



↑ Fig. 1 / *Tomb Raider: Legend* (Crystal Dynamics, 2006)



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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he interactions between films and games have been developing into an increasingly complex match, which, for some time, has no longer been limited to a single playing field. However, the increasing differentiation of video games and their genres has repeatedly resulted in uncertainties with regard to the applied rules and dimensions of the playing field. Rather than appreciating the various ludic forms in relation to the feature film, some of the dominant debates in feature articles and academia have exhausted themselves in a prematurely claimed "essentialism," through fear of the supposed end of cinema or of an un-

reflective absorption of games through cinematic conventions.

Euphoric predictions of a promising, participatory future – whether in the form of interactive film or the convergence of graphics in games to a cinematic photorealism – was mostly followed by disillusionment and a hardening of attitudes.

If the games promised cinematic action, these were often limited to the plot of a mediocre action film or to the leisurely detective game of a classic thriller. The players could not really intervene in the process, except by pressing the right button at the designated point of an interactive movie. Conversely,



Fig. 2 / Simon West:

LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER (2001)

➤ if the gameplay – the interaction between players and game – was captivating, the staging was quickly forgotten, and the hyper-realism proved to be a digitised Potemkin village covering up mediocre ludic qualities.

Occasionally, it has been attempted, with allegations such as “cinema envy” or the end of film initiated by games, to promote a rigid separatism. In the heat of battle, it was unnoticed that the interactions between films and video games are not a rule-governed game with a clear winner and loser in the sense of the term “game / ludus,” but a continual exchange of opportunities for improvisation within the meaning of the word “play / paidia.” The creative future of cinema and video games is not a single player game with a predetermined outcome, but a multi-player game whose rules are constantly being renegotiated and shaped by all participants. In particular, the creative potential of synergy, which is not being served on a silver platter, but is instead subliminally consummatory and occurring between the two media has been overlooked, for instance, when genre concepts are used as transmedia style models or the changes of perception toward games allow for a new perspective on familiar cinematic spaces. To avoid stalemates, the confrontation with games in the context of Game Studies pursues an emphatic multidisciplinary approach. Accordingly, the processing of video games as a cultural asset should not form a solicitous monologue, but occur in a dialogue between theory and practice.

The social relevance of video games manifests itself not only in its immense popularity, but rather in its varied possibilities, and the differentiation of game cultures. In the heated, hardly differentiated tunnel vision debate on “killer games,” they were gladly

overlooked or often not even perceived. The learning effect in the debate on comics and its comparable development a few decades earlier, or when dealing with provocative films that were banned, and which now belong to the standard programme of film studies internationally, failed to appear for a long time.

It should be a cause for thought that, along with its film collection, the US Library of Congress in 2007 included *Doom*, the style-defining first-person shooter in the list of games that should be preserved with nine others as cultural assets. In Germany, however, the indexing of the game, designed by John Romero in 1993, was only done in autumn 2011. Comparable to the evil lord of *Harry Potter*, whose name cannot be mentioned, the entire debate on the phenomenon of the first-person shooter, along with the controversies surrounding the other chosen titles, was swept under the table. Internationally, *Doom* was honoured by media scholars such as Lev Manovich as a new experience in digital space, and the University of Michigan Press dedicated a volume to it in their series *Landmark Video Games*. Instead of a differentiated discourse, preventive protection proved to be the preferred measure, and with the general fears, not only the cross-media aesthetic innovations fell from view, but also open forms of play, for example, in the field of modding, where players redesign games after their own ideas, or machinima films, where they are converted into amateur animation films. Often, shooters are also used for these practices of creative appropriation.

Even if you played with fire in the shooter game, you found neither the black magic of Lord Voldemort nor the military mobilisation of youth through

systematic seduction, but sufficient things from pulp science fiction, agent adventures à la James Bond, and film's historically coined standard situations. Even the world-war shooter *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* (2015 Games, 2002), that Steven Spielberg co-directed and which was an adaptation of his film *SAVING PRIVATE RYAN* (1998), says a lot about the cross-media conventions of the modern war film, whose problematisation cannot be simply attributed to the label, "killer game."

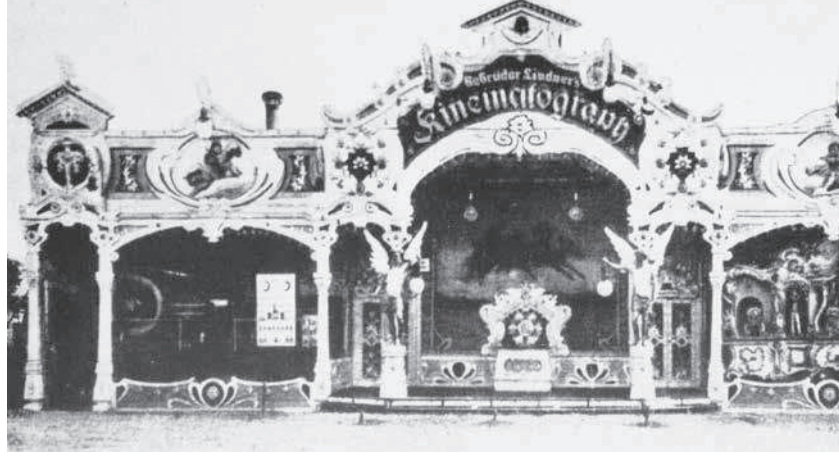
It should not be the aim of this catalogue and the underlying exhibition thus, to blow more fanfares on a deserted battlefield. Instead, the focus is on the hitherto neglected, augmentable aesthetic, and cultural interfaces between films and video games. With regard to cultural mediation and curatorial treatment, it is less about the appreciation of individual games through the title "cultural property," and more about questions surrounding archiving and ways of exhibiting. As many game designers and representatives of Game Studies have repeatedly and rightly put forth, an error committed in the early years of cinema can still be avoided in the area of games. Much of the early history of film is considered to be lost since there was more focus on the question of the cultural ennoblement of cinema than about the backup of existing stocks. Fortunately, a changed awareness for dealing with video games has been delineated through the engaged activities of The Museum of Modern Art in New York, which has been including video games in their permanent collection since 2012, the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Technology in Karlsruhe, and the Computer Game Museum in Berlin. This is a means, and is how it has been applied to films for several decades by the dedicated activities of mu-

seums and archives. The ensuing debate in terms of artistic and cultural potential should not begin late and be realised under the table.

In seven chapters the present catalogue offers not only the opportunity to recapitulate and intensify the exhibition *Films and Games: Interactions*. The single areas can be explored in a non-linear fashion as in an open designed game. They should stimulate further research and provide introductory insights into, for instance, the diversity of game cultures, and the moving image between movie and computer screens, even into the public space in the form of creative gaming.

The change of perspective between theory and practice forms a continuous structural element in all individual chapters. Current views from the fields of film, media, arts, and cultural sciences complement journalistic, experiential reports and interviews with game designers and directors.





- Further navigation through the interaction of films and games is in your hands! You can explore the exhibition catalogue in a non-linear way like a classic adventure game book. Should you have difficulty deciding which chapter you would like to read first, this small choose-your-own-reading-adventure helps you make a choice. Just start your tour at section 1:

**1** You stand in front of a cinema with an adjoining arcade. Do you want to enter into the lobby (go to 2) or explore instead the street outside the building (go to 3)?

**2** You enter the lobby. Your gaze wanders over the announcements and posters. In the first cinema an exciting sci-fi adventure is being screened, of which you have recently discovered a whole shelf full of colourful books and video games in a comic shop (go to 4). In the second cinema, the film adaptation of a popular video game series is shown (go to 5). You briefly notice that, since your last visit, some flashy equipment has been placed in the next room's passageway to the arcade (go to 6).

**3** You prefer the desert of the real instead of immersing yourself in the world of illusions. Still, you ponder how it would be like if the city were transformed into a playing field. Some memories of games that you have got to know a long time ago could suggest ways on how to do this. Perhaps the arcade archive on the other side of the road offers such inspiration. Continue reading on in the chapter *Creative Gaming – Ludic Mediations*.

**4** You enjoy the science fiction adventure, but wonder how on earth did the machines take control of humanity, and whether the cinema itself is slowly turning into an enormous digital simulation. What comes to mind next when watching the film? This digitally generated tracking shot was not yet there during Orson Welles's time, and isn't it truly amazing that now an entire movie can be told with a subjective camera? Continue reading on in the chapter entitled *Aesthetics*. Or do you think: Who would have thought that this black knight with the conspicuous respiratory problems is the father of that introverted boy and the adventurous princess? And what became of the guy with the funny jetpack? Actually, shouldn't he easily be able to fly out of the sand pit with the fangs in which he has just plunged? Continue reading on in the chapter *Transmedia Aspects of Films and Games*. Or would you prefer to get some fresh air in the lobby (go to 6) or in the street in front of the cinema (go to 3)?

**5** While on the screen a tried and tested kung fu adventuress, equipped with all sorts of technical gizmos, strikes the zombies into flight, you experience a distinct feeling of *déjà vu*. What does that remind you of? Haven't I experienced this scene once a few years ago in a video game riddled with numerous references to the history of film? Read on in the chapter *Adaptions and Exchanges*. Or do you begin to reflect on the remarkable parallels between the tracking shots in games and films? Continue reading on in the chapter *Aesthetics*. Or perhaps you prefer to stretch your legs a little: on the road (go to 3) or in the lobby (go to 6)?

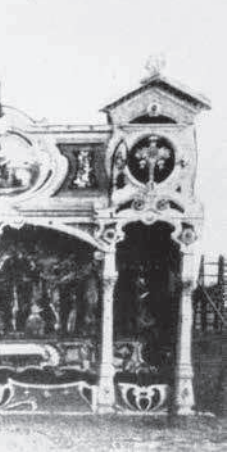


Fig. 3 / Untitled  
("Lindner Brothers'  
Kinematograph"),  
photograph, no date



In the passage to the arcade is a machine which promises an interactive movie. Do you want to try this (go to 7) or look around in the arcade next door (go to 8)?



You insert a coin. A knight who has to fight against a dragon appears on the screen. An elaborate animation sequence puts you in the right mood for this adventure. You push the joystick forward once and prepare yourself for the fight against the monster. But instead of the expected exciting battle, the dragon invites you to a complicated chess puzzle. A little irritated, you begin to think about the fact that the old slot machines were once somehow more attractive. Did cinema in its early days have similar difficulties in discovering more serious formats? After all, like the video games, it had its origin at fairs. If you want to explore these questions, read on in the chapter *Approaches*. Or would you rather watch a movie to relax? Then choose between the sci-fi adventure (go to 4) or the video game adaptation (go to 5). You can also go back to the lobby (back to 2).



The selection in the arcade appears different than usual. Obviously, an exhibition is being held. You start a round on a shooter game when suddenly the screen turns into an abstract pixel landscape. Next to the gaming machine, you discover a picture frame, with variations of *Pac-Man*, *Donkey Kong*, and *Space Invaders* as action paintings. Does the question go through your head, is this art? Read on in the chapter *Game Art*. Or would you prefer to recheck in the cinema hall what is going on with games as cultural assets? Back to 2.

Whatever you choose, we wish you a stimulating and enjoyable read.

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