

Ever since I was young I have always held a fondness for Video games. However, this interest was never fully supported by most adults around me, or even my peers. Even now, while Video games continue to grow and influence our society, it isn't taken as seriously as an art medium as say painting or sculpture. There has always been a disconnect between the visual arts and digital art as a medium. What most people don't realize what makes Video games so unique is that they have the ability to contain every form of art, while expanding it in ways that could not be done if it were simply one medium. The ability to weave interactive stories, to make moving paintings, to influence people and the world, to connect people from across the globe and bring them together is an experience entirely unique to Video games, and why I have fell so in love with them.

For this installation I created two digital pieces that represent a game that has greatly influenced me and my outlook on what it means to create a video game. The first print is from a Video game called journey. It relied heavily on visuals and music to tell its story, and because of this I wanted to go with more of a painting/dream-like aspect. The other represents the game Fallout New Vegas, I used a distinct 60s Vegas style that represents the game in itself, but also created a sense of beauty to draw the viewer's eye away from the facade it holds, just like the actual location within the game.

My goal is for people to look at my art and see that there can be a deeper meaning in Video games. I want them to walk away with a new perspective on the media and see it worthy of respect.

Ren A.
Texas

The Art Of Video Games

Ren A.



Art, no matter the medium, can often be used to create an impact on the world, or simply the person who consumes it, by providing a unique perspective into the world around us. Video games take this to the next level by having the ability to create stories you can walk through and experience in a way that's entirely unique to this new medium.

From using Video games as a platform for social commentary, to creating an experience solely for the purpose of forming emotional connections between different people from across the worlds, Video games have a wide range of options when it comes to how they're able to create such unique experiences.

One example of this is Linear storytelling. The most traditional form. Most novels are linear stories. So what about Linear Video games?

A Linear story is when there is a set plot, and though the player may be able to customize themselves and their abilities, they cannot change the plot by making decisions for their character or the story itself. Despite this, Linear stories have the power to tell their own powerful stories if used correctly.

Destiny 2, for example, has a linear story, but that doesn't stop it from creating the same emotional journey other games have. You play as a Guardian, a person who has been brought back from the dead to protect the remnants of what remains of humanity after an apocalyptic event that nearly wiped out the Earth by an enemy simply known as "The Darkness." Guardians are gifted with the power of light, given to you by The Traveler, a giant orb that floats above the Last Safe city. The story revolves around an Alien race that eventually captures the Traveler, preventing Guardians

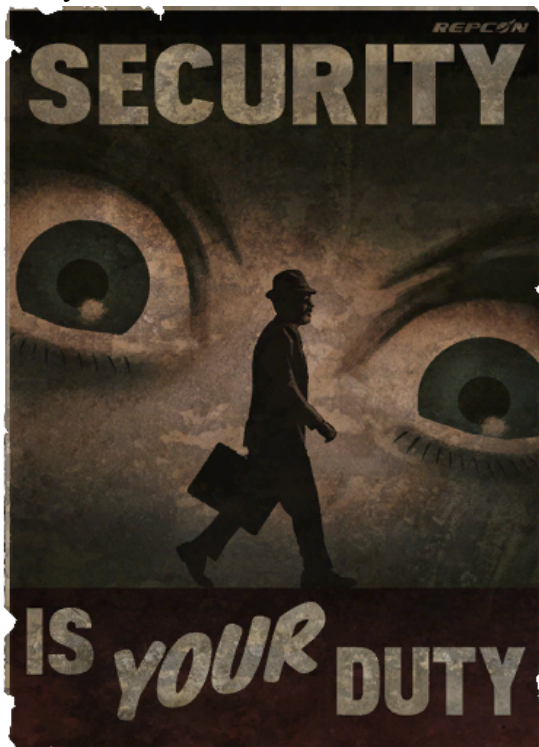


Figure 1 Propaganda poster in Fallout New Vegas

from using it's light to fight back. However, the player becomes the only one to get their light back, and from there you must help fight back against the forces threatening your home, and free the Traveler. The game's story is simple, an age-old tale about Light vs Darkness, That doesn't prevent it from being valuable, especially during a time where there seems to be a lot of dread going around anyway.

What Makes Destiny so important is that no matter what, the light prevails. Even when it had been stripped away, and humanity was left to fight against its attackers with no protectors, the light finds a way back, and the day is saved It may seem Cliche but that is far from the truth. Sometimes it's needed. It's good to see the light prevail, and the darkness lose, because it provides the player a sense of accomplishment and hope that couldn't be attained had the story revolve around continuous loss. More importantly, the fact that you are in control of the character who makes this possible, the hero of the story, is what make this Video game and others so impactful.

Another way Video Games have the ability to provide unique experiences is by allowing the player to make choices, and change the outcome of the world around them.

Fallout New Vegas takes place in a post apocalyptic society, where the world's most powerful nations had been fighting for what remained of natural resources after they had all been since depleted. This futuristic version of America relied heavily on military propaganda, and painting the enemy as communists ready to infiltrate the nation to ruin the "peace". Fallout reflects on the Cold War era, and the tensions that arose between Russia and the United States. Everything from music, featuring artists such as Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby, to the architecture, resembles the 1950's, giving an eerie yet realistic view into the game's fictional world. New Vegas commonly plays on the fears that were prevalent during that time, such as featuring atomic bomb safety routines in its trailers, and painting the world as if there was no threat at all by using multiple forms of patriotic propaganda, and happy-go-lucky commercials.

The war ended when China and America fired atomic bombs at each other, ending society as we know it. Many things about the "old world" were lost after society starting rebuilding, but the game has no problem informing the player that these ideals are what caused the war to happen in the first place. Specifically, in Fallout New Vegas, there are three major factions who have tried to replicate Old World hopes of bringing order to the wasteland: Caesar's legion, inspired by Ancient Rome's militarized society. The NCR (New California Republic) Spreading ideas of democracy, personal liberty, and rule of law. Finally, the last faction is only one person; Mr. House, a man from the old-world who shielded Las Vegas from the atomic bombs and hopes to restore both it and the wasteland to its original glory.

You get to decide which of these factions to back, or to reject them all as they fight to gain complete control over the Mojave. However, no faction is inherently good, in fact, that's what the game is trying to get you to realize.



Figure 2 American Propaganda poster from the Cold War

Each of these factions all have one thing in common; reliance on the Old World.

Much like our society today, these factions are reluctant to move forward, and adapt to the wasteland as it is. Instead they hold on to the past, so caught up in it's once great history to the point they are blinded to the fact the very ideas they are trying to replicate are what had caused it

to end. The replication of old ways leads to an endless cycle of war, and “war never changes.” I think it is important to note this influential quote from the game. The main reason war creates such a strong narrative focus, is because it reflects the reality in which we live in. In politics, there are always going to be people stubborn to change laws and practices that govern our society because of their belief that, since it worked for them in the past, it will continue to work for the future. The endless cycle of war continues.

However, as you continue on your path to complete the main story you encounter smaller, yet more controlled factions. Though none of these factions hold anywhere near the firepower as the bigger ones, they’re trusted among the wasteland by nearly everyone. The reason for this? They do the exact opposite of Mr. House, the NCR, and Caesar’s legion; they’ve looked past the old world, and into the future. The kings, the most powerful of the smaller factions only embraces the Old World in a social way, other than that, their goal is focused on creating peace and maintaining order in their corner of the Wasteland. There’s no forceful push of old world ideals, but rather new rules they’ve come up with based on how the world they live in actually works.

similarly the Followers Of The Apocalypse, an organization built around providing medical services to anyone in need. Wherever they go they spread their knowledge of science and medicine, and nothing else. They are all means pacifists, and yet are one of the most respected groups in the wasteland. These people could easily represent the new civil rights movements that pop up throughout history, fighting for the future rather than the past, and it’s because of this that makes New Vegas’ story influential.

Video games are too easily forgotten as a respectable medium for storytelling, with media focusing on simple first person shooters and nothing else. However, there are Video games with strong stories such as this one, and it's because they focus on real world examples that they’re able to create such a strong yet unique fictional world in the first place. Rpgs such as this one also play another role in creating an impactful gaming experience, because whatever decision you make changes how people perceive and interact with you, just like it does in real life. Perhaps because of this the story of New Vegas becomes more important and forces the player to think about what they’re about to do and what exactly it would mean for everyone living in the wasteland. All the political undertones come to light because of this. Everything that had been set up to include is important, and doesn’t get dismissed because you are forced to think about them as you play the game.

We have considered two games relevance based on their plot’s ability to connect to the real world" Let's consider now games that have the capacity to connect with players and to create connections between strangers.

The concept of Journey is simple, you play as a masked, clothed creature wandering through the desert uncovering the remnants of a lost civilization. Your goal is to reach the peak of a mountain emanating a bright light in the distance. No words are spoken in Journey, the story is told through meditations that display images in each area you encounter. Even the player can only communicate through musical chirps. As you continue the game you learn more and more about the dead civilization you’ve been traversing through, and the relationship you formed along the way.



Very early on, the game match-makes you with another player, your only companion for the rest of the game. Finally you aren't the only one traversing the endless sands. Because of this, you unconsciously end up growing attached to your partner. For the rest of your play-through you and your partner journey to the mountain together. You go through the same downfalls, the same joys, until you finally reach the end where you say goodbye. Personally, the story of journey was an emotional one. The artistic visuals of the game never ceased to amaze me, and the music only enhanced the experience. However, my partner was what really tied the game together. I specifically remember an area where I had fallen off a cliff and would have to start the climb all over again. I had feared that my partner was going to leave me, but instead they jumped off and followed me down. When they got to me they sent out a lot of short chirps, which I only perceived as them being grateful I hadn't been hurt. Finally when we reached the end, and all that was left was to walk into the light together, they took the time to draw a heart in the snow for me, to which I did the same for them. In a very short time of knowing this anonymous person with limited communication I had formed a deep emotional bond with them. No other game I had ever played had ever managed to have the same effect on me, or really the world at large.

What makes Journey such a memorable game doesn't have to do with a linear story, but much rather how it uses its graphics and music to evoke emotions within the player. There's also no extremely stressful situations in the game. You aren't put against another player, or having to solve difficult puzzles, you're simply travelling and experiencing each area.

Journey is powerful because the feelings of loneliness, companionship, and accomplishment among other things are what all humans have felt before in some way, shape or form. There's no spoken words guiding you to believe or feel one thing, but even still nearly everyone finishes Journey having experienced somewhat of the same thing. This is why some people have chosen to refer to Journey as a piece of art rather than a Video game, but what they don't realize is that they're one in the same. The point of Art is to evoke emotion, to bring something out of the viewer

or the artist, and Video games accomplish this, but they have the ability to do this in a variety of ways.

A painting, for example, can have a meaning. The artist can create it with the intention of spreading a message, or evoking certain emotions to those who may look upon it. But Video games, are able to take paintings, and give you the ability to walk through them. They take novels and allow you to visually see the story, to be in control of the protagonist. They give you the ability to connect with a stranger thousands of miles apart, something that any other art medium cannot accomplish in the same way Video games can. That is why I believe Video games is one of the most impactful art forms to date, and why it should be taken just as seriously as any other medium.