For Immediate Release

Game On: SPACES’ New Public Project Presents Video Games As Performance Art

Opening Reception: Friday, May 17, 2013, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Admission: FREE and open to the public

Cleveland, OH, April 29, 2013—This May through July, SPACES hosts an unusual exhibition of performance art—featuring works that use the framework of video games to create performances. These works vary from interactive long-distance performances that are directed by viewers/players, to video art created by documenting video game performances, indie video games that invite players to perform within the presented framework, and classic video games that highlight the performative nature of this interactive art form.

Performance art often centers around the artist's body improvising within parameters or working through a set of directions. Video games set the stage for a dual performance of the player’s subtle physical dance of fingers across a controller and the virtual movements of pixel bodies. In Dana Sperry’s video “First Person Shooter,” a player’s face is illuminated only by the pulsating glow of a first person shooter video game. Her eyes dart back and forth and her face slightly twists as the game
becomes more difficult. This is a documented micro-performance choreographed by the action on the screen.

Wafaa Bilal's contribution is a documentation of a performance that took place in Chicago's FlatFile Galleries in 2007. "Domestic Tension," had Bilal, an Iraqi, living in the gallery for one month, while a mounted paintball gun was controlled by users via the internet. Bilal and the gallery were pelted by yellow paintballs over the course of the month as people took the opportunity to shoot an Iraqi.

Pippin Barr’s quirky internet-based games use the form of video games to critique both gaming culture and the art world. In “The Artist is Present,” named after the noted Marina Abramović at the Museum of Modern Art (2010), the player arrives at MoMA to attend the exhibition. After waiting in line for a ticket, the player then joins an interminable queue to get the opportunity to sit with the pixilated Abramović. Rather than a game of action, it is a game of patience that points toward the performances and frameworks that surround the “art.”

Visitors to "Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start" will have the opportunity to act out their own performances through artist-created games and arcade classics through July 19, 2013.

Note: "Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start," also known as the "Konami Code," is a cheat code for some video games that allows players to immediately gain hundreds of lives or unlock "easter eggs"—special surprises or hidden game modes.

ARTIST BIOS

Pippin Barr is currently affiliated with the Institute of Digital Games at the University of Malta. He holds a PhD and an MSc in Computer Science from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) and he has taught courses in experimental interaction and programming for game designers at ITU Copenhagen. Barr's games have been featured in many online forums including Gamasutra, Rock, Paper, Shotgun, Buzzfeed, The Verge, Killscreen, and Edge and he has exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Iraqi-born artist Wafaa Bilal, an Assistant Arts Professor at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, is known internationally for his on-line performative and interactive works provoking dialogue about international politics and internal dynamics. For his current project, the 3rdi, Bilal had a camera surgically implanted on the back of his head to spontaneously transmit images to the web 24 hours a day – a statement on surveillance, the mundane and the things we leave behind. Bilal's 2010 work "…And Counting" similarly used his own body as a medium. His back was tattooed with a map of Iraq and dots representing Iraqi and US casualties – the Iraqis in invisible ink seen only under a black light. Bilal's 2007 installation, Domestic Tension, also addressed the Iraq war. Bilal spent a month in a Chicago gallery with a paintball gun that people could shoot at him over the internet. The Chicago Tribune called it "one of the sharpest works of political art to be seen in a long time" and named him 2008 Artist of the Year. Bilal's work is constantly informed by the experience of fleeing his homeland and existing simultaneously in two worlds – his home in the "comfort zone" of the U.S. and his consciousness of the "conflict zone" in Iraq. Bilal suffered repression under Saddam Hussein's regime and fled Iraq in 1991 during the first Gulf War. After two years in refugee camps in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, he came to the U.S. where he graduated from the University of New Mexico and then
obtained an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2008 City Lights published "Shoot an Iraqi: Art, Life and Resistance Under the Gun," about Bilal's life and the Domestic Tension project.

Mary Flanagan’s collection of over 20 major works range from game-inspired systems to computer viruses, embodied interfaces to interactive texts; these works are exhibited internationally. As a scholar interested in how human values are in play across technologies and systems, Flanagan has written more than 20 critical essays and chapters on games, empathy, gender and digital representation, art and technology, and responsible design. Her three books in English include Critical Play (2009) with MIT Press. Flanagan founded the Tiltfactor game research laboratory in 2003, where researchers study and make social games, urban games, and software in a rigorous theory/practice environment. Flanagan's work has been supported by grants and commissions including The British Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the ACLS, and the National Science Foundation. Flanagan is the Sherman Fairchild Distinguished Professor in Digital Humanities at Dartmouth College.

Knut LSG Hybinette was born in Enkoping, Sweden and is an Assistant Professor at The Cleveland Institute of Art where he teaches game design and digital foundations. He works in multiple mediums including game design, photography, animation, video and sound. Knut has exhibited his work at galleries in Sweden, Portugal, Germany and the United States. Additionally, Knut has been published in the American publication Oculus and others. In 2003, he was sponsored/commissioned by January to create a portfolio of the Night Chicago. Knut has shown a series of photographs that tell us of the process of aging through examining each individual story at Arts Atrium Gallery in New York and at Jet Artworks Gallery. He received his Master of Fine Art in Photography/Animation from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL and his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Photography from the University of Georgia, Athens.

Paolo Pedercini is a Pittsburgh-based artist who teaches experimental game design and media production courses at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Art. He is well-known for his radical video-gaming project Molleindustria. He received his M.F.A. in Integrated Electronic Arts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and his B.A. in Visual Arts and Multimedia Communications from Libera Accademia di Belle Arti, Brescia Italy (LABA).

Dana Sperry is an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Digital Media at Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio. His work has been featured at Gallery 1708, Richmond, Virginia; the Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, New York; Gardenfresh Gallery, Chicago, Illinois; North Harris College, Houston, Texas; Southeastern Contemporary Art Gallery, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana; Houston Community College, Houston, Texas; Society for Contemporary Photography, Kansas City, Missouri; and Front Room Gallery, Bloomington, Indiana.

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SPACES is located at 2220 Superior Viaduct, in Cleveland, OH. Gallery hours are Tuesday - Sunday: 12 – 5 p.m., and the gallery is open until 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Admission (and parking) during regular gallery hours is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.SPACESgallery.org, call 216.621.2314 or email contact@SPACESgallery.org.

Style Notes: “SPACES” is the official name of the organization and the name is entirely capitalized. The name is not “SPACES Gallery.”