CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

Session 3 – DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS & GAMES

Readings
> *Murray, From Additive to Expressive form Gamic Action*
> *Galloway, 4 moments*

Concepts/Keywords
- Interactive $\begin{cases} \text{procedural} \\ \text{participatory} \end{cases}$
- Immersive $\begin{cases} \text{spatial} \\ \text{encyclopedic} \end{cases}$
- Scripting the interactor
- Diegetic / Non-diegetic
- Operator

Goals
- Understanding basic principles of digital media foundations to understand how to digest media changes games

Intro:
> Murray talks about Digital Media in general, not Video Games alone; Galloway Focuses on games
>> Both try to find the essential principles of the medium, what sets them apart from other media. There is a focus on the object, not the human side.
> Every new media tech starts by imitating previous media forms.

Additive Forms:
- film – photo play or moving pictures
- photo – paintings with light - "multimedia"
- TV – radio with images
In the end, these media forms must find their own expressive, distinctive, principles

MURRAY

Murray approaches Digital Media from the standpoint of NARRATIVE, as a new narrative form

4 Essential properties of digital environments:

INTERACTIVE:
> PROCEDURAL
- Develop and behave according to two sets of rules
- Eliza example
> PARTICIPATORY
- Responsive to interactor's input
- participation in Zork is continuous, it is trial and error until you get it right
- part of the pleasure of Zork is testing the limits of what the program can do:
- this is possible because it's not branching, but instead using Object-Oriented Programming.
- Scripting the interactors in Zork - Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) provides the script

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IMMERSIVE:

SPATIAL
- Represent a space to navigate or move through
- Different from book – happens here and now
- Experimental drama of digital environments makes it not possible in other media
    - arguable – how is it different from table-top games like D&D?

ENCYCLOPEDIC
- Refers to storage capacity of computers
- Problems:
    - info is often fragmented or incomplete
    - Stories can be long-winded, formless, confusing (where to go next?)
    - Compelling property for narrative
    - About Civilization (the computer game) → "in Digital Media the interpretive framework is embedded in the rules by which the system works and the way participation is shaped" (systems embed volume)

Compare with definitions of play

HUIZINGA	CAILLOIS	MURRAY
FREE →	FREE→	PARTICIPATORY
SECLUDED, LIMITED→	SEPARATE→	SPATIAL
REGULATED →	GOVERNED BY RULES →	PROCEDURAL
	UNCERTAIN	
		ENCYCLOPEDIC
NOT-ORDINARY	MAKE-BELIEVE	
SOCIAL GROUPING		
NO MATERIAL INTEREST	UNPRODUCTIVE	

Play Eliza, apply properties

Galloway studies the <u>medium</u> of the Video Game
    Cultural Objects:
- bound by history and materiality
    - electronic computation on a device
    - game simulated in software
- photograph – images
- films – moving images
- <u>games</u> – <u>actions</u>

Machine Actions (see notes at back)

Play
Conway's Game of life

- What game actions apply?
- Computer Bugs
    - How are they disabling acts?

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