



EUPHRAT MUSEUM OF ART
De Anza College

Fall Art Exhibition at New Euphrat Museum of Art *Learn to Play*

September 10, 2010

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For Immediate Release:

CUPERTINO — The Euphrat Museum of Art features a brand new exhibition space in the front of the new De Anza College Visual and Performing Arts Center. Our fall exhibition, *Learn to Play*, and related programs highlight the new world of gaming, with ventures and artists from Silicon Valley and beyond.

EVENTS:

Events to coincide with ZER01:

Friday Sept 17: After work: Game Challenge and Workshop and Exhibition Preview (Selected Works),
Saturday Sept 18: Exhibition Preview; 5pm Deadline for digital submissions, Speed judging & awards

Events to coincide with Silicon Valley Fall Festival (Rotary Club of Cupertino, *World Journal*)

Saturday, Sunday, Sept 25, 26: 11-4 Exhibition Preview, with
Game Boards Art Station at Memorial Park; Game Spinners Art Station at Euphrat Museum

Fall Art Exhibition: *Learn to Play*

October 4 – November 24, 2010

Hours: 11-3, Tu-Th

Open additional hours to tours by appointment

Reception with the Artists: Tuesday, November 9, 5:30- 8:00 pm

Schedule of events to include night and weekend programs. For additional events, check the Euphrat Museum of Art website <http://www.deanza.edu/euphrat/inthemuseum.html> and <http://learn.toplay.us>

WHERE: Euphrat Museum of Art, De Anza College, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA 95014

LEARN TO PLAY ART EXHIBITION:

Artists include Andrew Y Ames, Jim Babb of Socks Inc., April Banks, Sean Boyles, Brenda Brathwaite, Yunan Cao, Terry Cavanagh and Stephen Lavelle, Joe DeLappe, David Elliott, Jake Elliott, Mark Essen, Catherine Herdlick, Rod Humble, Molleindustria, Rodrigo Oliva, Jason Rohrer, Susana Ruiz of Take Action Games, Adam Saltsman, Kelly Santiago and Jenova Chen of thatgamecompany, Jonatan Söderström, Superbrothers, La Mar Williams II, Robert Yang, the City of Cupertino, and more.

Curated by James Morgan and John Bruneau, with JanRindfleisch

Partners: ZER01, CADRE Laboratory for New Media

When life is a game, how do you learn to play?

Games, an expression of art and life, can bridge the gaps between cultures, and be a common language that brings communities together. Game makers tell compelling stories about their lives or the world. *Learn to Play* includes video, board and social games by indie game designers. The exhibit offers a selection of poetic, artistic, and artful games that embody the qualities of human existence, focusing on the experience of playing and learning to play. The characteristics of these games echo human nature, teaching us who and what we are, or can be, so we can explore life directions driven by our choice and conscience.

As conduits for bridging or separating cultures, games can be used to bring communities together for improvement of economic and social conditions, or to exploit communities through political maneuvering. The games selected span the range from quick play to epic games requiring many hours to complete; they range from personal growth to those used for socially conscious purposes.

Learn to Play is also a challenge. We invite people of all backgrounds to experience and create games that express social and emotional relevance. During the course of the exhibition, we will hold workshops to teach basic game design tools, then will have game challenges from which work may be curated into the exhibition.

Come play some games and/or create your own! Below are some examples of games in the exhibition.

Want to try living your life in 5 minutes? **Jason Rohrer's** *Passage*, a short lyrical game, gives you that chance. And then you can repeat and do it again differently. The retro, pixelated 8-bit graphics abstract us from the experience, but also allow us to see ourselves and our lives through our participation in the game. *Passage* has emotional impact and simplicity. Rohrer is an independent game artist and critic whose games and his work as a whole have bolstered the acceptance of games as a serious art form. <http://hcsoftware.sourceforge.net/passage/>

Start with little yellow game pieces and some boxcars. **Brenda Brathwaite's** game, *Train*, is artful and powerful, drawing one in with its sculptural form, historical reference, and the function of its play. Brathwaite is a game designer, artist and writer who was named one of the top most influential women in the game industry by Gamasutra.com and Next Generation magazine. Her current work is a non-digital gaming collection known as "Mechanic is the Message." *Train* won a Vanguard Award at IndieCade for "pushing the boundaries of game design and showing us what games can do."

Dive deep. **Adam Saltsman's** *FATHOM* explores the middle ground between life and death. Saltsman (Adam Atomic) is an indie game designer and programmer. Saltsman is co-organizer of the Indi Art Jam and responsible for flixel, a popular, open Actionscript library that aids other creators in the development of Flash games.

Catherine Herdlick is a cross-media artist making "game-like things". Her work, such as *Bike Friendly City*, involves large-scale real world interaction with an emphasis on fun and community engagement. Herdlick is working with *Learn to Play* to create a new piece of location-based work for the exhibition.

Have fun and play. **Yunan Cao's** *Ping Pong Diplomacy* has an actual fun-to-play ping-pong table painted with the words "trust" and "distrust" in English and Chinese. Cao updates the historical reference to opening up relations between the U.S. and China in the 1970s. "Friendship first, competition second." Her ping pong paddles have faces of US/China diplomacy today. In the Euphrat we extend the invitation of diplomacy to open positive dialog between visitors from different countries, companies, political parties, and more. Also viewers may suggest high-profile match ups to play the game or come up with their own rules.

Check out *You Meet The Nicest People Making Videogames*, the start of an ongoing video project by **La Mar Williams II**. Williams captures the drive, creative energy, behind gamers, including Anna Anthropy, a woman in an indie games field heavily dominated by men. <http://thenicestpeople.tumblr.com> Williams will run a related workshop for at-risk youth to let them experience the power of making their own game, telling their own story.



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Contemplate the game piece. *Milk Bath* is a photograph from the series *We Love to Watch* by **April Banks**. DeQawn Mobley, a former collegiate/NFL player, is shown putting on his gear amid stereotypic symbols of milk and watermelon. The photo calls attention to the commodified image of the hyper-masculine black athletic body as violent and sexual, a ubiquitous "game piece," putting on his game face. Using the historically racially charged symbol of the watermelon, this work explores Mobley's experience as a collegiate and NFL player and its well-debated parallels to the slave trade, and what it means to be reduced to a game object, "loved" by millions.

Joe DeLappe reminds us of the cost of our predilection for war with his ongoing memorial series *Dead in Iraq*. The exhibition features a scale model of a fallen soldier ripped from the video game *America's Army*, which is also used as a recruitment tool. As viewers approach the body, one is reminded of the real-life results of warring.

Help find Zoe. **Susana Ruiz** and **Take Action Games (TAG)** worked with Toronto's METRAC (Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children) to create *Finding Zoe*. METRAC was interested in a game for ages 8-14, addressing abusive dating relationships and gender stereotyping. The game can be played individually or in small groups, ideally facilitated. TAG specializes in casual games for change, addressing social/political content, traversing the intersections of computational art, narrative, journalism, activism, ethics, history and documentary. <http://takeactiongames.com/TAG/HOME.html>

Grab a flower petal and get to know **thatgamecompany**, founded by **Kellee Santiago** and **Jenova Chen**. *Flower*, a game for PlayStation3, explores emotional chords uncommon in video games. The surrounding environment is the primary "character," posing challenges. Players accumulate flower petals as the onscreen world swings between the pastoral and the chaotic. Everything you pick up causes the environment to change. The player controls the lead petal and accumulates a swarm of flower petals as s/he moves. Thatgamecompany focuses on games that touch and inspire. <http://thatgamecompany.com/games/flower/>

Superbrothers exhibit pixelated game-inspired film shorts. *Children of the Clone* (with Jim Guthrie). *Design Reboot HD* (with Jonathan Blow). *Dot Matrix Revolution* (with Jim Guthrie) has two computer engineers in a captivating dance-off that plays on the development of information technology and Internet in the last 60 years.

Trouble with your job? **Molleindustria's** *Everyday the same dream, you are late for work* is a "short existential about alienation and refusal of labor. Or if you prefer, a musical video." Molleindustria, an Italian team of artists, designers, and programmers, subverts the mainstream video gaming cliché and has fun in the process.

Forget the budget crisis? *Balance or Bust* Board Game. Your "City Council Team" must decrease spending (or increase revenue) by \$2,000,000 by the end of the fiscal year (one trip around the board is one fiscal year). Select a "Mayor" and "City Clerk." Cards are for services to be cut. Landing on dark pink squares means a Grant Opportunity. Dark green squares are Economic Development Opps. Black squares are bad news... Developed by the **City of Cupertino**, this award winning game tackles the real thing.

Tell a story. **Socks Incorporated** by **Jim Babb** is about creating an avatar, a sock puppet, and telling a story together. The player follows the main character's narrative while simultaneously participating in his/her own. The sock puppet avatar (brought to life by your hand) allows the player to experience real-world play without the fear of embarrassment or the limits of social conformities. Anyone who can upload images and videos can play. The potential for personal expression and creativity is sky-high (or knee-high in the case of socks).

For *Corporate Ladder* you stack blocks. The object of the board game, developed by **David Elliott**, UCLA Design Media Arts, is to take up the most space. Players can build up their territory or take over an opponent's territory, but if you knock over a tower you lose the game. Tall towers become a liability to everyone. Building structures is fun. Deeper pleasure comes when players' construction plans intersect. With conflict, personalities become as much a deciding factor as building strategies. <http://hadto.net/category/projects/corporate-ladder>

Divorce drama? **Robert Yang** makes mods. *Radiator 1-2*, *Handle With Care*: You're struggling to repress stressful memories while your worthless husband moans and whines to that equally worthless marriage counselor. (Issue 2, July 2009) A mod(ification) of *Half-Life 2* to talk about gay marriage and divorce.

A chess mod to better reflect modern warfare? **Andrew Y Ames's** *Last Resort* is modified chess: war to protect civilians and territory. The Bleached side with pawns, rooks, knights, bishops, and a nuke, fights to free a foreign people in another land; the Oiled side with pawns, fights to be a free people in their own land. Both sides seek to protect life and freedom. The asymmetry of war is encoded in movements. The game has brass civilian pieces that either player may move. Oiled pawns and the nuke may be detonated, removing adjacent pieces. The first player to move four civilians to the row closest to their side wins. Players can play justly and protect the citizens. Or manipulate civilian loses to gain support through deception. <http://andrewyames.com/lastresort.php>

Jake Elliott. Two grandmothers and two great-grandmothers enliven *A House in California*, a narrative game, inverting the murder mystery game *Mystery House* (1980) into "a peaceful but surreal character study which draws the player into the inner lives of its characters through verbs like *remember*, *learn* and *play*." Players engage with "environments and activities drawn from a combination of memory, research, poetry, and fantasy."

Arcade Murals:

Created on-site for the exhibition, **Sean Boyles's** 16-foot mural *Control Freak* is a tour de force, with line drawings of groups of youth, a bevy of game controls, free-flowing paint, and some nostalgic fowl from *Duck Hunt*. <http://www.seanboyles.com/> Combining colorful paint and stencils, **Rodrigo Oliva's** multi-dimensional *Bits* brings the museum's walls, seating, and computers alive with *Space Invaders* and other early game imagery.

Come On Down! is a multi-purpose project space that includes a collaborative communal area for connecting visual and oral history, and an experimental exhibition area for the results of interactive projects. Part of this campus/community space features frequently changing art. Fall 2010 presentations include:

- **Student Activity: Euphrat Multidisciplinary Arts Summer Bridge Project for Foster Youth.** Santa Clara County high school students in the De Anza Summer Bridge Program for Foster Youth (developed and directed by **Donna Fung**) worked with Euphrat staff, looked at goals and resources, and created powerful photographs, a *Game* mural, and poetry.

ABOUT THE EUPHRAT MUSEUM OF ART For over 30 years, the Euphrat has presented one-of-a-kind exhibitions, publications, and events reflecting the diverse heritage of our area. Our mission is to provide a venue and resource for visual ideas and communication that stimulate creativity and an interest in art among audiences of all ages. We provide for a spectrum of interactions with a large and diversified public, working on and off campus with specialists in all disciplines. The Museum has an outstanding Arts & Schools Program, primarily in Cupertino and Sunnyvale, at various school and community sites. Each year the Museum creates public art projects involving elementary and middle school students, De Anza student interns, and Euphrat artist/teachers. **The Euphrat is funded in part by De Anza College, De Anza Associated Student Body, City of Cupertino, City of Sunnyvale, Arts Council Silicon Valley. It is also supported by an Applied Materials Excellence in the Arts grant in partnership with Arts Council Silicon Valley, and by the Euphrat Museum Advisory Council and Friends of the Euphrat Museum.**

More info, links, at <http://www.deanza.edu/euphrat/inthemuseum.html> Contact Jan Rindfleisch at 408 864-8836 or rindfleischjanet@fhda.edu for potential press interviews with the curators or artists, and/or for press photos.