

[INCLUSIVE GAME] DESIGN

THROUGH INCLUSIVE [GAME DESIGN]

SWEDEN GAME CONFERENCE

21ST OCTOBER, 2016

RICHARD A. **BARTLE**

UNIVERSITY OF **ESSEX**, UK

INTRODUCTION

- WHEN I WAS **INVITED** TO **SPEAK** AT THIS CONFERENCE, I WAS TOLD THAT THE **THEME** WAS "INCLUSIVE GAME DEVELOPMENT"
- I'M A **DESIGNER**, SO IMMEDIATELY CHANGED THE WORD "**DEVELOPMENT**" TO "**DESIGN**"
- THAT **SAID**, WHAT DOES "INCLUSIVE GAME DESIGN" **MEAN**?
 - THE DESIGN OF INCLUSIVE **GAMES**?
 - THE INCLUSIVENESS OF THE GAME DESIGN **PROFESSION**?
- WHERE DO THE **BRACKETS** GO?

STRATEGY

- THERE'S **ANOTHER** QUESTION THAT NEEDS TO BE **ASKED**, TOO
- WHY IS EITHER **IMPORTANT**?
- IT'S IMPORTANT FOR PROGRESSIVE, LIBERAL, SOCIAL AND **POLITICAL** REASONS
- WILL IT ACTUALLY IMPROVE THE **GAMES** AVAILABLE TO US, THOUGH?
- MIGHT IT EVEN MAKE THEM **WORSE**?
 - AFTER ALL, WE **COULD** LET **FIVE-YEAR-OLDS** DESIGN OUR AAA GAMES, BUT WE WOULDN'T WANT TO **PLAY** THEM FOR VERY LONG

ART AND CRAFT

- COMPUTER GAME DESIGN IS AN **ART** FORM
- AS WITH **ALL** ART FORMS, THERE ARE **TWO** MAIN COMPONENTS TO IT:
 - THE **ART**
 - THE **CRAFT**
- THE **ART** IS WHAT YOU WANT TO **SAY**
- THE **CRAFT** IS THE **SKILLED** USE OF A **VOCABULARY** TO **SAY** IT
- IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE **WORDS**, YOU CAN'T SAY **ANYTHING**
 - THEREFORE ALL ARTISTS **ARE** CRAFTSPEOPLE

COMPARISON

- **CRAFT**



ART



CLARIFICATION

- WHEN I SAY "ART", I **DON'T** MEAN "GRAPHICS"
- I MEAN THAT GAME DESIGN IS A **MEDIUM** THROUGH WHICH THE GAME DESIGNER CAN DELIVER A **MESSAGE** TO ITS **PLAYERS**
- NEITHER AM I TALKING ABOUT SELF-CONSCIOUS "**ART GAMES**"
- THEY ALMOST INVARIABLY EMBODY THEIR MESSAGE IN THE GAME'S **FICTION** AND THE **GOALS**, RATHER THAN THE GAMEPLAY
- **GAMEPLAY** IS WHAT DELIVERS THE ARTISTIC **PAYLOAD** OF A GAME'S DESIGN

ASSERTION

- I'M NOW GOING TO MAKE AN **ASSERTION**
 - OBVIOUS TO **ME**, PERHAPS **NOT** SO TO DESK-CHAINED, PIZZA-AND-RED-BULL DESIGNERS
- WHEN A DESIGNER IS TRYING TO **SAY** SOMETHING THROUGH THEIR DESIGN, THE RESULTING DESIGN IS **BETTER**
 - IT HAS BOTH CRAFT **AND** ART
 - THERE'S A STRONGER, COHERENT **VISION**
 - THE PLAYER EXPERIENCE IS MORE **MEANINGFUL**
- IF YOU HAVE **ONLY** CRAFT AND **NO** ART, YOU DON'T **BELIEVE** IN YOUR GAME

CRYSTAL MED

- HERE ARE SOME CRYSTALS



CRAFT

- NOW IF YOU HAVE THE **CRAFT**, YOU CAN **MAKE** THE THINGS THE CRAFT COVERS
- FOR GAME **DESIGNERS**, THIS MEANS **GAME DESIGNS**
 - ACTUAL **DEVELOPERS** MAKE THE GAMES, USING THEIR **OWN** CRAFT
- IMPORTANT: YOU CAN **DESIGN** PROFESSIONAL-QUALITY GAMES USING CRAFT **ALONE**
- THIS MEANS YOU CAN APPLY YOUR DESIGNER'S **SKILLS** AND **KNOWLEDGE** TO MAKE SOMETHING ... THAT YOU DON'T **BELIEVE** IN

ALL THE TIME

- THIS HAPPENS **ALL THE TIME** IN PROFESSIONAL GAME DEVELOPMENT
- DESIGNERS ARE GIVEN A SET OF **PREDEFINED** REQUIREMENTS AND TOLD TO GET **ON** WITH IT
 - THE AIM OF A MODERN GAME STUDIO IS TO **AVOID BANKRUPTCY**, NOT TO RISK ALL MAKING **ARTISTIC STATEMENTS**
- NOW A **GOOD** GAME DESIGNER CAN **INDEED** “GET ON WITH IT”
 - APPLYING THEIR **CRAFT** IN LIEU OF **ART**
- THESE GAMES ARE **SOULLESS**, BUT THEY **SELL**

ART

- **ART** GIVES A GAME ITS **SOUL**
- WORKS OF ART **GAIN** THEIR POWER FROM THE ARTIST'S ATTEMPT TO **SAY** SOMETHING TO THEIR **AUDIENCE** – TO ASK **QUESTIONS**
- SO AS TO BE **ABLE** TO DO THIS, THE DESIGNER NEEDS TO HAVE SUFFICIENT **CRAFT** TO CREATE SOMETHING FOR **ANY** AUDIENCE
- A STUDIO **CAN** ASK A DECENT DESIGNER TO CREATE A GAME FOR **WHATEVER** AUDIENCE, AND THE DESIGNER **SHOULD** BE ABLE TO DO IT
– THEY MAY NOT **ENJOY** IT, BUT THEY CAN **DO** IT

HOWEVER

- JUST BECAUSE A DESIGNER **CAN** CREATE FOR ANY AUDIENCE, THAT **DOESN'T** MEAN:
 - THEY **KNOW** THIS PARTICULAR AUDIENCE
 - THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO **SAY** TO IT
 - WHAT THEY **CHOOSE** TO SAY IS ANY DIFFERENT TO WHAT **OTHER** PEOPLE HAVE **ALREADY** SAID
 - THE AUDIENCE WANTS TO **HEAR** IT
- AN AUDIENCE OFTEN **DOESN'T KNOW** WHAT IT WANTS TO HEAR
 - MEANING THAT WHAT THE AUDIENCE **WANTS** TO HEAR **MAY** NEVER BE **SAID**

LESSON 1

- THE **FIRST** THING A DESIGNER SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN **DESIGNING** A GAME IS: **WHO'S GOING TO PLAY IT**
 - BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T **KNOW** WHO'LL PLAY IT, HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'LL FIND **FUN**?
- NEWBIE DESIGNERS **WILL** OFTEN CREATE A GAME **WITHOUT** KNOWING WHO WILL PLAY IT
 - IN THE **EXPECTATION** THAT **SOMEONE** WILL
 - THAT "SOMEONE" MAY JUST BE **THEM**, THOUGH...
- **OLDBIE** DESIGNERS MAY DO THIS, TOO
 - IN THE EXPECTATION THAT **NO-ONE** WILL PLAY IT...

KNOWING?

- IT'S FINE TO SAY "**KNOW** YOUR PLAYERS", BUT WHAT DOES "KNOW" **MEAN**?
- IT MEANS YOU HAVE TO **UNDERSTAND** THEM AT AN EMOTIONAL AND INTELLECTUAL LEVEL
 - WHAT DO THEY **LIKE**? WHAT DO THEY **DISLIKE**?
 - WHAT **ENTRANCES** THEM? WHAT **BORES** THEM?
 - WHAT MAKES THEM **WISTFUL**? WHAT MAKES THEM **MELANCHOLIC**?
 - WHAT DO THEY **WANT**? WHAT (IF **ANYTHING**) DO THEY **THINK** THEY WANT?
- WARNING: PLAYERS ARE **NOT** ALL THE SAME!

THE PLAYERS

- THERE'S NO SUCH **THING** AS "THE PLAYERS"
- PLAYERS ARE ALL **DIF**FERENT
- THEY AGREE ON **SOME** THINGS, DISAGREE ON **OTHERS**, CARE NOTHING ABOUT **MORE**
 - ASIDE: POINTING **OUT** THAT THEY AREN'T ALL THE SAME WAS THE CHIEF OBJECTIVE OF MY **PLAYER TYPES** WORK
- IF SOMEONE SAYS "**THE** PLAYERS WANT THIS", THEY MEAN "**SOME** PLAYERS WANT THIS"
- SO HOW **CAN** YOU KNOW THE PLAYERS?
 - OR OUTSIDE GAMES, "KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE"

KNOW, HOW?

- **NON-DESIGNERS** APPROACH “UNDERSTAND THEIR AUDIENCE” IN ONE OF **TWO** WAYS:
 - **SCIENTIFICALLY**, IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL PLAYERS THROUGH RESEARCH
 - **UNSCIENTIFICALLY**, USING HEARSAY AND PERSONAL OPINION
- THE FORMER IS **BETTER** BUT **BOTH** LEAD TO **STEREOTYPING**
- **DESIGNERS** EMPLOY A **THIRD** WAY:
 - **ARTISTICALLY**
 - KNOWING WHO WILL PLAY JUST **COMES** TO THEM

FILTERS

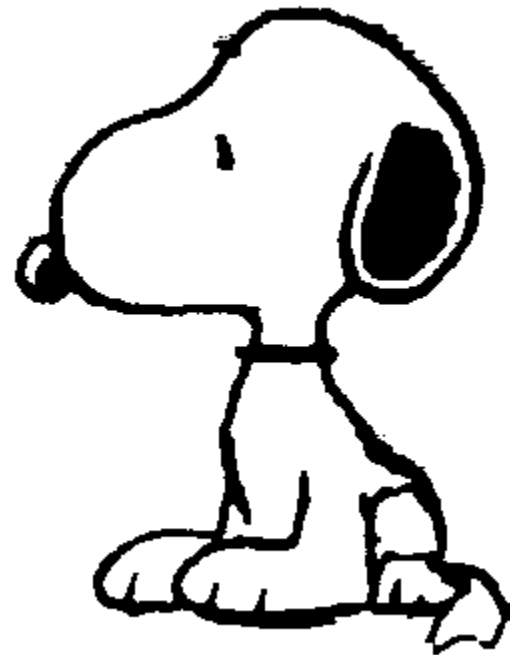
- PLAYERS ARE **MODELLED** IN A DESIGNER'S **HEAD** AS SETS OF **FILTERS**
- DESIGNERS AUTOMATICALLY **APPLY** THESE FILTERS WHILE HAVING **IDEAS**
- AS FOR WHERE THE FILTERS **COME** FROM, THE DESIGNER **CONCEIVES** THEM WHILE THINKING ABOUT THE AUDIENCE AND THE GAME
 - NOT **METHODICALLY**, IT JUST **HAPPENS**
- WHEN A DESIGNER **ASKS** "WHO WILL PLAY?", THEY'RE APPEALING FOR **SEEDS** ABOUT WHICH THE **CRYSTALS** OF THEIR MODEL CAN FORM

INACCESSIBILITY

- ONE OF THESE ARTISTS HAS HAD AN EXHIBITION IN THE LOUVRE



- LADY APART, PAUL KLEE



- SNOOPY, CHARLES M SCHULZ

UNHELPFUL

- THIS EXPLANATION ISN'T EXACTLY **HELPFUL**
- I'M BASICALLY SAYING THAT THE **FIRST** RULE OF GAME DESIGN IS TO **DO** SOMETHING YOU CAN'T **STOP** YOURSELF DOING **ANYWAY**
 - AND WHICH IS **VERY HARD** TO DESCRIBE TO NON-DESIGNERS
 - AUTHORS, PLAYWRIGHTS, ARTISTS *ETC.* WILL GET IT
- IT'S SOMETHING GOOD DESIGNERS CAN JUST **DO**
- THE **REASON** I'VE GONE INTO IT IS BECAUSE IT HAS **CONSEQUENCES**
 - WHICH ALSO RELATE TO **ART** AND **CRAFT**

INTERACTIVE

- **GAMES ARE VERY INTERACTIVE, BUT GAME DESIGN IS LESS SO**
 - THE DIALOGUE IS MAINLY **ONE WAY**
- ESSENTIALLY, YOU HAVE SOMEONE WHO DOES THE **SPEAKING** (THE DESIGNER) AND MANY PEOPLE WHO DO THE **LISTENING** (“THE PLAYERS”)
 - WHO THEN SPEAK TO THEMSELVES
- **WHILE DESIGNING, THOUGH, THE DESIGNER DOESN'T SPEAK TO THE PLAYERS**
 - THE DESIGNER SPEAKS TO THEIR INTERNAL **MODEL** OF WHO WILL BE PLAYING

SUBSET

- SUCH MODELS COME WITH **TEMPTATIONS**
- A DESIGNER CAN **UNDER-SPECIFY** THEIR AUDIENCE, TO SAY SOMETHING MORE **PROFOUND** TO A PARTICULAR **SUB-AUDIENCE**
 - AND IN SO DOING BE **INACCESSIBLE** TO SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO MAY **WISH** TO LISTEN
- A DESIGNER CAN **OVER-SPECIFY** THEIR AUDIENCE TO ADDRESS **MORE** PEOPLE
 - WHO MAY NOT ALL **WANT** TO HEAR THE MESSAGE
- THE FORMER IS TOO MUCH **ART**
- THE LATTER IS TOO MUCH **CRAFT**

RANGE

- THE **BEST** DESIGNERS NEITHER UNDER- NOR OVER-SPECIFY THEIR AUDIENCE
 - THEY **ONLY** SPEAK TO PEOPLE THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO **SAY** TO AND WHO WANT TO **HEAR** WHAT THEY SAY
- **PROBLEM:** WHAT IF YOU'RE SOMEONE THAT DESIGNERS **DON'T** HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO?
- YOUR **CHOICE** IS:
 - PLAY SERVICEABLE BUT SO-SO **CRAFT** GAMES
 - PLAY GAMES WITH **ART** YOU DON'T GET
 - DESIGN AND DEVELOP YOUR **OWN** GAMES

INCLUSIVITY

- FINALLY, WE REACH **INCLUSIVITY!**
- WHAT UNSERVED PLAYERS NEED **ISN'T** FOR DESIGNERS WHO **DON'T** SPEAK TO THEM TO **TRY** TO SPEAK TO THEM
 - I.E. DESIGNERS TRYING TO MAKE "INCLUSIVE GAMES"
- THEY NEED DESIGNERS WHO **DO** SPEAK TO THEM TO **SPEAK** TO THEM
 - I.E. THE DESIGNER **PROFESSION** NEEDS TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE
- FROM **THIS**, WE'LL **GET** INCLUSIVE GAMES
- HMM, THEN AGAIN...

EXCLUSIVITY

- WHEN PEOPLE **TALK** ABOUT INCLUSIVITY, THEY **GENERALLY** MEAN ONE OF:
 - YOU COULD **EASILY** WIDEN YOUR AUDIENCE WITHOUT COMPROMISING YOUR **ART!**
 - WHY WON'T YOU **CRAFT** GAMES FOR THESE POOR, DESERVING PEOPLE OVER HERE?
- THE **FORMER** IS FAIR ENOUGH
- THE LATTER IS **MISPLACED**
- WHAT UNSERVED PLAYERS NEED ARE GAMES THAT SPEAK **TO** THEM, NOT **AT** THEM
- THEY NEED THEIR OWN **EXCLUSIVE** GAMES

WIDER

- FOR ALL YOU CLOSET #GAMERGATE PEOPLE OUT THERE, THIS DOESN'T **AFFECT** YOU
- THIS IS **OPENING UP** GAMES TO AN AUDIENCE OF **POTENTIAL** PLAYERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY **UNDER-SERVED** OR **UNSERVED**
 - IT'S FINDING **NEW** SEAMS TO MINE, NOT ABANDONING THE MOTHER LODE
- HAVING **EQUAL** NUMBERS OF **MALE** AND **FEMALE** GAME DESIGNERS **WOULDN'T** HALVE THE NUMBER OF MALE DESIGNERS
- IT WOULD **DOUBLE** THE NUMBER OF DESIGNERS

SIMILAR

- NOTE THAT YOU **DON'T** HAVE TO BE AN **×** TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO PEOPLE WHO **ARE** **×**
 - OTHERWISE, WE'D NEVER GET GAMES FOR **×**="FIVE-YEAR-OLDS"
- YOU JUST HAVE TO HAVE SOMETHING TO **SAY** TO PEOPLE WHO **ARE** **×** THAT THEY **WANT** (OR YOU FEEL THEY **NEED**) TO **HEAR**
- ALSO NOTE THAT BEING AN **×** YOURSELF **DOESN'T** GUARANTEE THIS
 - "GAMES FOR WOMEN" IS ONLY THE **SECOND-MOST** OFF-PUTTING DESCRIPTION OF THEM

CONCLUSION

- IF WE TEACH PEOPLE TO DESIGN ONLY CERTAIN **KINDS** OF GAMES, WE'LL SEE TOO **MANY** OF THOSE GAMES
- IF WE TEACH THE SAME KIND OF **PEOPLE** TO DESIGN GAMES, TOO MANY WILL WANT TO SAY **SIMILAR** THINGS
- A GAME CAN BE **EXCLUSIVE** TO BE INCLUSIVE
- A **VARIETY** OF DESIGNERS MEANS A VARIETY OF **GAMES** FOR A VARIETY OF **PLAYERS**
- **MORE** VARIETY MEANS **MORE** GAMES FOR **MORE** PLAYERS – SO **MORE** WIN!