Playing with Worlds | Worlds of Play (Cologne, 11–12 Mar 16)

University of Cologne, Mar 11–12, 2016
Deadline: Nov 15, 2015

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The conceptual understanding of worlds has become a very fruitful theoretical category for many disciplines. This concept, which could be traced back to the classic philosophical study of Nelson Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking, was a fundamental starting point for further phenomenological, constructivist and cognitivist inquiries, and has continued to inspire humanities and social sciences alike. World concepts provide a lens through which we are able to examine representations and relations of time and space. They can be used when considering cultural contexts of production and the reception of meaning, while highlighting the conditions in which processes of sense-making are triggered. However, they can also be taken as spaces of possibility, i.e., as conditional games of the mind. Through this, players approach a world in a mode of "what if" to put the real world's rules and boundaries to the test, or take the opportunity to lose themselves in a fictional realm quite different from their everyday lives. Drawn to recent developments in the field of media studies and beyond, worlds of play could also be addressed as environments, as an Umwelt in terms of an ecological paradigm. They perform temporal manifestations between the conflicting notions of interior/exterior, figure/ground, nature/culture, serving as fertile soil for playful investigations within games. In this sense, game worlds emerge as a fundamental anthropological condition. They meet different purposes and come in nearly inexhaustible forms.

It is in this context that our workshop addresses questions such as: Which 'ways of worldmaking' do players of digital games engage in? What does it mean to make a home within a game? In which terms are game worlds a question of individual perspective or shared experiences? How are the spatial exploration of a game's virtual world and the emergence of its storyworld interrelated? And how are such relations affected by the inclusion of the real world as in transmedial environments and augmented reality games? And in turn: What impact does playing within these environments have on our understanding of the term "world"?

For our workshop, which is set for March 11-12, 2016, we would like to invite international master's and doctoral students from the different fields of the humanities to come to Cologne to share ideas, present findings and discuss concepts concerning worlds of play and the playing of worlds. Contributions may include, but are not limited to: time and space in digital games, storyworlds in games, transmedial game worlds, location based games, alternate reality games, potentials of an environmental understanding of games and the notion of playfulness in relation to strategies of worldmaking.

Please send abstracts of 500 words to worlds-of-play@uni-koeln.de

They should be submitted by 15th November 2015.
We would like to encourage oral presentations as opposed to the mere reading of prepared materials. Travel grants equivalent to DAAD guidelines will be provided for international participants.

Organizers: Philipp Bojahr, Michelle Herte, Léa Perraudin and Hanns Christian Schmidt, a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne

Reference:
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