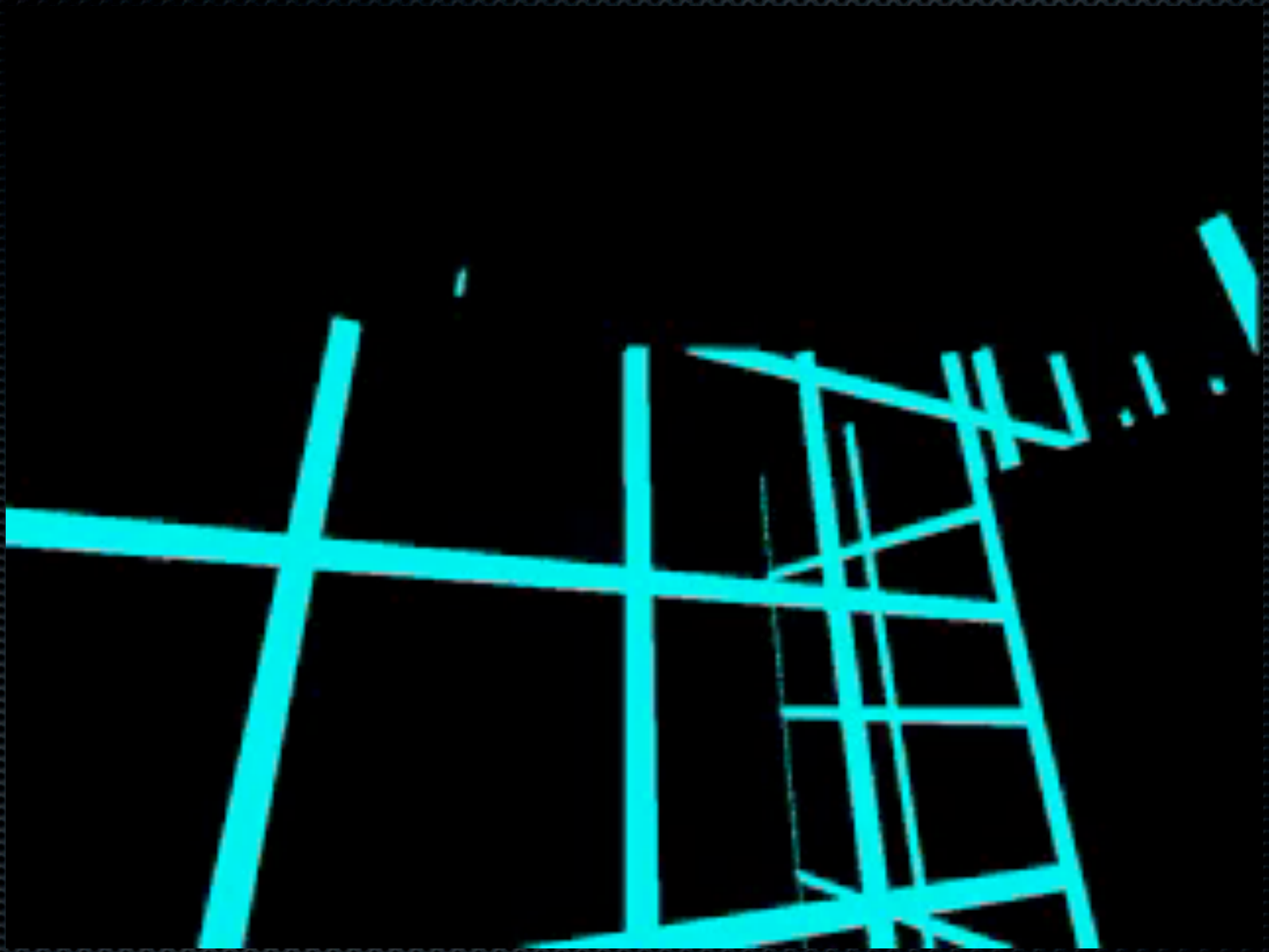
Renaissance perspective is like optimal gameplay flow

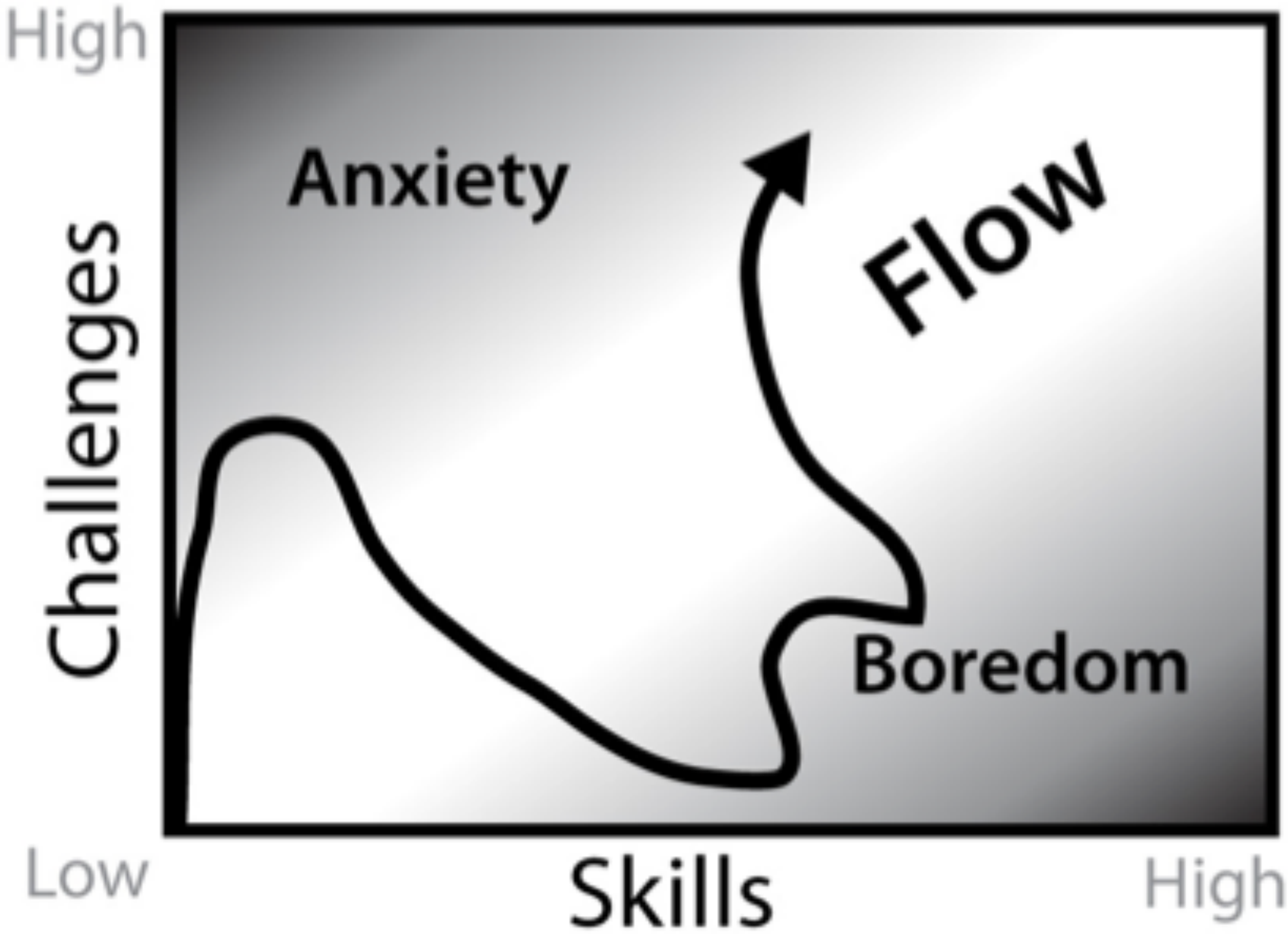


Formal painting
plays with perspectival space



Formal games play with flow




High
Challenges
Anxiety
Flow
Boredom
Low
Skills
High

…contrast with a mainstream game like Portal

Space Giraffe, Llamasoft

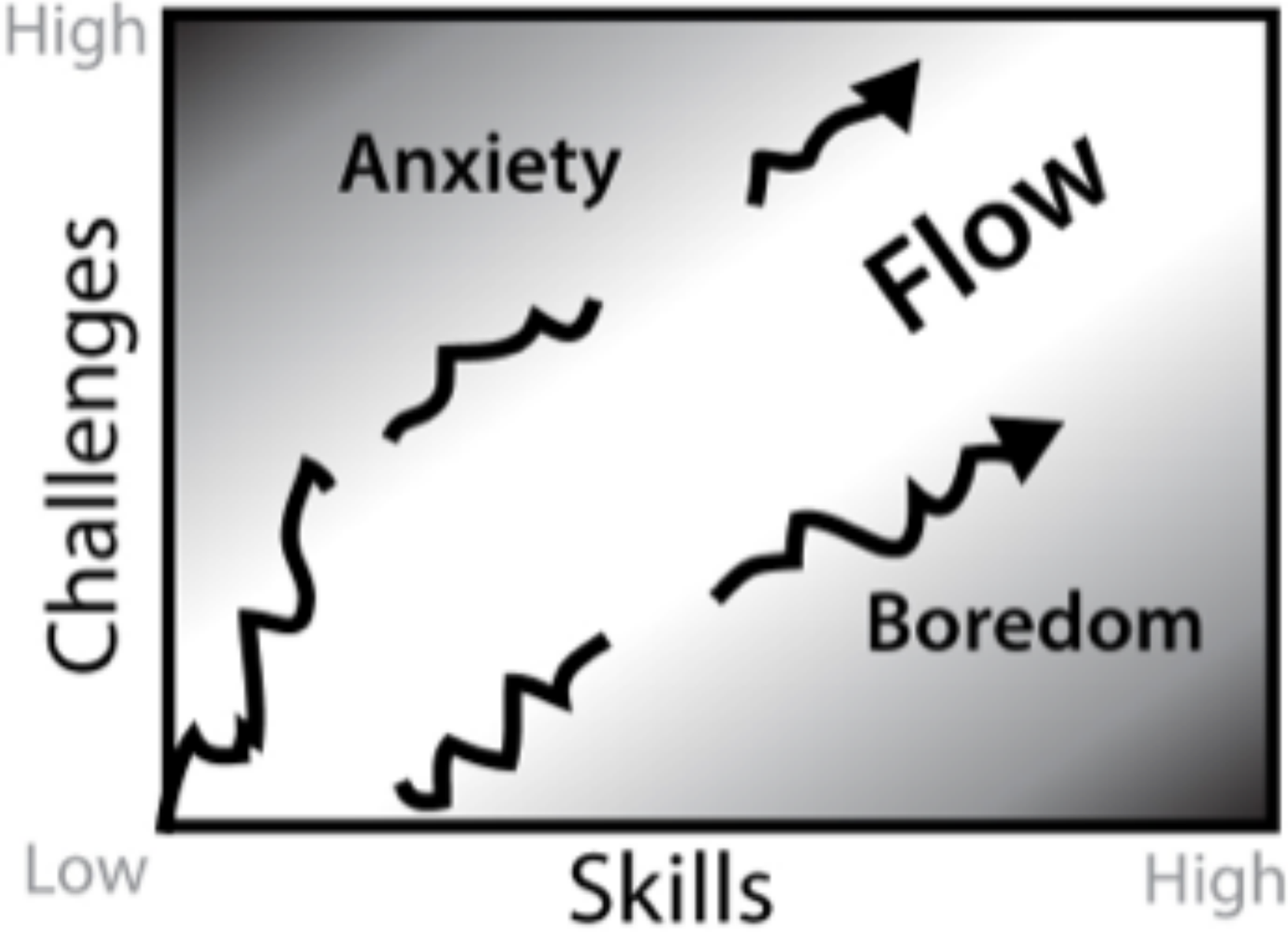
"You'll frequently die because you couldn't pick out the pulsating assassin from the warped playfield floating over the throbbing LSD nightmare that is the background, which makes this game uniquely aggravating." —*Xbox Magazine*, 2007

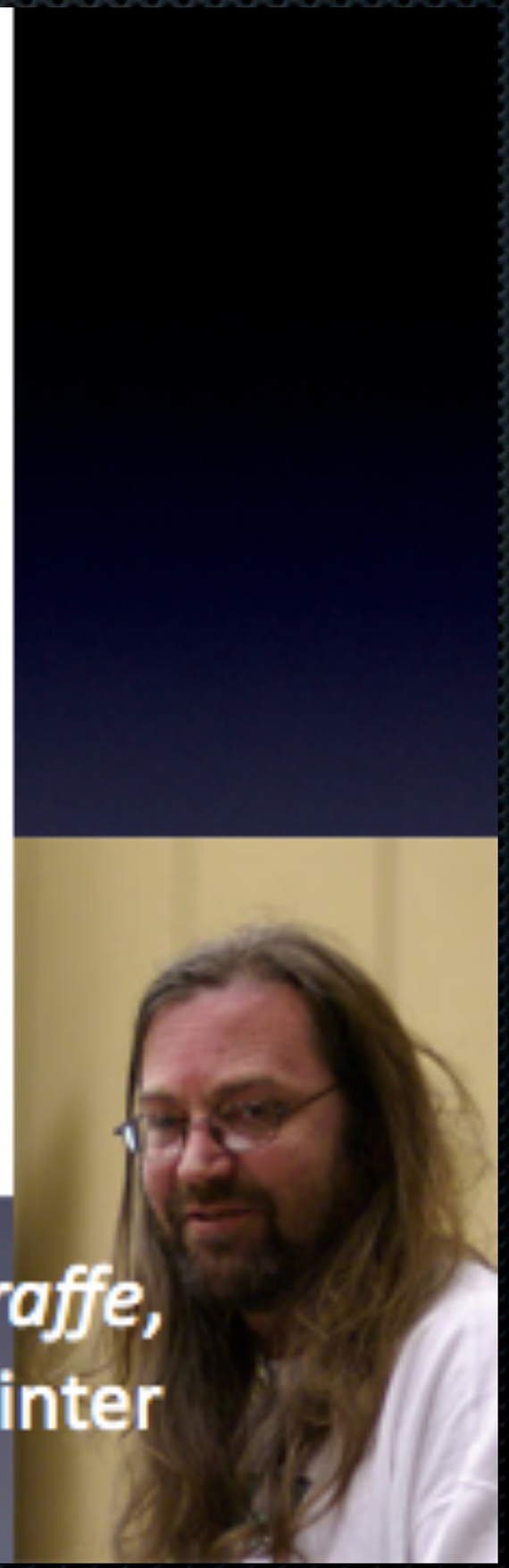
Reviews of the Game:

"…it's so atypical and requires so much effort to appreciate that very few will find it truly worthwhile."—Games Radar

"With incredibly poor visibility (apparently by design) and a thumping electronica soundtrack, it offers a generous 100 levels of damn-near-unplayable technoslop."

—Official Xbox Magazine





"You'll always make progress in *Space Giraffe*, even as you die repeatedly."—Minter

2+
3
PLASMIDS
Security Bullseye
PLASMIDS BY ENGIN INDUSTRIES
Plasmids
Electro Bolt

Formal games explore this space:

question break...

Talk Overview

- What is Art?
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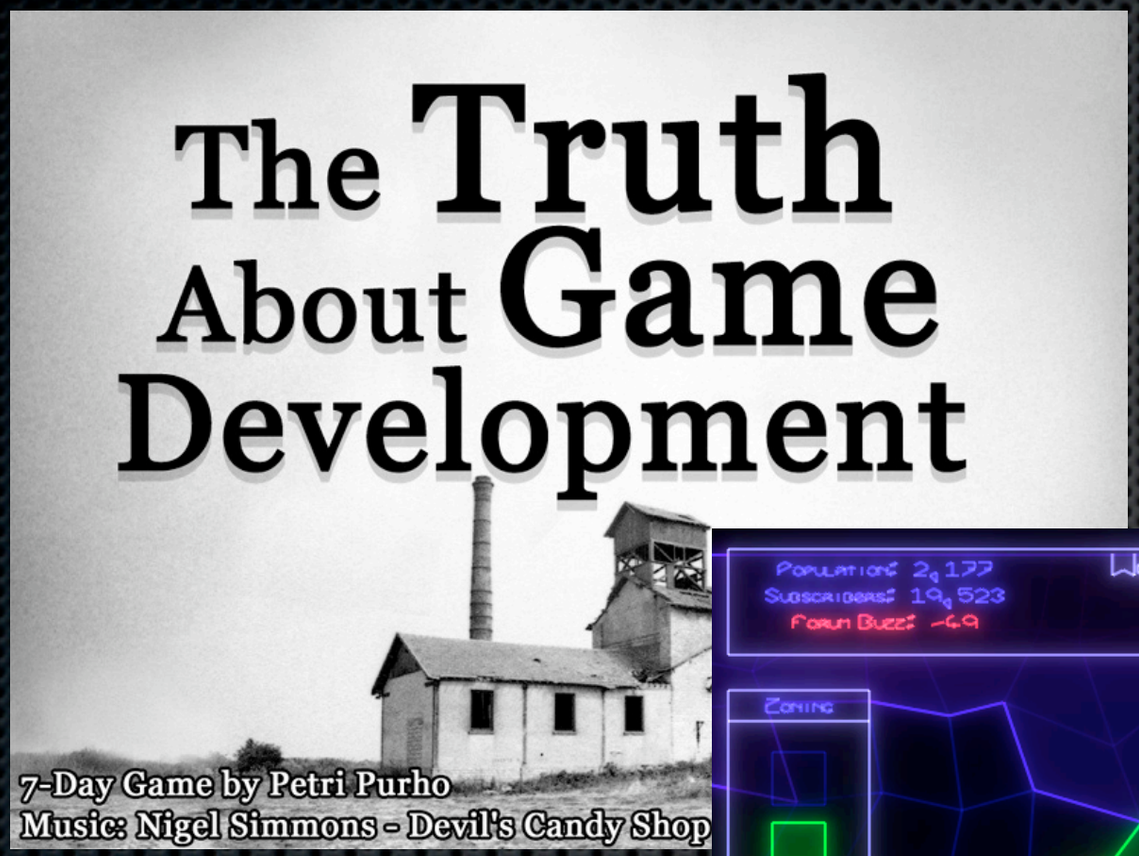
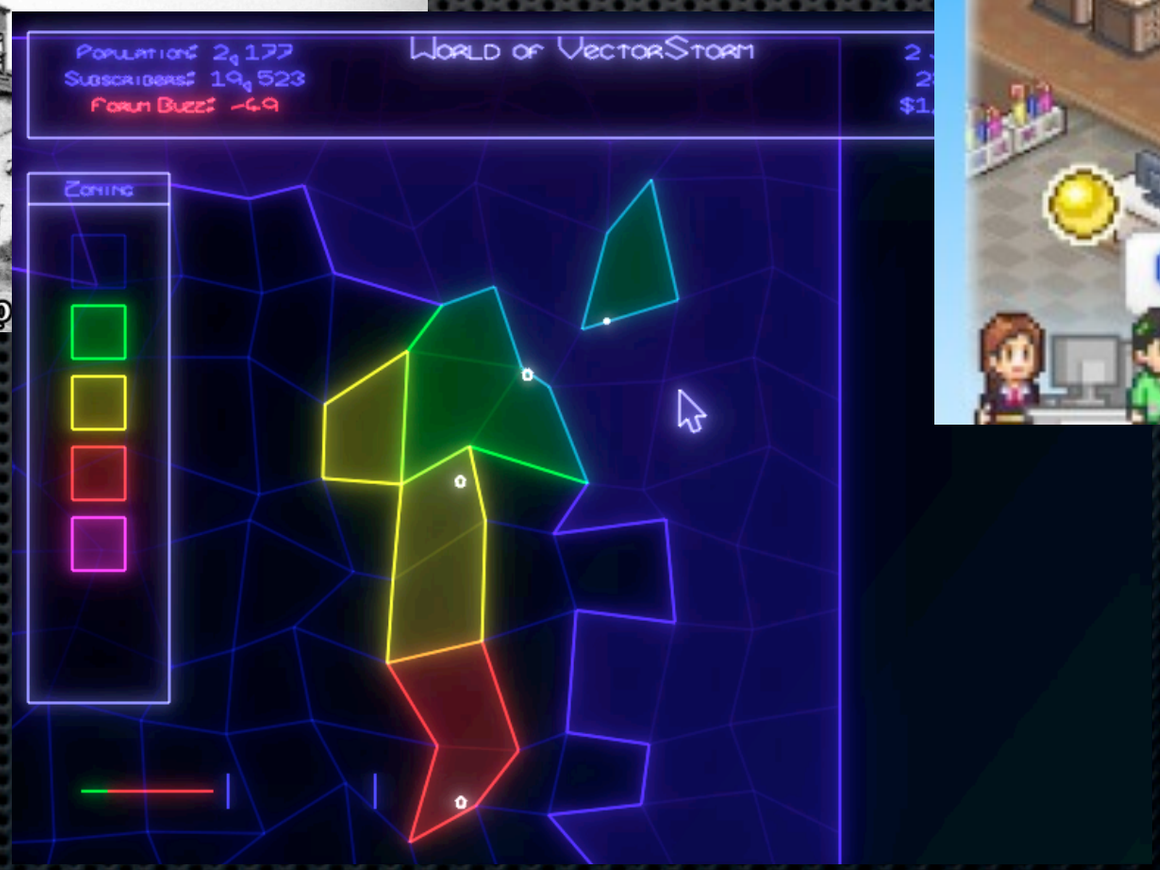
Formal games can be about making & sharing games

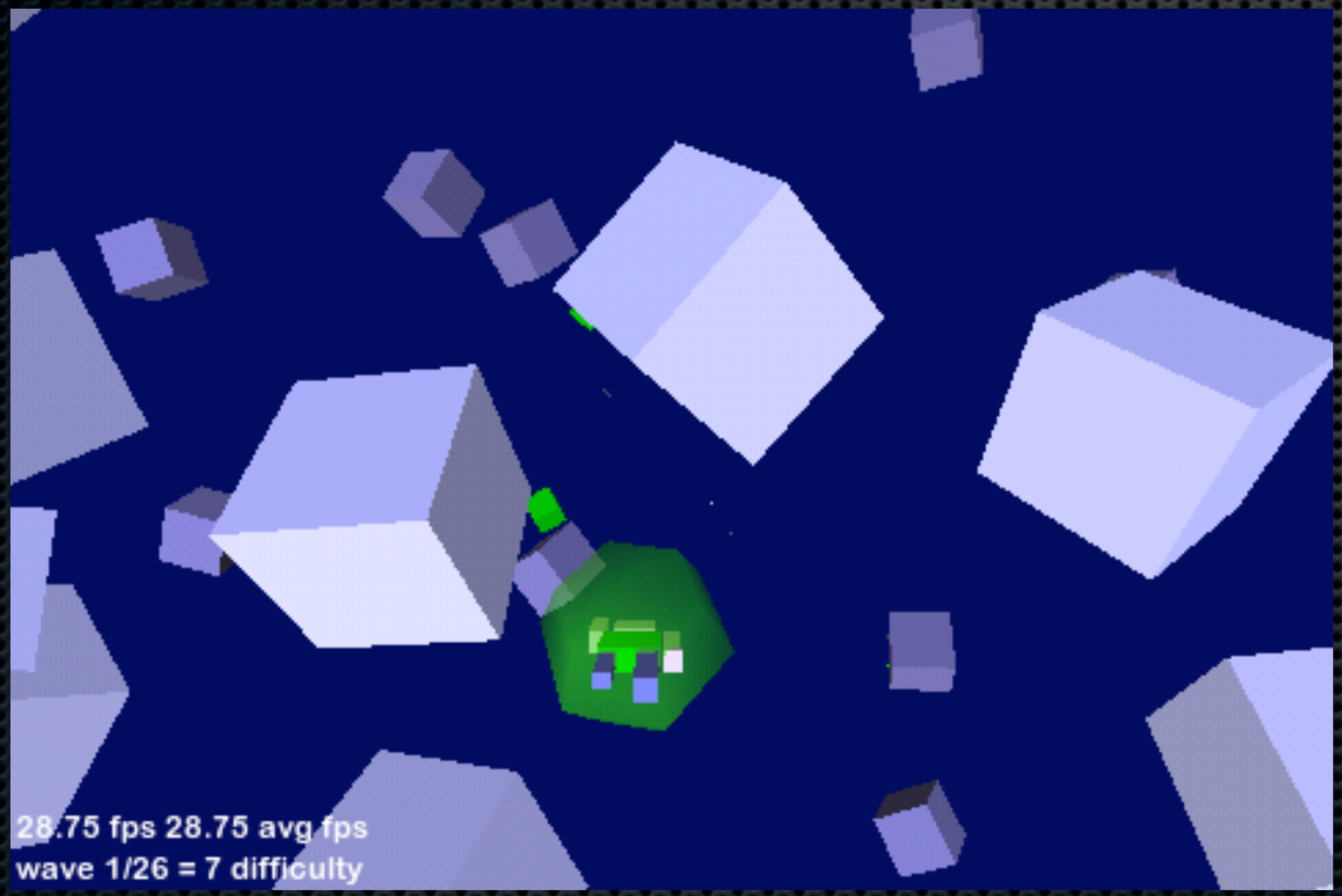
Formal games about the history of games

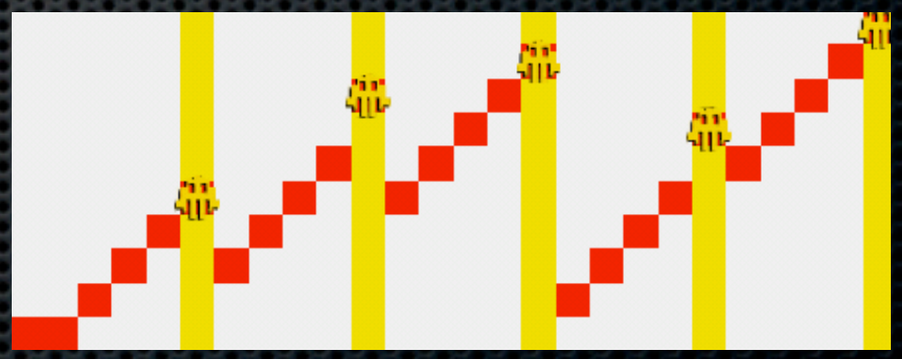
Formal games about game development

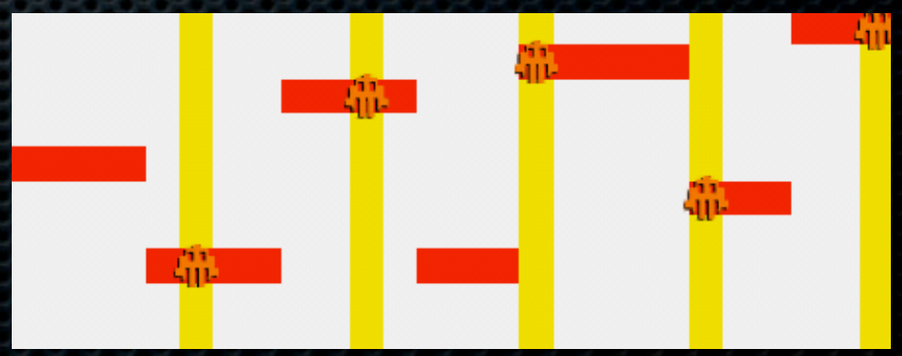




Formal games about game design





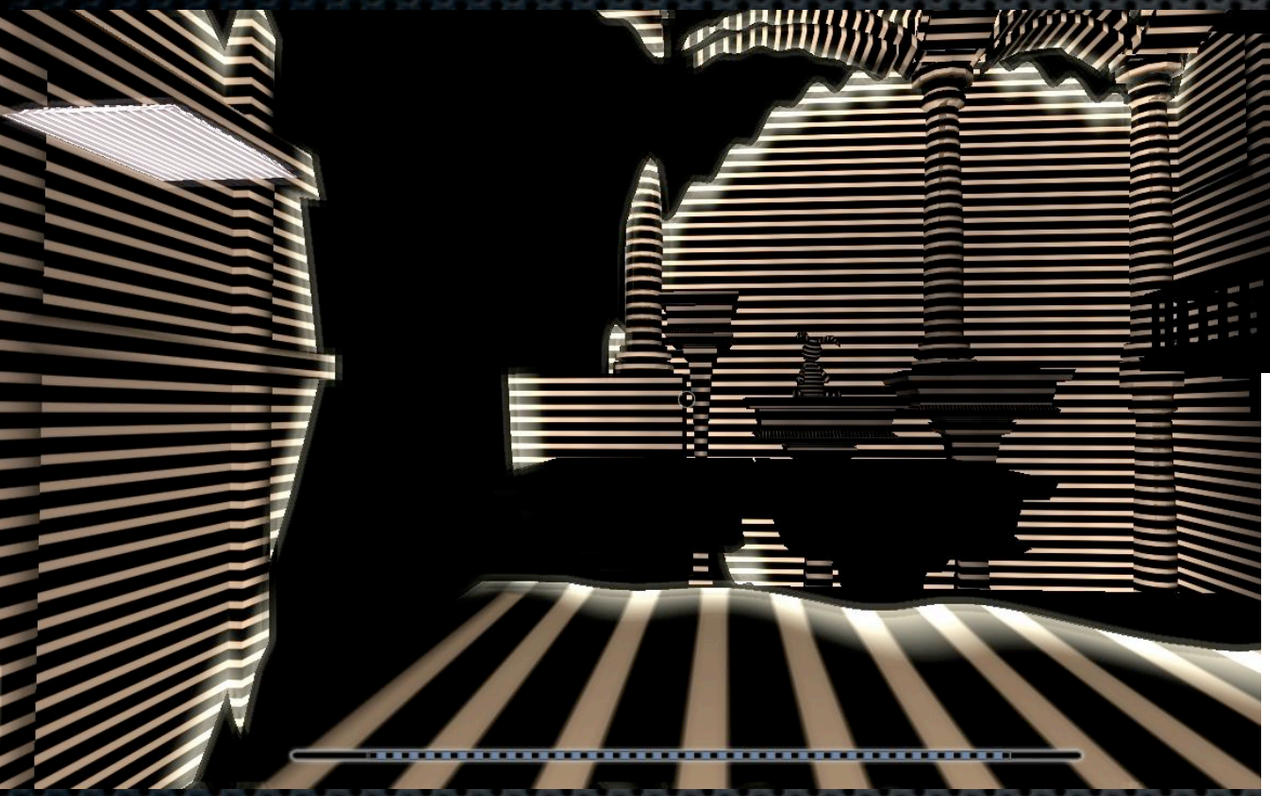


Arcadia is about game genres & mechanics

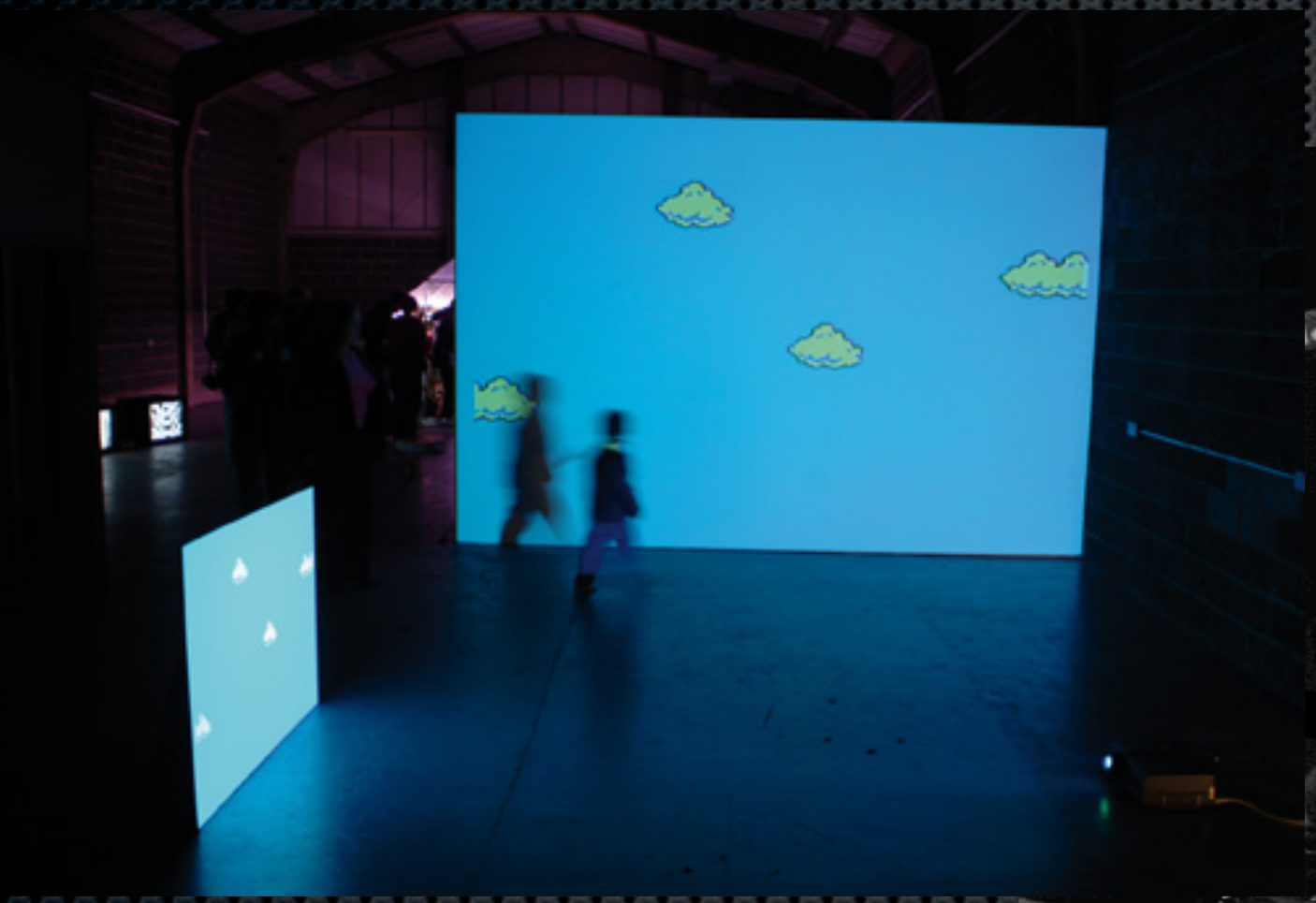
Sleep is Death is about improvisational game design

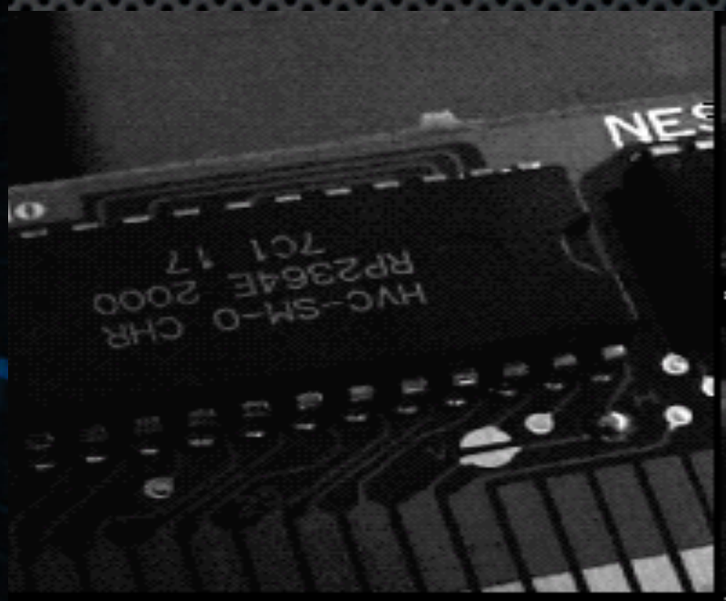
PlayPen is about wiki-like, collaborative game design

Formal games about navigating and rendering 3D space



Super Mario Clouds is about game nostalgia & hardware





These games gamify games.
That is why they are *formal*.
They primarily play with the *form* of the medium.

Formal games establish and expand the artistic domain games.

Questions?

if there's time, review
more formal games listed with
Resources on class website:

http://artgamedev.com/resources.html