Call for Papers: Avatar Aesthetics

The DIGRA workshop on Avatar Aesthetics invites submissions on the characteristic properties of avatar-based videogames as an art form, and on the aesthetic aspects of self-embodiment in videogames. Avatarial aesthetics relate to a broader tradition of bodily spectacles and amusements while also sharing similarities with experiences created by VR, installation art and performance art. Furthermore, avatar aesthetics intersects with the aesthetics of architecture, of space and travel, and with ethical and political philosophy for game worlds. The workshop aims to bring together scholars from philosophy, game studies, media studies, and related fields to discuss a broad range of aesthetic modes and attractions relevant to avatar-based videogaming. Phenomenological and ontological perspectives on avatarial self-embodiment are also welcome.

The workshop will address aesthetic concerns related to avatars across various dimensions, including but not limited to:

- Art and the Avatar: How traditional artistic elements — music, poetry, literature, and visual arts — affect avatar-mediated experience and self-experience (Tavinor 2009; Ensslin 2014).
- Viscerality: Aesthetic attractions related to perceptual spectacle, violence, aggression, and horror in avatar-based games (Huhtamo 1995).
- Ecology and Space: The aesthetic experience of space and place, including adventure, conquest, habitation, and environmental concerns (Jenkins 2004, Chang 2019)
- Transgression: The philosophical implications of moral and ethical transgressions in avatar-based videogames, including violence and dehumanization (Mortensen & Jørgensen 2020; Sageng 2020)
- Politics of Representation: The roles of colonialism, militarism, capitalism, and the representation of gender, sexuality, and race in avatar-based videogames (Dyer-Witheford 2009; Wildt et al. 2020; Murray 2019)

- Body and Interface: Analyzing the technological and generic properties of avatarial self-embodiment, including perspectives from interaction and interface design (Sudnow 1983; Wilhelmsson 2001)
- Subjectivity and Identity: Examining mechanisms of self-positioning, agency, and identity in avatar-mediated interaction, particularly in relation to narrative and fictional characters. (Vella 2015; Kania 2017)
- Representation and Fictionality: Understanding the representational status and function of avatarial self-embodiment in relation to gaming, fictionality, and virtuality (Tavinor 2012; Carlson & Taylor 2019)

Please submit an abstract of maximum 300 words and a short bio (max 100 words) to *avataraesthetics25@gmail.com* by May 1, 2025. The organizing committee will select participants based on the relevance and quality of their proposals.

Each speaker will be given 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by 10-minutes for discussion.

The workshop is organized by the Department of Information Science and Media Studies and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bergen, in collaboration with the Game Philosophy Network. The organizing committee consists of:

- Associate Professor Rune Klevjer (University of Bergen)
- Associate Professor Anita Leirfall (University of Bergen)
- John R. Sageng, Coordinator of the Game Philosophy Network

Bibliography

Carlson, M., & Taylor, L. (2019). *Me and My Avatar: Player-Character as Fictional Proxy*. Journal of the Philosophy of Games, 2(1). https://doi.org/10.5617/jpg.6230

Chang, A. Y. (2019). *Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games* (Vol. 58). University of Minnesota Press.

Dyer-Witheford, N. (2009). *Games of empire: Global capitalism and video games* (Vol. 29). University of Minnesota Press.

Ensslin, A. (2014). *Literary gaming*. MIT Press.

Huhtamo, E. (1995). Encapsulated Bodies in Motion: Simulators and the Quest for Total Immersion. In S. Penny (Ed.), *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*. State University of New York Press.

Jenkins, H. (2004). Game Design as Narrative Architecture. In N. Wardrup-Fruin & P. Harrigan (Eds.), *First Person. New Media as Story, Performance and Game* (pp. 118–130). MIT Press.

Kania, M. M. (2017). *Perspectives of the Avatar: Sketching the Existential Aesthetics of Digital Games*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej. https://depot.ceon.pl/handle/123456789/13187

Mortensen, T. E., & Jorgensen, K. (2020). *The paradox of transgression in games* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Murray, S. (2019). *On Video Games: The Visual Politics of Race, Gender and Space* (First edition., Vol. 27). I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Sageng, J.R. (2018). "The bracketing of moral norms in videogames". In Jørgensen, Kristine & Karlsen, Faltin (Eds.), *Transgression in Games and Play*. The MIT Press.

Sudnow, D. (1983). *Pilgrim in the Microworld. Eye, Mind and the Essence of Video Skill*. Warner Books.

Tavinor, G. (2009). *The Art of Videogames*. Wiley.

Tavinor, G. (2012). Videogames and Fictionalism. In H. Fossheim, T. Mandt Larsen, & J. R. Sageng (Eds.), *The Philosophy of Computer Games* (pp. 185–200). Springer.

Vella, D. (2015). *The Ludic Subject and the Ludic Self: Analyzing the "I-in-the-gameworld*. IT University of Copenhagen, Center for Computer Games Research.

Wildt, L. de, Apperley, T. H., Clemens, J., Fordyce, R., & Mukherjee, S. (2020). (Re-)Orienting the Video Game Avatar. *Games and Culture*, 15(8), 962–981.