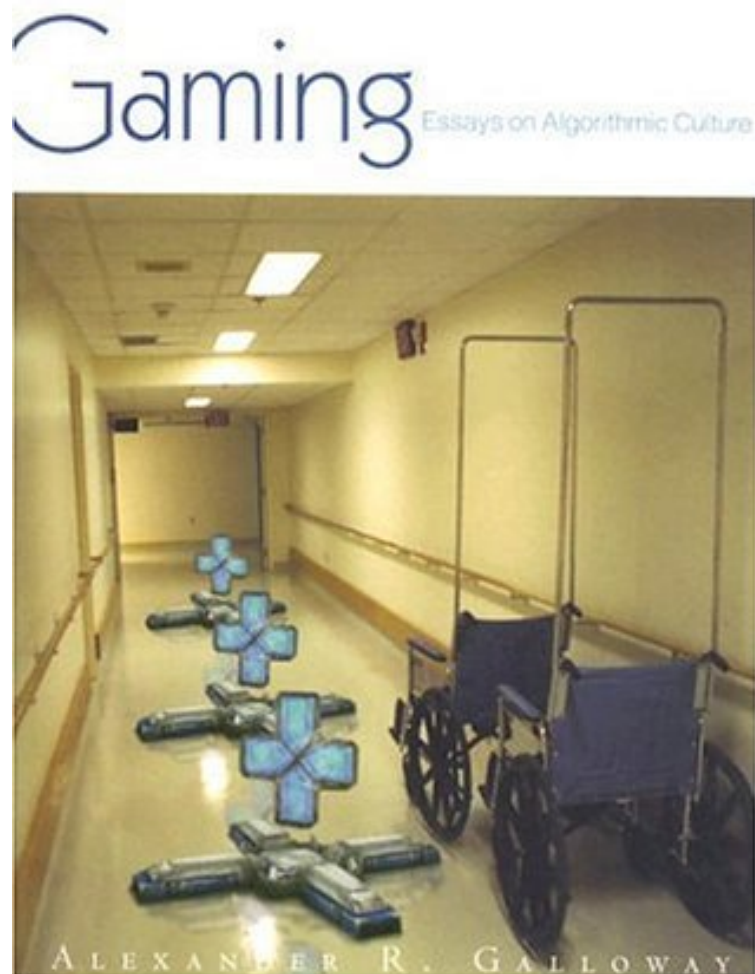


[Download pdf] Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture (Electronic Mediations)

Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture (Electronic Mediations)

Alexander R. Galloway

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Alexander R. Galloway : Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture (Electronic Mediations) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gaming: Essays On Algorithmic Culture (Electronic Mediations):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A collection of essays about video games that jive with ...By CustomerA collection of essays about video games that jive with some of the "broader" academic interests and

interpretations of the medium. I personally found value in Galloway's cross-disciplinary approach to video game analysis, and his efforts to visualize a bridge between video game studies and other media studies (like film). The rating is a 5/5 because I think Galloway delivers on the claims made in the short description. I (a media studies graduate student), found this helpful in increasing my scope of understanding of how the greater academic world sees (or could see) my passion.² of 4 people found the following review helpful. Videogames are actions

By CustomerFor Alexander Galloway "videogames are actions". Videogames are acts of doing enacted by the player and the technology in a cybernetic relationship that can occur as part of the diegesis or as separate to the narrative world of the game. A videogame cannot be played until the machine is powered up and the software running. By placing machine and operator in a praxis with diegetic and nondiegetic acts Galloway not only enfolds the more commonly iterated components of algorithmic program and player acts but celebrates the traditionally ignored and often vilified aspects of video gaming including crashes, hacks and lag. The pause button is as important as the shoot or action button, cheats are as significant as strategies and the nondiegetic routines of saving and loading are of consequence. This is a great way of thinking about videogames! This is all contained in chapter one which I thoroughly recommend. The other chapters for me were not as useful but are still an interesting read.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Good high-level book on game culture

By calvinme This is a fun book to read that is written in an accessible and engaging style that contains some really interesting ideas about gaming. Because this is more a collection of interrelated essays than a sustained argument, it makes sense to approach each essay individually. In the first chapter-essay, to understand the relationship between the player and the game space, the author arrives at a cartesian plane of possible gaming moments: The x-axis moves between the operator's and the machine's actions, and the y-axis moves between diegetic and non-diegetic actions. The result is that some common gaming moments can be reliably plotted in this plane. The author's approach here presents a way to initiate a discussion around action, but the entire argument doesn't hang on the validity of this model. This diagram forces the author to define game diegesis somewhat narrowly within the confines of certain kinds of games, and it seems somewhat arbitrary where he draws the line between diegetic and non-diegetic. However, it's an interesting beginning, and the terms and relationships Galloway sets up here permeate the remainder of the essays, contextualizing them all within the idea of game action.

In chapter 2, the author goes to great lengths to justify his central claim that where film uses the subjective shot to represent a problem with identification, games use the subjective shot to create identification. The problem with first-person or subjective camerawork is that the perspective suggests agency or the ability to interact. It is in these moments in cinema where the camera exposes itself as an agent of looking, and the audience is confronted with its own status as observer. In other words, it is the fact that the first-person perspective holds forth the possibility of action that makes it such an uncomfortable technique in cinema, but such a natural arrangement in gaming where the possibility of interaction exists. The author then identifies certain cinematic situations that adopt visual "patina" derived from gaming. Some obvious examples of this "gamic vision" include the Heads-Up Display subjective shots from Terminator and RoboCop.

In chapter 3, Galloway unpacks the idea of realism in gaming, distancing it from the so-called "realism" of high-end graphics that purport to be faithful representations of real world objects. Instead, since gaming is for Galloway an action and not an image, realism should be imagined on different terms. Again taking cues from cinema, Galloway argues that a better kind of realism for gaming would follow the model of neorealism in film in which neorealisticness depends on narrative and not form. Galloway mentions games like September 12th and The Sims as possibilities of a better realism in gaming because they engage social reality at a level in which the game action parallels the real-world action it comments on. In other words, a person is more likely to order a pizza than shoot aliens. Again orienting his discussion on action, Galloway concludes that the true correspondence obtained in realistic gaming is a congruence between the "material substrate of the medium" and the gamer's social reality.

In the fourth chapter and the concluding one, Galloway makes a compelling case for the expressive potential of video games. In outlining the allegories of control in gaming, Galloway claims that, to the extent that successfully navigating daily life increasingly relies on selecting options from series of menus, gaming simply emulates this by enclosing it within the gaming action. The main example here is Civilization, which has been criticized for its Imperialistic politics. For Galloway, though, the problem with Civilization is not so much that it presents other nations and people groups as fodder for conquering, but that it condenses politics into a series of quantities that can be balanced and varied according to menu configurations. So Galloway does criticize the game, but mainly does so because it represents an index for the very dominance of informatic organization and how it has entirely overhauled, revolutionized, and recolonized the function of identity.

In chapter five, Galloway ends up with six theses for countergaming, one of which is hypothetical. Though the book as a whole claims to be a collection autonomous essays, it's hard not to read in this essay the culmination of ideas outlined in the first four. Put briefly, countergaming involves establishing and then subverting the formal poetics of gameplay. One theme in this is the foregrounding of apparatus, or when games break. The author's main example in this essay is Jodi's untitled game in which the interface frequently breaks down or appears to reveal its underlying code. Similarly, countergaming can become visible in subverting representational modeling of objects with degraded artifacts. Note that this is not simply bad modeling or the modeling of abstract objects. Rather, the spatiality of objects is threatened by their exposed status as images. This discussion is useful not

only for outlining a potential direction for artistic or activist game design, but also for providing a context for discussing more mainstream activity like Alternate Reality Gaming in which the game world is very much defined by its juxtaposition with its representation and underlying code, or more sinister-seeming accidents like actual rendering errors in game worlds. These phenomena are not countergaming as such, but it is possible to understand the disruption of their presence better if we see it as a kind energy working against the dominant hegemony of the game structure. Such things break the framework of social realism. Although I found this book intelligent and engaging, I'm still not sure what to do with it. The author proposes alternatives to popular critical models, but these are mostly gestures toward a way of thinking about gaming rather than a declaration of How Things Are. It is this approach, along with the approach to gaming as an action rather than games as objects, that is this book's most valuable contribution. I would recommend it to high-level game architects and virtual world architects who aren't afraid of a somewhat academic read.

Video games have been a central feature of the cultural landscape for over twenty years and now rival older media like movies, television, and music in popularity and cultural influence. Yet there have been relatively few attempts to understand the video game as an independent medium. Most such efforts focus on the earliest generation of text-based adventures (Zork, for example) and have little to say about such visually and conceptually sophisticated games as Final Fantasy X, Shenmue, Grand Theft Auto, Halo, and The Sims, in which players inhabit elaborately detailed worlds and manipulate digital avatars with a vast and in some cases, almost unlimited array of actions and choices. In *Gaming*, Alexander Galloway instead considers the video game as a distinct cultural form that demands a new and unique interpretive framework. Drawing on a wide range of disciplines, particularly critical theory and media studies, he analyzes video games as something to be played rather than as texts to be read, and traces in five concise chapters how the algorithmic culture created by video games intersects with theories of visuality, realism, allegory, and the avant-garde. If photographs are images and films are moving images, then, Galloway asserts, video games are best defined as actions. Using examples from more than fifty video games, Galloway constructs a classification system of action in video games, incorporating standard elements of gameplay as well as software crashes, network lags, and the use of cheats and game hacks. In subsequent chapters, he explores the overlap between the conventions of film and video games, the political and cultural implications of gaming practices, the visual environment of video games, and the status of games as an emerging cultural form. Together, these essays offer a new conception of gaming and, more broadly, of electronic culture as a whole, one that celebrates and does not lament the qualities of the digital age. Alexander R. Galloway is assistant professor of culture and communication at New York University and author of *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*.

"Galloway is active as both a scholar and an expert player of the video games he is analyzing. This is contemporary media theory at its best." - Lev Manovich
About the Author Alexander R. Galloway is assistant professor of culture and communication at New York University and author of *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*.