

VGA Reader Call for Papers—Issue 2: SURVIVAL STRATEGY

IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS.

—Old Man, *The Legend of Zelda*

In an era of ecological, social, and political crisis, when contemporary media inundates us daily with apocalyptic scenarios, video games can act as a valuable means of psychological escape. However, video games— as unique, participatory works of art— can also model both individual and collaborative means of survival through the experience of play. Video games offer opportunities to navigate both historical and fictional conflicts, traverse landscapes devastated by climate change or nuclear holocaust, and manage the limited resources of individuals, or even whole civilizations, on earth and beyond. They offer players a dizzying array of dystopian scenarios in which to build and invent, cooperate to achieve shared goals, or sometimes merely learn how to survive another day. Video games focus attention, hone visuospatial skills, and shape cognitive control and physical reflexes. How do video games, through these unique methods, participate in the larger context of radical, activist artworks that challenge destructive norms and structures of power? How can we harness the skills we develop through play— or “game the system”— to imagine our best possible future(s) in trying times?

The *VGA Reader* (VGAR) is accepting submissions that critically analyze video game art as a means of survival. Though “survival strategy” exists as a defined gaming genre, all video games can be considered as methods of human conditioning, coping, and creating.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- How video game artworks development, design, and play are uniquely situated to explore personal, social, or ecological crises.
- How video games participate in larger activist and radical art communities/collectives.
- How video game art prototypes collaborative approaches to survival.
- How video games explore the long-term implications of human activity in relation to ecological crisis.
- How the history of games engages with dystopias and utopias themes of the past and present.
- How video games provide methods of constructive and collaborative play.
- How we might develop a critical discourse of “casual” games through psychological and physiological conditioning.

- How might we investigate the relationship between survivalist subcultures and resource management games.
- How video games can work as systems for mediating or mollifying conflict.
- How the economies and cultures of world simulators and Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs) can be viewed as models of real-world growth or collapse.
- How video games create, reflect, or critique current apocalyptic real world tragedies, crises, and political upheaval, as well as the media narratives that surround them.

Deadline for Submissions is February 28th, 2018

All submissions and questions should be sent to: tfunk (at) vgagallery (dot) org.

For more information and formatting guidelines, visit:

[Submission Guidelines](#)
[Video Game Reader Website](#)

Video Game Art Reader Mission Statement:

The VGA Reader is a peer-reviewed journal for video game audiences and video game practitioners interested in the history, theory, and criticism of video games, explored through the lens of art history and visual culture. Its primary aim is to facilitate exploration and conversation of video game art, documenting and disseminating discourse about the far-reaching influence of video games on history, society, and culture.

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