

Animation to Games, Virtual Department of Games in Tokyo University of the Arts

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Figure 1: Unfamiliar Ritual, The Fire Celebration at Kurama, and here AND there

ABSTRACT

In recent years the borderline between games and animation has been blurring on the technical front and in terms of “expression,” there are many commonalities between games and animation when “creating the world,” where the characters live and the story unfold. So then, why not create video games from already existing animation titles?

Animation to Games project, or AtoG, is a collaborative project between Square Enix’s Business Division 2 and Tokyo University of the Arts, where seven animated works by the students were chosen and then directed by the students, with BD2 game creators participating as mentors over a nine-month period of game development. In this session, we would like to talk about the AtoG project and the many insights we learned about art expression and games, as well as the future of game development and education.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Applied computing** → **Computer games**; *Collaborative learning*;

KEYWORDS

Animation, Game, Art

ACM Reference format:

Norihito Ueno, Tomohiro Hasegawa, Prasert Prasertvithyakarn, Isamu Hasegawa, Mitsuko Okamoto, and Takashi Kiriya. 2018. Animation to Games, Virtual Department of Games in Tokyo University of the Arts. In *Proceedings of SIGGRAPH '18 Talks, Vancouver, BC, Canada, August 12-16, 2018*, 2 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3214745.3225183>

1 INTRODUCTION

Games have become a part of our lives, affecting our thought processes and realities as they evolved from their birthright as entertainment. Constantly transforming and enigmatic, a “game” has come to imply both content and concept, the latter expanding with the advancement of technology and manifesting into genres such as healthcare, education, etc. So, what is in store for games as a content medium? How will it speciate as an art or a cultural form?

Assuming a question, “What if there was a Department of Games in Tokyo University of the Arts?”, we launched the virtual department of games by the Tokyo University of the Arts Center of Innovation, the Graduate School of Film and New Media, and SQUARE ENIX. Animation to Games project, or AtoG is the project that graduates and students of the Graduate School of Film and New Media develop interactive games from their own animation or film projects with advice from SQUARE ENIX for nine month in the virtual department of games. We also exhibited the event that showcased the result of the AtoG project. Other features include exhibitions on game development processes at SQUARE ENIX, lectures by the creators on the Final Fantasy XV team, and a 4-day workshop by Associate Professor Andreas Kratky from the Media Arts + Practice Division at University of Southern California.

The event aims to incite new discussions on the definition of a game and its relationship to art through the games made in collaboration between artists and game creators, and a virtual game department curriculum.

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SIGGRAPH '18 Talks, August 12-16, 2018, Vancouver, BC, Canada
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ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-5820-0/18/08.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3214745.3225183>

2 CASE STUDY

All of the seven games are not only mere games from animations, but games including various challenges. We introduce those games as case study.

“Unfamiliar Ritual”. With this project, the character’s movement is left at the mercy of gravity. This uncontrollability becomes the driving force of the story. The original animation film was made in 3DCG incorporating physical computing applicable to the video game version. Ryoya Usuha(director), Fuuga Matsumoto (mentor).

“here AND there”. Three trivial occurrences in three different landscapes intertwine and make a tiny story in the original animation film. Komitsu (director), Kohei Toyama (mentor), Kentaro Hirase and Yusaku Kimura (engineers).

“The Fire Celebration at Kurama”. This game is based on an animation film depicting an actual festival in Kyoto, Japan. The game spawned from the animation features interaction between player and spirits in a VR environment. Yosuke Tani (director), Prasert “Sun” Prasertvithyakarn (mentor), Abacus Inc. (production).

“ZONE EATER”. A game based on a film made by using 3D scanning techniques that creates a new landscape of life with ordinary objects and scenes around us. The game further explores the relationship between real and virtual worlds. Shota Yamauchi (director), Tadachika Iima (mentor), Koki Sone (engineer).

“The Grouse in Snow Mountain Kurama”. In the original 2D animation film, a mountain climber loses his way in a blizzard and meets a grouse. The VR game also takes place on a snowy mountain with limited vision which the player can view through his eyes. Hiroko Satsuma (director), Kazumasa Niitsuma (mentor), Yoshikazu Fujita and Junko Muroyama (engineers).

“Colony highway broadcast”. The original animation piece featured highways and other manmade objects in the surroundings moving autonomically as if they were organisms of nature. In this exhibition, the viewer can see various facets of these living highway elements. Asako Fujikura (director), Kentarou Kimura (mentor), Yoshikazu Fujita and Junko Muroyama (engineers).

“Z”. This game uses projection on toy blocks. Is is based on a stop-motion animation film about a two dimensional character living inside a flat piece of paper who accidentally discovers a three-dimensional world. Tadashi Seo (director), Kentarou Kimura (mentor), Yoshikazu Fujita and Junko Muroyama (engineers).

3 LESSONS LEARNED

3.1 Academia side

3.1.1 Direct feedback in the exhibition. By exhibiting games, creators could receive direct feedback from the visitors. Receiving user feedback is an advantage of exhibiting games in a live setting, which is less obvious in the creative process of animation.

3.1.2 Prototyping. In creating a game based on animation, some mentors encouraged the team to transfer elements of animation to the implementation environment, e.g. Unity3D. By rapidly developing such a prototype, the team could estimate the amount of tasks and missing visual elements.



Figure 2: (from top left to bottom right) The Grouse in Snow Mountain, Colony Highway Broadcast, ZONE EATER, and Z

3.1.3 Creative team. Some projects were successful in bringing the initial concept to a higher level. Although the developing process was not always linear in such a project, they were determined to implement the concept as a playable experience. The roles of director, engineer, and mentor worked well in such a project.

3.2 Industry side

3.2.1 Collaboration with other industry. One of the lessons learned from AtoG project is that most of companies can create demonstrations from their cutting-edge technologies, but they are not good at packaging them to put them out into the world. In this context, it is important for game and movie industry to collaborate with other industry, since the business of game and movie developers is to realize technologies and knowledges, and make them to entertainment contents. Thus, other industries can put their technologies and knowledges out into the world, and game or movie industry can acquire new technologies from other industries.

3.2.2 Non-commercial game design. When developers in game industry try to design a game, they are unconsciously bound to the restriction that they need to package the idea to a commercial game. However, the students of AtoG project are free from those restriction, and can design innovative games since they lack experience of game development, and their designs are based on the motivation to express the original animations. Those new designs are suitable for new platforms like xR(AR/VR/MR), and the new interactive contents may be extension of those designs.

4 CONCLUSIONS

We are continuing the animation to game (AtoG) program by adding new projects. Making games by starting from the world views of animation is effective, though, it is not always a straightforward process. We will accumulate insights into the process towards establishing a new methodology of making games from animations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Prof. Andreas Kratky and Prof. Richard Lemarchand of USC for their contribution to this effort.