

The Art of Video Games **Frequently Asked Questions**

Visiting the Exhibition

Where is the *The Art of Video Games* exhibition located?

The exhibition is located on the 3rd floor of the Smithsonian American Art Museum at 8th and F Streets, N.W. in Washington, D.C. For directions to the museum, please visit www.americanart.si.edu/visit/hours/.

When is the exhibition open?

The exhibition is open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., March 16 through September 30, 2012. Please note that on busy days there may be a line.

Do you need a ticket to see the exhibition? How much does it cost?

The exhibition is free and you do not need a ticket.

Can I play any of the video games in the exhibition? Is there a time limit?

Five games in the exhibition are available for visitors to play: *Pac-Man*, *Super Mario Brothers*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Myst*, and *Flower*. Each game has a time limit of a few minutes. The exact time is subject to change, and may vary between games.

When is the best time to see the exhibition? Will there be a line?

The exhibition is busiest on Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 5 p.m. We recommend arriving early and allowing time to wait in line. The line will form at the entrance to the exhibition, near the north elevators.

How long does it take to see the exhibition?

You should allow at least 1 hour to view the exhibition, not including time spent in line.

Do you have docent tours or can I schedule a tour?

The Art of Video Games is a self-guided experience so there are no regularly scheduled or pre-arranged tours for the public or for school groups.

Can I come to the museum in costume?

Absolutely! We encourage you to wear costumes inspired by your favorite video game characters. We only ask that you keep in mind this is an art museum, so please avoid costumes that obscure the face, include imitation weapons, or have protruding objects that could harm artwork (for instance, Big Daddy Bouncer costumes from BioShock would be a problematic choice). The museum's security team and staff reserve the right to ask any visitor in costume to remove costume elements that violate this policy before entering the museum. You can see a more extended list of security policies for visitors at <http://www.si.edu/Visit/Security>.

What is available in the museum store?

The museum store has products related to the exhibition, including the book *The Art of Video Games: From Pac-Man to Mass Effect* by curator Chris Melissinos.

Does the exhibition travel to other museums and if so, where?

The Art of Video Games will travel to 10 museums in the United States after closing at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. A list of confirmed venues and dates is online, www.americanart.si.edu/taovg.

About the Exhibition

What is *The Art of Video Games* exhibition about?

The Art of Video Games explores the 40-year evolution of video games as an artistic medium. The exhibition highlights how new technologies have allowed for increasingly interactive and sophisticated game environments while staying grounded in the traditions of each game type. It will feature games with striking visual graphics and recognize some of the creative individuals who have made significant contributions. *The Art of Video Games* is not about the most popular games of all time, nor is it about the individual games themselves. This is not a historic review that seeks to capture every memorable moment in video game history.

Why are video games being featured at an art museum?

Art is beguiling. Much like a great novel or film, you can become engrossed in the world created by a video games and the Smithsonian American Art Museum wants to celebrate the designers and developers who create these worlds. Video games are an emerging medium for creative expression and we're very excited to explore their artistic evolution over the last forty years. All video games include classic components of art—striking visuals, a powerful narrative, and a strong point of view. What's new is the role of the player. Of course, contemporary games have taken this creative expression to a whole new level, so the museum decided that this is the right moment to look at this popular global phenomenon.

How did you select the games?

The museum invited the public to help select the 80 video games included in the exhibition. The 240 games on the ballot were selected by Chris Melissinos, who worked with the museum and an advisory group consisting of game developers, designers, industry pioneers, and journalists. You can see the list of advisors here: <http://www.americanart.si.edu/taovg>. The games were selected based on a variety of criteria, including visual effects, creative use of new technologies, and how the game fit into the narrative of the exhibition.

How did the voting work?

Each person could vote for one game in each genre on each system, for a total of 80 votes. It was only possible to vote for one game in each category, even if you did not vote at all in some categories. Voting took place between February 14 and April 17, 2011. More than 3.7 million votes were cast by 119,000 people in 175 countries! The winning game from each genre on each system is included in the exhibition.

Are these all the games that will be included in the exhibition?

The exhibition features 80 games through still images and video footage. Five games are available for visitors to play for a few minutes, to gain some feel for the interactivity—*Pac-Man*, *Super Mario Brothers*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, *Myst*, and *Flower*. In addition, the galleries will include video interviews with developers and artists, large prints of in-game screen shots, and historic game consoles.

How did you announce the winning games?

The winning games were announced at 1 p.m. EDT on Thursday, May 5, 2011. A webcast of the announcement is online, <http://americanart.si.edu/calendar/lectures/archive/2011/taovg/>.

Is the exhibition suitable for children/families?

All of the content in *The Art of Video Games* exhibition is suitable for audiences of all ages.

Does the exhibition include video games rated for mature players?

The exhibition does include a few games that have been rated Teen or Mature by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). All excerpts and images in the exhibition are suitable for audiences of all ages.

Can you tell me more about the curator?

Chris Melissinos, former chief evangelist and chief gaming officer for Sun Microsystems and founder of PastPixels, is the curator of the exhibition. He has been engaged in the ongoing dialogue about video game technology, social trends, and the application of technology for more than a decade.

What is the music being played at the entrance to the exhibition?

Visitors to the exhibition are greeted by excerpts from selected games projected 12 feet high, accompanied by a chipmusic soundtrack by 8 Bit Weapon and ComputeHer. 8 Bit Weapon—the husband and wife effort of Seth and Michelle Sternberger—is inspired by classic video game soundtracks and electronic music from the 1970s and 1980s. 8 Bit Weapon songs featured in the soundtrack are The Art of Video Games Anthem, written specifically for the exhibition, Miami Dub Bounce from the new album *Bits with Byte* and Chip on your Shoulder. ComputeHer—the solo project of Michelle Sternberger—creates intricate electronic music using retro gaming consoles and 8-bit computers. The soundtrack includes Twilight Byte and Dark Pub from ComputeHer's recent album *Modemoiselle*.

How did members of the advisory group participate?

Members of the advisory group advised on all aspects of the exhibition's development, including concepts, platforms to be featured, historical elements, people to be interviewed, and the pool of 240 proposed games for the voting site.

How did you choose the featured genres of games? Where are the role playing games (RPG), fighting games, racing games, and massively multiplayer online games (MMOG)?

There are so many different types of games that we knew our show could not feature them all. We looked for four broad categories that allowed us to offer a wide selection—Action, Target, Adventure, and Tactics.

How could you leave out my favorite games?

It was really difficult to narrow the tens of thousands of game choices down to just 240 titles and we appreciate that there will always be games that people feel should have made the cut but didn't. The games that were considered for the exhibition represent certain points in time for each of the 20 systems that also contribute to the overall narrative of the exhibition.

Where are the arcade games, handhelds, and system XYZ? How could you not include these?

We considered the size of the museum's galleries where the exhibition is displayed, as well as the time that visitors need to experience the content. We decided to focus on home console games only in this exhibition, which is why arcade games, online games, and handheld/mobile games are not included. The 20 selected systems represent significant points in time for the eras described. Hopefully this will be the first exhibition of many that explore the medium of video games!

This exhibition is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum yet there are a number of games that were developed by foreign companies. Why?

The museum presents works that have had an impact on American visual culture, and these influences are increasingly global. Many American designers and developers have been influenced by those working outside of the United States, so it was important to include them in the exhibition.

GameFest

What is GameFest?

GameFest was a three-day festival that took place Friday, March 16 through Sunday, March 18 at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. All GameFest programs that occurred in the museum's McEvoy Auditorium are available on our website, <http://www.americanart.si.edu/multimedia/webcasts/>.