

Video Games: Action or Art?
by Kegan Lovell

Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, Saints Row, Battlefield. The first assumption to jump to when games like these are mentioned is to chastise them for their violence. After this, people would turn their backs on the topic, scowling, without a second thought. The idea that these games for young adults could be looked at as an art form is nearly repulsive. However, this conclusion is a mistake; not because of the games, but because of how we look at them. Although often overlooked, video games are the unsung heroine of modern art and culture.

Many games provide narratives that can tell a story which easily rivals popular works of literature. Prime examples of this include *To the Moon, Journey, and This War of Mine*, which are considered masterpieces by gaming enthusiasts due to the way each of them tells a unique story through innovative ideas. Abigail Tucker, an expert at Smithsonian, wrote about her opinion on games: "Video games are the only forms of artistic expression that allow the authoritative voice of the author to remain true while allowing the observer to explore and experiment." More importantly, interactivity allows a story to come alive.

Video games combine aspects of all forms of art: music, literature, visuals, and aesthetics. All of these components are widely accepted as forms of artwork, so what makes video games any less than them? In fact, combining these things to create a believable environment is a difficult task that very few companies are able to pull off correctly. Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that video games are protected by law as a legitimate form of art, meaning they are on the same playing field as any other work in an art museum. Even now, video games are still developing, and there is no telling what the future holds for them.

There are quite a few art critics who claim that video games can never hold a candle up to legendary artists such as Picasso. They argue that video games cannot be art because they do not tell a personal story about the artist or convey a realistic message to the player. This argument is not compelling, as the job of the developer *is* to immerse the player in a world where the personal story and realistic message is portrayed in the setting and gameplay. Still, critics back up this argument using examples which are infamous for their almost non-existent storyline, such as *Grand Theft Auto*. Unfortunately, these games sell because they provide lots of action, leaving games that are truly works of art, which deserve attention, behind.

Video games are a diamond in the rough, only recognized by a select few. They have influenced the world, whether it is known or not. *Pac-Man* is the most identifiable character in history, and *Mario's* tune can be instantly recognized by nearly everyone. The world should turn towards video games with open eyes and ears to be able to fully appreciate what this genre has to offer.

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