



# Games as Art and Entertainment: Towards More Inclusive Cultures

Southwest Popular / American Culture Association  
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# Overview of Game Communities

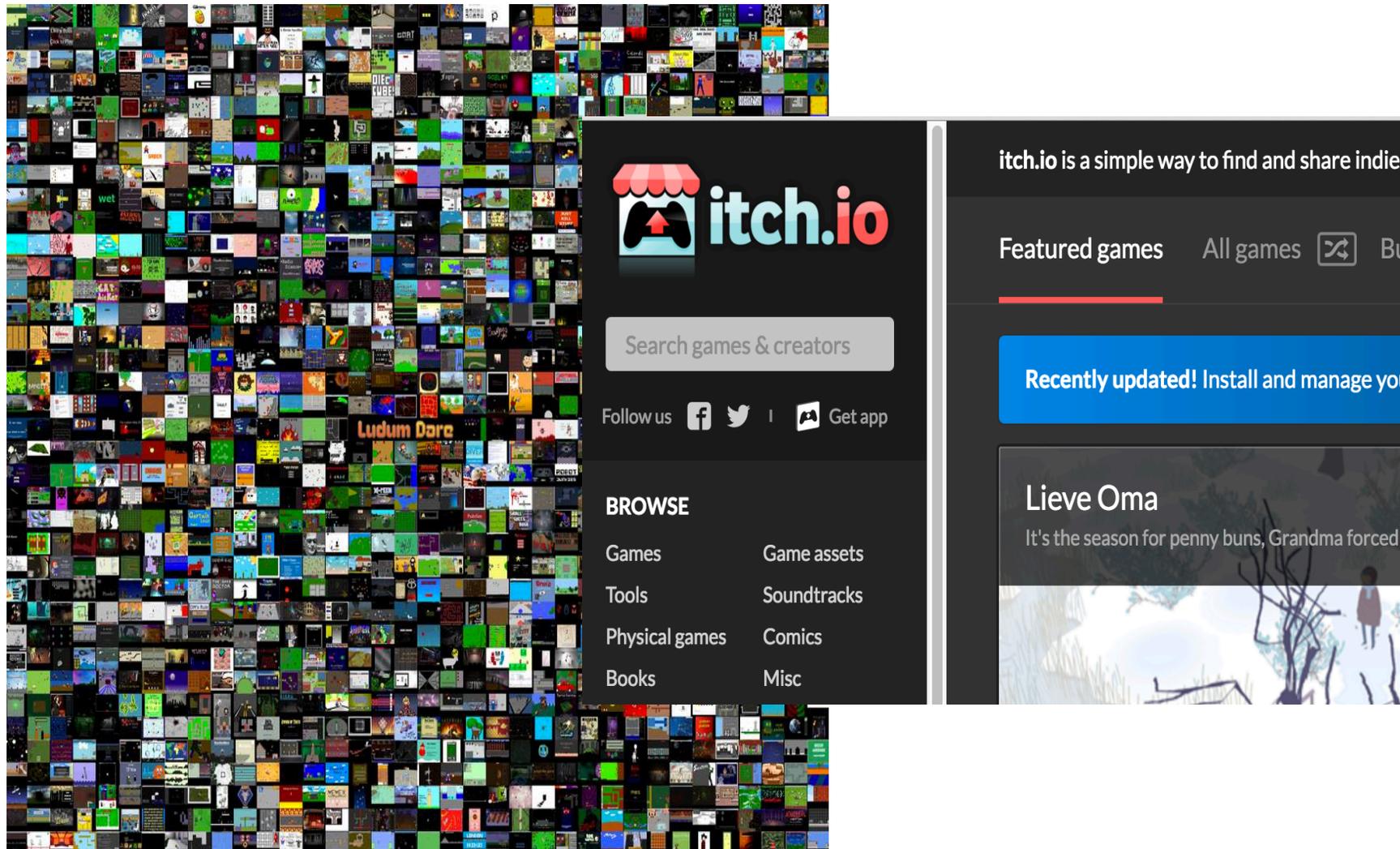
- Folk
- Indie
- Mainstream
- [Populist] High Art
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# Folk Community



# Folk Community

- Companies already see players as content creators:

*Ingress and Pokemon Go*

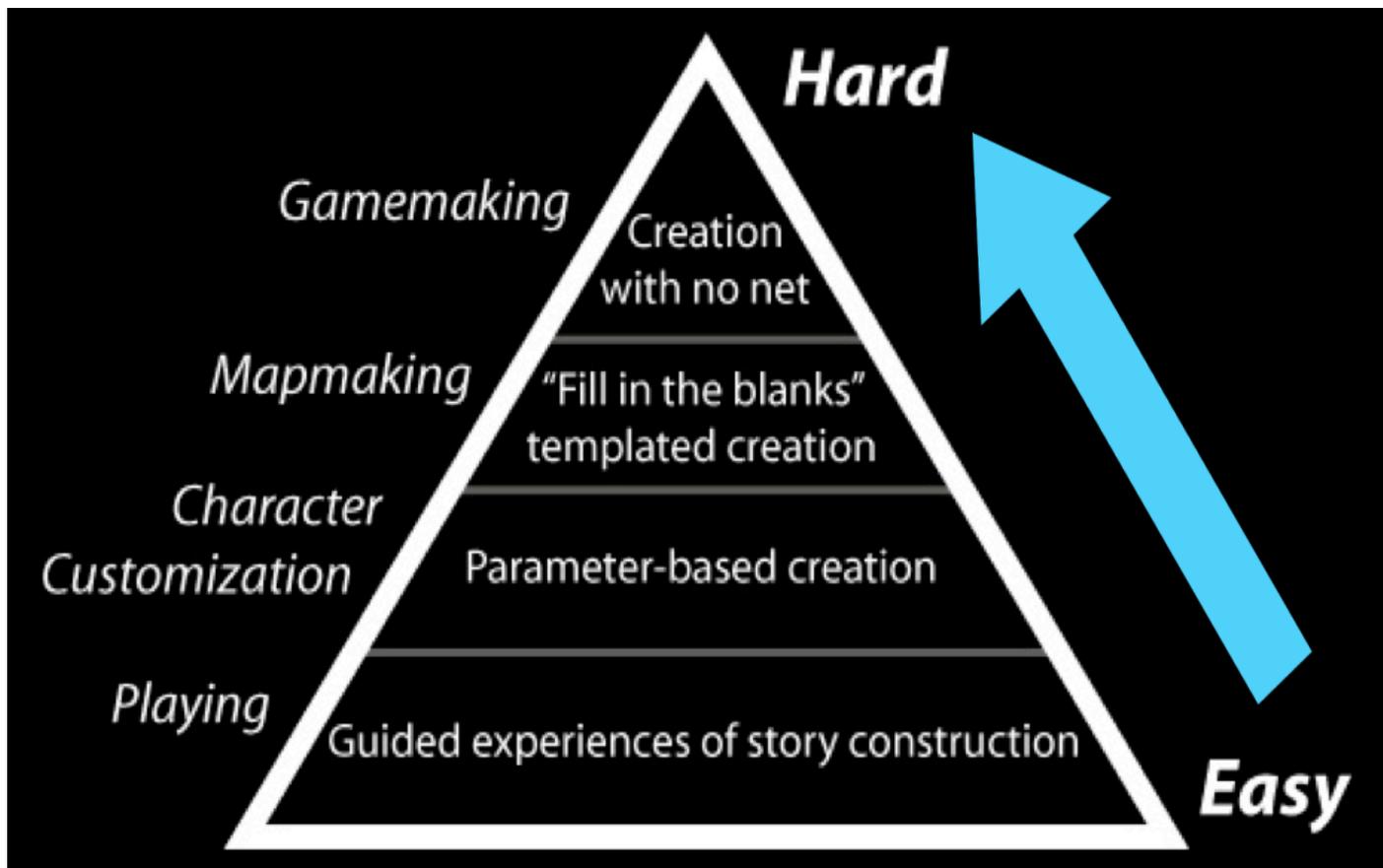


*Super Mario Maker*



# Folk Communities - Call for Inclusion

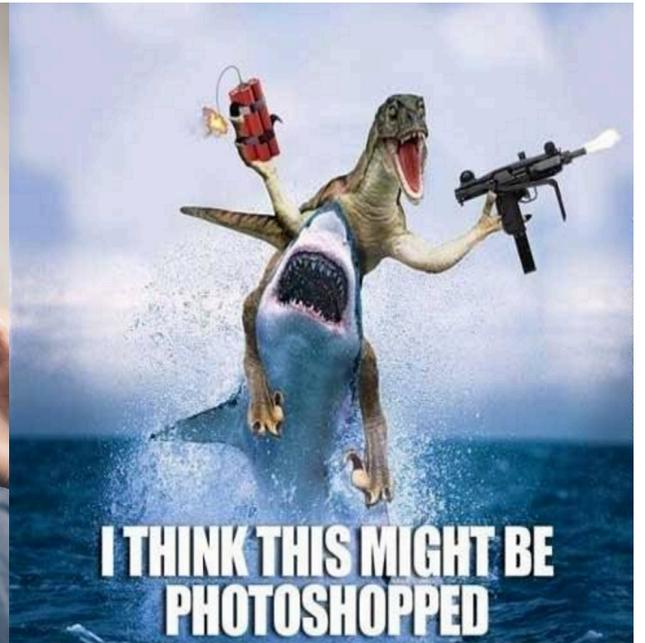
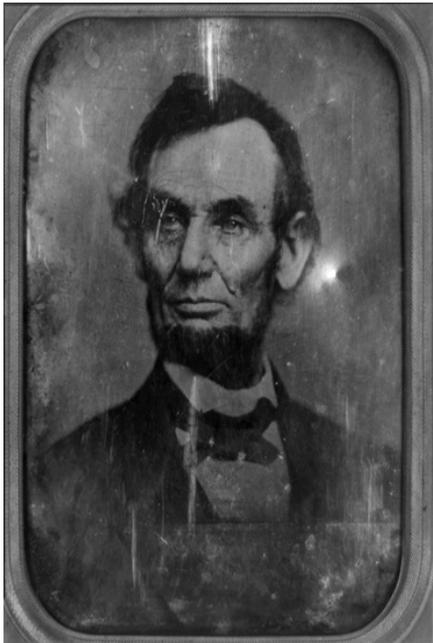
- Help folks rise up the Participation Pyramid!



# Folk Community

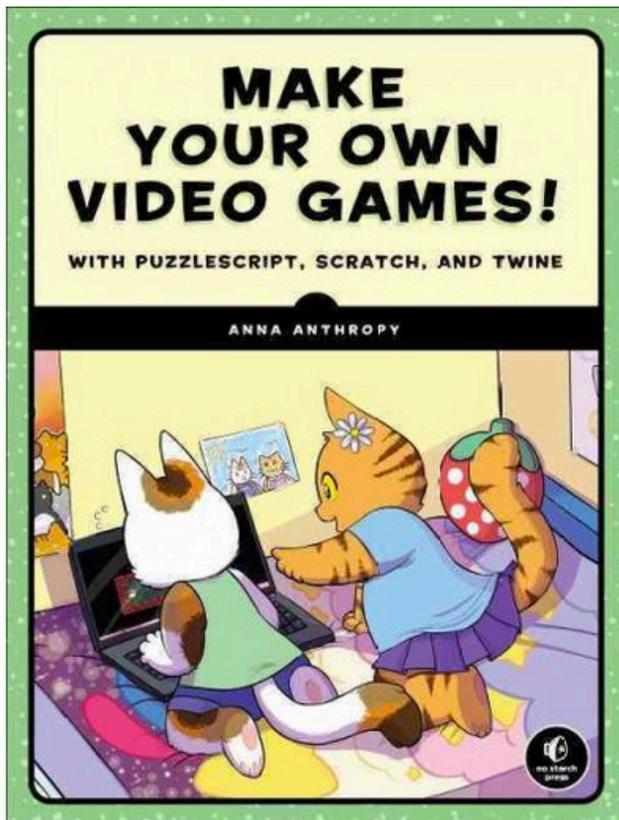


Democratization of Communication



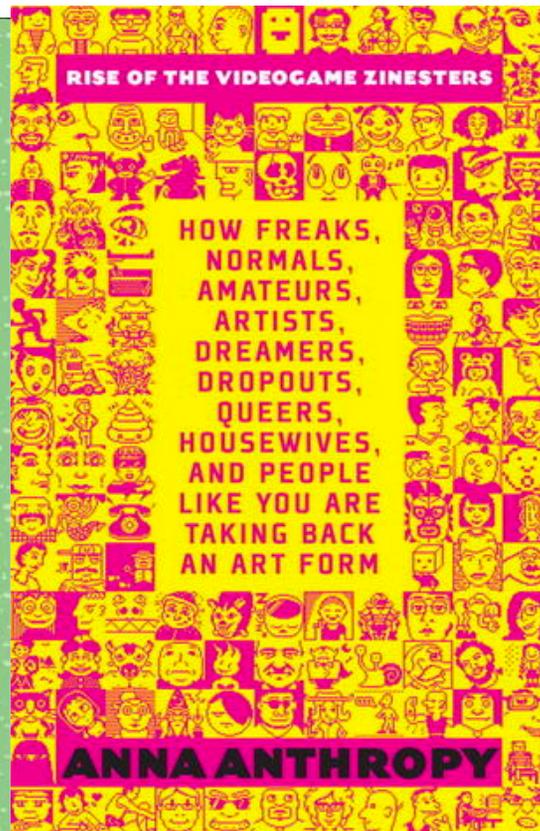
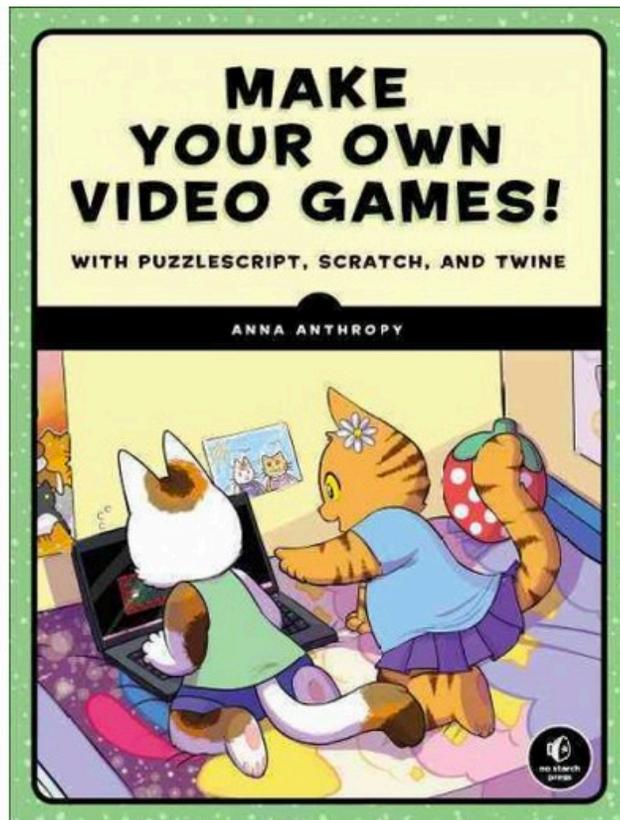
# Folk Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Support Games Education & Literacy



# Folk Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Support Games Education & Literacy
- Audible voices and Visible bodies



# Folk Community



## Democratization of Communication

*Theme Song*, Vito Acconci 1973

random Youtuber



# Folk Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Appreciate games beyond their scope & polish
- Value “Immediate Games” (Disposable is okay)

*Hey Baby*



*How do they do it?*



# Folk Community



## Democratization of Communication

*Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman, Dara Birnbaum 1978-1979*



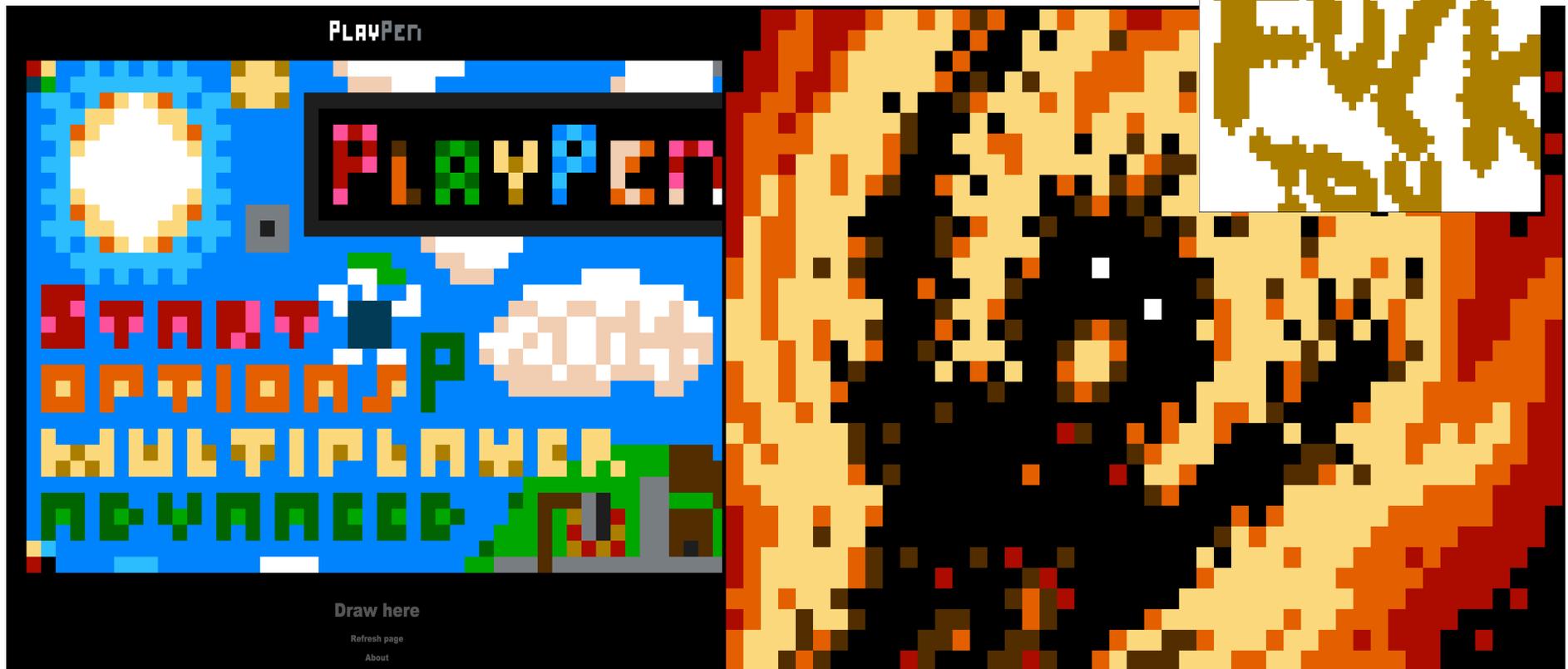
*Youtube Poop / Remix Culture*



# Folk Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Support Crude Experimentation
  - (it atomizes the medium into a language)

PlayPen





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# Indie Communities

- Game Developer Conference (26,000 Attendees)
  - Independent Games Festival
    - I was 1 of 7 jurors of student prize, Grand Prize juror
  - Experimental Gameplay Workshop, alt.ctrl. Train Jam



# Indie Communities

- Independent Games Festival
  - Student Prize Award Criteria:
    - “Overall quality”
    - “Impressiveness”
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    - DePaul Game: *That Blooming Feeling* won nomination



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  - Grand Prize
    - “overall innovation, quality, impressiveness, and enjoyability”

# Indie Communities

- Independent Games Festival
  - Student Prize Award Criteria:

I mean... we kind of ARE the IGF given that we're literally choosing the nominees/winners so it's up to us to decide what we value or don't

## – Grand Prize

Regarding this prize money debate, I think that crops up every year because it's hard not to think about the circumstances of a game's creation. I tend to feel more charitable to single creators and less to big teams, regardless of whether money is involved. Grand Prize to me isn't just about the best game (which is terribly relative anyway), it's also about upholding the indie spirit.



# Indie Communities

- Independent Games Festival
- Student Prize and Grand Prize [Actual] Award Criteria:
  - Broad Appeal and **Polish**
  - Marketable **Innovation**
  - Ready for **Market**
  - [Are we fans of this game?]
  - [Do we know the developer on Twitter?]

# Indie Communities

## IndieCade

- ~8000 Attendees
- “Sundance Festival of Games”
- More artistic than Independent Games Festival
- Slants toward the commercial
- I’ve been a juror since 2011



# Indie Communities

## IndieCade

- Won award for VR *Game Dumpy: Going Elephants*



# Indie Communities

## IndieCade @E3

- *Pedandeck* was rejected and then accepted



# Indie Communities

Jury system driven by fandom. “Do I like/want to play this game?”





# Indie Communities



“I'm having some trouble reviewing this game. It's a provocative and innovative game from someone who's clearly thought a lot about what kind of social interactions they want to provoke and exploit. It's also absolutely no fun. I didn't want to play it and I don't recommend that anyone else plays it, ever.

I don't know if that's intended - that the tension between the player and the game, which asks them to overcome a natural aversion to creating and exploiting fundamentally slightly unpleasant social situations. Unlike Cards Against Humanity, Pedandeck doesn't make the players collectively complicit in poor social behaviour in a relatively controlled way; it makes them creators and exploiters of it in the wild, and allows players to feel the social effects of their choices outside of the game, in the real world. I've never seen anything quite like it before, and I'm glad that it exists as it makes for a fascinating theoretical talking point. I just really wouldn't want to play it in future.

Materially, the components are really nicely designed, with a graffiti-art aesthetic that suits the mood of the piece perfectly.”

## Indie Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Judge not by fandom but with critical distance

## Indie Communities - Call for Inclusion

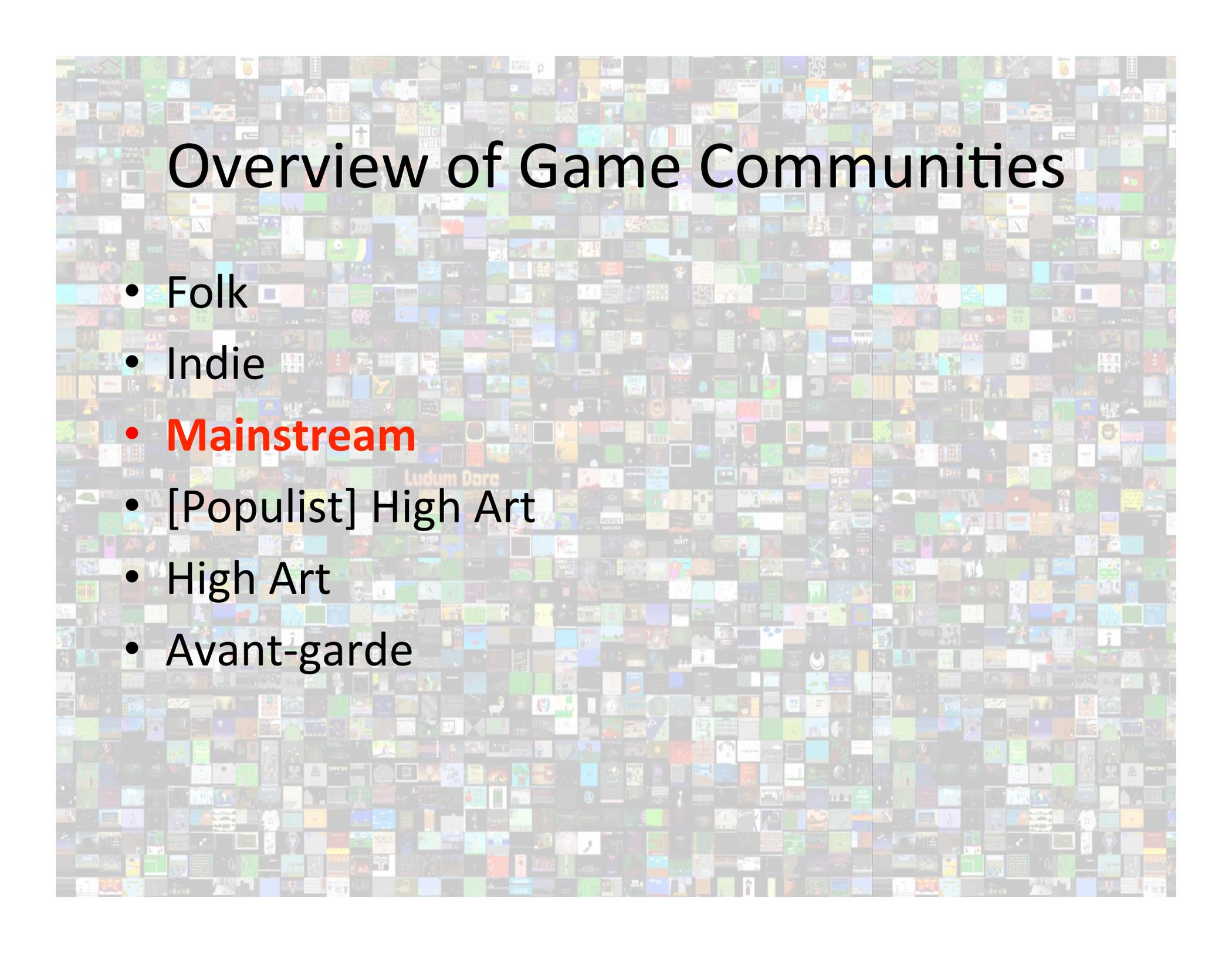
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- Mitigate Cultural Homogenization of Games
  - Adopt a multivalent composite of values explicitly stating various ways games function in culture
  - Educated on history of indie entertainment and art

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- Social Media Blinders
- Paid in order to compensate them for their time

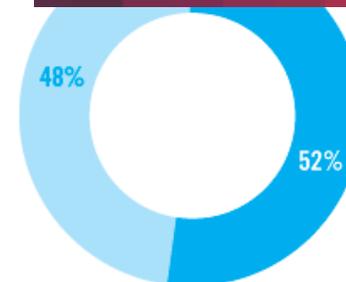


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# Mainstream Communities

- Gamergate, #metoo, etc are watershed moments exposing widespread latent bigotry



**GENDER**  
of Game Players  
52% male  
48% female

# Mainstream Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Worked at *Electronic Arts* on *Urbz: Sims in the City*
  - Constant spiels like “the developers making games should look like the people playing them.”



## Mainstream Communities - Call for Inclusion

- “EA Spouse” [Erin Hoffman’s] letter in 2004:
  - *“EA's turnover rate in engineering is approximately 50%. This is how EA works.”*



## Mainstream Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Not 48 hour “Game Jams” but 3-week “Slow Jams”
- Not “Hackathon” but “Codefest”
- Not “Makerspace” but “\_\_\_ Lab”



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# [Populist] High Art Community

- Games as Art Festivals and Exhibitions
  - Chicago Design Museum Exhibition (curator)
  - Game folks on board wanted JS Joust, “sexy” games

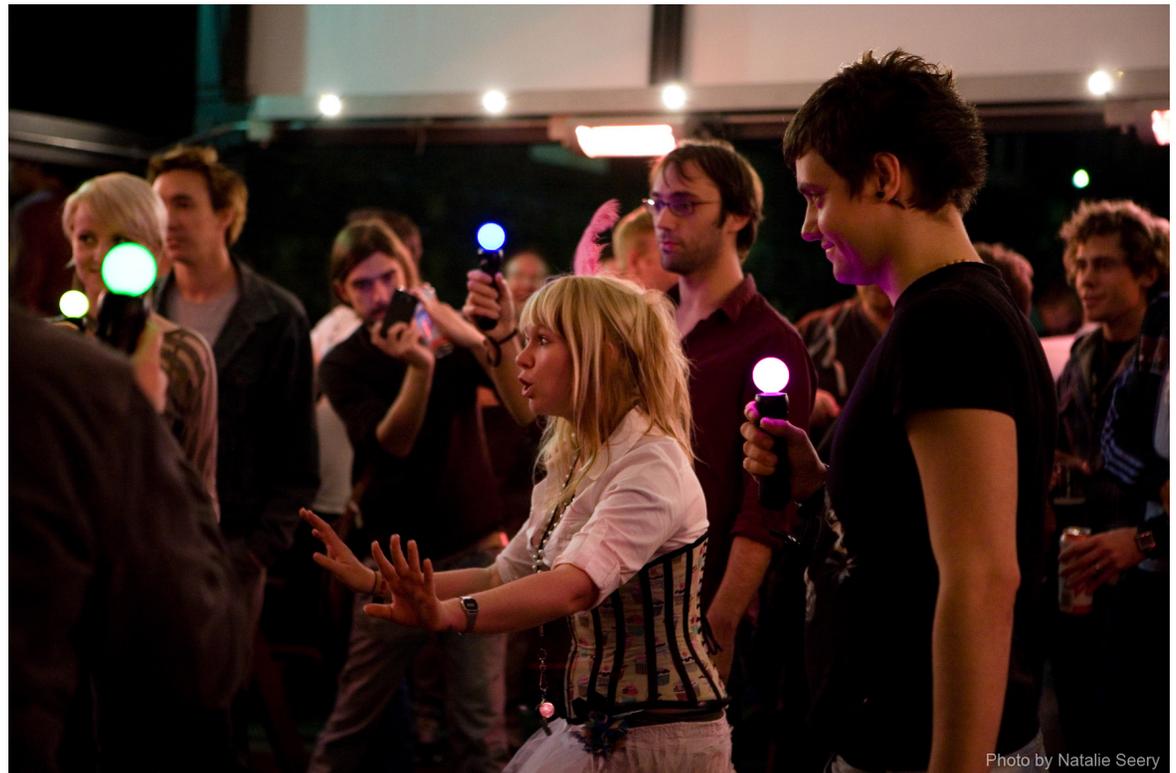


Photo by Natalie Seery

# [Populist] High Art Community

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# [Populist] High Art Community

- Games as Art Festivals and Exhibitions
  - Bit Bash (we constantly show work there)



# [Populist] High Art Community

- Games as Art Festivals and Exhibitions
  - Bit Bash values “sexy” games



# [Populist] High Art Community

- Games Art Exhibitions [Actual] Award Criteria:
  - Middlebrow palatability. “High kitsch”
  - Fandom based on markets lacking critical distance
  - Limited understanding of art history

## [Populist] Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Games Art Exhibitions [Actual] Award Criteria:
  - **Avant-garde** not kitsch
  - **Forcework** not marketability
  - **Aesthetic experience** not polish



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# High Art Community

- Spoke on Avant-garde Games at “Art History of Games” at High Museum of Art in Atlanta

*Super Mario Clouds* by Cory Arcangel



## High Art Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Game community doesn't want to be “co-opted” by outsiders who don't grind and work
- Art seems irrelevant to many in the game community

## High Art Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Effort needs to be made on both sides to bring artists + game devs + musicians together
- Founding a lab at DePaul called **Virtual and Augmented Design Lab** that will host curated game + art events targeted at above folks



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# Avant-garde Communities

- Babycastles in New York
- Bar SK in Melbourne
- D.A.D.S. in Chicago



# Avant-garde Communities

- Babycastles in New York
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- ...

Seem to value

- Glitch art arising from an “anti-aesthetic” arising after postmodernism
- Gritty, inebriated social comfort in end times

## Avant-garde Communities - Call for Inclusion

- Go beyond digital neo-grunge and cater to more socially awkward folks
- Value a range of diverse themes and vibes.  
Change the aesthetic to draw in new people

# Avant-garde Communities - Call for Inclusion

Beatrice Hale described the feminist struggle using the “metaphor of an army to delineate the main body of **parliamentary suffragists**, the rear of **municipal suffragists**, a **vanguard of 'advanced feminists'**, and an **ultra-radical group of 'skirmishers'**.”



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Beatrice Hale described the feminist struggle using the “metaphor of an army to delineate the main body of parliamentary suffragists, the rear of municipal suffragists, a vanguard of 'advanced feminists', and an ultra-radical group of 'skirmishers'.”

No more purity tests.



# Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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