

If the film delivers 'autobiography' only obliquely and mockingly, through a game 'of displacements and replacements' (as in the substitution of Frampton's own voice by that of fellow filmmaker Michael Snow), it nevertheless is 'a document about an era', as Moore argues. Indeed, in addition to portraits of Frampton's friends and contemporaries – among whom are Carl Andre, Frank Stella and James Rosenquist – the film is rich in in-jokes and references to the period. Stella's portrait blowing smoke rings, for example, evokes Bruce Nauman's *Self-Portrait as a Fountain* (1966–7), as the voice-off hints. By talking us through these puns and references, Moore maps out (*nostalgia*'s) relation to the critical and aesthetic debates of the time. Among these debates is that around the 'structural film', a label coined by the critic P Adams Sitney in response to the ostensible concern with form and structure of many experimental films of the late 1960s, among them Frampton's own. Frampton's problems with, and problematisation of, the category have not gone unnoticed, even, in fact, by Sitney himself. In this context, Moore's mobilisation of Bataille's concept of the 'formless' as, via the agency of fire, the drive of (*nostalgia*) is perhaps by now a bit clichéd. Much more interesting, here, is Moore's insistence on the humour and irreverence impregnating (*nostalgia*) and on Duchamp's legacy in Frampton. For, notwithstanding the sombre title, the dramatic (or melodramatic) act of burning one's 'past' at its core, and the highly rationalised, ordered structure, (*nostalgia*) is also a funny and playful film – one in which Frampton, as Moore reminds us, is 'having [us] on'.

A comprehensive and stimulating discussion of this important work, *Hollis Frampton: (nostalgia)*, will hopefully contribute to making it better known and appreciated outside avant-garde filmmaking and film theory circles. Moore's book opens up a space for an evaluation of its historical significance in art practice and theory more generally, as a work representative of a moment by which contemporary art is still very much informed. Elegantly written, accessible and informative, Moore's book will appeal to both a general and an academic readership interested in twentieth-century art, photography, and independent cinema, and in the interrelations between these disciplines and their theories.

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#### DEVELOPMENT ESSENTIALS: GAME STORY AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

MARIANNE KRAWCZYK AND  
JEANNIE NOVAK

Thomson Delmar Learning 2006 \$52.95  
264 pp. Fully illustrated.  
ISBN 1-4018-7885-7

#### DEVELOPING SERIOUS GAMES

BRYAN BERGERON

Charles River Media 2006 \$44.95  
452 pp. Fully illustrated.  
ISBN 1-58450-433-9  
US dist. Thomson Delmar Learning

Creating an electronic game is a complex process. Creating a successful electronic game is an even more complex process. Artists who design electronic games need to be concerned with many things: creative elements, such as 3-D modelling and interface design; media components, such as video and audio; technical considerations, such as game engines and programming; game genres, such as strategy, role-playing, action, etc.; narrative, linear and non-linear; characters, such as hero and mentor; the user experience; demographics, and the list goes on . . . and on. It is no wonder, then, that there are a plethora of books on game design and its many facets currently available.

The most useful books on the topic fall into one of two categories: those that provide detailed information about one particular component of game design; and those that provide a general overview of the entire game design process. In this review I will discuss two books, one in each category: *Game Development Essentials: Game Story and Character Development* by Marianne Krawczyk and Jeannie Novak, and *Developing Serious Games* by Bryan Bergeron.

*Game Development Essentials: Game Story and Character Development* focuses on just what the title indicates, story and character. The authors, experienced in electronic game design, provide the reader with the core components necessary for developing strong story lines and fully realised characters. Now, those of you who are not familiar with game design might ask, what is strong about story lines and fully realised about characters in electronic games? Krawczyk and Novak do a nice job of explaining the importance of each.

The authors begin with a description of the evolution of story – from fable to myth to legend to theatre to the printed word.

Then, they discuss the concept of story as it applies specifically to games, making sure to differentiate story from plot. Story, the authors say, is a telling of events – for example, a man escaping from prison. Plot serves to reveal the story. Plot is a literary structure consisting of points (plot points) that build the story. In the example of the man escaping from prison, the plot points might be as follows: 1) the man breaking out of prison, 2) the man stealing a car, 3) the man driving recklessly and hitting a pedestrian, etc.

Characters in traditional game design tend to be archetypes: hero, antihero, mentor, etc. In contemporary game design there is the protagonist, antagonist, mole, etc. With the descriptions of these many characters in the book, we are able to understand how complex the development of characters in game design can be, if for no other reason than there are so many. The authors also provide information about the similarities and differences in character development between games and other media, which is useful if you have experience in, say, writing for film or television and you are interested in working in game design.

Krawczyk and Novak spend a good deal of time explicating the parallel between developing story in games, literature and film. Concepts such as theme, exposition and three-act plot structure are common to all, and the authors' explanation of this provides the reader with an awareness of how games that have stories tend to be developed like books and movies. It should, however, be noted – and the authors make a point of doing so – that not all games have stories. Some games, puzzle games for example, work because they involve players in a meaningful challenge.

*Game Development Essentials: Game Story and Character Development* provides the reader with colourful graphics and some rich imagery, which help to make the reading experience visually interesting. The book has expert interviews from professional game designers, producers and developers, which sometimes provide interesting insight, but at other times are inconsistent with the topic being discussed in a given chapter and therefore seem extraneous.

*Developing Serious Games* by Bryan Bergeron falls into the second category: books that provide a general overview of the game design process. By 'serious', Bergeron is referring to games that are created to 'impart knowledge, skills and attitudes that

can be applied in the real world'. Serious games may not have the frivolity associated with typical computer and video games, but, according to Bergeron, they do share the following attributes: a challenging goal, engagement of the user, the concept of scoring and the element of fun. Yes, fun. Who says a game in which the player assumes the role of businessman fending off a corporate takeover cannot be fun? Certainly not Bergeron, who maintains that entertainment value can be key to keeping players involved in a serious game.

*Developing Serious Games* gives the reader an overview of the very profitable electronic games industry, the trends in technology, technical standards, interface design parameters, hardware and software tools, the business of games, and intellectual property issues. It also describes the design document – a most important document when selling a new game idea, communicating design vision to a production team, or marketing a game. The information Bergeron provides is generally applicable to game design and development; it is not, however, specific to serious game design and development. He does not fully make this distinction.

The book has black and white illustrations and screen shots of games, which provide a little bit of visual spark for the reader, as well as charts and sample programming code, which help to explain some of the complex technical issues included in the text, such as Table 4.3 'The matrix of standards associated with the configuration of desktop PCs that might pose challenges to serious game developers'.

*Developing Serious Games*, is a book for artists and designers who want general know-how about a type of electronic game they may know little about, but beware: the preponderance of technical jargon can lead to you believe that creating serious games is not a creative endeavour, which it is. *Game Development Essentials: Game Story and Character Development* is one in a series of books called 'Game Development Essentials'. It works well in providing specific information about story and character, but may work better with the other texts in the series, providing a more comprehensive look at the overall world of game design.

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## ANTHONY McCALL: THE SOLID LIGHT FILMS AND RELATED WORKS

CHRISTOPHER EAMON (ED.)

Northwestern University Press 2005 £ 20.00  
\$24.95 (P)  
172 pp. 168 col illus  
ISBN 0-8101-2318-5

This important and definitive publication surveys the early film and installation work of Anthony McCall. In particular, it focuses on the 'Solid Light Films'. These were a series of films and installations which were performed in the early 1970s, and which, as Christopher Eamon explains in the introduction: 'make performance out of aspects of the cinematic event that are supposed to go unnoticed: the beam, the projector and the projectionist'. Exemplary works include McCall's most well known piece, *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), in which a dot is projected onto a facing wall, growing in size over 30 minutes to fill the fogged space with a cone of light. Similarly *Long Film For Four Projectors* (1974) cuts across the gallery space with four changing fields of intersecting light to create a manifestation of what Benjamin Buchloch called (in describing some of Richard Serra's films) 'sculptural film'. Any scholar interested in radical practices in filmmaking, sculpture, installation and performance from the last 40 years should find much of interest here.

The book collects together extensive documentary material, sketches, diagrams and photographs, as well as a major essay on the work by Branden Joseph and a conversation between the artist and Jonathan Walley. Of particular interest is the first ever photographic documentation of *Long Film For Four Projectors* (1974) and 100 new reproductions from the artist's archive. In addition, there is authoritative biographical and bibliographic information.

McCall's work has, until recently, been relatively unknown outside the scholarship of late-twentieth-century avant-garde cinema. There is no reference to it in the encyclopaedic *Art Since 1900* for example, but this is changing, first, with the appearance of this timely publication, and secondly with a number of exhibitions and performances of old and new work. These include those in Paris, New York and San Francisco; the showing of *Long Film for 4 Projectors* at Tate Britain (10 September 2004) and the inclusion of a

new work, *Doubling Back*, in the 2004 Whitney Biennial.

There are several, clear, reasons why McCall's work has not received more attention. First, after making the Solid Light films he withdrew from filmmaking for 25 years to pursue graphic design. Secondly, as becomes clear from the extensive archive research presented in this book, a number of his projects remain unfinished. Thirdly, and more significantly, his work is difficult to categorise neatly and thus curate. It sits uneasily between more familiar categories of film, sculpture, installation and the more specific concepts of Expanded Cinema, and Happenings elucidated by Youngblood and Kaprow. As film it hovers, for example, outside what Krauss celebrated as the expanded field of sculpture yet is also clearly distinct from the art-house movie extravaganzas of Peter Greenaway or Matthew Barney. As moving-image installation it is more challenging than the easy Pre-Raphaelite stylings of Bill Viola. And it is clearly different from the contemporary video art of the early 1970s, which has its own aesthetic dictated by the immediacy of the performing body mediated by the raster scan of the cathode ray tube and the magnetic video tape. McCall's work, on the other hand, deals with the viewer's experience, over time, of projected light in space.

The fourth reason for McCall's low profile to date is that much of his work is unspectacular; boring even. For example, *Long Film for Four Projectors* (1974) is six hours long, during which very little happens. So, just as the Solid Light Films confound certain categories of classification they also disrupt the spectator's expectations for the work. Thus the spectator's mode of engagement with the work is confused. As Branden Joseph explains, it is 'Anti-Cinema' which, despite being more ephemeral than traditional plastic sculpture, nonetheless does not work as a cinematic or theatrical event because it is so uneventful.

It is, however, precisely this predictability and the move from the theatricality of cinema in which the importance of McCall's work lies. The lack of immediate spectacular, stylistic, iconographic or narrative content in the work throws the viewer's attention on the structural composition of both the work itself and the phenomenological experience of encountering the work. As is explained in the text, McCall considered his films as fields to be occupied by the visitor.