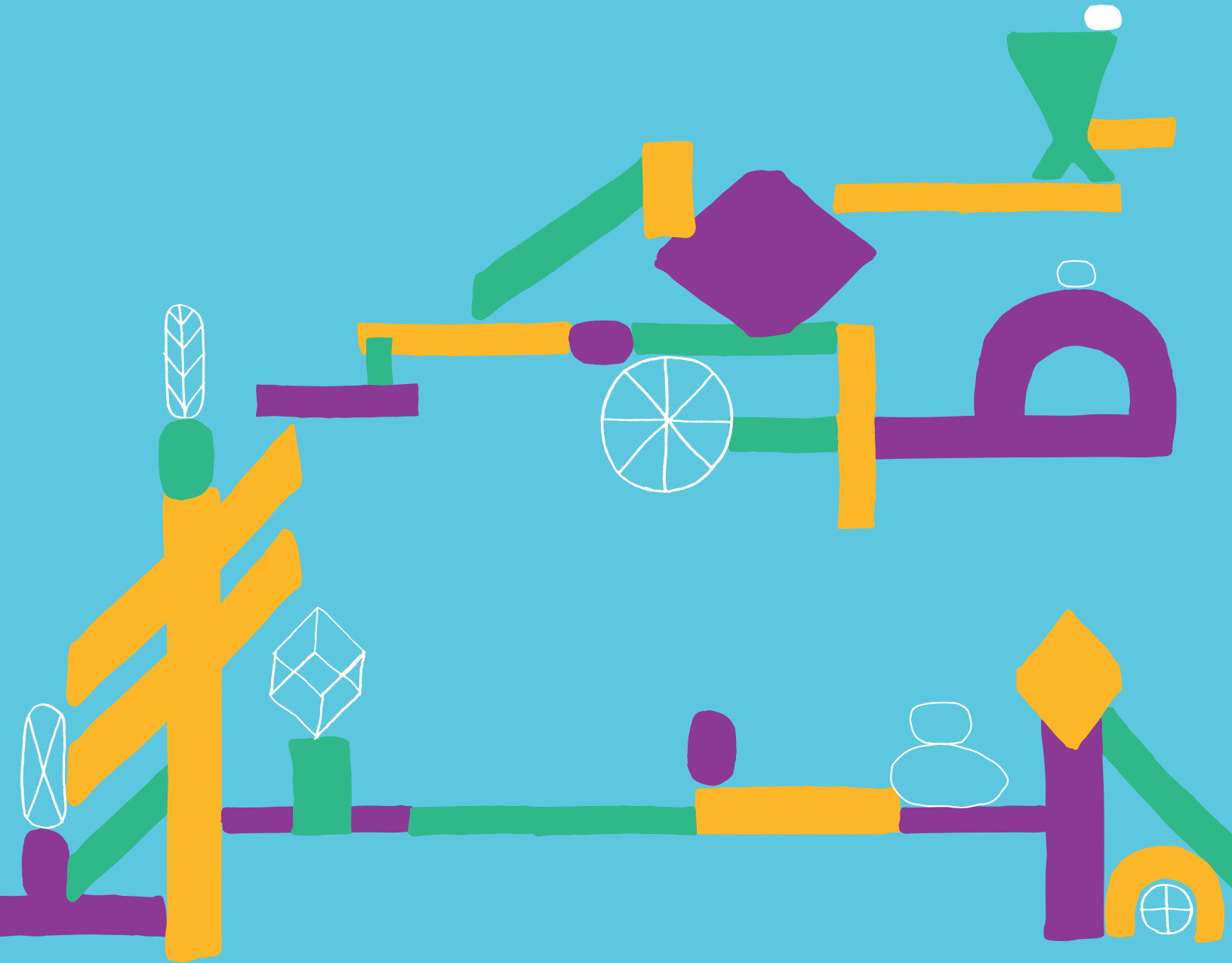


GAMEPLANNER



INTRODUCTION

There is an ever-expanding array of in-person events, festivals and conferences a game creator can attend internationally. Gameplanner is a new resource intended to help indies plan their exhibition and networking strategy based on their goals and their tendencies.

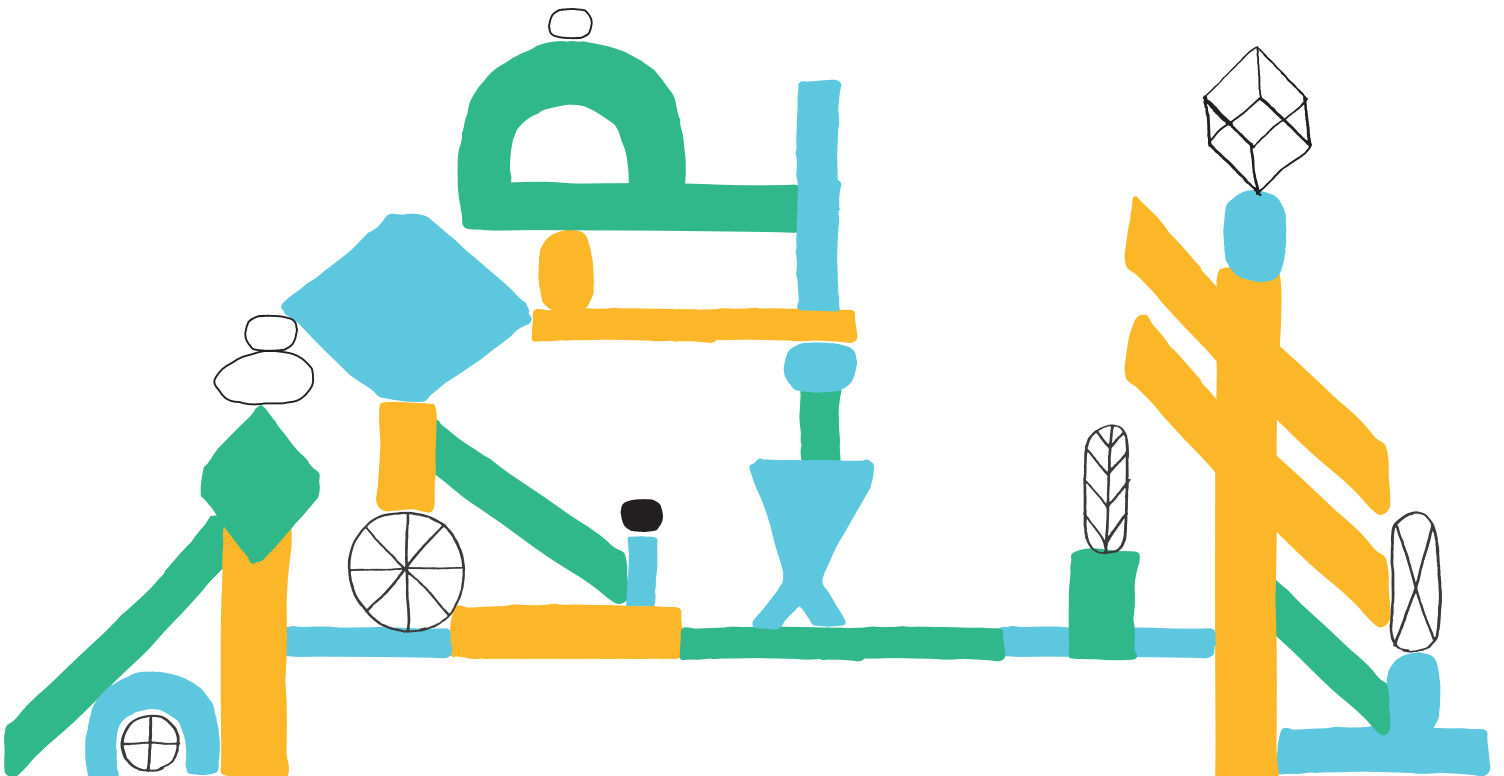
The Gameplanner resource was created by Jim Munroe of the Game Arts International Network. GAIN is a not-for-profit that serves game arts organizers and curators in Los Angeles, Montreal, Buenos Aires, Vancouver, Madrid, Ottawa, Austin, Seattle, Tel Aviv, Halifax, New York, Berlin, Melbourne, Portland, Reykjavík, Pittsburgh, London, Boston, Copenhagen, Cape Town and Toronto.

Previous to starting GAIN, Jim Munroe spent close to a decade founding and building up the Hand Eye Society, the world's first videogame arts organization. In this executive director role he ran large game curation events like the Fancy Videogame Party at the AGO, focused festivals like WordPlay, and established the Toronto Videogame Events calendar. He also became aware of the need for interconnections between regional groups, often facing the same problems and challenges alone, and started to reach out to peers and shared models of programs to groups in Vancouver, Montreal and Portland.

Gameplanner was created between January and September 2019 with the input of 56 game creators across Canada and over a dozen international game curators through a series of one-on-one interviews and surveys. We would like to thank all these respondents and the following for outreach assistance: Dr. Jennifer R. Whitson, Dr. Bart Simon and Dr. Felan Parker from Indie Interfaces; Maurice Grela from Full Indie; Jason Della Rocca from GamePlaySpace; Tanya X. Short from Pixelles; Craig Pfau from Alberta Makes Games; & Logan Foster from GameCamp Edmonton.

Gameplanner was made with the financial support of the Canada Media Fund and Ontario Creates.

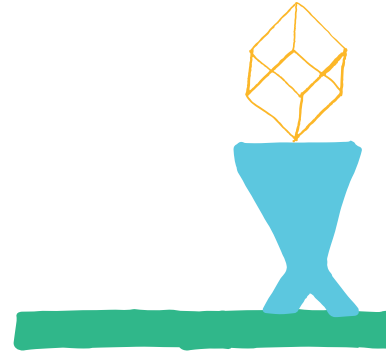
The opinions, observations, conclusions, and recommendations contained in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ontario Creates or the Canada Media Fund. The Canada Media Fund, Ontario Creates, the Governments of Canada and Ontario and their agencies are in no way bound by the recommendations contained in this document.



MATCH YOUR GOALS WITH EVENTS

Attending in-person events is a fun and useful activity for most game creators. But it can also be tiring and expensive, so it's worth thinking through your gameplan when it comes to choosing where to put your time and focus. This resource was created to help you craft your approach.

Most people make games to be played by other people. Almost all of these goals are ways to connect with and build an audience: it makes creation meaningful, and increases the economic and emotional reserves to continue to make games. But as there are direct and indirect ways to do this, it's worth covering each separately.



BUILD AUDIENCE DIRECTLY

Getting your game in front of players and giving them a chance to try it is a time-intensive but effective way of connecting with an audience. This can happen anywhere you can set up your game, but usually happens on showfloors at game events. The top choice by a mile for this is the PAX series of events, mainly PAX Prime and East, with E3 being a distant second.

GET MEDIA AND STREAMER COVERAGE

Keeping in mind that this is mostly an indirect way to build audience, it can be a time-effective way to focus your efforts if you have the kind of game that has a gonzo visual style that appeals to streamers, or if your game has an interesting hook that would be appealing to write about. E3 and PAX E&W, are the top, with GDC and IndieCade getting honorable mention.

NETWORKING WITH PEERS

Beyond the fun of hanging with cool like-minded people, there's a number of other benefits: potential future collaborations/employees; technical, creative, and business advice/feedback; co-promotion to fan bases. Lots of indies enjoy including little nods to other indie games via skins and references, and this can often be a no-cash co-promotion. It can lead to being invited to join an indie email list or conversations where you can learn from their experiences or mistakes.

For commercial game creators, GDC is the top pick, with PAX #2. For non-commercial, A Maze Berlin and IndieCade are highly regarded.

BUSINESS DEALS

By attending an event you are demonstrating your investment in the community, but that's rarely enough to land a publishing deal or get showcased on a platform. Being on the showfloor can allow reps to discover you and see player response, and social events can be a way to initiate or maintain relationships. GDC is the top, followed by PAX, followed by E3.

GET INSPIRED BY GAMES AND TALKS

Learning something new about your craft or seeing an amazing new game can really keep you inspired during the long periods where you have your head down creating your own work. It's hard to quantify, and perhaps the most subjective, but GDC (and its IGF and Alt CTRL programs, now alongside Day of the Devs) rated the highest, with PAX being second.

THERE'S MORE!



ALSO NOTABLE

While it's clear that GDC and PAX are the most highly valued events for most of the goals we've outlined, there are a number of others that are worth mentioning.

- BitSummit is a good all-round event in Japan
- GamesCom is the world's biggest games conference and while it is expensive and exhausting, it is a good connection to the European market
- EGX Rezzed in the UK has good player attendance and media
- PSX is highly rated for the enthusiastic fan base for those on the Sony platform

WORTH IT IF YOU'RE NEARBY

- Full Indie Summit in Vancouver is a one-day conference with showcasing opportunities
- Montreal International Game Summit has networking and business opportunities
- Comics X Games and WordPlay happen in Toronto for those with comic-inspired art or narratively focused games
- Esports games have had good response at EGLX in Toronto

HANDY CHART!



= Known for it



= Somewhat known for it

| | Media | Peer Networking | Business Deals | Player Contact | Inspiration |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A Maze Berlin | Somewhat known for it | Known for it | | Somewhat known for it | Known for it |
| Bitsummit | Somewhat known for it | Somewhat known for it | | Somewhat known for it | Somewhat known for it |
| E3 | Known for it | Known for it | Somewhat known for it | Somewhat known for it | |
| EGX Rezzed | Known for it | | | Known for it | |
| GamesCom | Somewhat known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Somewhat known for it | Somewhat known for it |
| GDC | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Somewhat known for it | Known for it |
| IndieCade | Somewhat known for it | Known for it | | | Known for it |
| PAX East | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it |
| PAX West | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it | Known for it |
| PSX | Known for it | Somewhat known for it | | Known for it | |

This top ten chart is based on 23 in-person interviews and 33 online surveys. The research was conducted between June-August of 2019 and included game creators in Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Edmonton, London, Varennes, Quebec City, New Westminster, Surrey, Calgary, and Gabriola Island.

PLAN YOUR ATTACK

Events tend to sneak up on you, especially in the fog of game development. Here is one set-it-and-forget-it approach that will help you get the jump on things.



BE CAREFUL!

1. Make a list of events that you feel have value to you and best align with your goals.
2. Set a recurring reminder in your calendar twice a year to PLAN GAME EVENTS. Once a year isn't enough, because festivals and conferences often announce dates close to the event.
3. When the reminder comes up, pick your date source to see what of your chosen events have dates announced:
 - [EventsForGamers.com](https://www.eventsforgamers.com) is the most comprehensive event calendar event we've found and has run for a decade. This site will allow you to import events directly into your calendar, which is handy.
 - Zuraida Buter curates a selection of playful events that have more of an arts slant at zo-ii.com.
 - You can also refer to the event site itself and enter it manually.
Either way, get the events into your calendar. Set a reminder for yourself six weeks before the event about it.
4. Now check the event site to see if there are any showcasing, award, or talk proposal deadlines. (We can call these multipliers as they increase an event's value.) Create a reminder for yourself two-to-three weeks out from the deadline that says, say, IGF SUBMISSION DUE IN TWO WEEKS! If there isn't a deadline posted yet, subscribe to their newsletter. (You can also use deadlines like these to motivate your team, in which case you might want to put the reminder a month or two out instead. An external deadline is always better than an internal milestone.)
5. This is the best part: forget about it. You won't book a camping trip that conflicts, though you can always skip that event this year if a good opportunity comes up -- just not accidentally.
6. When the reminder comes up for a multiplier like an award and your game is presentable, you can submit it unless you've decided in the interim that the event is off your list.
7. When you get a reminder about the event in six weeks, it's time to decide. Plane tickets are only going up from here, and that lead time will allow you to reach out to people and book meetings. Assess the travel costs and the disruption to your development cycle and measure it against how it helps you reach your goals.

CHOOSE YOUR STRATEGIES

Your choice of strategies should take into account your temperament, abilities, and the type of game you have.

DO YOU LOVE TALKING TO STRANGERS AND SHOWING THEM YOUR GAME?

what about...

SHOWCASING YOUR GAME

There's lots of benefits to showcasing your game. Pre-release you can get user feedback and watch to see what's working and not, as well as build excitement. Post-release you can engage with existing fans. But, it can be exhausting, especially for introverts. There's minimal time to interact with peers. It's expensive to get your equipment and rent the booth. Prep, attendance, and recovery takes time out of development.

Team Up: The Indie MegaBooth is a no-brainer if you can get in. We universally heard from creators that IMB offers better traffic, better media attention and lower costs than running a solo booth (though the MiniBooth got mixed reviews). The PAX 10 showcase offers free booth space and the Indie Arena at GamesCom is also recommended.

Don't Go Alone: Make sure you have enough people with you to have reasonable shifts. People involved with making the game are more exciting for players to meet and can answer questions that potential business partners might have, but some people have limited social energy. Perhaps you can bring a younger developer from the community along to apprentice in your booth?

Design Your Booth: You put thought into every aspect of your game: do the same with the user experience of your booth! Mount a large screen high up so people can spectate when it's busy. Dollar store bling can give a little visual flare. Vertical banners are not hugely expensive, eye-catching, and easy to transport. Always include an email list signup for when people want to quietly indicate they're superfans.

Merch Madness: Stickers, pins, shirts and stuffies based on your game can offset booth costs, enhance the booth decor, and promote your work, when done well -- but it's really hard to do well. Consult with other people, make prototypes and short runs and see what works at local events, and be careful with border crossings as they can trigger customs charges that kill your profit margin.

Photos or it Didn't Happen: Get lots of photos of people having a blast with your game. They'll come in handy for newsletter updates or pitches.

Level Up Regionally: If you're in an area that has game events, take the opportunity to practise showcasing when stakes (and costs and effort) are lower. See what works, and iterate on it for larger events.

DO YOU LOVE TALKING ABOUT YOUR GAME, BUT NOT ALL THE TIME? DO YOU HAVE THE SAVVY TO PUT TOGETHER SOME PUNCHY COPY?

try...

MAKING MEDIA HAPPEN

New makes the News: Having something new to announce such as a new feature or new content substantially increases your chances of getting coverage.

Refine Your Pitch: A one-line hook is useful to pull in players on the showfloor, intrigue peers at parties, and

show market potential to your potential partners. Yes, it can be challenging to distill something you've worked for years on down to one line: rise to this challenge.

Hire Some Guns: If you have an announcement and few media contacts it might be worth considering hiring a PR

company for a few months prior to the event to hook and book media interviews for you. A good PR company will have a deep knowledge of the media outlets, writers and what they're looking for.

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR BACKING TO DO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN YOU COULD ON YOUR OWN?

you should be...

DOING BUSINESS DEALS

Book Early: Contact people you'd like to meet with 3-4 weeks in advance, and if you have the choice, book earlier in the event while they're still fresh and haven't had 4 solid days of 16 meetings a day. Later in the event when spots are running scarce they might cancel your meeting entirely.

Mentoring at Meetings: Have a junior member of the team with some promise? Bring them

along to the meeting so they can see how things go down. Even if they take notes or just sit there and listen, it helps reduce the mystique in a way other training doesn't.

Be a Curious Cat: Although it can seem like you're the less powerful entity in the conversation, having a few questions for your prospective partner -- good ones you couldn't just google -- can give

you a better sense of who you're dealing with. Plus, if you tend to overtalk, this can break that up.

Skip the GDC Meeting: If you're already in contact with them, some people have suggested meeting with partners at a less high-density event like IndieCade. Others have said they like to visit key partners in the off season in their own office, where they have more time.

LOTS OF PEOPLE FIND THE TERM NETWORKING OFF-PUTTING, BUT IF YOU'RE DOING IT RIGHT, IT'S AS NATURAL AS MAKING FRIENDS.

here's how to...

MAKE FRIENDS

Play the Long Game: The veterans we spoke to all spoke about how their network grew slowly over a number of years, getting stronger with conversations and parties where common interests were discovered and trust was built. Familiarity leads to getting a no quicker, and getting a yes eventually.

Ask for Feedback: Peers often have great feedback and can also become advocates for your game and signal boost it when it comes out. Even if they have smaller followings, it can boost your credibility with their followers -- who sometimes are media people with bigger followings. Do you follow? Also,

asking for small favours -- like bridging introductions -- is generally a good idea, because it opens the door for them to ask you favours, and pretty soon it's not a transactional thing anymore.

Take Notes: Because it's often months or years between events, it helps to jot down things about people you connect with to jog your memory next time, or when you're looking for a certain type of contact in the interim. You can be methodical without being mechanical.

Facebook Friends to IRL Friends (and back): If you have time, reach out to people you follow on social media and see if they

want to meet up. Some will be too busy already, but some will be free. Similarly a good way to keep low-key informed about someone you met at an event is to follow them on social media.

Don't Just Network Up: A lot of people think they have to talk to important or influential people to succeed, but it's often more natural to build relationships with peers. A few years later, you have a real friendship and, what do you know, a lot of them will have moved into decision-maker roles.

THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE AT EVENTS, AND IT DOESN'T HURT TO STAND OUT. THOSE LOOKING TO BUILD ART CAREERS CAN BENEFIT IN PARTICULAR FROM GETTING AWARDS AND DOING TALKS TO PUT ON THEIR CVs.

you can always...

DISTINGUISH YOURSELF

Submit Your Game for Awards:

Many creators were ambivalent towards awards and saw only slight correlation between them and success. They help team morale and raised reputation among peers -- which could lead to better collaborations and partners. The laurels give partners, press and potential players another reason to look at it. If you are considering going to an event, you should consider submitting your game to their awards or showcase. If they accept it, then you can attend with some perks including free passes or special networking opportunities -- and yeah, maybe a bit of an ego boost.

Propose a Talk: Similar to the above, if you are considering going to an event that takes talk proposals, you might want to think about submitting one of

yours if it's the kind of thing you like doing. If you hate public speaking and find creating talks exhausting, it's unlikely to be worth the work. A self-promoting talk is unlikely to be selected, but if you have something of value you want to share -- a technique or perspective on game creation that you think would be helpful -- go with that energy. It will almost certainly lead to interesting conversations in the aftermath.

Organize Something Cool: Many people love parties, but some people find it doesn't work for them: they don't drink, they have problems with loud rooms, or other reasons. Why not create the gatherings of type you want with the kinds of people you want to socialize with? Perhaps it's a small dinner with a handful of narrative designers. Maybe

it's a gathering in the park where fellow introverts can catch up on email near each other. Maybe you organize an outing to a gallery or suggest a walk. If you want to do it, it's likely other people will too!

Fly Your Freak Flag: Feel like the only musician in a roomful of coders? Cool, they need you to compose some tunes! Aren't a white straight male in this still-homogenous community? Great, there's lots of teams who know they need your perspective. Are you more influenced by Victorian novels than Zelda? You might make the next innovative interactive fiction that people flock to. Being different can be uncomfortable, for sure, but if you stick it out you might find it to be your biggest asset.

AND
DON'T
FORGET!

POST-MORTEM

When you get home from the event, take ten minutes to write down the benefits of attending the event. Set a task for three months after the event assess any new benefits that have developed and take ten minutes to review what you'd do differently.

APPENDIX



HOLLY GRAMAZIO

NOW PLAY THIS, UK

For the last five years I've directed Now Play This, which runs at Somerset House as part of the London Games Festival. Each year I've worked with George Buckenham to select the work for that -- generally a core exhibition of around 25-40 works, and then other special events and sometimes showcases around that.

What is the general process followed for each, ie how do you find the games, who is involved with the selection and how are they selected?

Oh gosh, big question! We do a lot of different things: follow interesting people on itch.io and twitter and try to pay attention to their work; look at interesting itch galleries; read criticism; scoot through recommendation blogs; look at the lineups of other festivals and exhibitions; go to anything we can where interactive work is shown; sometimes just google random phrases related to themes we're interested in, add the word "game", and see if anything comes up. If someone sends in a game for the festival one year and it isn't quite right, but we're interested in their work, we'll

pay attention to them for next year. In fact, because we curate around themes rather than around recency of work, a couple of times we've even gone back to someone who submitted a game in a previous year that didn't quite make sense for us in the context of the rest of the show, and asked if we can show it now.

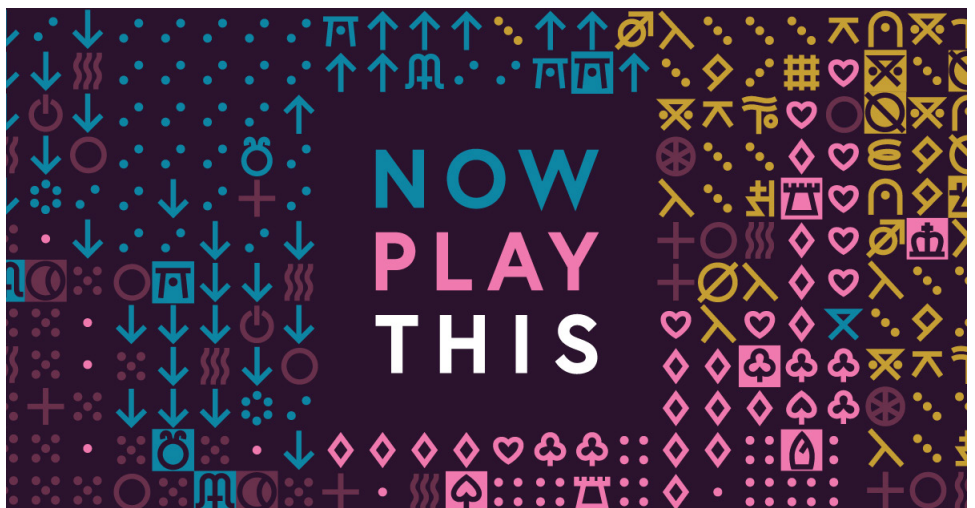
Plus a lot of friends and colleagues know what we're looking for and what our themes are in a given year, and send us links.

We also run an open call, inviting people with relevant work (whether that's released or in development) to send it in. We try to make this a really simple process, with just a few questions, enough to give us an idea of whether the work might be suitable, and if so we can go ahead and look into it

in more detail. Our ideal is that it shouldn't take people more than five minutes to fill in the form. It's important to us to keep it simple just because we take so few of the games that come in through the open call -- most of the work we show has come to us some other way, and we might take three or five games from the open call in any given year. So we don't want two hundred people to spend two hours each writing up their game, if we know we're going to take maybe one or two percent of them!

How many games do you review and how many are selected? How many people get to see/play the game as a result?

Depending on the year and the theme we might get anywhere between 120 and 300 games sent into the



open call, and like I say we'd always take at least a few of those, and maybe as many as six or eight -- I don't think we've ever taken more than that.

I have no idea how many games we "review" through the less formal process of just poking around and keeping our eyes open -- many hundreds each year, certainly, but that can mean anything from "playing it for thirty seconds at an event and shrugging and moving on" to "hearing about it and contacting the creator and skyping to find out more about it and playing for hours."

What do you wish you got more of?

I would always love to see more purely physical playable work that works on a drop-in basis -- games using paper, things we can stick on walls and get people to draw on top

of, construction or creativity toys that do something novel. And large room-scale installations, as well: a few more of those would be amazing.

What do you wish you got less of?

You know, I don't think there's anything. Sure, we get some games that are just copy-and-pasted into the form by a PR firm who clearly haven't read the open call, but those are always super quick to weed out. And anything else that I could make an absolute statement about -- well, there'd be a game that would prove me wrong.

How do you handle rejections?

Mostly we just send out a mass rejection letter with everyone BCC'ed in. If a game was super close to acceptance, or we reeeaaaally wanted to show it but it just

didn't make sense in the context of the show overall, or we think the work isn't quite ready but the artist is new to us and we'd love to see what they make in future, we'll try to reply personally, but usually that's only a few games each year.

I will say: sometimes I get a cheery email back from someone whose game we didn't take, going "oh well, thanks for looking at it, good luck with the festival!". And that's always SO nice! Sending out the rejections is a pretty unpleasant task, and it makes you feel better to get someone replying in good humour, and it also helps to remind you that nobody actually cares about your festival as much as you do; the decisions might seem agonising to you but nobody is devastated by being turned down. So I try to do that myself now when I'm rejected for something!

LAUREN GARDNER

BABYCASTLES, NYC



As a collective, Babycastles selects games/ events/Installation ideas that are either shown in our space or for events we curate like MagFest or when we have commissions to put on events at other spaces like the Algorave Arcade at PS1. We also work with outside curators to suggest games for exhibits like the games in the cabinets at the V&A Design/Play/Disrupt. All of these selections or decisions made as a collective follow our mission to amplify and increase the diversity of voices in video game culture.

Individually, our members may be part of additional panels to select games. This is outside of our collective's purview.

What is the general process followed for each, ie how do you find the games, who is involved with the selection and how are they selected?

We follow two main processes for curation. For installations or events, we have a form online for people to submit their ideas or they email us directly. For installation/events suggestions, we then discuss internally to see if the idea fits our mission and we have the capacity to help build it. If we agree as a collective to add it to the calendar then we assign an internal host and continue discussions in a smaller team to realize the installation.

The second process is more loose. Once the event or installation is chosen we

then have many internal discussions about the games or logistics of how they will be displayed. Because we are a fairly large collective, we also reach out to our contacts to help curate games/artists/ references/people... This is the responsibility of the host to reach out but it's a collective effort to curate the games and their display.

How many games do you review and how many are selected? How many people get to see/play the game as a result?

We do anywhere from 8 to 12 installations a year with an average of 10 games per installation. If you count the one-off curations, events like Game of The Month Club or events held offsite

I'd estimate we show more than 200 games per year. Our average monthly attendance to our space is 400+ people so estimate 5,000 people per year. That is not inclusive of the events we help curate offsite like MagFest (30k) or V&A (100k+ ???).

I couldn't guess at the # of games reviewed. Again, most of that happens on an individual level at different conferences, playtest nights, game jams...

What do you wish you got more of?

People who want to do administrative tasks... J/K (but not really). Personally I wish we got more games that were made on super accessible platforms so we could do more learning events around the exhibitions. My favorite example of this last year was the [Pixels/Paper exhibit](#).



I'd also encourage every person who submits an idea or a game to think about the context of how it could be displayed or similar/complimentary works and events. Games are an opportunity to learn about so much and we have the ability to make an event with 'games' into a transformative social experience. A good example of this is the curation Ben did for '[Games about Protest](#)' which included digital games, board games and rule books. It included contemporary games and historical games. It was a learning opportunity for everyone who came and

many people walked away with a new perspective of what a game could be.

What do you wish you got less of?

Physical installation Ideas that lack criticality.

We are in the instagram age and it is easy to make things that look good. It is harder to make things that look good and make you think differently.

How do you handle rejections?

If we get an idea that does not meet our mission statement, we reframe our objective with the submitter

to diversify the culture around games and ask them to re-work their submission to include more women/people of color or LGBTQ artists into their curation and re-submit.

Additionally, if an artist needs space and it's not something that is 'on mission' we can rent out the space for a flat fee but it won't be promoted as a Babycastles event and we aren't involved with the curation. We do this for student showcases or game launches. In this way, we can still serve the audience of independent developers in NYC.

LU OULTON

GAME ON! EL ARTE EN JUEGO, BUENOS AIRES



As the director and curator of Game ON! El arte en juego I'm deeply involved in the selection process of the games. Each edition is integrated by a mixture of invited works, commissioned projects and open call. The exhibition's first edition was in 2009 but it wasn't until 2014 that we added the open call. We have 2 simultaneous open calls, one for national works that included works-in-progress, projects and installations, and an international one that is only open to video games: either software works that can be sent by mail or alt-CTRL proposals that can be shipped and locally mounted or locally replicated.

The focus is always the same: art games, experimental works, alt controls, playable media which separates from the mainstream and conventional. We look for innovative narratives, for aesthetic virtuosity, experimental and disruptive game design, sensorial experiences and so on.



What is the general process followed for each, ie how do you find the games, who is involved with the selection and how are they selected?

Until this year the selection process was run by the Game ON permanent team, but this year we created a Committee selection team integrated by two external advisors: Agustin Perez Fernandez (indie developer specialized in art games), Diego Mate (art critic and game scholar) and myself.

We also ask advice from people who are deeply related to the local scene (like FUNDAV – the national video games foundation) who have been participating in international congresses or who are related to the international experimental scene. We are also constantly checking other festivals and contest, trying to be up to date.

The open call is a conventional form that asks for info such as title, abstract, equipment, trailers, demo, everything that can help us understand the game.

We have a first selection process to narrow down the most attractive proposals. They have to be new games (not older than a year or have an improvement, for instance they have now a VR version that is

somehow different from the previous experience). They have to induce a feeling of awe. They have to be suitable to play in an exhibition context or be able to be understandable in a short period of time, they have to be in Spanish or English or able to be understandable despite its language. They can not be offensive or aggressive.

Then we go to a second selection based upon the amount of games we can have. We try to have a mix of different experiences and hardwares.

Once we have this we start to think on the coincidences and convergences in order to create nodes of work. We form groups associated by a common characteristic, for

instance narrative, activism. That makes us think of possible games that have not presented to the open call but should be invited to the exhibit, and we try to reach out to those.

How many games do you review and how many are selected? How many people get to see/play the game as a result?

The amount of work varies each edition, but approximately 100 are reviewed and in between 20-30 end up being exhibited. Around 2000 people visit the exhibit which usually last 10 days and is free of charge.

What do you wish you got more of?

I would love more alt-CTRL and installation works.

What do you wish you got less of?

Interactive narrative games, which are not so exhibition-friendly and end up being pretty similar (at least the ones that have applied to our open calls). We are thinking of a special section for those this year, but still haven't made up our minds about it.

How do you handle rejections?

We have a stock mail that we send individually where we thank them for taking the time to participate. We explain that the selection process is tough and that sadly this time they haven't been selected. We also offer the possibility to have individual feedback which if solicited is always related to the focus of the exhibit.



SAGAN YEE HAND EYE SOCIETY, TORONTO

As the executive director of videogame arts organization, the Hand Eye Society, I oversee a number of exhibition and showcases throughout the year such as:

ComicsXGames — A showcase of games during the Toronto Comics Arts Festival.

Hand Eye Society Ball — A fancy videogame party with a selection of party games and other playful social activities from around the world.

WordPlay Festival of Writerly Games — A showcase of games with interesting or exceptional use of writing at the Toronto Reference Library.

What is the general process followed for each, ie how do you find the games, who is involved with the selection and how are they selected?

ComicsXGames has an open call a few months before the event with no cost to submit. Whoever of the staff is interested and wants to be involved takes part in the selection process. It takes a day to play the games and take notes. We look for games with visual impact likely to appeal to TCAF's audience. It's easy to identify the extremes (definitely and definitely not) so the second round is about going the the ones in the middle. People will advocate for certain games to be included over others.

Hand Eye Society Ball has an open call with no cost to submit. The process is similar to CxG except the tilt it towards multiplayer games and alt-controller games that offer a unique experience. For alt-controller games, good documentation is hugely important (one decent vid is all you need) as we often won't be able to play it ourselves.

WordPlay has an open call with no cost to submit. It has an international jury made up of previous showcase winners and local advisors who create interactive fiction.

How many games do you review and how many are selected?



How many people get to see/ play the game as a result?

CxG: 60 games reviewed, 25 are selected. It's part of TCAF which gets 20,000 visitors, we estimate 800 people over the fest see it.

HESB: 30 games reviewed, 11 are selected. 600 people get to see it.

WordPlay: 80 games reviewed, 25 are selected. 150 people see it.

What do you wish you got more of?

I wish people would submit games to suitable showcases: a game that would be good for WordPlay wouldn't be good for the Ball, and vice versa. We could use more submissions overall! Not enough multiplayer games for the Ball!

What do you wish you got less of?

Mechanically good, aesthetically bad games. I would rather have a mechanically weak, visually strong game when it comes to exhibition. It's not inviting.

How do you handle rejections?

We send a bcc'ed mass email thanking and notifying folks.