



# Preliminary Study of the Artistic Potential of Video Games

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**Abstract.** Starting from consensual definitions about video games and arts, this article discusses the artistic potentialities of video games and their relationship with the gaming industry. Highlighting the importance of games for humanity in its cognitive aspect, power of socialization and the representation of society itself, this article discusses the possible artistic potential of video games, as well as the hypothesis that these potentialities may be totally or partially overshadowed by the emphasis on economic success that is given by the video game industry, mainly because it is a less established form of expression compared to cinema, music, literature and the visual arts, which do not need to prove anything as an artistic language, but which also experience dilemmas and counterpoints with their manifestations more focused on pop and media consumption, having as their first instance massive popularity and economic success, and not creativity and the full expression of human experience, subjectivity and sensibility.

**Keywords:** Video Games · Art Games · Gameart

## 1 Introduction

This article discusses the possible artistic potential of video games, as well as the hypothesis that these potentialities can be totally or partially overshadowed by the emphasis on economic success that is given by the video game industry, mainly because it is a less established form of expression compared to cinema, music, literature and the visual arts, which do not need to prove anything as an artistic language, but which also experience dilemmas and counterpoints with their manifestations more focused on pop and media consumption, with mass popularity and economic success as the first instance, rather than creativity and the full expression of human experience, subjectivity and sensitivity.

In order to be able to establish the dichotomy “artistic manifestation vs. economic success” in video games, this article is segmented as follows: definition of game and video game: to outline the social importance of games and differentiate them from their digital version; definition of art: search for a modern concept that is compatible with the contemporary context; market, industry and commercial success: the focus on commercial success and the difference between indie and AAA games; benefits provided by video games: regarding cognitive, social and expressive aspects; video games as art: do video games have artistic potential or are they just entertainment?; finally, the conclusions, in which the lessons learned from the research for this article will be presented, as well as the answer to the hypothesis raised: can the artistic and transformative potential of video games be overshadowed by excessive concern with commercial success?

## 2 Definition of Game and Video Game

From the definitions presented by renowned game designers and ludologists, Passos [1] has reached the following definition of the game: “A game is an interactive, individual or collective, competitive or cooperative, intellectual and/or physical activity, which may or may not contain embedded narrative, but in any case, emergency narratives, consisting of pre-established rules and tools and objective-oriented, which usually involve conflict resolution, which lead to variable and quantifiable results.”<sup>1</sup> Such a definition fits any type of game, whether digital or not. But as video games have singularities, it is convenient to establish a definition for the digital version of games.

Video games emerged as a commercial product in the 1970s and are a specific type of videocentric electronic games [2], which became audiovisual and digital in the following decade. Currently, there are several types: consoles, PC games, mobile games, arcades, handheld consoles, web games, VR games (virtual reality games), social network video games, etc. Video games are also based on rules and follow the same premises as mechanical games [3], but the use of information and its rapid processing allows flexibility and many new possibilities, with more complex rules that do not need to be known in advance by the player, who learns them throughout the game [4]. Passos [1] also presents a succinct but comprehensive definition of video games, based on the definitions presented by important authors in the area: “Video games are electronic games with which the player(s) interact, in real time, with a computational simulation through a peripheral (user interface or input device) connected to the device (in the case of computers or consoles) or that is part of it (in the case of arcades, smartphones, tablets), such as a control (joystick or gamepad), keyboard, mouse or touchscreen, to

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<sup>1</sup> “Um jogo é uma atividade interativa, individual ou coletiva, competitiva ou cooperativa, intelectual e/ou física, prazerosa e voluntária, que pode ou não conter narrativa embutida, mas, de todo modo, é propenso a narrativas emergentes, constituída de regras preestabelecidas, com espaço, tempo e ferramental próprios e orientada por objetivos, que geralmente envolvem resolução de conflitos, que levam a resultados variáveis e quantificáveis.”

generate feedback to the player through output devices such as screen (screen), speakers and haptic sensors<sup>2</sup>”.

After establishing definitions for games and video games, we are looking for a contemporary definition of art, one that is not dated and attached to traditionalisms that would prevent us from taking the proposed discussion forward.

### 3 Definition of Art

Before a specific definition of what art is, it is worth mentioning that authors such as Koslowski [5] and Solomos [6] differentiate two distinct types of artistic practice: pragmatic, functional or useful art and pure, fine art or artistic practice. “The first works are directed to an end, while the second are directed only to appreciation, delight and aesthetic experience.”<sup>3</sup> [5]. At first sight, videogames may seem intrinsically belonging to functional art, since, even if they approach the concept of art, they are still games, therefore, and above all, they serve a purpose: to be played. As defended by Ebert [7]: “One obvious difference between art and games is that you can win a game. It has rules, points, objectives, and an outcome. [Someone] might cite an immersive game without points or rules, but I would say then it ceases to be a game and becomes a representation of a story, a novel, a play, dance, a film. Those are things you cannot win; you can only experience them.”. In our view, the fact that video games have objectives and rules does not eliminate the possibility of being artistic objects, since, according to the interpretation, they can also have objectives (the exhibition of the work to the public), results (the finished work) and rules (which are generally defined by the artist himself, such as: a visual work painted with oil paint on fabric canvas only with “warm” colors; or an interactive installation mounted with video projections, ambient sounds, silk curtains and papers with texts randomly distributed on the floor). The score is just a way to quantify the results, as with the score assigned to films by IMDB, or awards such as the Oscar or the many lists of best literary works and music charts of a certain period. Such intrinsic characteristics of games (game mechanics) do not minimize their artistic possibilities, since they can be softened or adapted to artistic purposes, which, in fact, expands artistic expression to new frontiers, just as occurred with the emergence of new artistic languages, now established (literature, photography, cinema, comics, etc.).

Moreover, just like “pure” art, a video game, like any game, has an end in itself, that is, it is autotelic [8, 9], “which is not justified by any other end, other than existing for itself. Which has no purpose or objective outside or beyond itself”<sup>4</sup> [10]. Thus, playing video

<sup>2</sup> “Videogame é um jogo eletrônico com o qual jogador(es) interage(m), em tempo real, com uma simulação computacional por meio de um periférico (interface de usuário ou dispositivo de entrada) conectado ao aparelho (no caso dos computadores ou consoles) ou que faça parte dele (caso dos arcades, smartphones, tablets), como um controle (joystick ou gamepad), teclado, mouse ou tela sensível ao toque, para gerar feedback ao jogador por meio de dispositivos de saída, como tela (ecrã, ou écran), alto-falantes e sensores hápticos.”

<sup>3</sup> “As primeiras obras são dirigidas a um fim, enquanto as segundas são dirigidas somente à apreciação, ao deleite e à experiência estética.”

<sup>4</sup> “que não se justifica por nenhum outro fim, a não ser existir para si mesmo. Que não apresenta nenhuma finalidade ou objetivo fora ou além de si mesmo.”

games, like appreciating art, is a self-motivated, self-rewarding, pleasurable, rewarding, and meaningful activity: autotelic; and video games are the quintessence of autotelic activity, as they enrich us with intrinsic rewards rather than fueling our appetite for extrinsic rewards [7]. Given this, we do not see video games and art as excluding, but as activities that may become complementary, if that is the purpose, according to the definition of art presented by Reicher [11]: “x is a work of art if, and only if, x is intended by an issuer (producer) as a means of an aesthetic experience.”<sup>5</sup>

That said, there are authors [12–14] who argue that there is not or is not possible a formal definition of art. However, we chose to resort to a definition that is comprehensive enough to account for the cultural and temporal diversities to which art definitions are subject, considering art as a broad concept, not reducible to a few homogeneous principles. Therefore, according to Dissanayake [15], art can be defined as a set of the following elements: demonstration of a remarkable ability; artificial creation (as opposed to “natural”); what evokes a sensation of beauty or pleasure, that is, what is sensorially attractive; fullness of sense experience, as opposed to ordinary experience; establish order, harmony, unity; orientation to originality, creativity, invention; willingness to beautify, decorate, adorn; self-expression, manifestation of a personal vision about something; communicate through a special language, symbolize; attribute importance, meaning, meaning; explore fantasy, make-believe, imagination; experience elevated, extraordinary existence: emotion, ecstasy, sublimation.

After a comprehensive definition of art, which brings together a series of concepts to encompass the subjectivity, scope and complexity of its meaning, we now seek to explore the motivations for the game, which goes beyond mere entertainment, which can explain the millennial ubiquity of games in the most varied human societies.

## 4 Why Do We Play Games?

Archaeological discoveries claim that ancient games, such as Senet (Egypt), Royal Game of Ur (Mesopotamia), Game of Twenty (Egypt, Babylon, Mesopotamia and Persia) and Fifty-Eight Holes, or Dogs and Jackals (Egypt), appeared about 5 thousand years ago [16], but it is possible that the games predate this period [17]. In any case, games have been part of our lives for long enough to be intimately rooted in human culture, to the point that many everyday expressions use the verb “to play” or the noun “game”: open the game, hand over the game, hide the game, play fair, play dirty, game of life, game of scene, play around, word game, game of seduction, double game, political game, rules of the game, follow the game, turn the game, etc. Perhaps the reason for such ubiquity lies in the fact that games provide learning and training of physical, intellectual and social skills in a playful and safe way [1, 17] – with specific rules within the “magic circle”, as defined by Huizinga [19] –, security that provides simulations of real situations that can be dangerous, unpleasant or boring [1]. Games require skill improvement,<sup>6</sup> which

<sup>5</sup> “x ist ein Kunstwerk genau dann, wenn x von einem Sender (Produzenten) als Medium einer ästhetischen Erfahrung intendiert ist.”

<sup>6</sup> Such as agility, arithmetic, bargaining, communication, concentration, general knowledge, creativity, decision, dexterity, concealment, strategy, strength, leadership, logic, narrative, aim, precision, pattern recognition, reflex, social relations, resistance, rhythm, jumping, teamwork, speed, vigor, vocabulary, among others.

helps adapt to reality and cognitive behavior [20], and provide challenge, feedback, epic meaning, and autotelic pleasure [21].

Video games were launched commercially in the 1970s as an evolution of computer science experiments, based on mechanical games, carried out from the 1940s [1, 3]. It is a mostly audiovisual interactive media (although there are audio games consisting only of sounds and video games that are only visual, without sounds) that, since its inception, has become increasingly notorious by the public, the media, critics and also by academia, due to its aspects related to the development of brain capacities [22], the promotion of social transformations [23], entertainment, communication, cognition and artistic expression [24], which is of particular interest to this article.

Thus, in line with the interest of the related public (players, developers, critics, researchers, etc.), video games are expected to evolve in terms of technology, as has been the case since their genesis. With the evolution of digital technology, increasingly faster and with greater processing power in reduced-size components, many advances have been taking place with graphics, animations, audio, narrative, gameplay (game mechanics: procedures, interactions, and rules), hardware and tactile experiences [25], including in the field of arts, in which many experiments have been carried out.

In addition to having fun and training intellectual, motor and social skills, there are other motivations for people to feel attracted to video games, since, unlike the real world, they effectively motivate, maximize their potential and make them happy, in addition to being able to teach, inspire, involve and unite people in a way that society has not been able to meet [7], in full contrast to what is still disseminated by the media, politicians and religious, that video games are mere escapism, lead to addiction, idleness and unhealthy habits and encourage violent behavior [18]. Although excesses can cause problems, as in any other activity, video games are a ludic alternative to societies in which competitiveness, divergences, individualism, consumerism, manipulation, corruption, indifference, and violence – which destroy lives, relationships and families, not controlled and imaginary violence – make life increasingly distressing and frustrating [7].

Video games also demand hard work so that the player can master the required skills, overcome challenges, achieve goals and evolve, which leads to *fiero*,<sup>7</sup> the feeling of success in the face of an assignment or adversity [7] – which is minimized or non-existent in passive (non-interactive) entertainment or activities that do not require deeper involvement –, and also relates to the flow, the holistic, satisfying, stimulating, exciting feeling of creative achievement and heightened/enhanced functioning does, and playing games is a powerful Flow activity, it is the quintessential Flow experience [26]. A dynamic and holistic mental state achieved when one acts with full involvement, in which actions follow one another according to an internal logic that apparently does not require the person's conscious intervention, whose consciousness is harmoniously ordered to the activity to which that person surrenders for the mere satisfaction of living it, as a reward in itself, and therefore, flow experiences are generally autotelic, such as

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<sup>7</sup> *Fiero* is a term of Italian origin, coined by psychologist Isabella Poggi [31], which refers to a specific type of pride experienced when one triumphs over a great challenge. Paul Ekman [32] subtly broadens the definition of *fiero*, describing it as the pleasure felt when an individual overcomes a challenge that enhances his capabilities, being a positive form of pride.

hobbies, sports, games and arts [27]. Thus, fun, skill training, hard work, *fiero* and flow are intimately interrelated in video games, and can find parallels in artistic practices.

Among the main benefits provided by video games and disseminated by the academic community, it can be highlighted: selective attention, improved self-monitoring, learning abilities, analytical and spatial skills, psychomotor and social skills, introduction of new concepts, short- and long-term memory, strategic thinking, planning, problem recognition and resolution, decision making, among others [29].

In addition, video games also promote confident and optimistic attitudes; division of major challenges into manageable steps; maintenance of interest; creative thinking; and, consequently, reduce the fear of failure, which inhibits innovative experimentation – very dear to the arts. Personalization of the experience for each participant, problem-solving, sense of control, and teamwork [30].

With such a ludic and cognitive potential, it is natural that video games have become one of the main forms of entertainment among entertainment habits in the country, with 70.1% of the Brazilian population playing some type of video game [28]. With such popularity, the power of influence and importance of video games today is noticeable. In view of this, it is to be expected that video games will begin to approach the field of the arts, as has happened with other languages, such as sounds, dance, writing, photography, cinema, etc.

## 5 Video Games as Art

The discussion about the possibility of video games being or not artistic manifestations is not new, and the subject has already been debated by several authors [33–41]. When we start from the assumption that an artistic object can be understood as any creation that proposes the reflective experience or aesthetic enjoyment [42], it is possible to understand that videogames can be perceived as works of art, according to the communicative and expressive potential that this language offers. Since video games are a multimedia medium whose objective is the interaction and exchange of experiences between the player and the game, by proposing video games as art, there is the idea of a rupture between artist and observer, in which both play a role in interpretation and experimentation, which generates an inter-relational experience, such as that observed in contemporary art.

According to Heinich [43], contemporary art is not limited to temporal issues, but is a paradigm shift and a new way of making and thinking about art. Classical art is the standard model of figuration (idealized or realistic), while modern art is the expression of interiority, which can go beyond the standards of classical figuration or even figuration itself (abstract art). Contemporary art, on the other hand, goes beyond the limits of common sense, not of classical figuration, but of the very notion of art, as well as the modern demand for a link between the work and the interiority of the artist. Contemporary art breaks with classical and modern arts, as it does not fit into their conceptions of what a work of art is; it does not demonstrate a link between the work of art and the interiority of the artist; irony and playfulness are more important than seriousness; technical or social mediations are necessary, as well as technology to effect the durability of the work; the work of art is not limited only to the object proposed by the artist, but to

the whole set of operations, actions, interpretations, etc. provoked by his proposition, hence the importance of the context; the discourse about the work is part of the artistic proposal; and employs new types of materials or modes of presentation (installations, performances, land art, body art, video, photographs, multimedia, cybernetic art, etc.), breaking the boundaries between languages (visual, sound, body, etc.) [33].

For Archer [44], artists from the 1960s/70s sought to establish the political parameters of artistic creation, by adapting the marginality of avant-garde practices to the expression of the experience of cultural marginality, giving voice to those excluded from “high culture”, which does not mean that the performance of the work of art in political terms is independent of its artistic merit, on the contrary, it is closely linked to the way in which art exerts an aesthetic influence on the observer and as a starting and convergence point for the investigation of meaning. Thus, contemporary art is configured and defined as such according to the needs of each artist and the time in which it is inserted, and the readings of this whole confer important paradigm shifts for the construction of new perspectives and knowledge about art and its definition. Thus, if videogames have been developed with artistic purposes, and nowadays we see that artists are increasingly appropriating digital technological resources for their productions, both end up offering the player-spectator an experience of immersion and interaction with their “works”, not differentiating here what was proposed by Duchamp when he opens a huge paradigm shift by proposing direct questions to spectators in relation to their ready-mades, opposing established conventions and artistic values with ludic-conceptual conceptions to disturb the spectator and make him co-author [45].

Art is not defined by the production itself, but by its idealization, performance and realization [46], thus, the option for a certain technology or technique reflects, in addition to an aesthetic point of view, an ethical position of the artist [47]. Thus, “[...] the video game can be seen as an aesthetic sign – capable of offering interpretative developments that result in aesthetic experiences.” [42]. This point of view offers us the understanding that many video games go beyond mere entertainment developed by an industry concerned with extravagant profits and the need to reach player-consumers from all corners of the world. It brings the possibility of thinking about the possibility of video games being in fact artistic objects, and in view of the discussions about it, we can understand, in the broad field of the definition of art, that many video games are lived and experienced by their players as an artistic manifestation of their time. By understanding that video games build dialogues and manifest themselves with their audience, they can be considered as an artistic object. For Stateri and Pfitzenreuter [48], “The technology that originated video games, as well as those that preceded it, raised the creative impulse of artists, inside and outside the video game industry. The result is that we see manifestations of this artistic intent within commercial video games and alternative circuits as well.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “A tecnologia que originou os videogames, bem como as que a antecederam, suscitou o impulso criativo de artistas, dentro e fora da indústria dos videogames. O resultado é que vemos manifestações dessa intenção artística dentro de videogames comerciais e também circuitos alternativos.”

Therefore, there are currently very concrete and theoretically elaborated definitions of what is defined by art games and game art, our intention here is to give video games status as art and defend that if we do it with the intention of being art we will possibly have a future where video games will be perceived and understood (not only in the academy, art galleries, museums, but by the whole society, including the most lay people) as an artistic expression and, just as in contemporary art, it will offer more and more reflection and transformation in society, modifying structural paradigms of society, as well as art has done and comes doing just like some video games are already being developed. Let's look at the Games for Change,<sup>9</sup> an NGO that is willing to boost entertainment and engagement aimed at social causes, proposing that game developers reflect and create games that can contribute to building a better world, in causes that positively impact their communities and promote social good.

There is a distinction between art games and artistic videogames. Art games are “[...] an interactive work, usually humorous, by a visual artist that does one or more of the following: challenges cultural stereotypes, offers meaningful social or historical critique, or tells a story in a novel manner. To be more specific art games contain at least two of the following: a defined way to win or experience success in a mental challenge, passage through a series of levels (that may or may not be hierarchical), or a central character or icon that represents the player.” [49], and “Art games may be made in a variety of media, sometimes from scratch without the use of a prior existing game. They always comprise an entire, (to some degree) playable game... Art games are always interactive [...] art games explore the game format primarily as a new mode for structuring narrative, cultural critique. Challenges, levels and the central character are all employed as tools for exploring the game theme within the context of competition-based play.”<sup>10</sup> [50].

Art games are oriented as artistic objects, which seems to us to take the focus away from the gameplay;<sup>11</sup> while artistic video games are focused on gameplay, but with artistic treatment in the aspects that make up the video game: narrative, graphics and sounds. The former are more related to the concept of pure/fine art/artistic practice, while the latter are more connected to the idea of pragmatic/functional/useful art. *The Path*<sup>12</sup> (2009), *The Cat and The Coup*<sup>13</sup> (2011), *Conglomeration*<sup>14</sup> (2013), *Rehearsals and Returns*<sup>15</sup> (2013) and *Mizmaze*<sup>16</sup> (2017) are examples of art games; while *Journey*<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See: <<https://www.gamesforchange.org/>>.

<sup>10</sup> We do not agree with the final statement, “[...] within the context of competition-based play.”, as not every video game is inherently competitive, as there are cooperative and even exploratory video games, which may not be competitive or cooperative, even though there are objectives, challenges, and rules, possibly supported by a narrative.

<sup>11</sup> The further away from gameplay and mechanics an art game is, the less relation there is with what is known as a game, approaching an artistic object that simply uses an aesthetic common to video games, such as pixel art, chiptune, 3D virtual world, etc.

<sup>12</sup> See: <<https://tale-of-tales.com/ThePath/index.html>>.

<sup>13</sup> See: <<https://www.thecatandthecoup.com/>>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <<http://frederickostrenko.com/conglomeration/>>.

<sup>15</sup> See: <<https://www.rehearsalsandreturns.peterbrinson.com/>>.

<sup>16</sup> See: <<http://mizmazegame.com/>>.

<sup>17</sup> See: <<https://thatgamecompany.com/journey/>>.

(2012), *Sound Shapes*<sup>18</sup> (2012), *Walden, A Game*<sup>19</sup> (2017), *Gorogoa*<sup>20</sup> (2017) and *Outer Wilds*<sup>21</sup> (2019) can be defined as artistic videogames. Many of these games, whether artistic video games or art games, offer the possibility for the player to freely explore the beauty and details of the fictional game world, which ends up guiding the game towards artistic expressions in terms of sounds, graphics and narrative [35].

Obviously, not every video game is oriented towards artistic intentions: “Although all video games should not be considered art, recent developments in the medium have been widely recognized as clear indications that some video games should be regarded as art works.” [33]; and even when it is, the gameplay, that is, the game mechanics, is a crucial element for its design and development, since it is, above all, a videogame, and even if it is composed of different languages, since videogames are multilingual media, a videogame has its own characteristics: “I judge that though they have their own non-artistic historical and conceptual precedents, videogames sit in an appropriate conceptual relationship to uncontested artworks and count as art. [...] At the same time, videogames have their own distinctive features, meaning that as a form of art they should be treated on their own terms and not simply seen as derivative forms of pre-existing types. [...] Videogames are representational artifacts in the way that many other forms of art are, and though differing to traditional artworks in certain respects, they do have perceptual and formal structures that are the object of an aesthetic and interpretive engagement in much the same way as other artworks.” [51].

Since gameplay is a distinct element of videogames, we believe that the tendency is for it to be treated more and more with a view to creativity and even expression, so that it comes closer aesthetically and conceptually to the languages that make up an artistic video game or art game, breaking with a possible utilitarian view of games, which Ebert [52] argues is intrinsic to video games: “I am prepared to believe that video games can be elegant, subtle, sophisticated, challenging and visually wonderful. But I believe the nature of the medium prevents it from moving beyond craftsmanship to the stature of art. To my knowledge, no one in or out of the field has ever been able to cite a game worthy of comparison with the great dramatists, poets, filmmakers, novelists and composers. That a game can aspire to artistic importance as a visual experience, I accept. But for most gamers, video games represent a loss of those precious hours we have available to make ourselves more cultured, civilized and empathetic.”. In this sense, many indie

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<sup>18</sup> See: <<https://youtu.be/zfPbJE6XDxg>> and <<https://www.ign.com/games/sound-shapes-queasy-games>>.

<sup>19</sup> See: <<https://www.waldengame.com/>>.

<sup>20</sup> See: <<https://gorogoa.com/>>.

<sup>21</sup> See: <<https://www.mobiusdigitalgames.com/outer-wilds.html>>.

games<sup>22</sup> have offered creative solutions, seeking to offer an artistic experience added to the “meaningful ludic interaction”, resulting from the interaction between players, the game system and the context in which the game is played, that is, the player’s actions result in the creation of new meanings in the system, and thus the newly established relationships originate new sets of meanings created by the players’ actions [24].

According to the above, video games can present, if not all, at least a large part of the elements present in the definition of Dissanayake [15] presented in Sect. 3. *Definition of Art* of this article, provided that the game is conceived with artistic intentions, in contrast to the marketing intentions of the big studios, whose games are more oriented to popularity and obtaining the maximum profit, which ends up leading games to commercial success formulas, clichés and populism to the detriment of expression. Creative, questioning, and elevated artistic.

## 6 Conclusion

In the same way that writing began to receive artistic treatment until it became literature, or mimesis evolved into theater, storytelling became narrative, rock art mutated into graphic arts, noises turned into music and photography gave rise to cinema, games, as ingrained in human life as these languages and even prior to some of them, are being transfigured into art games or artistic video games, which seems to us a natural course in view of the relevance of games and, more currently, video games. It is up to those involved (graphic designers, concept artists, screenwriters, programmers, music composers, sound designers, animators, etc.) to seek creative solutions for video game mechanics to bring them closer to the proposed experience and artistic concept, as well as to the other aspects that make up a game. And if they do so, time will take care of protecting a place in the pantheon of the arts for these videogames, just as it happened with the other languages that are now considered artistic.

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<sup>22</sup> Indie games can be considered as the opposite of mainstream video games: “[...] the mainstream is one whose goal of popularity and profit overrides creativity, self-expression, and art. So attitude is what defines independence, not just a billing and popularity metric. [...] ‘indies’ are not characterized by their underground nature, but by a matter of conceptual and ideological positioning, where cultural and creative production finds its centrality.” (“[...] o mainstream é aquele cujo objetivo de popularidade e lucro sobrepõe a criatividade, a autoexpressão e a arte. Portanto a atitude é que define independência, não somente uma métrica de faturamento e popularidade. [...] os ‘indies’ não se caracterizam por sua natureza underground, mas por uma questão de posicionamento conceitual e ideológico, onde a produção cultural e criativa encontra sua centralidade.”) [53]. That is, indie games are games with their own proposals and wide creative freedom, which do not follow the corporate standards of the industry and the big studios, focused on popularity and profit, with large teams and millionaire investments. Indie games usually have an elaborate graphic look in a retro or unconventional 2D style, are developed by small teams, bring experimental mechanics and often affronting or intimate themes [54, 55]. Indies can be subdivided into professionalized, who adopt professional work practices, similar to the rest of the industry; and non-professional, linked to amateur and hobbyist practices [55].

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