

Sex and Videogames: A Case of Misappearance?

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The focus of this paper is on sex and videogames, seeking to provide a counterweight to the sensationalist treatment of the topic within the popular press. The author argues that there is surprisingly little explicit sexual imagery in games and asks what accounts for its disproportionate absence. An account is given of the way that the interactive nature of games which do include sex either in terms of story or as a gameplay mechanic shapes the way that sex appears, as distinct from other media. This leads to an analysis of what contextual conditions need to be in place to 'permit' the appearance of sex in games such as *Playboy: The Mansion* and the *Leisure Suit Larry* series. As well the more obvious pressures of high risk, high cost production and economic regulation, the author suggests that the growth of sex sims and cybersex freely available on the unregulated internet play a role in the relatively low inclusion of sex within videogames. A central plank of the argument is that despite the relative lack of explicit imagery it is important to take a more subtle and complex approach to the study of sex in games, calling for a closer study of the erotic nature of gaming more generally. The author proposes that the videogames industry would benefit from greater inclusion of more diverse forms of sex in their titles designed for adult consumption and that it is important to account for the complexity of sexuality generally if we are to avoid sensationalist panic about the presence of sex in games.

Author Keywords

sex, sexuality, rhetorics of representation, game design

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