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MAS CONTEXT AMUSEMENT

ISSUE 6 SUMMER 10



6 | **AMUSEMENT** SUMMER 10

AMUSEMENT is in context. That seems imperfectly meta and self-referential, but to find something funny or entertaining relies entirely on perspective and circumstance. Enjoyment is found in the heart of the beholder. It's personal. And the person creating the event, the statement, the idea, the passage will, like any artist with an eye, see what he or she can get away with. J'amuse? You muse.

MAS Context is a quarterly journal created by MAS Studio that addresses issues that affect the urban context. Its aim is to provide a comprehensive view of a topic by the active participation of people from different fields and different perspectives. It instigates the debate.

MAS Context is partially supported by a grant from the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

UNLIKE QUEEN VICTORIA, WE ARE AMUSED

IKER GIL

"Like the bee, we should make our industry our amusement"

Oliver Goldsmith

We began MAS Context with the following goals: learn more, share more, and enjoy every second doing both things. Issue Six AMUSEMENT has accomplished just that.

The multi-disciplinary contributors of this issue explore the virtual, temporal, speculative, contradictory, economic and comic qualities of amusement. They use their various medias and thoughts to address with all seriousness the concept of amusement. We wanted them to uncover, propose, and discuss amusement and its role in their work and life.

In the category of those who uncover new aspects of your and our amusement, photographer Yosigo has developed an intriguing set of photographs of amusement parks like you have never seen before: empty. Paul Butt from Section Design distills in his diagrams the relationship between comic books and their movies in terms of economic gains and critical acclaim. In such a frame, Howard the Duck is even more unamusing.

Another amusement proposal comes from architect Joseph Altshuler, who reinvents the traditional domestic boundary, the fence, and turns it into an opportunity for collective amusement. Liselore Goedhart illustrates Game Seeds, a set of little spirits that you can play with and combine to bring new characters and game ideas to life. With a concept design by Niki Smit, Christophe Berg turns the artwork into a game card — design a game by playing a game.

Creative directors and co-founders Matt Clark and Jenova Chen, from United Visual Artists and thagamecompany respectively, discuss with us their ideas and practice. Developing their projects in different fields, both have in common a body of work that redefines the boundaries of the design fields and breaks from the norm. If you have ever attended a Massive Attack concert or played the video game fLOW, you will know exactly what we are talking about.

Architect Eduard Bru and writer Mike Walsh explore in their two essays physical spaces of amusement: urban waterfronts and local bowling alleys. Eduard takes us to some of the recent and past waterfront redevelopments and analyzes what they mean to their cities while Mike crafts stories from his half-year trip crossing all 50 states to do one thing: bowl.

Jon Cole joins us for this issue to share in his video five amusement scenes, from the collective of the cinema to the individual of the mobile device.

It is worth noting that, while finishing the last touches of the issue you are about to enjoy, the Chicago Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup after a half-century drought. It was certainly amusing to see our city celebrate like never before the victory of the team long neglected by its citizens.

In the end, we all just need an excuse to be amused. We hope this issue serves as that excuse. Otherwise, the 2010 FIFA World Cup will have to do.

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Empty Amusement

Photography by **Yosigo**



Igueldo, 2007

Applying graphic design fundamentals while composing his photos, photographer Yosigo started to document spaces of different qualities and conditions, such as the beach and bathers of his native San Sebastian in Spain, abandoned industrial areas in the surrounding cities, or popular locations in London and Paris.

Through his continual spatial explorations, and somehow unconsciously, he discovered his interest in amusement parks, realizing that when empty, the attraction to those spaces was even stronger. Colorful spaces, amusement parks provoke different, and somehow contradictory, feelings: from happiness and emotiveness to desolation and sadness. It depends on the point of view and experiences of the spectator.



Igueldo, 2007



Igueldo, 2007



Eurodisney, 2008

Eurodisney, 2008



Eurodisney, 2008



Eurodisney, 2008



Eurodisney, 2008



Eurodisney, 2008



Prater, 2009



Prater, 2009



Prater, 2009

Prater, 2009



Prater, 2009

In Front of the Sea

Essay by **Eduard Bru**, architect and director of Cercle (Research Group & Review from ETS Architecture of Barcelona)

A waterfront, a place for contemplation or neglect; a place of relaxation or intensity; a place for muse or amusement. Every city and every designer deals with that limit between land and water in a different way. Architect Eduard Bru explores some of the cities that have addressed that powerful edge.



Benidorm West Beach Promenade

A waterfront is a proposal of relationship between land and sea, or, almost always, between city and sea. Who owns that carpet between nature and the artificial? It can belong to one or the other, or a bypass between both: mediations that separate or connect, or cut through like a blade.

A few privileged cities need only to show to the sea what they already are. That is the case with Rio de Janeiro. Roberto Burle Marx proposes an intensification of what Rio already is: more of the sinuous topography that defines the curves of the Sugarloaf Mountain; more, and even tighter, exuberant vegetation; more color than Rio already possesses. A project as a lesson and exaltation of the city, and its natural connection with the sea.

Not always does a city own the exceptional physical structure of Rio: for example, Toronto or Benidorm. The people responsible for intensifying that relationship in those cities chose, respectively, entertainment and decoration.

In plan, the pavements, bridges, platforms and accessories of the project by West 8 and DTAH in Toronto propose a texture that identifies the transition between the artificial – the city – and the natural – the sea. In terms of usage, entertainment is introduced as the *leitmotif* shared with the boundary between land/sea. There is a lot of earthy quality in the main material used, which is wood, and quite a lot of watery quality in the sinuous movements with which Adrian Geuze moves it: in its bridges and ramps, and in its sidewalks divided in bands almost like bowling lanes.

There is something of a collective childishness in the proposal: what the citizen can do in front of the sea, and also the sea itself that, without claws or fangs, is presented almost as an aqua park for free. The solution by West 8 and DTAH already has an extensive tradition, for example, in obsolete urban ports turned into commercial and recreational areas, perhaps statements of a reduction of our perspective of what we can do, feel, or imagine in front of the sea from the city.

Carlos Ferrater and Xavier Martí from the Office of Architecture in Barcelona (OAB) decided in Benidorm, Spain, to invent a Burle Marx. On top, they added volume. There is nothing in that summer city to support the project from the context; it is a cliff, a wall of massive buildings in front of a languid coastline.

It's nothing like the cross movements in Toronto: there is no possible cross movement before the wall parallel to the water. It is only

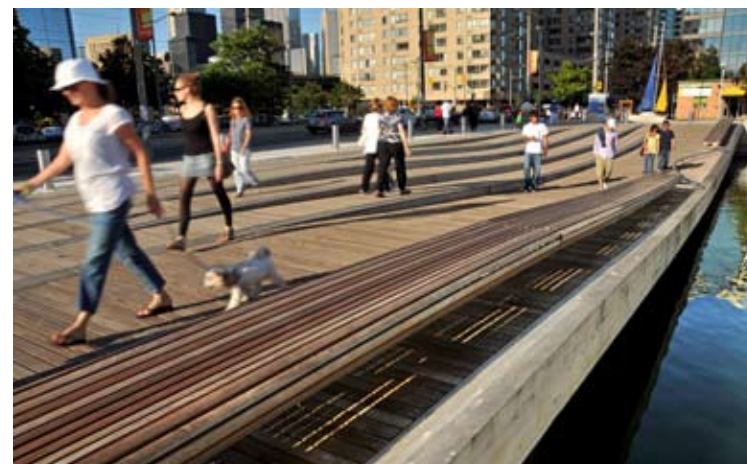
Simcoe WaveDeck, one of four uniquely Canadian wavedecks planned for the Waterfront Toronto



Simcoe WaveDeck and its curves that soar as high as 2.6 metres above the lake.



Spadina WaveDeck with its curves that are constantly changing to create ledges for seating and new routes to access the water's edge



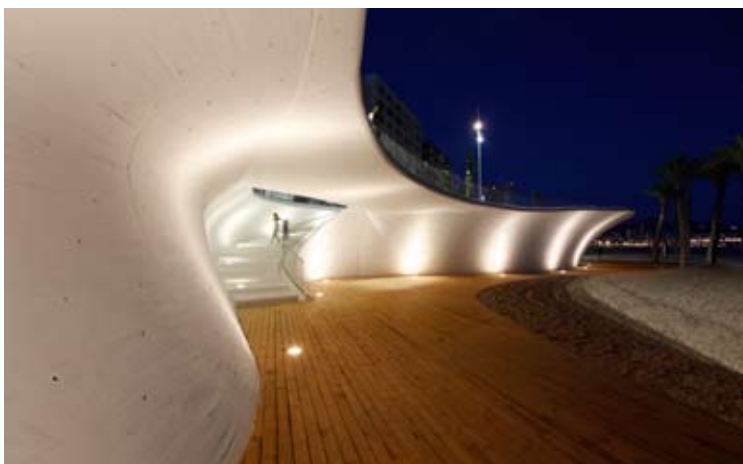
Aerial view of the Benidorm West Beach Promenade, a project that, with its organic layout, it recreates the shape of the cliffs and the waves



The promenade is built of a single material, white concrete, with pavements of various textures and colours



Night view showcasing the stairs connecting the level of the beach and the level of the city



possible to act in the same strict line between nature and extreme vertical construction. Because of that, the whole project happens there. Ferrater and Martí blew air into the tropical sinusoids turning them into volumes that allow the user to go up and down, penetrate, select the height and hang over the sea.

There are no elements with which nature can collaborate in this operation. The color, like the rest of the elements, is introduced by the project. Colors as intense and contrasting as premeditated plantations, sequences of shades organized by the movements ordered by the line turned into volume. From the abstraction, the project resolves, brilliantly, everything that neither nature nor the project for the existing city have ever imagined.

There is not much to say either, between city and sea, in the area of Matosinhos, Portugal, in which Eduardo Souto de Moura operates. The same inane architecture, but with less volume and presence, and the same irregular linear coastline. Souto creates his project out of that lack of communication. He proposes to be between the city and the sea. His project is a kind of bridge that cleaves the border line. The main character is neither the city nor the sea. The transit itself between them is the element that Souto creates. The parallel views to the coast take priority: even in the crosswalks he avoids the cross circulation. It never tempts us to leave the grounded platform. To feel strange both in the city and in the sea, to not go through one or the other, but in between them, so much so that we wouldn't be surprised if at any given moment the flat barge, sharply cut on the sides and from which we are the load, would start a slow movement, a slow and heavy, uncertain adrift.

A little bit north of the Matosinhos of Souto's setting, in areas of lower urban density and close to the parks of Fernando Távora, the coastline becomes rocky and rugged, nude and exposed to the winds. It is the land where the Boa Nova restaurant, designed by Alvaro Siza, is situated, as well as his swimming pools of Leça da Palmeira.

Between the first and the latter, with a few added smaller interventions, an open waterfront takes place proposing an encounter of sea/city, not from the context of mediation but from their difference. Siza says simultaneously two contradictory aspects: cuts like a blade the areas of land and water, but he makes it evident to us that both are matter, two matters that look and understand each other and a geometry as a rasp that defines them.

Aerial view of the waterfront designed by Eduardo Souto de Moura in Matosinhos, Portugal



Aerial view of the waterfront designed by Alvaro Siza north of Matosinhos



Aerial view of the Leça da Palmeira swimming pools designed by Alvaro Siza in 1966



The rock and the city share destiny and function: both have cavities that the sea fills and that we call swimming pools. The area of the bowl that belongs to nature is made fiercely, by the aggregation, still and forever visible, of the magma that stopped and cooled down there. The built half is made by manufactured materials, concrete adapting the rectilinear geometries that its artificial nature and construction technique demand. Both meet each other and accept together the water and the passage of time that is inexorable, that sometime will separate them: that tense temporary community is the project.

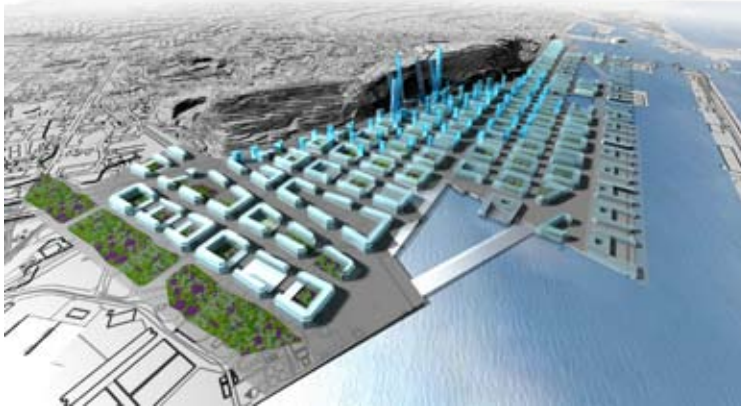
Otherwise, I like more the cities when they reach the sea without mediation at all, when they reach the sea with all their energy. All the construction, the agreement between material wishes and the things that the city is, all stopped right in front of the water... it is mutual fascination without the possibility of any kind of surrender or agreement. Naples or Syracuse, hanging by the edge of the water.

My city, Barcelona, progresses each day with an excessive agreement between sea and city: there is so much mediation that you hardly perceive the water. Calm, like liquid asphalt. With Mamen Domingo and Conxita Balcells, besides friendship and academic activities, we share big scale projects on the Barcelona coast. Conxita is the author of the Marine Zoo. Mamen proposes to live in front of the sea – as Le Corbusier did with the GATPAC of Josep Lluís Sert, Torres Clavé, etc – but now at the foot of Montjuich, which can therefore play a vital role in the city, beyond being the “green lung” and traditional venue for exhibitions.

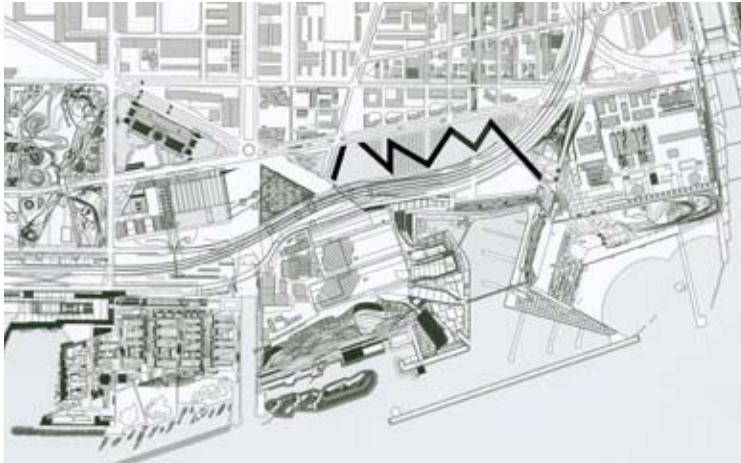


View of the Bay of Naples, Italy

Volumetric view of the proposed residential neighborhood at the foot of Montjuich



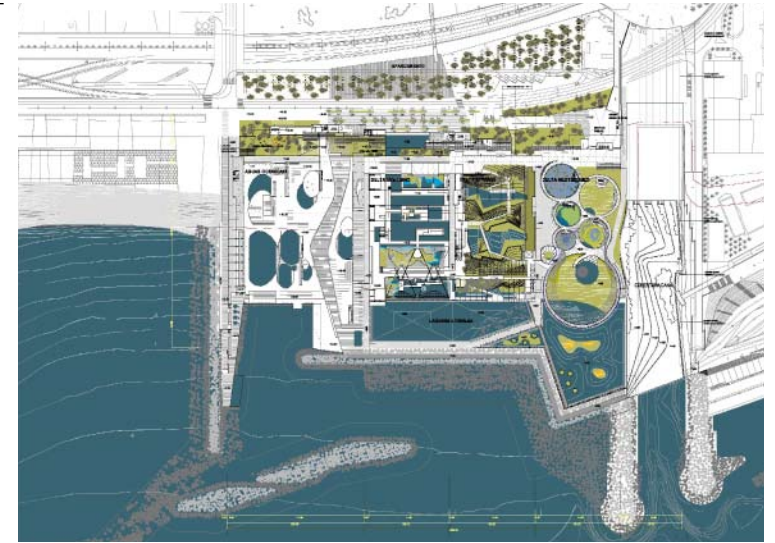
Plan of the Campus de Llevant in Besós at the end of Diagonal Avenue in Barcelona



Model of the Campus de Llevant in Besós



Plan of the proposed Marine Zoo in Barcelona



Mamen from the South and Conxita and myself from the North prefer to live with the sea instead on walking by it. As a result, in my project for the Campus de Llevant in Besós I try to extend the urban tension all the way to the edge: like the Venetian Arsenal, like our naval dockyards when they were in front of the sea. I take the pattern of the main road, from my master plan done with Josep Lluís Mateo and the late Enric Miralles, and the plan of the Forum building by Herzog and de Meuron, and I transform it into a zigzag line, that is a waterfront, that creates plazas of land and plazas of sea, a zipper between water and soil.

Probably, what these three projects in Barcelona have in common is their wish not to insert a waterfront between city and water; it is the whole urban public space that offers itself to the water to turn it, also, into city.

Audience as Participants

Interview with **Matt Clark**, co-founder and creative director of **United Visual Artists**

Volume installation, 2006

United Visual Artists are the collective behind some of the most striking installations and live performances, with a body of work that constantly crosses and redefines the boundaries of the design fields. With an emphasis on research and development, they have collaborated with artists and clients such as Massive Attack, U2, Prada, and Virgin Media. Architect Iker Gil interviews Matt Clark, co-founder and creative director of United Visual Artists.

IG: How was United Visual Artists formed?

MC: UVA was formed in 2003 by Chris Bird, Ash Nehru and me. We were all working as freelance creatives in the live performance and touring industry. We had worked together on few projects, but it was after the success of the 100th Window Tour for Massive Attack that we decided to set up a proper company.

IG: UVA is composed of a group of people with a wide range of backgrounds. How is UVA structured and how does each person get involved in the projects?

MC: My background is in fine art and design, Chris's is in technical production and Ash studied computer science. We found that our different skills complimented each other's and lead to a dynamic working process. We have continued to grow with a diverse set of skills, and this has lead to a wider range of projects and keeps things interesting and exciting for us.

The key here is that everyone has his or her particular individual skill and is able to contribute creatively in their own different ways. We consider everyone at UVA equally important to the creative process - it's what we built our ethos on. At the beginning of every project, a larger group will get together and put their thoughts on the table. Then people tend to break off into smaller units, depending on their specialism, to fit the project more appropriately. The skills we have in the studio range across architecture, programming, animation, lighting design, model making and more. The key is that people work beyond their skill set and knowledge is shared.

IG: You have collaborated with the band Massive Attack for four of their world tours, starting in 2003 in what became your first project. Can you explain how this relationship started and how it has evolved?

MC: We first met Massive Attack in 2003 after learning that they were looking for a new stage design for their 100th Window Tour. Robert Del Naja was looking for something visual that really communicated with the audience; he wasn't interested in fluffy background textures or video, he wanted something that would make people think and feel. So together we came up with this super ambitious plan to base the show on information, real information that would change on a daily basis. The show explored digital representations of information, filtering real-time news, stock-market prices, spam emails, local travel information, realtime statistical data, virus alerts etc, all translated into 36 languages including Japanese! This created a 'picture of now' and put people in the moment, it was a very powerful show and still probably some of the best work we have produced.

We went on to create more shows for Massive Attack, most of which have been smaller festival tours, and the stage design has to be far more compact and easier to construct because of time limitations. The most recent tour is more politically driven than the previous ones. Robert was into the idea of 'sloganeering', so we designed a very sculptural digital banner that he could add text treatments to as the tour progressed. At a show in Italy recently, Robert used a story that was about the deaths of young people in Police custody, and a screenshot of this went up on an Italian left-wing bloggers site and Massive Attack got a call from the Italian police saying that if they came back to Italy, they were not allowed to use this information or else they would be arrested. So it can be a far-reaching medium.

IG: In the design for the world tours of Massive Attack, Jay-Z or U2 for example, among other things you ultimately design towards the amusement of the spectator. How do you design towards that amusement?

MC: Generally, what we are doing is adding layers to the band or artist, they are the focal point and everything else should work from there. We create drama and contrast through light and rhythmical programming of visual elements. We always try to create a narrative

Massive Attack
2003



Massive Attack
2003



Massive Attack
2008



for a show even if it's quite abstract. This, however, can sometimes be frustratingly difficult, as every artist changes the set list right up until show time.

IG: At a personal scale of amusement, several installations like *Volume*, *Triptych* and *Contact* explore the relationship between your work and the visitor. Can you talk a little bit about your research and explorations of these interactions?

MC: When we develop an installation for the public realm, we always think about the layers of interaction between people and the work. There is the intimate relationship of the single person experience between them and the work, then the group experience of discovering that you are part of making a greater whole and sharing this with other participants. Outside of this, you have the audience and observers who are watching 'the show' where people are equally a part of creating the artwork. This is at the core of the development of all our work, how does it make people feel and behave.

During the development phase of a project, we build prototypes and test them, and then once you are in situ you need to test everything again, as location and context changes everything. Often after opening night there is still a need to make a few changes, as you really only can see how an installation behaves once you have had a large number of people experiencing it.

IG: The relationship between the simplicity, and in some cases minimalism, of the finished product and the complexity of technology happening behind the scenes is really interesting. In a way, it is a high-tech process that is not overwhelming for the end user, such as in the *Speed of Light* project. Can you talk about the relationship between simplicity and complexity in your work?

MC: Our aim is for our work to communicate on an emotive level that makes you feel something, this is why we like to work with light. People are drawn to light like moths to a light bulb, it's a powerful medium. Working with light and controlling it does involve a lot of technology and control systems, but we are not interested in making this infrastructure a feature, we want the end experience to be as pure and impossibly simple as possible. That said, one of our recent

Volume
2006



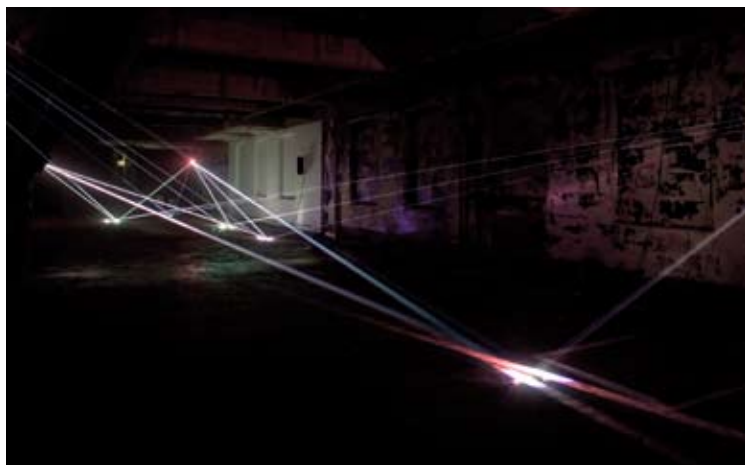
Triptych
2007



Contact
2008



Speed of Light
2010



Chorus
2009



projects, *Chorus*, involves 8 computer-controlled pendulums and is our most technically complex project yet. The mechanical aspect is a part of the aesthetic, it's supposed to look like a gigantic mechanical musical instrument.

IG: How do you assess risk in order to maintain success while being cutting edge?

MC: Most of our projects have a risk factor, we are inventing bespoke systems and always working with new technologies. However, I don't think being cutting edge is that important to us, as we often use old technologies but perhaps in new and unusual ways. As we

grow, we are learning how to mitigate risk, but there has to be a certain element of wandering into the unknown, otherwise things start to feel prescribed and that's boring.

IG: How do you approach the short-term duration of most of your work? Was *Maple Leaf Square*, your new permanent installation, approached in a different way?

MC: The difference between temporary work and permanent is usually time scale and the durability of technologies and materials. With the installations in Toronto, we have had nearly 2 years to conceive, develop and build 2 permanent public installations, it can be a matter of weeks with temporary works and live performance design. It has been a steep learning curve designing large scale permanent public works, you have to guarantee the work for up to 50 years and the weather in Canada is extreme, so you have to be sure you are using the right materials. We do hope to continue working a mixture of temporary and long term projects, as they offer both short and long term disciplines which is interesting.

IG: Which type of project do you enjoy producing the most?

MC: We work on a wide range of projects now and we're really lucky that nearly every project we embark on is exciting to us. I don't think we can pin it down to one type of project, but moving into creating permanent work is an exciting step for us.

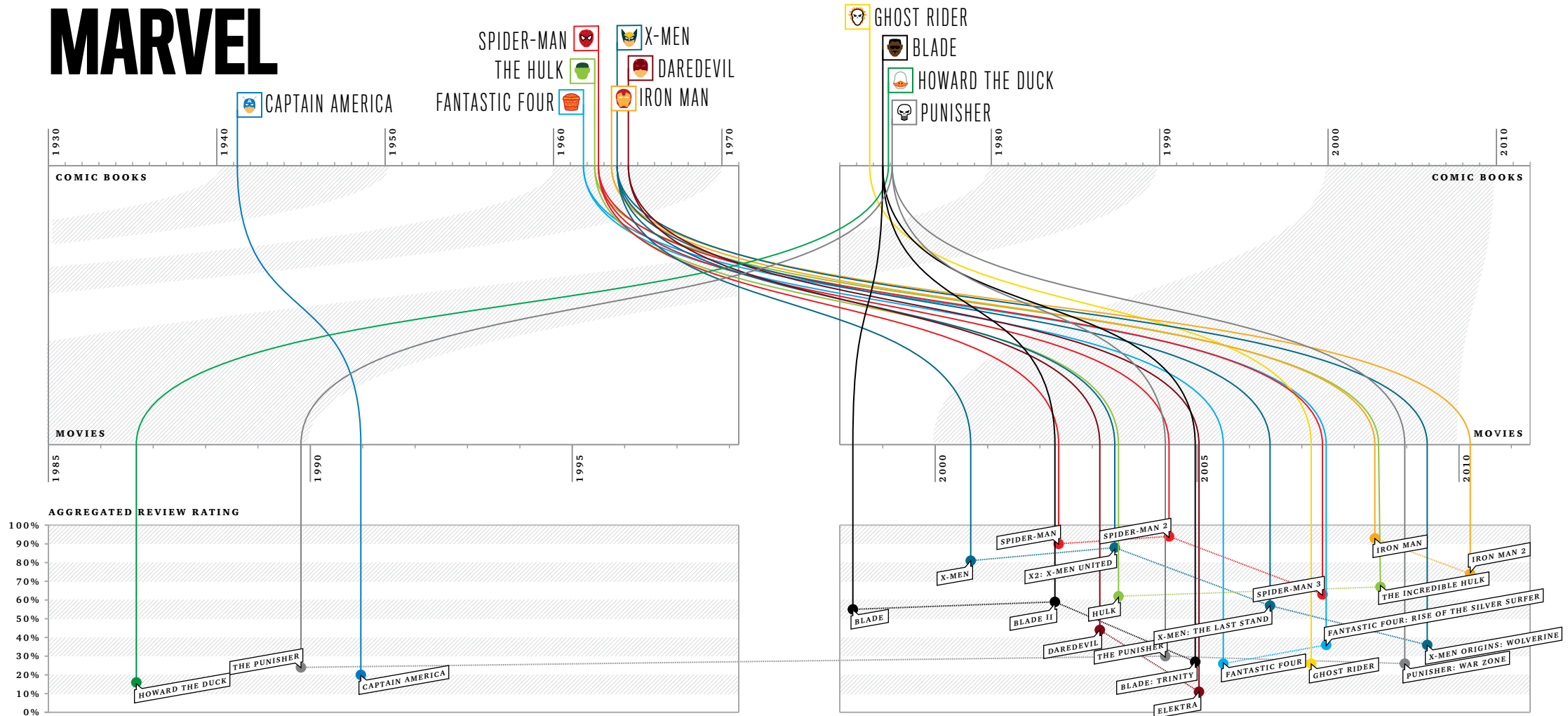
IG: What one project would you like to work on but have not had the opportunity to yet?

MC: My son is severely autistic, so I have been thinking of how our work could potentially be useful to people with sensory and communication disabilities.

We've also always wanted to create an installation for the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern, its such an incredible space.

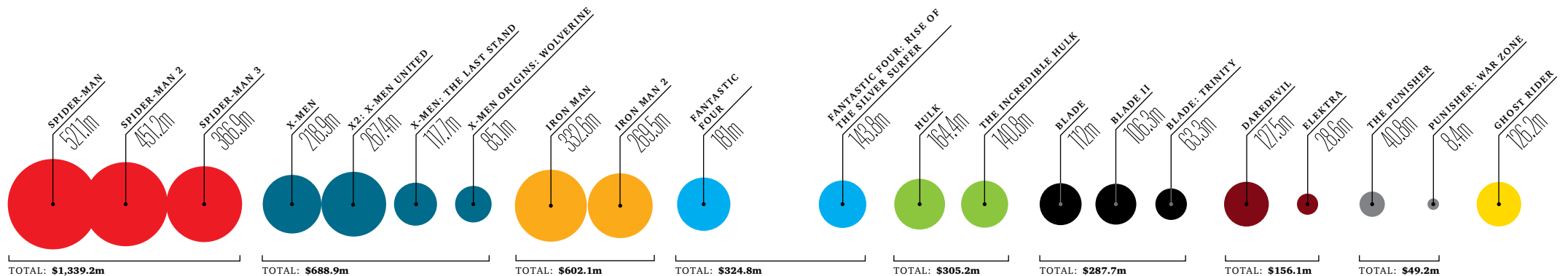


MARVEL

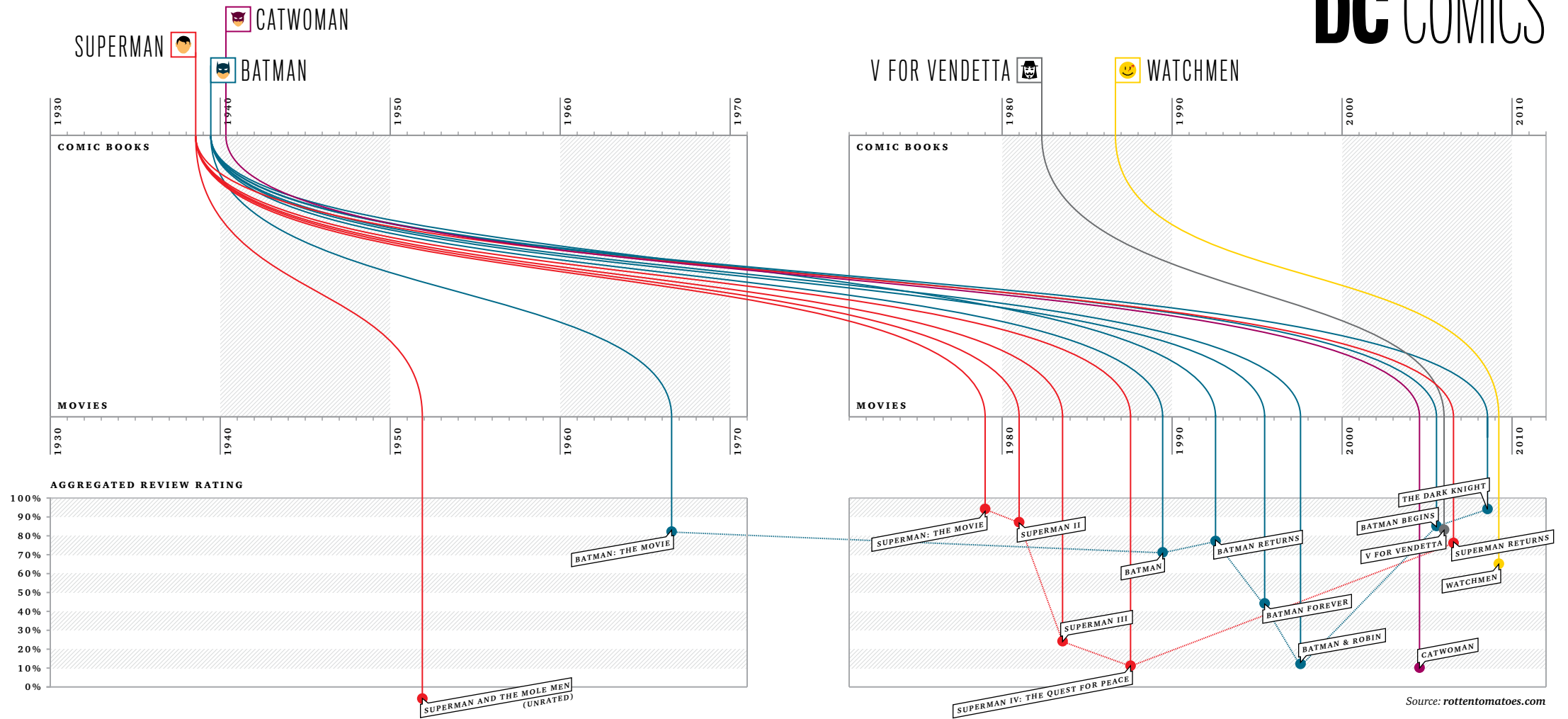


US DOMESTIC BOX OFFICE GROSSES (INFLATION ADJUSTED)

Source: boxofficemojo.com. Calculated using ticket price inflation adjusted to 2009.

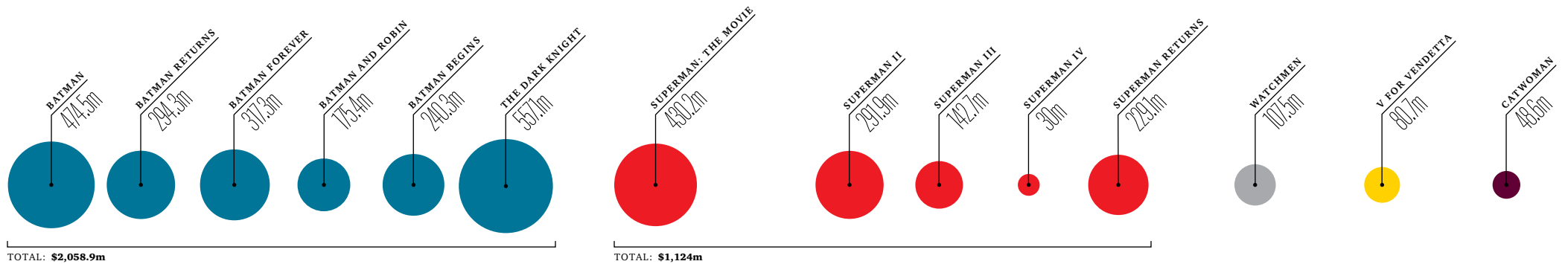


DC COMICS



US DOMESTIC BOX OFFICE GROSSES (INFLATION ADJUSTED)

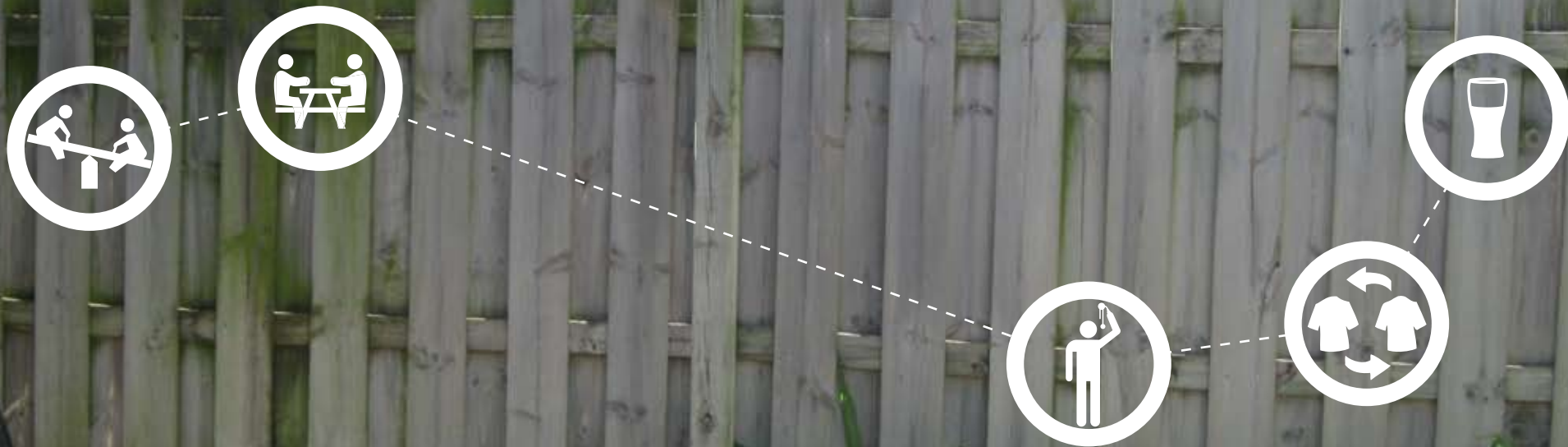
Source: boxofficemojo.com. Calculated using ticket price inflation adjusted to 2009.



de[FENCING]

Proposal by **Joseph Altshuler**, director of
CARTOGRAM

What if the most typical constraint of urban isolation, the fence, is catalyzed to provoke social interactions among otherwise apathetic neighbors? Architect Joseph Altshuler turned this question into a proposal for a public intervention within the confines of private property. The traditional boundary transforms into a set of social opportunities.



Traditional fence

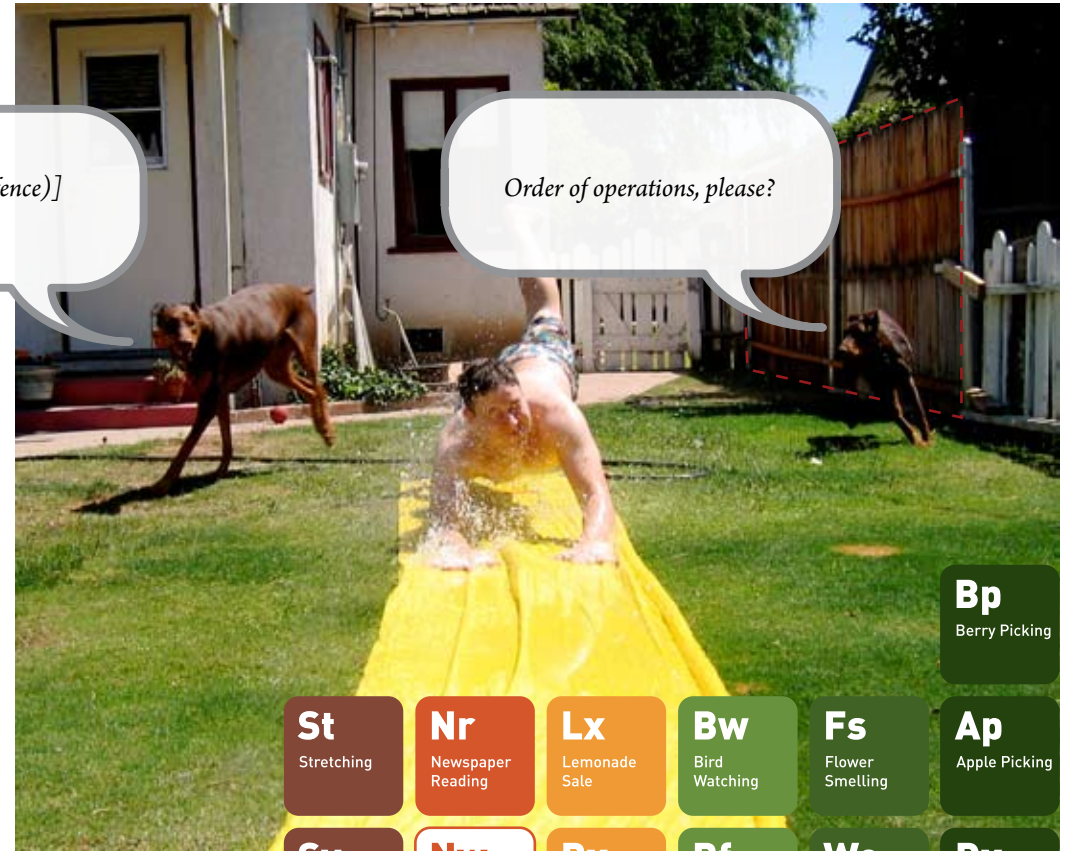
Elements of Amusement

A lexicon of backyard leisure activities program this new and distinctly urban middle ground. By repurposing the familiar vocabulary of backyard amusement into the fence itself, specific interventions will engage neighbors on both sides of the fence. This "periodic table" calibrates leisure activities by type and participant intensity. Interventions can be staged to program every Element! Prototyped Elements are highlighted.

*[(Backyard programs) program (backyard fence)]
re-program backyard.*

In the current urban condition, the fence separates and isolates these social activities. What if the fence facilitated and enhanced these Elements?

Order of operations, please?



↑ smaller group activities

Hr

Horseshoe

Bo

Bocce

Co

Cornhole

Cq

Croquet

Lb

Lawn Bowling

Bb

Hoop Shooting

Vo

Volleyball

Sl

Sliding

Mb

Monkey Bars

Tt

Teeter Totter

Sw

Swinging

Tr

Trampoline

Jg

Jungle Gym

Bt

Boomerang Throwing

Sb

Sand Building

Pc

Playing Catch

Cp

Chess Playing

Tp

Tag Playing

Hp

Human Pyramids

Sm

Snowman Building

Sa

Snow Angels

Sg

Stargazing

Rc

Wall Climbing

Pñ

Piñata Smashing

Pw

Pool Wading

Sp

Sprinkler Playing

Hs

Hopscotch

Sn

Slip 'n Slide

Wf

Water Fighting

Di

Digging

Tc

Time Capsule Burying

Lp

Leaf Piling

Ca

Camping

Sk

Sketching

Sc

Sidewalk Chalking

Pc

Pumpkin Carving

Si

Singalong

Wc

Wind Chiming

Kc

Knitting Circle

Gb

Garage Band

Dc

Drum Circle

Wt

Weight Training

Yo

Yoga

Su

Sunbathing

Kb

Kickboxing

Sms

Text Messaging

Pk

Chit Chatting

Ho

Hanging Out

Bf

Bonfire

Yx

Yard Sale

Gx

Garden Sale

Cx

Clothes Swap

Ao

Art Opening

Bw

Bird Watching

Br

Butterfly Rearing

Ff

Firefly Catching

Bk

Beekeeping

Fs

Flower Smelling

Rh

Rainwater Harvesting

Hg

Herb Gardening

Vg

Vegetable Gardening

Ap

Apple Picking

Pn

Picnicking

Bbq

BBQ

Bp

Berry Picking

Rx

Recipe Sharing

Bd

Beer Drinking

↓ larger group activities

Lawn Sports

Playground

Kid Activities

Art-Making

Kinesthetic

Dialogue

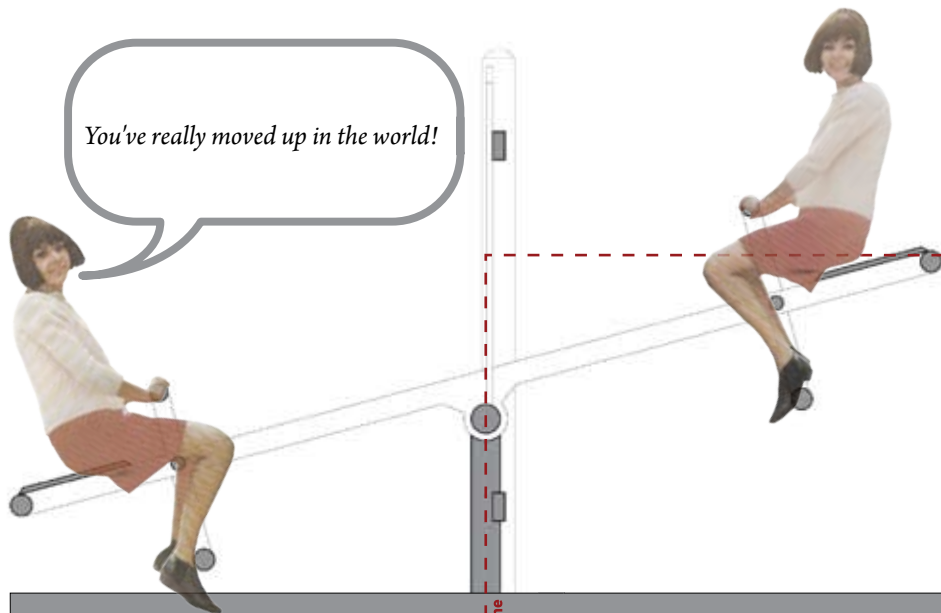
Exchange

Wildlife

Growing

Food

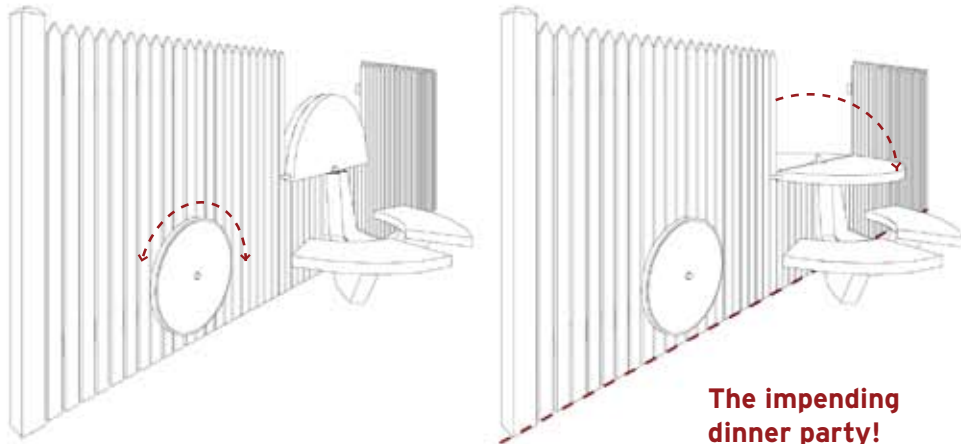
Inspired by NEXT Architect's prototype for an interactive Table Tennis Fence, de[FENCING] is a proposal for a public intervention within the confines of private property: what if the ubiquitous boundary of the urban fence is transformed into a social hub? It has been said that the fundamental act of architecture is to delineate borders; to mark territory by ascribing difference and locating thresholds. By literally inserting playful opportunities into a proverbial boundary, radical adjacencies and social opportunities are created; the boundary is de-delineated.



01. Teeter Totter Fun Fence

property line

Tt
Teeter Totter



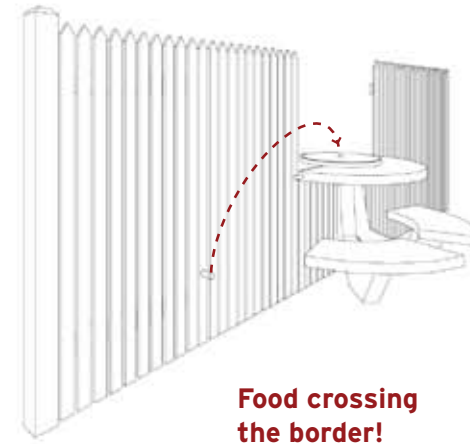
01

In the closed position, the Lazy Susan Picnic Table remains a functional bench. The surface of the Lazy Susan tray itself doubles as a chalk board, and acts as a playful, rotating art surface while being stored on a peg at kid-level.

02

When the moment is right, neighbors on both sides of the fence can swing the hinged table surface open!

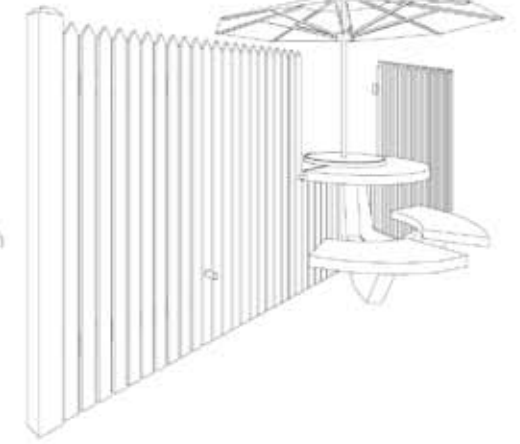
The impending dinner party!



03

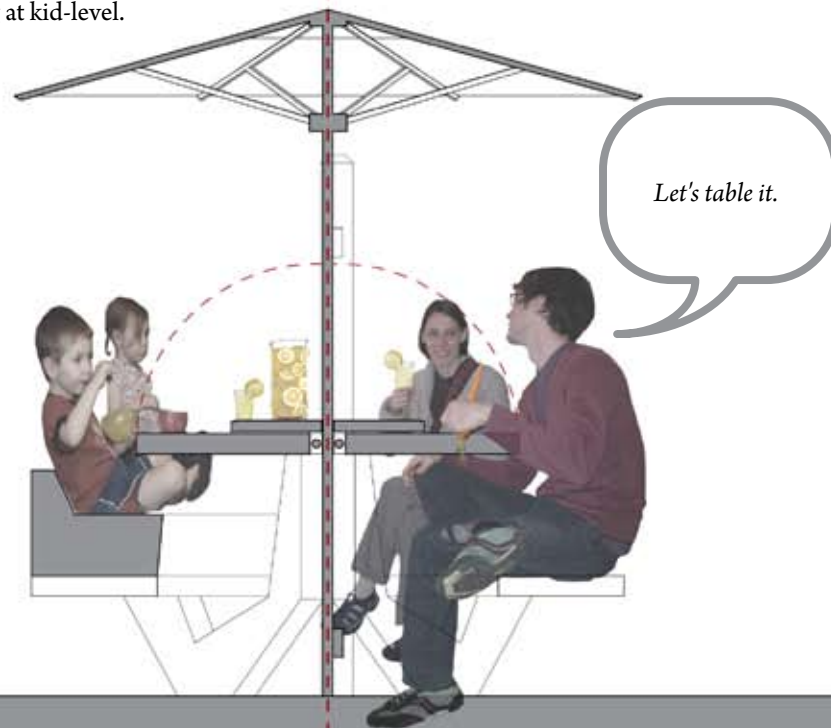
The Lazy Susan tray is mobilized into position by simply placing it on its central axel. Neighbors can inscribe menu notes and food labels on its chalkboard surface ("100% Vegan cookies!"). By rotating the Lazy Susan, food-sharing can literally straddle property lines and neighborhood boundaries.

Food crossing the border!



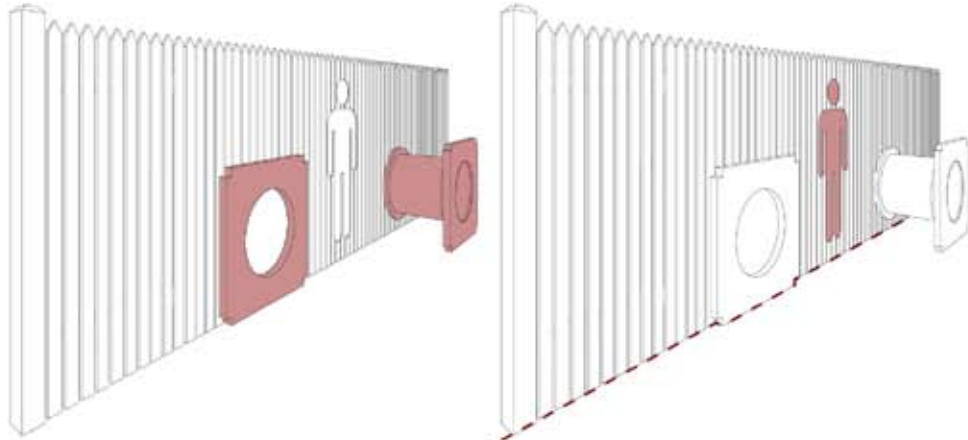
04

An optional umbrella can be installed to temper summer's hottest afternoons and spring's evening drizzles.



02. Lazy Susan Picnic Table

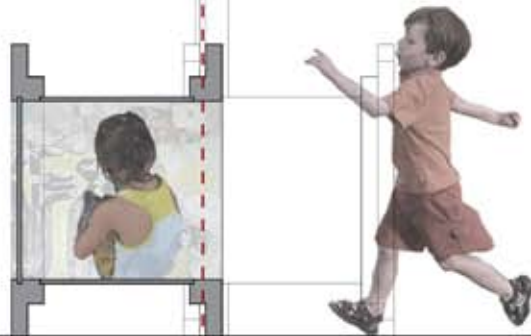
Pn
Picnicking

**01**

One graffiti tunnel protrudes from each side of the fence into the adjacent property. Kids and adventurous adults can draw on the curved, acrylic tunnel walls and the circular window that delineates the end of each tunnel. More rebellious spirits can even leave their mark on the wooden support frames. Neighbors can simultaneously act as spectator and enact an artistic spectacle!

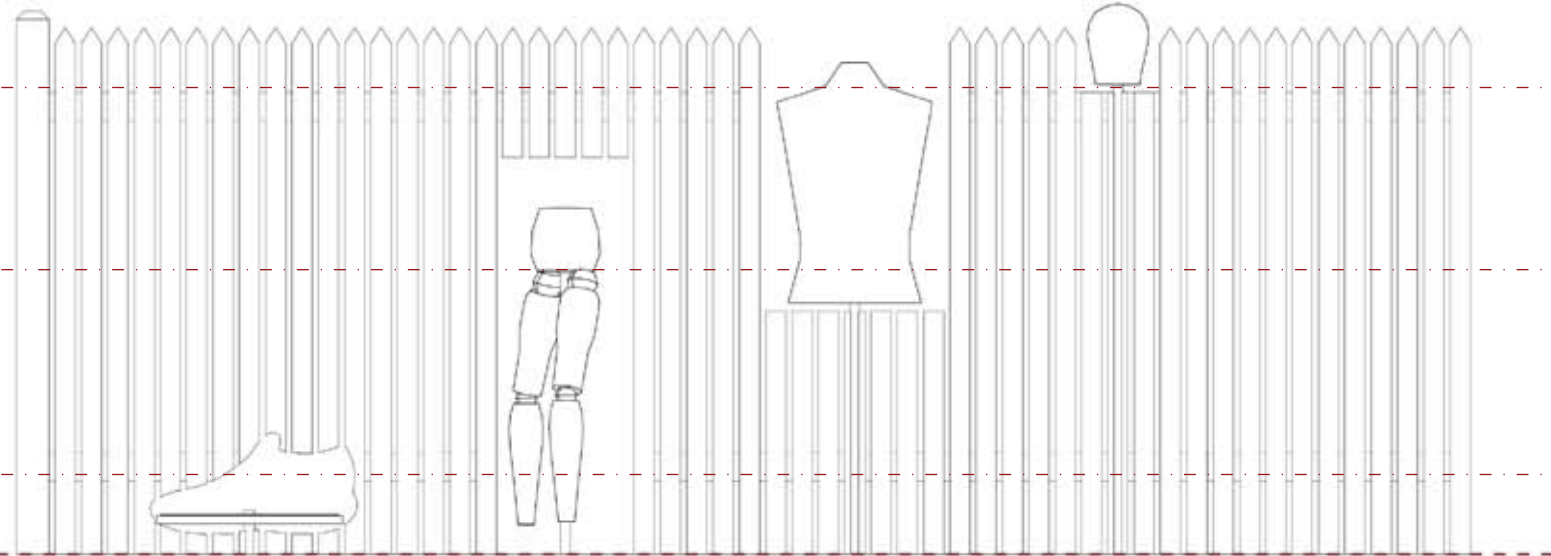
02

A human figure-shaped acrylic window provides an additional graffiti and people-watching opportunity. Neighbors can draw each other's likeness from opposite sides of the fence!

**03. Graffiti Portal**

Nw
Neighbor
Watching

Sc
Sidewalk
Chalking



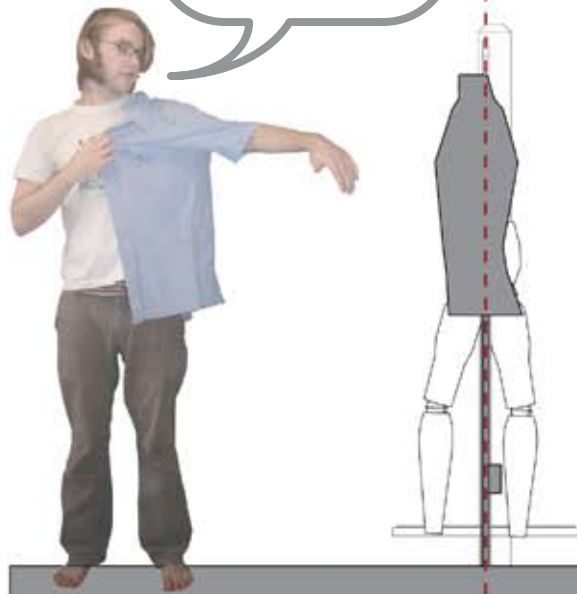
01
Foot Carousel.

02
Leg Mannequin.

03
Torso Mannequin.

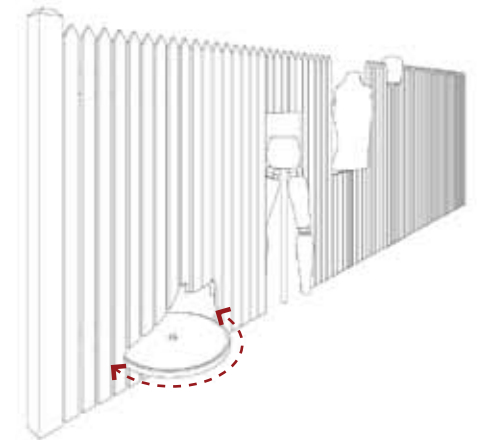
04
Head Mannequin.

*The jeans are always
bluer on the other side
of the fence.*



Getting tired of that old sweater?
Need something swanky for Saturday
night's party? The solution lives in the
backyard—catalyzed by the fence!

The Clothes Swap Mannequin operates
as an exquisite corpse game that
neighbors can play. Like the Surrealist
method, neighbors can exchange
garments for feet, legs, torso, or head—
each facilitated by a separate mannequin
device. Each mannequin rotates on
a vertical axis over the property line,
ensuring that neighbors on both sides of
the fence can give and receive, advertise
and browse.

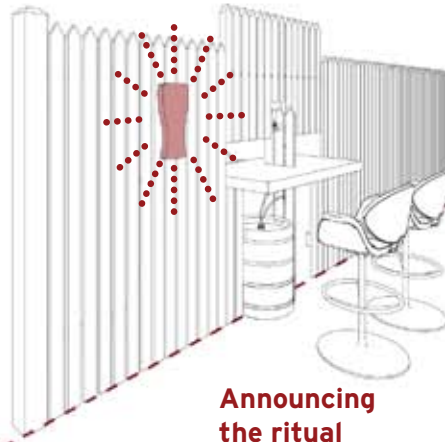


04. Clothes Swap Mannequin



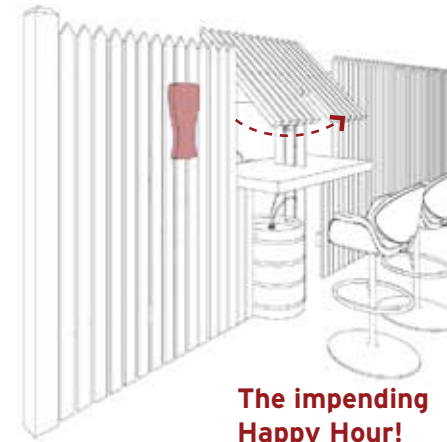
01

In the closed position, the Beer Window is unobtrusive and anticipatory. The relative privacy of the status quo remains unchallenged.



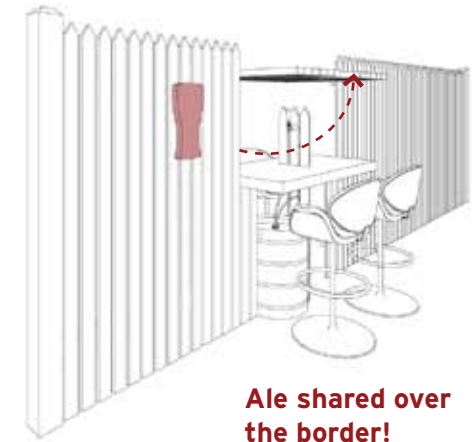
02

When the mood strikes, a neighbor on either side of the fence can switch on the iconic 'beer light.' The friendly, illuminated vessel announces the desire of a ritualistic drink, and calls the neighbor on the opposite side of the fence to participate!



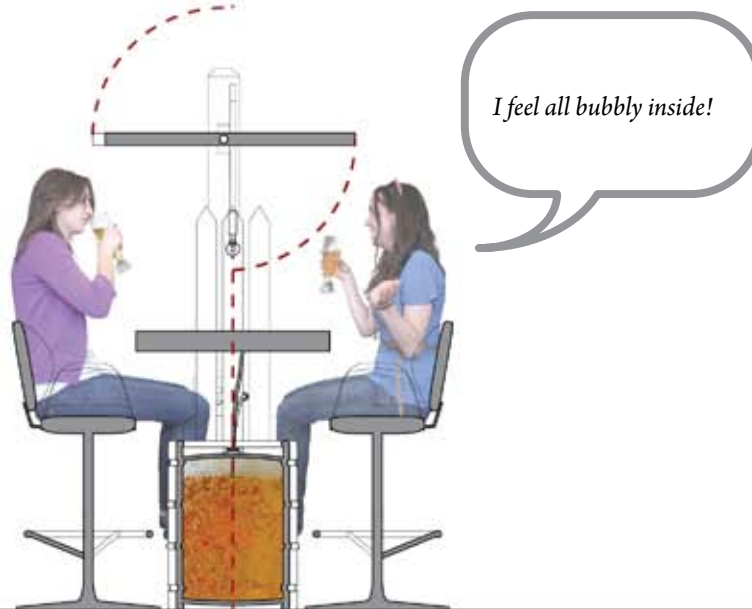
03

When the moment is right, neighbors on both sides of the fence can swing the hinged Beer Window open!



04

The privacy screen becomes a shading device, sheltering social imbibers from Happy Hour's intense afternoon rays. The tap literally straddles the property line, offering draught beer to be shared. If ice is used to chill the keg residing beneath the fence bar, melting water can be directly channeled to water the backyard garden.

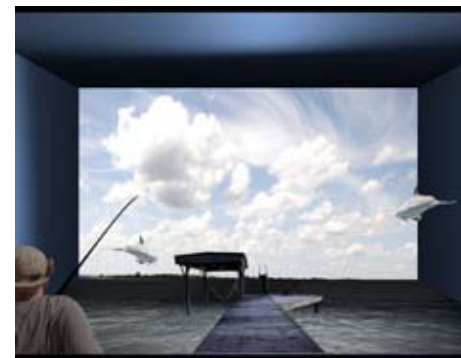
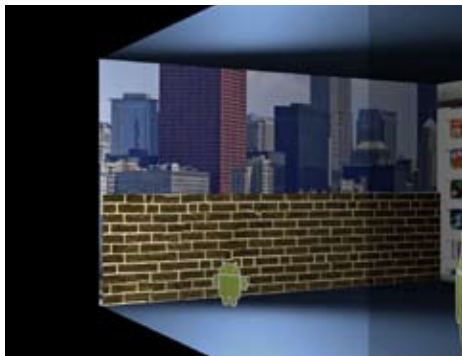


05. Beer Window

Bd
Beer
Drinking

ONLINE AMUSEMENT

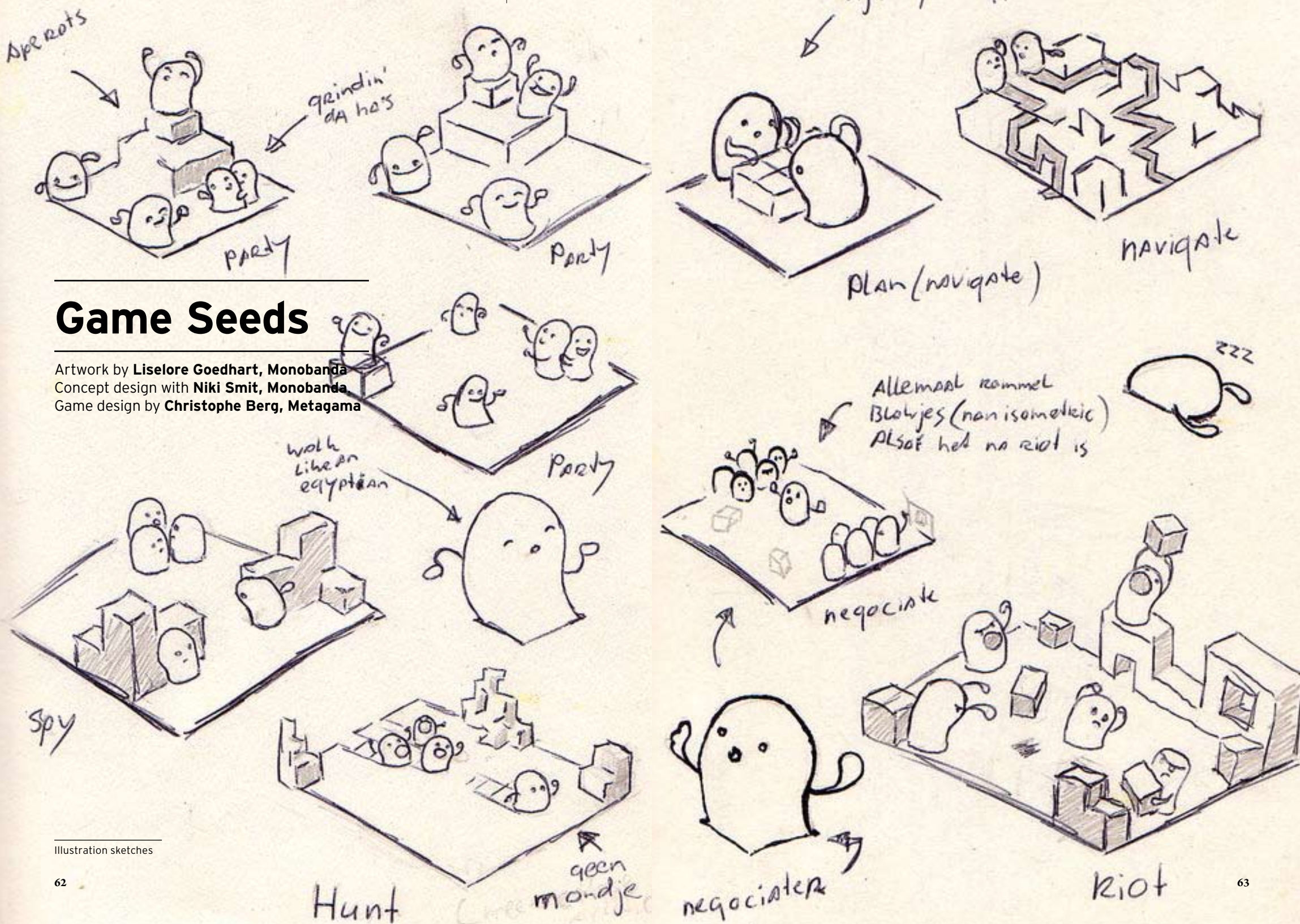
A film by Jon Cole



Made By
Jon Cole

Watch
Enjoy
Link

www.mascontext.com



Games Seeds artwork

Liselore Goedhart

For *Game Seeds*, I wanted to use a simple and stylized design that gives the player a guideline, but does not steer them in one direction. In my designs, I always try to portray an emotion or feeling using very little elements. The ideal outcome is for a viewer or player to add in their own imagination and creativity.

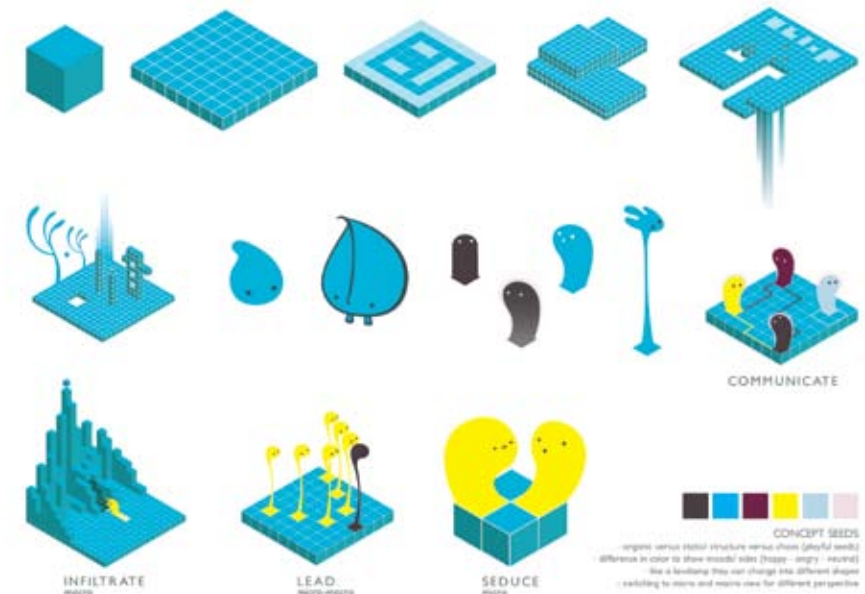
The first part of my design process is research and inspiration. For the *Game Seeds* illustrations, I began with the lines of basic geometric shapes, patterns and pixel art. I created moodboards that helped me to eventually come up with the first idea for the illustrations: an isometric setting made out of little cubes. I used these cubes as a uniform setting knowing the whole design would require thirty-six individual illustrations for the playing cards. I wanted the illustrations to be simple yet playful icons. Some icons, such as lifestyle and gender, were very easy to design, but time and species needed more iteration.

Every action needed a solid concept and portrayal of the action. With my colleague at Monobanda, Niki Smit, I sat down and doodled up most of the 36 actions. The biggest challenge was explaining the actions without referring too much to the real world. The insight we saw was how much of our visual communication is based on icons from everyday life.

During brainstorming, the process of thinking in terms of behavior at the micro and macro level fostered new ideas. Then life started really to emerge. The final idea to use little spirits (the Game Seeds) helped us to avoid a distant and abstract graphic design. The Seeds bring life! We combined organic blob-like creatures and a static setting, which transforms into all kinds of situations. It was edgy and recognizable. We think that the same process will work for the players.

Designing the actions in Adobe Illustrator was like playing a game myself: moving around the building blocks, playing with the postures of the Seeds, and even laughing aloud when moving around their little beady eyes to make them look a little bit more quirky and funny.

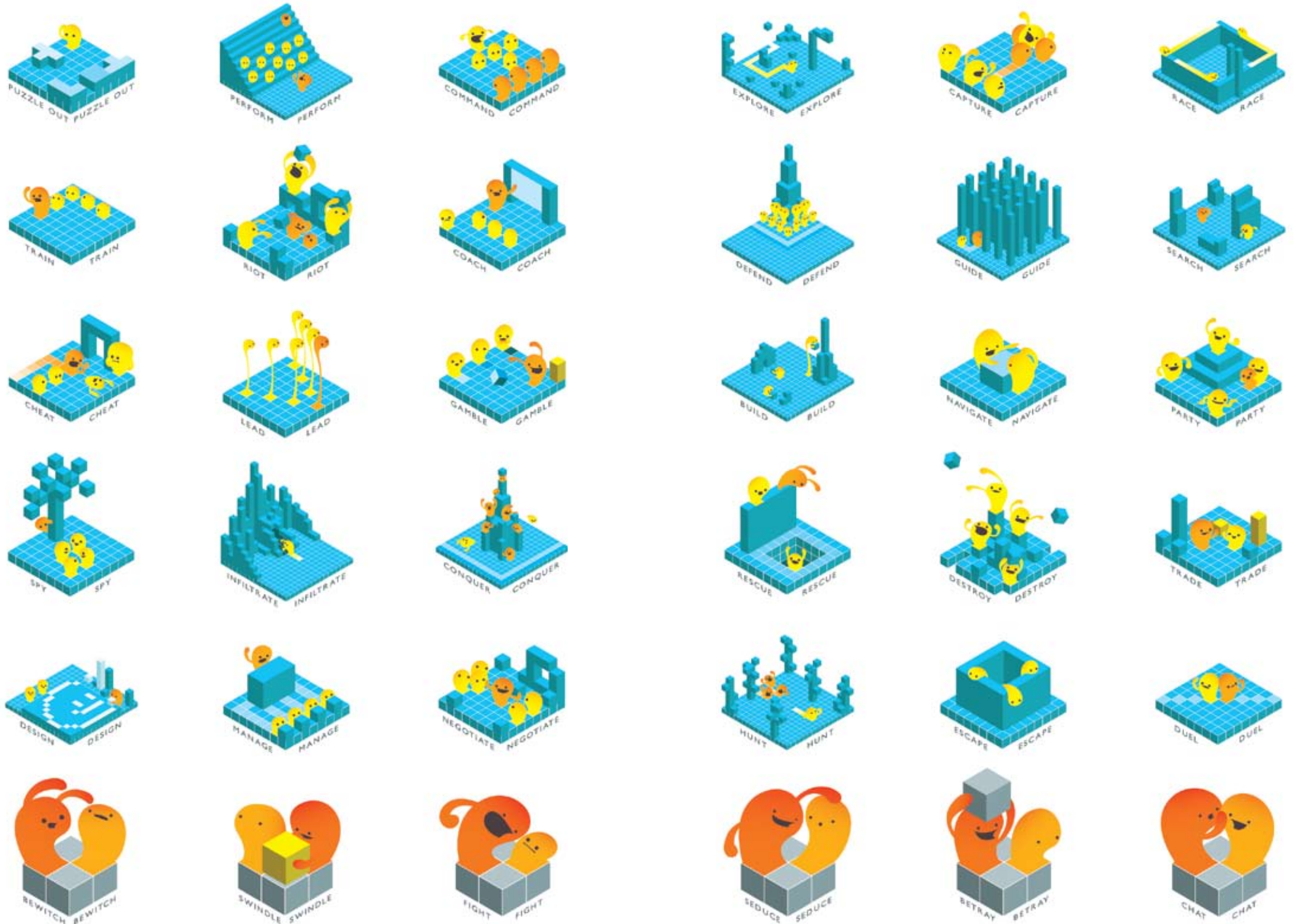
Opening up a deck of cards for the first time was an amazing experience — to finally be able to hold the cards and see the result of my work. The reactions I received about the design continue to be overwhelming. It's inspiring to see how people perceive the illustrations and think about other actions and ways to use them.



Concept art



Icon design



Game Seeds card game

Christophe Berg

Game Seeds is a card game designed to spice up your brainstorm sessions on Character and Game Design.

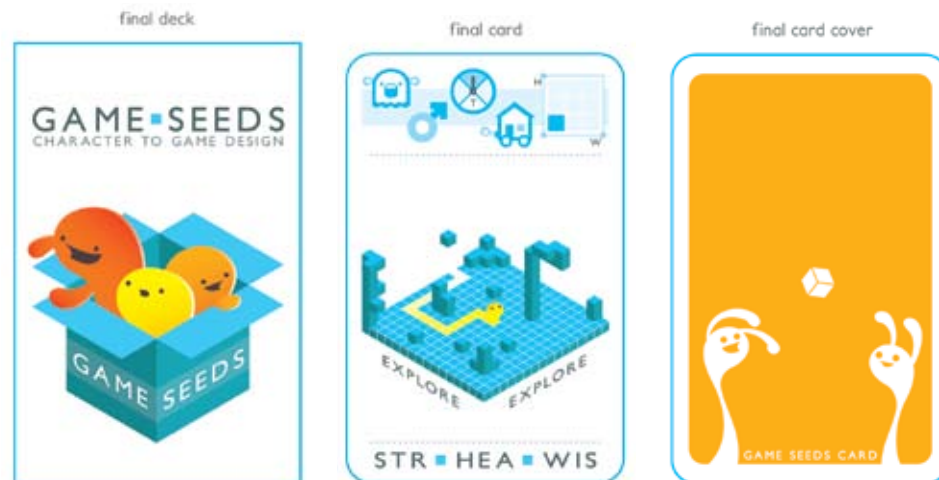
Game Seeds are wild free-spirited tiny creatures that you can play with, combine, hack and get inspired by to bring new characters and game ideas to life, so with the goal to embed the gameplay and the future player's actions in the behavior of the designed characters.

Object of *Game Seeds*: Design a Hero, Design a Sidekick, Design a Game by playing with a deck of cards.

Improving your skills on character design is all about practicing. The more you play, the better you will eventually become. Use improvisation to foster your creativity.

Game Seeds has been designed by the Utrecht School of the Arts, Monobanda and Metagama for designers, students and creative professionals. *Game Seeds* is also to be used for workshops on Character Design as a playful experience and a real playcentric approach to creating Innovative Games.

A project commissioned by the **Utrecht School of the Arts: Games & Interaction**.
www.hku.nl



Game Seeds card game

Delivering an Emotion

Interview with **Jenova Chen**, co-founder of **thatgamecompany**

Flower, 2009

In any field, there are those people who follow the norm and those who break it. In the world of video games, that person is Jenova Chen, co-founder and creative director of thatgamecompany. With his award-winning games *Could*, *fIOW* and *Flower*, he is redefining the game industry. Designer Andrew Clark interviews Jenova about his artistic vision, his background and his goals.

AC: When we sat around wondering what amused us, at some point everyone said, “Video games.” What does amusement mean to you as an interactive entertainment designer?

JC: I think amusement is not entertainment; it is one particular portion of entertainment. I am more interested in defining the term. Entertainment is what food is to a hungry man. It is emotional food. From my point of view, entertainment is a bigger range. If we compare amusement to one type in the entire spectrum of the food industry, it is probably the sweets: candy and sugar. But there is real food, too, that is also very good, but that is not amusement.

Entertainment can be about tragedy, putting you on a roller coaster and swirling you around. It could be bungee jumping. It is entertaining because it satisfies a particular feeling, an emotion. That business, the entertainment business, is about satisfying these brain needs. It has existed since the very dawn of civilization. You can see people sitting around the fire, dancing as entertainment. In our age, just like the food industry, we want something to eat, not just to be happy. At tribal times, humans wanted to feel safe and warm in a very crude environment where any animal could kill you. What you wanted was safety. Humans dancing around fire makes us feel safe and warm. You are with other people and you feel a connection. Those are basic human emotions and, over the last thousands of years, like the food industry has evolved, so has the entertainment industry. We want more variety, more subtly. When entertainment was first available, people used to say, “Hey, I want to be amused, I want to laugh, I want to be excited or surprised or scared”. But over

time, perhaps horror movies are not what we need. I want to have a drama, a romantic movie, a documentary reflecting the real society's emotions — a complex feeling that is a mixture of other things, like a flavor you evolve over time. Amusement is probably a big portion of entertainment, but certainly doesn't cover every emotion we need.

AC: Going a little further back, what was the first video game you ever played? What was the feeling?

JC: I remember it was some kind of platform like Pinball. It was for computer, so it had a monochrome screen and very low resolution. I don't even know the name of it, I just remember playing it.

AC: Since those simpler times, video games and entertainment have progressed. What attracted you to this work of designing games? What are your influences as a designer?

JC: The reason I picked video games was because of the year I was born. I went to film school and I learned a lot about the history of film as a medium. If you see how it evolved, it is very similar to video games, time is just offset a little bit. Every medium usually starts with the technology. At the time, people wanted to push the technology. When they first invented the camera, early films basically documented real world events: a ballet concert, a boxing match, a train station. That was not very exciting, because people didn't know how to use the new technology to express themselves, but they were very good at capturing those primal experiences. A train coming at the camera? People were scared—but they could run out of the theatre and tell other people about it. The industry didn't start to provide more artistic content until a group of kids grew up with this particular media. They eventually became educated with this type of medium.

Film has existed for 100 years now, and the school I graduated from, the University of Southern California (USC), is 75 years old. Film didn't really become an industry until there was an education in film, until there were kids growing up with film, studying it. And the first wave of students studying film included people like George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Robert Zemeckis. When they first started working in the industry, they said, "What, there is a major

called Film?" I think these first people were able to make film part of their life, and for me, it is the same thing. I grew up playing video games and, for a long time, I thought games were just a distraction. Everybody who was older than I at the time told me it was something useless. They told me, "Do something more meaningful, why are you wasting your time?" They were treating it as if it were pornography or drugs. But then, once you go to a university where there is a program for film, people will tell you, "This is for the future, you have to go, become an expert in the field, change the future of this." So, it is not that I was born for video games. There is a particular attachment between video games and me. When I was a kid, my parents would say, "don't watch TV, it is for adults only, you are only supposed to watch this particular content." They were scared of me reading novels and becoming addicted to it, so they didn't give me a lot of novels to read either, and the same thing happened with film and going to the theater. So the very first deep emotional experience was actually through video games. I cried at video games more than I cried at films, because I wasn't allowed to see films. I was probably 13 or 14 when I played my first video game, which by today's standards would be very cheesy. It was my very first experience. I remember how the image touched me and changed the way I see the world and myself as a person. If you read an interview about Peter Jackson, he says that when he saw the film "King Kong" (the original version), he decided to become a filmmaker. He saw the movie when he was 9, and he thought that the emotional attachment to King Kong was so strong that he wanted to touch people the same way. And I felt the same way, to touch people the same way. If I had been born earlier, I would probably be a filmmaker now!

AC: In 2008, the magazine *Technology Review*, published by MIT, wrote, "He's desperate to see something new: right now, most games focus on stimulating players by inciting aggression. I want to expand what a video game can be." In your thesis, you explore the concept of *fIOW*, its relevance on video games, and you define the word *fun* as *fIOW*: a balance of the relationship between challenge and ability. Can you briefly describe your basic approach in creating *fun/fIOW*?

JC: Video games, in some peoples' minds, is the ninth greatest art. In my opinion, the video game is this ongoing, evolving medium that human civilization finally achieved. Cinema is definitely one of the greatest mediums in the world, because it combines all others together. You have literature, performance, painting, cinematography, music, composing...everything a human can do all combined and contained in a cinematic experience. I think a video game is taking everything a cinematic experience has and adding interaction. It is the greatest art, because it could just do what films do, but the industry won't admit that. So, if you dissect interactive media into its components, when you are designing music, you are a composer. As a composer, you have a set of rules. The music has a particular rhythm that it needs to have to sound good. The same combination with different rules could make people very disturbed. The same thing can be applied to an artist and composition. There are many rules that are involved. So when it comes to interaction, which is a very new dimension of mixing media, it also has rules. It involves human interactivity and *fIOW*, which is a positive psychology: how to design an interaction so that the user, the player, or the athlete can become more focused, more immersed in that activity. As a game designer, I am mainly in charge of creating the very good interactions in the experience.

The key is to be aware of how the player, or if you are a coach, because they are game designers, is engaged in his training. Is he distracted? Or is it too hard for him? Or too easy? Is he bored? You have to keep him entertained and focused on the activity he is doing. *FLOW* gives out about 8 different conditions that keep the player or athlete in the Zone, so he focuses on what he is doing. This is a very new field. A game designer is like an architect. They are dealing with the end user, human beings, learning how people react to certain conditions: lighting, physics, everything. A lot of architects become video game designers.

This is an interesting field because it involves a lot of science. As a game designer, you have to be aware of psychology, sociology, all different sciences that aren't taught to designers today, but you have to learn it. As a game designer, making the games fun is fundamental. The overall experience is beyond just fun. In the past, people were just focusing on fun, it is like painters focusing on realism. But then at some point, someone said just being realistic is not enough,

fIOW
2007



fIOW
2007



fIOW
2007



you have to express something. That is when the art starts to happen, when you start to combine elements in a particular order to express a particular sense or meaning.

AC: In 2006, you and Kellee Santiago started *thatgamecompany* and since then, you have been recognized as an innovator, a pioneer, the #99th most creative person in business for your work in interactive entertainment. How did that collaboration begin and what was the vision for the studio?

JC: I went to school because I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I felt that I should have more education and decided I should go to film school. During our first year, we were required to shoot five short films and learn screenwriting and all the basics that have to deal with video games. I asked myself why I was there. I wanted to be an interactive designer. But those films ended up being the inspiration later as I compared the video game industry to the film industry, and were the foundations for me to form my discipline and philosophy.

At film school, the biggest thing was a student design project called *Cloud*. At the time, we were just thinking it was a grant from the school, a video game innovation grant, and we pictured something that was very different from what was in the market. I just saw all this violence in the market. I saw Senators condemning all this violence, and video games such as *Grand Theft Auto San Andreas* were just coming out that year. I thought I could make a video game that was the opposite of *San Andreas*: no violence, no competition, no numbers, no points, no goals. Just focusing on a particular experience—clouds floating in the sky. Who doesn't like the beautiful clouds in the sky, and who hadn't dreamt they could fly among them? So we made the experience *Cloud*, which is about a boy who is sick in the hospital and he is daydreaming he is flying in the sky. He can make the clouds into different shapes, like animals, and he can use the clouds to create a rain to wash the land. A very simple experience. It took us forever to make it and once we put it out in the market, when we finally had it done, we just wanted to submit it to a festival. That was the goal. Two days after we submitted the game, it was highlighted on TV on G4, and the host really loved playing the game. Immediately, our school server was brought down because of

Cloud
2006



Cloud
2006



Cloud
2006



the traffic. Since then, it has crashed four times and every time we have moved it to a bigger server to keep it from crashing. I think currently one million people have downloaded this game. I have heard from so many emails of people who have downloaded it from the internet and say, “This game is so different, you should show this game to the rest of the world, show them that video games can be about this.” Other people said the game made them cry, which to me was surprising because after making the game I didn’t feel anything for a year. The awards and the response ... people were discussing if video games can be art based on the experience playing this game. Newspapers in Sydney, Australia, were debating on whether video games can be art because of our game. This was an accident. We didn’t think this game would be that great and we tried to look back and identify that thing which makes it unique, that makes it a success. It is obviously different from the rest of the games. I finally realized, just like any other medium, that it is entertainment. Entertainment is about fulfilling the desire for feelings. If you look at novels and movies, they are all based on feelings. In the video game industry, as it evolved over time, we had the equivalent of a horror film, a summer blockbuster action film, a thriller, but we don’t have one for drama, romantic movie, documentary, anything that is deep and involves interaction with life and the world around us, and strong emotions that make us cry. So I thought no wonder not everyone is a gamer, there is an emotion that they can’t connect to. Everyone listens to some kind of music, reads some kind of book. I designed *Cloud* as a video game for certain types of emotions. Certainly those emotions are present, but they haven’t been designed for a “gamer”. They never thought about it as a possibility. When they see it, they love it and they convince other people to play it.

We leapt from *Cloud* to opening *thatgamecompany* with a goal to expand the emotional range of the video game and to make the general public aware of it. It was important for us to be a successful company, so that other game makers could make these types of games as well.

AC: In your games there is an emphasis on natural environments and organic objects such as clouds, flowers and fluid creatures, and this is one way I see the game being able to connect to these deeper emotions. How do you design and connect to the user's emotions in your games?

JC: It is instinct. There are no textbooks to tell you how to make it work. It is a combination. *Flower* is an experience where you felt like you are spreading positive energy —life and light—to the world. There is also this sadness that we created with the dark side—the city. As you play, if that sadness resonates with you as you heal the city, you are healing yourself on an emotion level. It will touch you in that way. But that is an instinct based on a decision I had.

There are also techniques such as the three-act structure for a cathartic experience. When you want to have an overwhelming emotion experience for the player, you need to have a strong emotional touch. In order to reach that in a three-act structure, you need to have a little twist and then a lower drip before reaching the climax. The more drastic the lifting experience from the low point to the climax is, the more intense and connective the unexpected emotion will feel. It’s much stronger than a steady rise. By controlling the emotions through a curve, putting the audience through a roller coaster of emotions, not a rising line, you can manage to have them reach catharsis. But, is this catharsis about a positive feeling or extreme sadness? And as a director, you have to make sure everything is working along this curve. The climax has to sync between the visual, the performance, the script, the music, the sounds, and the interaction. I believe I can be a good film director because I have a certain discipline and training. But right now, I am working in the video game industry and I have one more consideration: game play. I can control game play, making this level or area challenging to achieve that curve.

AC: Has there been an evolution of your game design thinking between the three games: *Cloud* – a first person soarer, *flOw* – an aquatic experience through a surreal biosphere, and *Flower* – a pastoral, wind swept exploration of the petals voyage? Are there elements you are refining and continuing to develop?

JC: There is no evolution, only learning. The video game industry is so new that there is no textbook for things. In *Flower*, we wanted to create a peaceful experience. Anything we know about fun is challenged, and if you fail at challenge you feel frustration, not fun. If you think about *Flower* as game play, there are a bunch of dots and you try to touch as many dots as you can. It is a really boring

Flower
2009



game. We went against tradition and made a video game that made you feel peaceful and calm, and it turns to be working! *FlOw* was one thing, *Cloud* was another, and every time we tried to make something new, we were fighting against the traditions. Is it going to work? Nobody has done it before. I feel like we haven't done a lot. Our work is a risk, and there is always the risk it won't work in the end. It is a stressful environment to work on these games. For our new game, we are trying something that no one has done before and testing it to see if it will work. We hope it will be out soon, possibly this year.

AC: In your games, the "instruction manuals," or how-to, is simple and organic, yet delivers complexity and variety, similar to the output of a cellular automata. How do you accomplish this?

JC: The reason the game is simple is because we wanted to deliver an emotion. At some point *Flower* was a puzzle game in which you had to collect a certain number of petals to unlock and open doors. When people played it, they didn't have the time to be attached emotionally to the game, all they focused on was remembering where the petals were and how many petals they needed. The emotional brain can't be engaged when we have to solve rational puzzles. Then, there is the other spectrum, puzzle design, such as *Sudoku*, *Scrabble*, which is more traditional and engages the brain in an intellectual challenge to solve problems. Solving a problem doesn't give you emotions, so

we steer away from that direction. We simplified the game to make the emotion the main focus.

AC: How do you get your games in front of kids, teenagers, adults, and non-gamers? What are the distribution channels in the 21st Century for a gaming company?

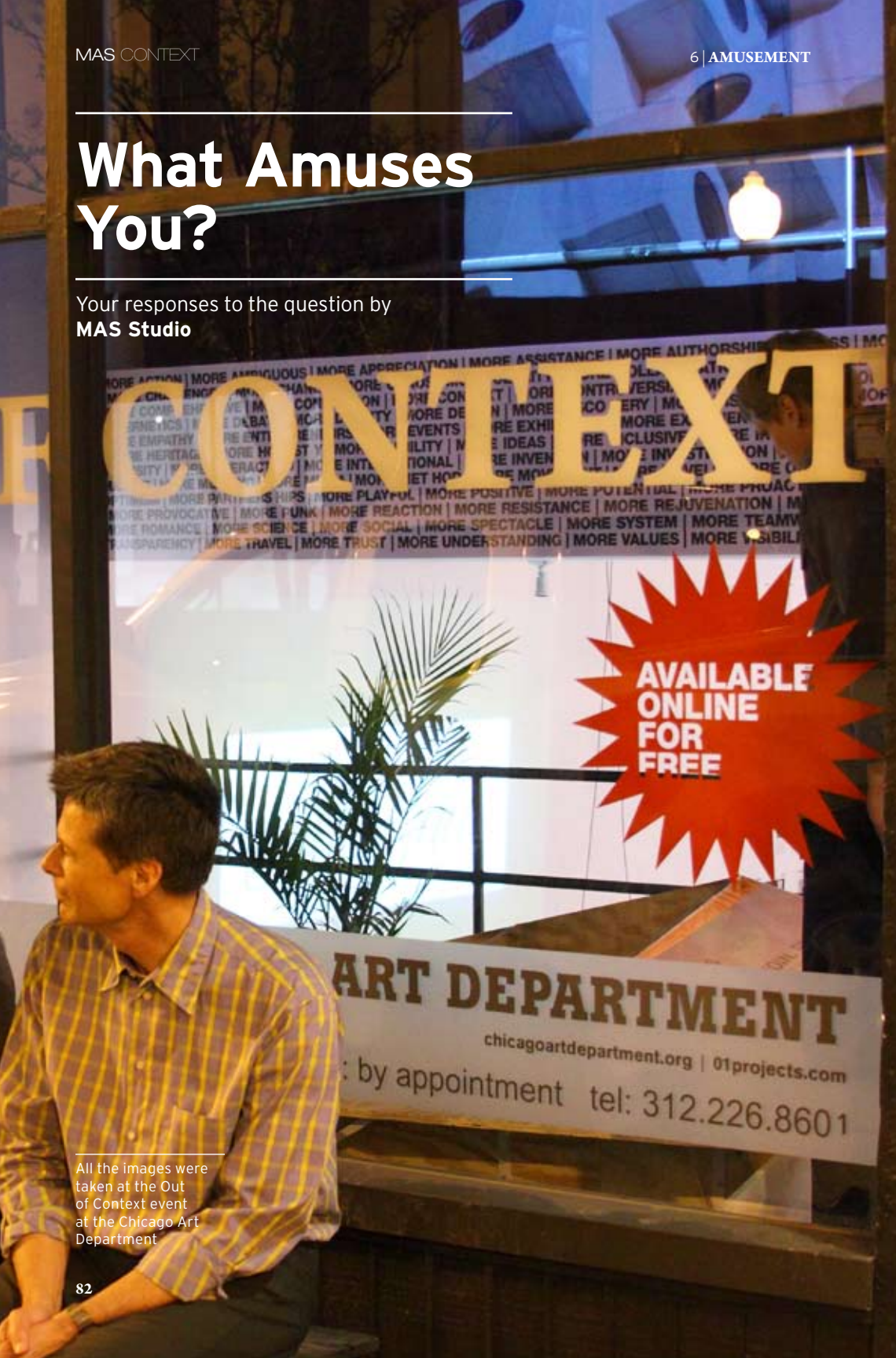
JC: Actually, I don't think we have done a good job spreading it. It has only been on PlayStation 3, and we have had very good sales on that platform. But compared to *flOw* and *Cloud*, the free flash games online, it is just a small portion. *FlOw* had over 6 million people playing it on the website. We are certainly not satisfied with the number of people who are playing *Flower* right now. We want to show everyone that these games are available, and we need to do more.

AC: You said in an article, "If we keep making these games, more and more gamers will want to see stuff like this. It's not about killing each other, and that could change the world's perception that video games are just about teenage boys and violence." Where would you like to see video game designers' head? What territories should they be moving towards?

JC: The term video game design is actually the wrong term. In the industry, we are called video game directors. In the film industry, almost all directors are writers, but because interactive is so new, I think they should think about themselves as directors. They should think about what they want to tell or express in the video game. The medium is there and it has tremendous power for an audience. Are you just going to make another game that makes people feel excited? Or do you want to deliver something more unique, something more personal, that you feel will be beneficial to be experienced by others? And if you had something you felt proud of, and was worthwhile for millions of people to play it, I bet you that game will be unique and good. If your work is only to change one thing from a game that already exists, that is not an expression, it is the work of a fan. We need more creators than fans.

What Amuses You?

Your responses to the question by
MAS Studio



All the images were
taken at the Out
of Context event
at the Chicago Art
Department

Taylor	Hipsters.
Marcus	Seeing people holding hands down by the lake.
Roy	Hey Monday Live picture and space in general >>looks great.
Jennifer	Dreamers.
Susan	TV Set.
Noël	Most things, sadly...
Barbara	How my labrador retriever has no interest whatsoever in retrieving anything.
Mari	People who think that vegetarians only eat grass. Or who assume chicken broth is a-ok.
Michael	Beautiful landscapes, cities, buildings, graphics and design.
Carly-joy	Graffiti, interactive art, penguins.
Gjudelman	3-year olds playing soccer.
Myles	The fact that I take showers to procrastinate. (this also concerns me on several levels).
Valpero	Jokes, videos with rare things, stop motion, motion graphics, interesting objects of design, watches...
Andrew	#2 supersized. Diet coke.
Benny	Thinking about cold sheets before bed, beatboxing on my walk from my car to my home, and listening to my wife sing (preferably in the shower).
Lauren	Animals acting like people. Eating finger food with a fork and knife. Overhearing private conversations on public trans- portation.



Tony, the Chicago Cop

Amusing. smelly dogs and the misuse of the word irony.
Delights. ice cream and sex.
Excites. big cities

Kisbeck

I love sitting in on or by the water, any water. Lake Michigan amuses me to no end. SPLISH SPLASH.

Baxter

Euphemisms that aren't, and new ideas that aren't, in that order.

Juan

What kind of amusement? I think these term can branch off into different "amusements". First amusement: its amusing to be entertained by others; i.e. comedians, people falling from their bikes, dumb questions in very serious environment, going to an exhibition 5 minutes before they close, etc. I think to be amused is to be entertained and being able to laugh so anything can be amusing if it is viewed out of its original context.

Luis

Bullshit conversations.....and by bullshit I mean superficial.

Leti

Stimulating discourse.

Ryan

My vanity glasses.

Daisy Lynn

Men in business attire with their ties strewn over their shoulders eating ice cream cones.

Jeff

Folded dog ears.



Alexis

La vie en General. life in general, there is always a surprise at the corner of the street, but you have to look for the first one, then you get the others. Keep on amusing yourself and you will amuse and be amused, by tiny details. Just writting this is amusing.

Marcus

Josh's dangling curl.

Adam

When I am playing with my daughter - she will suddenly stop, turn beat red, and poop.

Scott

The three Bud Lights in my fridge that will probably live there until I move out.

Roger

Giving nature human attributes.

Paul

When, after a few minutes of conversation with someone, they say, "You're funny."

Chris

The stories of Marcovaldo - Italo Calvino.

Lionel

Understanding human nature amuses me. In particular, understanding and solving problems that seem complex, but whose solution is deceptively simple.

Mike

Interactive video!!

Julie

Flea circuses and dancing hamsters in commercials. And also "European" shorts.

Marina

Seriousness amuses me.



Kim

I find farts amusing.

Barbara

I'll be right back with SOMETHING amusing (if I can just stop giggling at this dogface snoring at my feet...).

Ben

Finding out that a co-worker thought that every chicken egg was a baby chick, and was shocked to learn that chickens lay eggs unfertilized. Telling that story to different co-worker, and finding out that he has been unwittingly fed fertilized eggs by his partner for years and never knew it, and is visibly grossed out.

Taylor

Freshmen Boys (such a mixture of immature goof balls and young men.....very funny to observe).

Jordan

Farm animal antics (donkeys playing on dirt piles and roosters crowing to impress the ladies).

Hannah

Hobos.

Ken

I'm amused by watching encounters between small children and animals--there's something comical and genuine about those interactions, usually infused with curiosity and sheer delight, between innocent creatures who don't know quite what to make of each other.



Liz

People falling down. It never ceases to amuse me. Not that I'm so evil that I would actually cause this to happen...but when it happens on its own, I can't help finding hilarity in it. Bubble wrap, drunk people, and reality tv. The latter two go hand-in-hand. Myself.

Amelia

Conversation ONE:

Isabella (seven years old) getting ready for bed.
Isabella: "Mommy, do spirits have spirits?"
My response: "Yes, they do."
Isabella: "Okay. I was just trying to figure it out."

Conversation TWO:

Out of the blue, two days ago, Sophia (four years old) stopped while brushing her teeth to ask me a question:
Sophia: "Mommy, why did God make all those planets but only put people on Mother Earth? What are all of the other planets doing?"
My response: "Hmmm. Good Question."
Sophia (impatient): "Mommy, you told me that every thing God made has a purpose. Why aren't there people on the other planets? What are those planets doing?"
My response: "I don't know. But I know God knows."
Sophia, after a pause: "That's what I was thinking."

She Was Not Amused

Essay by **Mike Walsh**, author of *Bowling Across America: 50 States in Rented Shoes* (2008, St. Martin's Press)



I was nearing the end of a half-year trip for which I'd quit my job, lost my girl, and given up my every possession that wouldn't fit into the trunk of a ten-year old Honda when I met her: a cute, sweet, playful woman who seemed to make my friend happy. They were tumbling toward marriage while I tumbled alone across the western United States on a quest to prove truths I'd long believed to be unassailable. My trip had borne fruit to that end, and any lingering doubt about having upended my life to make this quest had been relegated to the trash heap of misery that now filled the back seat in the form of fast food wrappers and notes of my encounters in 46 states. At every turn I'd found validation and around every corner, confirmation. Literally hundreds of people had told me, "Yes, you're right. I feel that way, too." But with a single sentence, she unraveled all of that.

"There is nothing fun, nor funny, about bowling."

For someone who had just dedicated six months during the prime of his life to spending time in bowling alleys on the premise that bowling is both fun and funny enough to support a full-length travel memoir, this was more than a little disconcerting. At the risk of casting too dramatic a comparison, it was akin to a devout Christian being confronted for the first time with an equally convicted atheist. And so, like Peter denying Jesus three times before the rooster's crow, I found myself in a sudden crisis of faith. As with all such crises, resolving it required answering a big question: Is bowling amusing?

Prior to committing to going bowling in all 50 states, I had a well-established affection for the sport—or, more accurately, the venue in which it takes place. I'd always found bowling alleys to be wildly romantic, in the nostalgic reminiscence, not sexy, sense of the term. What other place in the world contains such a cross-section of people? What recreational activity offers more opportunity for both competition and socialization? The downtime between rolls is tailor-made for conversation, for breaking bread, for sharing a pitcher of beer. Its low cost, ubiquity and simplicity (it's just rolling a ball, after all) give bowling an egalitarian sensibility. Rich, poor, black, white, young, old, male, female, transgendered, handicapped, whatever: everyone can get to the foul line and take a shot at the pins. Few bowl enough to be good at it, much less own their own equipment, which puts people of all backgrounds in the same garishly-colored rented shoes rolling a borrowed ball that someone else left behind. It matters not whether it's a group of suburban rich kids, a senior citizens' league, or a family of four spending their only entertainment dollars for the month: everyone looks equally ridiculous in ill-fitting blue and red

222 Dutch Lanes
Bowling



Rental shoes



Group of bowlers
enjoying the game
and the amenities
of the bowling alley



Senior citizen's league



Aunt Ginny bowling



Jason Jr. bowling



shoes trying to balance their weight against that of a heavy three-holed ball. And so everyone feels equally silly when they roll a gutter ball, and equally proud when they roll a strike.

Any given bowling alley on any given day is a microcosm of the community in which it sits. The bowling alley is a gathering place, and much more transpires within its confines than merely a series of sporting contests divided into ten frames. People don't just bowl at bowling alleys. They eat and drink. They karaoke. They fall in love. The sneak behind the vending machines and have sex. They spend the one Saturday afternoon a month they have custody of their son there. They forget about work, home, the news of the day. And, where it hasn't been outlawed, they smoke. Man, do they smoke.

Any bowling alley worth the shoe spray under its front counter is rich with the trappings of amusement. There's a bar to loosen inhibitions, typically with a loosened interpretation of what constitutes the age of majority than a bar not attached to a bowling alley will have. (With near unanimity, people tell me one of the easiest places to score drinks when they were in high school was the bowling alley bar, given the easy melding of ages and activities under one roof, and the need for incremental revenue when the lanes aren't filled with leagues.) There's a snack bar where nacho cheese flows free and easy, facilitating communal mealtimes that can't help but bring people together. There are arcade games and special nights when, thanks to enough lighting equipment to power a KISS concert, the bowling alley more closely resembles a nightclub than a smoke-filled hangout for men wearing Sansabelt. By these measures my friend's contention is patently, provably false. Bowling alleys are literally built for amusement, and for amusement beyond the act of rolling a ball down an oiled surface bent on destructing an equilateral triangle 60 feet away.

And so, it would seem that bowling alleys are both fun and funny. But she didn't use the word "alleys," did she? She said, "bowling." Period. If her contention pertained only to the sport itself—solely the contest of ten frames and a tally of pins felled—would it be true? This is a difficult proposition to test, as pretty much all bowling takes place in bowling alleys, and all bowling alleys are geared for fun. To answer the question scientifically would take a sterile testing environment and some people who were seriously unamused by my quest to bowl in all 50 states. As it happened, there was such a place. And there were such people.

I was only three states into my cross-country bowl-athon when I received a call from one of them. His name was Rory, and he worked for the American Bowling Congress. He'd taken issue with some comments he'd read on my website suggesting that bowling was merely a bastion of beer drinkers and

barflies unable to participate in any physical activity more rigorous than rolling a ball every so often.

"Real bowlers are legitimate athletes," Rory insisted. "They train hard, suffer injuries and need to be as mentally focused as any other professional athlete."

"They probably have to work even harder," I replied, adding, "given all the smoking they're doing between frames."

Rory's sigh at my predictable quip was audible. He'd heard it before, and was surely tired of trying to change perceptions about bowling carried by the non-kegling masses. Nonetheless, he invited me to the ABC's headquarters in Milwaukee. "We'll show you real bowling," he promised in a somewhat ominous tone.

When I arrived at the ABC, Rory took me to the world's foremost bowling laboratory: eight working lanes representing 95% of the bowling surfaces currently in use and sanctioned by the ABC. It was a windowless room lit by fluorescent tubes in the ceiling. Charts and graphs line the walls, and on the lanes are contraptions for testing balls, lane surfaces, lubricants, pins and pinsetters. Every sanctioned piece of equipment, brand of lane oil, type of synthetic ball material and bowling pin is tested here before being approved for use in a real, live bowling setting. Noticeably absent were the key components of the average, amusing bowling alley: No snack bar. No bar bar. No disco lighting package. Presumably a fog machine would be rendered ineffective by this temperature- and humidity-controlled environment.

Using the charts on the wall, a man explained the complex physics behind rolling a bowling ball, where each variable—the ball's weight, its velocity, its rotation, its angle of impact on the pins—has a significant effect on the outcome of a given roll. As he did so, a small group of people began to trickle in from the ABC's offices, curious to see the jackass who was trying to bowl in all 50 states despite having apparent contempt for the finer points of the sport. Naturally, I tried to win them over with my wit.

"And here I thought the only skill involved in bowling was pouring the beer from the pitcher without making too much foam," I said to a collective grown.

Ritz Classic bowling sign in Salt Lake City, Utah



Tropicana Lanes sign in St. Louis, Missouri



"Rolling strikes consistently is like having a good golf swing," someone says in bowling's defense. "It's extremely demanding, mentally and physically."

There was a large contraption at the head of one of the lanes, and the group surrounded me and led me to it. It looked like a torture device from a sixties-era Bond movie: a nine-foot-tall glass enclosure with a machine inside it—gears and mechanical arms, hydraulic fittings, hoses and wires combining for an intimidating combination of steel and technology. "Um...I was just kidding about the beer thing," I muttered.

"This machine is designed to roll a perfect strike," Neil explained, to my relief. "It has three lasers to precisely position the ball, and we set the exact release point, axis tilt, speed and rotation for the given lane conditions." He puts a ball into the machine, makes some adjustments on a keypad and everyone steps back. The machine picks up and spins the ball to put a precise rotation on it before releasing it onto the lane at the ideal trajectory to hit the pins at the exact angle needed to produce a strike. As if to prove my naivete about bowling's athleticism, the strike-throwing machine left a pin standing.

At this point a man named Roger Dalkin joined us. Roger was the ABC's executive director, and a former World Bowling Cup champion. And he came to the lab to bowl against me. He will certainly beat me. Badly. Having not fully learned my lesson about making fun of bowling in front of people whose livelihood depends on the sport, I attempted to trash talk—as though I had any hope of psyching out a world champion in a sport I participate in casually, usually while drunk. "You know, these lane conditions aren't quite pristine if you ask me," I said. "There's no second-hand smoke in here."

Roger responded by rolling a strike. And another. And many more. I proceeded to roll one of the better games of my life—a 152—and he still beat me by more than 100 pins. By the game's end, the crowd had grown to about a dozen career bowlers and ABC officials who were all clearly on Roger's side. Still, in the spirit of people who purely love the game and want others to enjoy it too, they encouraged me and offered tips to help my game, cheering my strikes and bemoaning my open frames. Good-natured ribbing and laughter filled the room. High fives between combatants and handshakes of sportsmanship prevailed. All in all, even in the sterile confines of the ABC's testing facility, even while losing, bowling was fun.

But could it also be funny? After Roger trounced me, a handful of the ABC group helped me test this hypothesis at a legend of Milwaukee's underground bowling scene that was the polar opposite of the ABC's pristine

Bowling machine located at the ABC's offices in Milwaukee



Marcy Skowronski

Sport paraphernalia
at Holler HouseInterior of Holler
House with
underwear hanging
from the ceiling

environs. As the crookedly painted letters on the red wall above the staircase announce, "This is Holler House."

Holler House is a bowling alley where dreams come true and nightmares are born, often in the same evening. It's run by 76-year old Marcy Skowronski (just like it sounds), and has been in her family since her in-laws built it in 1908. The two lanes in the basement are the oldest ABC-sanctioned lanes in the country, but all of the action during our visit happened in the bar upstairs where Marcy held court over Zwipec beers from her native Poland while we sat in stools upholstered with cracking red vinyl. Glancing around the bar at the sports paraphernalia, photos of regulars, pictures of bowling teams from the 1950's and dents in the walls, I counted dozens of pairs of underwear and bras dangling from the ceiling. If these walls could talk, I think, only as long as Marcy is around they wouldn't get a word in.

"A group of men came in one night," she said. "I figured it was a stag party, so I asked 'em, 'Who's getting married?' And they just started laughing." The men were seminarians from a nearby Catholic college. "They got so bombed," she continued, "and they started taking their pants off. That's one of their underwear up there. I told him when he gets ordained I'll wrap them up and send them to him!"

Eagles guitarist Joe Walsh once led songs on the rickety piano in the corner during a surprise visit, and bowling greats like Earl Anthony, who won 45 Professional Bowlers Association titles in his career, have signed some of the undergarments on the ceiling.

"I lived in Arizona," Marcy said in response to a question, "and you know you'd get so bored! So I tried to do some volunteer work at a hospital. The coordinator asked me what I wanted to do and I said, 'I want to read porno to the blind.' Well, he just took off and started running!"

My friends from the ABC and I spent nearly an hour listening to Marcy, holding our sides much of the time. Some of her stories and jokes were barely appropriate for a dive bar on Milwaukee's south side, let alone coming from the mouth of a 76 year-old grandmother. But they, and the frames of bowling I squeezed in between them, were funny.

And so, inappropriate as it may be, I continue to invite my friend's new bride to visit me in the Midwest, promising that when she comes back from Milwaukee she'll no longer be wearing a bra. One day she'll come around to bowling's transcendent power to amuse.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

AMUSEMENT has had invaluable help from: Joseph Altshuler, Nuria Ayala, Alejo Bagué, Christophe Berg, Eduard Bru, Paul Butt, Jenova Chen, Andrew Clark, Matt Clark, Jon Cole, Keri Elmsly, Liselore Goedhart, Alex Gordon, Enric Llorach, Julie Michiels, Yasmin Mokhtarzadeh, Paul Mougey, Niki Smit, Mike Walsh, Yosigo, Kent Fenwick for making the script for "What amuses you?" and everybody who responded the question.

Empty Amusement

Yosigo (pg. 6-21)

In front of the Sea

Alejo Bagué (pg. 22-23, 26) Domingo Ferré Arquitectes (pg. 30 top)
West 8 (pg. 25) B.A.G. (pg. 30, middle, bottom)
Google (pg. 28) Conxita Balcells Associats (pg. 31)
Yoruno (pg. 29)

Audience as Participants

United Visual Artists (pg. 32, 35, 37, 38)

Comic book movies

Paul Butt | Section Design (pg. 40-45)

de[FENCING]

Alex Gordon (pg. 46-47)
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Game Seeds

Liselore Goedhart (pg. 62-63, 65-68)
Niki Smit (pg. 69)

Delivering an Emotion

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What Amuses You?

Iker Gil (pg. 82, 84-87)

She Was Not Amused

Mike Walsh (pg 88-89, 91, 92, 95, 97, 98)

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Departures
Salidas

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Our next issue will focus on the topic of INFORMATION. Nowadays, we produce, consume and distribute more information than ever before. It is shaping the way we think, feel, live and communicate. It controls what we do and it shapes our perceptions. Whether you like it or not, we live in the era of Information.

Of course, we want to hear YOUR opinion. Contact us before July 9 if you want to contribute in the form of an essay, photographs, diagrams, or case study.

For information on the submission guidelines and other questions, please visit www.mascontext.com

7 | INFORMATION FALL 10 will be published on September 1.

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ISSUE 6 SUMMER 10

