

A TYPOLOGY OF MUSEUM GAMES

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As museums continue to innovate and find new ways of engaging visitors, the use of games has emerged as a tool for engagement, education, and entertainment [2]. But while the collection and curation of games are now well within the remit and expertise of museums, many museums are also creating playful game-like experiences that evade definition, and sometimes challenge visitors' expectations by not conforming to shared understandings of what a game is. We present a tentative typology of games in museums, drawn from research on the use of games in Australian museums. Through case studies at Science Gallery Melbourne, ACMI, The Australian National Maritime Museum, The Hellenic Museum, MOD., and The Powerhouse Museum we have constructed a framework for museums and game designers to support the development and integration of games within museum settings. A case study approach was used to generate a variety of rich contextual and situated data about real-world phenomena [3]. The typology was constructed by examining the design intent, characteristics, and implementation strategies of the games in our cases, which were identified through data collected from site visits, gameplay, and design materials and activities, and clarified through semi-structured interviews with museum staff across different areas - curatorial, education, exhibition design, programming and leadership - as well as game designers who had worked with museums.

Science Gallery Melbourne (SGM) has a number of game-like initiatives in these programs, including a game-show module, and a workshop module called *Mission Control* that was developed with industry partners and uses roleplaying and to engage young people in the space industry. The gallery has also developed a mobile game called *Recollect*.

The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) is the museum of screen culture encompassing film, television, video games, and other digital media. Much of ACMI's programming engages with video games, from workshops teaching animation and character design to modules analysing games. ACMI also supports creative residencies for game developers and curates exhibitions such as *Honk!*, an exhibition on *Untitled Goose Game*, which showcases the game's creative development through displays of previously unseen concept art, sketches and design material as well as playable versions of the game from its early development.

The Australian National Maritime Museum focusing on naval history, immigration, ocean exploration, and indigenous seafaring traditions, and has one of the largest floating historical vessel collections in the world. As a national museum, the Maritime has a remit to reach audiences across Australia, and runs a series of travelling exhibitions and online programs to fulfil this. Related to this aim (though it was not the sole motivation) the museum commissioned a series of three video games: *The Voyage* in 2015, *Cook's Voyages* in 2020, and *Wreck Seeker* in 2021, primarily for use in Australian classrooms.

The Hellenic Museum celebrates Greek culture and history catering to both the Greek diaspora community and a contemporary Australian audience. The museum's regular programming includes workshops, tours, lectures, cinema screenings, and other events. In the last few years, they have also run a number of game events including ancient boardgames, a megagame, the tabletop roleplaying game *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D), and most recently a live-action roleplay (LARP).

The Museum of Discovery (MOD.) is a "futuristic museum" exploring how research shapes our understanding of the world and informs the future. MOD.'s exhibitions often include mobile games and playable interactives. MOD. is unique in applying game design principles to its exhibition design, and the use of concepts like Bartle's taxonomy of player types [1] to augment existing visitor engagement strategies.

The Powerhouse Museum works at the intersection of science, technology, design, and innovation. The Powerhouse has established a strong relationship with the Australian gaming community through its curatorial programs and games editions of the Powerhouse Late program, which in 2022 and 2023 featured a series of gaming events, including demos of video games, tabletop roleplaying games, and talks by industry professionals. The Powerhouse also supports the Australian games industry through creative residencies for game studios and has used roleplaying games in its educational programs.

MUSEUM-THEMED GAME

A game designed with the intent of engaging participants with the museum's content, either with specific exhibited material or with exhibit themes. These games do not intrinsically rely on the museum's physical space, and so can be played either onsite or offsite.

MUSEUM-WIDE GAME

A game designed with the intent to integrate the museum's physical environment and content into the premise and gameplay. These games do not make sense outside of the specific museum they were designed for, and would require mechanical adaptation to be played elsewhere.

GAME AS EXHIBIT

A game developed independently from the museum but acquired or exhibited by the museum. It can be showcased either in its original playable form or as part of a broader exhibition that examines the game's design, cultural impact, or development process.

PLAYFUL NON-GAME

An interactive, engaging experience that embodies elements of play but doesn't necessarily meet the formal definition of a game. These experiences emphasise elements such as creativity, exploration, or storytelling rather than structured game mechanics.

MUSEUM AS GAME

An approach to exhibition design where the museum itself is treated as a game, by the application of game design principles to visitors or the experience design.

Queer Men Peering Into a Rockpooling Fuzzy Ghost

REFERENCES

- [1] Richard A. Bartle. 1996. Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit MUDs. MUD (1996). Retrieved August 25, 2024 from <https://mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm>
- [2] Kety Beale (Ed.). 2011. Museums at play: games, interaction and learning. MuseumsEtc, Edinburgh.
- [3] Robert K. Yin. 2009. Case study research: design and methods (4th ed. ed.). Sage Publications, Los Angeles, Calif.



Untitled Goose Game
House House



Recollect
SGM

