Critical Archaeological Gaming Workshop
January 25, 26
Cotsen Institute Seminar Room (Fowler A222)

screenshot: “Deadfall” https://www.kotaku.com.au/2013/06/its-a-global-archeological-adventure-its-also-an-fps/

This workshop focuses on the design of archaeological games that entice users to engage with archaeological skills, methods, questions and results. What are possible goals of such games, and how can these be reached through narratives, interactive mechanics and visual, aural and motive stimulants.

Beyond providing exercises in archaeological approaches, can emergent gameplay have a significant heuristic function? If so, what are the requirements for availability and quality of data, player choice and player skill development?

Friday Seminar, 26 January

3.00 pm	Friday Seminar: Panel Discussion on Critical Archaeological Gaming Chris Johanson, Demetri Terzopoulos, Eddo Stern, Lisa Snyder
4.00 pm	Reception
5.00 pm	David Fredrick (University of Arkansas)

Data Games: Cognitive Mapping in Ancient Pompeii

PROGRAM

Thursday, January 25

Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Seminar Room A222

10.00-10.15	Willeke Wendrich	*Welcome and purpose of the workshop*
10.15-11.00	Tara Copplestone	*Rethinking Archaeology Through Game Design*
11.00-11.15		coffee break
11.15-12.00	Erik Champion	*The Sin of Completeness versus the Lure of Fantasy in Contested Possibility-Spaces*
12.00 – 1.00		Lunch Break
1.00-1.45	Willeke Wendrich	*Walking through Empty Buildings, Everybody Wears the Same Shoes*
1.45-2.30	Hannah Scates Kettler	*Jumping into the Animus: Revisiting old video games to create new ones*
2.30-3.15	David Fredrick	*Secrets in the Garden: Modeling Vulnerability and Information Exchange in the House of Octavius Quartio*
3.15-3.30		Coffee break
4.15-5.00	Rosa Tamborrino	*The sense of Time in Videogames: Fragments and Lack of Dynamics in Historical Environment Reconstructions*

Friday, January 26

Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Seminar Room A222 and Digital Archaeology Lab A163

10.00 – 12.00	Demonstrations in the Digital Archaeology Lab (A163)
12.00 – 1.00	lunch break
1.00- 3.00	Discussion: setting the agenda and follow up (A222)
3.00 pm	Friday Seminar: Panel Discussion on Critical Archaeological Gaming Chris Johanson, Demetri Terzopoulos, Eddo Stern, Lisa Snyder
4.00 pm	Reception
5.00 pm	Public Lecture by David Fredrick *Data Games: Cognitive Mapping in Ancient Pompeii*

Abstracts:

Erik Champion

The Sin of Completeness versus the Lure of Fantasy in Contested Possibility-Spaces

"..virtual archaeology was not only about 'what was' and 'what is', or just about developing digital tools... It included a licence to imagine 'what ifs' and 'what might come to be'."
In contrast to virtual archaeology, I will outline but question how the fantasy elements of computer games' pretend completeness enrich ritual, player choice and reward. Could archaeology-focused games leverage fantasy (imagination) for not just engagement but also for critical reflection?

Reference
Beale, G. and Reilly, P. 2017 After Virtual Archaeology: Rethinking Archaeological Approaches to the Adoption of Digital Technology, Internet Archaeology 44. https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.44.1 [Section 2].

Tara Copplestone

Rethinking Archaeology Through Game Design

This brief paper will use a series of games developed in collaboration with programmers, artists and archaeologists to explore how the game media interacts with archaeological knowledge production, dissemination and understanding. These case studies were designed using the "rethink" principle, allowing for unexpected or unusual archaeological games that, for example, are played by neural networks, use humans or artefacts as controllers, are played during excavation, or use archaeological data to procedurally generate narratives. The creation of these unusual games was recorded using a Moments of Inspiration (MoI) tool that allowed the creators to capture what they were thinking and doing during production. By analyzing the MoI data alongside player observations, interviews and heatmaps this paper will explore how disruptive design can provide a unique space for generating, sharing and engaging with archaeological knowledge – for both the players and the developers.

David Fredrick

Secrets in the Garden: Modeling Vulnerability and Information Exchange in the House of Octavius Quartio

This presentation details a virtual recreation of the House of Octavius Quartio, in the form of a Unity3d application, as a platform for the exploration of its composition that is both analytic and experiential. The Unity application allows movement between a realistically modeled and textured representation of the house and its gardens, experienced through a first-person walking simulator, and abstracted analysis of how space, wall painting, sculpture, and plantings work together to choreograph movement and condition social interaction.

The latter is informed by the integrated spatio-visual toolset found in holistic environmental analysis, including network topology, visual integration and interest, proxemics, and atmospherics. This ensemble approach is increasingly found in the analysis of contemporary retail settings, and it becomes particularly insightful when the spatio-visual data are projected in and through the 3D model, where it is most legible through a top-down or orbiting mode of presentation to the user.

Hannah Scates-Kettler

Jumping into the Animus: Revisiting old video games to create new ones

What elements have made a game popular? What elements turn people off? Libraries are particularly sensitive to the what's popular, what's in demand, and what's 'best' for teaching and learning. As such, the most likely collected and preserved video games are those that have significant cultural relevance. This paper will explore the past successes and failures in some recent, popular video games. It will also highlight glaring issues regarding video games, archaeology, libraries and how they impact dissemination, collectability and long-term playability.

Rosa Tamborrino

The sense of Time in Videogames: Fragments and Lack of Dynamics in Historical Environment Reconstructions

This contribution highlights the differences in sense of time between a scholarly approach to (digital) historical reconstruction and historical set ups developed for videogames. The temporal fragments conceived for videogames have the purpose of creating "synthetic" sceneries. Some videogames are very precise, realizing very truthful recreations of built environments. Nevertheless they create artificial contexts by visualizing a frozen idea of the time of the period evoked.
I will explore the historical contexts of the videogame "Assassin's Creed" developed by Ubisoft Montreal. By discussing its several set ups, I will especially focus on the set up created of 19th Century Paris as a case study. Places and people involved in the gaming actions will be analyzed in relation to a historical approach in a reconstruction that always requires taking into account layers and dynamics. On the other hand the illusory realism of the game also evokes reflections on how to use the historical reconstructions for edutainment. Is a plethora of information the best approach to cultural heritage education?

Willeke Wendrich

Walking through Empty Buildings, Everybody Wears the Same Shoes

Archaeological visualizations are often based on actual archaeological finds. "Realistic" 3DVR reconstructions of buildings are usually an extrapolation of extant architectural remains, with a strong focus on building materials and techniques, without considering the wider urban or landscape contexts or human interaction with and within the space. Similarly, representations of human activity, clothing and interaction tend to focus on material culture and depicts humans using some of the archaeological finds. The limited range of objects recovered, results in the duplication of particular finds ("the" Roman sandal). The reason for such limitations is mostly the intense and time consuming research required to create an archaeology-based reconstruction. Gaming environments usually have a greater interest in atmosphere than in research-based settings, where the narrative is linked to action, rather than the static reconstruction of the context. This paper addresses whether we can create exciting narratives that critically engage and employ the research for 3DVR models, rather than using them as a backdrop.

Willeke Wendrich, NELC, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology
Demetri Terzopoulos, Computer Science
Eddo Stern, Design Media Arts
Chris Johanson, Classics