Game Engine Cultures - Workshop CfP

June 30th at DiGRA2025 (University of Malta)

The workshop intends to explore the implications of the widespread use of videogame engines in visual culture and the creative industries. Game engines like Unity and Unreal Engine have transcended their initial confines in videogame development, evolving into versatile platforms that now influence a wide array of creative and scientific fields. These powerful tools are not just limited to gaming; they have reshaped Hollywood visual effects, virtual production, and even pre-visualisation of movie sets, as well as contemporary art and architecture. Game engines are also utilised to create training simulations for various industries, including the military.

As these engines standardise aesthetic and functional practices, they simultaneously raise critical questions about artistic authorship, expressive diversity, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and the impact of increased digital consumption. The workshop aims to critically examine the contemporary use of game engines within the visual arts. It seeks to explore the convergence of media studies, game studies, platform studies, curatorial practice, and art history.

The workshop draws on the ongoing work of the curators in this field. They have organised an art exhibition (School of Digital Arts, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2022), a workshop (University of Liverpool, 2023) and are now curating an edited collection on the subject (Mimesis International, to be published in 2025).

The workshop will take place on June 30th at the University of Malta, in the framework of DiGRA2025. Participants will deliver 20-minute presentations of their work, followed by Q&A. Presentations will be divided into sub-thematic sessions, and presenters within the same session will be expected to read each other's paper. Both in-real-life and online presentations will be possible. In selecting the final list of speakers we will be mindful of issues of representation in relation to gender, race, geographical background and career level.

Please submit a 300-word abstract by **Friday 4th April** to the organisers:
Paolo Ruffino paolo.ruffino@kcl.ac.uk
Matteo Bittanti matteo.bittanti@iulm.it
Valentino Catricalà valentino.catricala@gmail.com

Notification of acceptance: Monday 21st April

Workshop date: June 30th (University of Malta)

Please contact the organisers for any questions.

Curators bio

Paolo Ruffino is Senior Lecturer in Digital Curation and Computational Creativity at the department of Digital Humanities, King's College London, UK. Ruffino has been investigating the independent production of videogames, labour unions in the videogame industry, and nonhuman and posthuman play in the digital age. He is the author of Future Gaming: Creative Interventions in Video Game Culture (Goldsmiths/MIT Press 2018), editor of Independent Videogames: Cultures, Networks, Techniques and Politics (Routledge, 2021) and author of articles for Games and Cultures; Television and New Media; Critical Studies in Media Communication; and GAME The Italian Journal of Game Studies. He is currently working on a new monograph for MIT Press, titled Videogames for the Post-Anthropocene (to be published in Fall 2026).

Matteo Bittanti is Associate Professor in Media Studies at IULM University in Milan, Italy and a Lecturer in the Faculty of the Master of Arts in Algorithmic and Networked Photography at ELISAVA, in Barcelona, Spain. Bittanti is the artistic director of the Milan Machinima Festival and director of the online platform VRAL. His latest publications include Game-driven Video Art. Cinema, videogames, machinima (Mimesis Edizioni, 2025), Fotoludica. Photography, video games 3 between art and documentation (with Marco De Mutiis, Mimesis Edizioni, 2025), The Photographer's Guide to Los Santos (with Marco De Mutiis, Mimesis International, 2024). Bittanti lives in Los Angeles.

Valentino Catricalà is the curator of the SODA Gallery, Modal, in Manchester (UK) and a lecturer at Manchester Metropolitan University. His research and curatorial practice focus on the relationship between artists and new technologies. Valentino holds a PhD from Roma Tre University and has been a visiting lecturer in at ZKM (Karlsruhe), Tate Modern (London), University of Dundee (Dundee), and LIMA (Amsterdam). As a curator, he has worked for many international art institutions such as the Hermitage (San Petersburg), Minnesota Street Project (San Francisco), New York Media Center (New York), Fondazione Stelline (Milan), MAXXI Museum (Rome), Palazzo delle Esposizioni (Rome), Ca' Foscari (Venice), Indian Art Faire - New Dheli Italian Cultural Institute (India), and Spatiu Intact (Romania).

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