24.191S15 LAUNCH QUESTION #9

INNOVATIVE GAMES

Jessica Hammer's research focuses on the question of how games can be used as a tool for educational and personal growth. For example, to teach people about the reality of race and sex bias, she has designed a game in which you play as a headhunter, placing people in jobs, and are faced with the task of identifying and counteracting the biases against your clients. For more information, see Jessica Hammer: Changing the Rules of the Game.

Along similar lines, in her blog posts, Leigh Alexander suggests that innovative, independently designed games have the potential to break out of the tropes of the gaming genre and genuinely challenge their audiences. See her blogs "A Game is Being Beaten," and "Playing Outside."

Here she describes one such game:

"Richard Hofmeier, another independent game designer, made *Cart Life*, a grueling simulation of the daily life of someone relying on a sidewalk cart's income to survive. Its bleak grayscale art and the ruthlessness of even its smallest rituals, like showering, buying food, and remembering to pick your child up from school, represented a shift in the 'life sim' genre, highlighting the humble heroism in simply facing the world every day without privilege rather than the power fantasies with which games are usually associated."

Both authors emphasize the potential of games to address relevant social issues and educate the gamers. What are some cultural, political, or ethical issues that you think might be usefully addressed by games? How would you design a game to address this issue? (Brainstorm and get creative!)

24.191 Ethics in Your Life: Being, Thinking, Doing (or Not?)
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