Cordula Heithausen

Being a Child Again Through Gameplay

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Verlag Werner Hülsbusch
Fachverlag für Medientechnik und -wirtschaft

C. Heithausen: Being a Child Again Through Gameplay

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet unter http://d-nb.de abrufbar.

© Verlag Werner Hülsbusch, Glückstadt 2023

vwh Verlag Werner Hülsbusch
Fachverlag für Medientechnik und -wirtschaft

www.vwh-verlag.de

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Korrektorat und Satz: Werner Hülsbusch
Umschlag: design of media, Lüchow
Druck und Bindung: Schaltungsdienst Lange oHG, Berlin

Printed in Germany

ISBN: 978-3-86488-189-3

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Preface to this book edition

Admittedly, studying a second time was the last thing on my mind after I had just concluded my years as a doctoral researcher and left the engineering path altogether driven by a growing creative urge. And when on my search for a new path in the entertainment industry I stumbled across a master program in game development, I considered this merely an interim solution. Games have always had a place in my heart and contributing to their creation was an idea I liked to indulge in—despite my inexperience obstructing its actual realization. However, it was not until I became a student again that I came to truly apprehend, appreciate and enjoy the history, theory and thought behind interactive media.

And finally, when it was time to come up with a master thesis topic, I connected my passion for games with the time of my life when it first emerged and delved into in-game childhoods. I explored the child perspectives an adult player can adopt through gameplay and the effect these might have on them. I further tried to gather and theorize the means to create a relatable child perspective and —as practical research—developed the game prototype *BackSeat*, intending to convey a childlike experience of a family car ride.

Throughout the research, writing and game development of my thesis, I was guided by Prof. Dr. Gundolf S. Freyermuth and Prof. Dr. Hanns Christian Schmidt who I extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to. It was a demanding and exciting time that I am very thankful for as it extended my enthusiasm for the language of games to areas previously unnoticed by me.

I am further thankful and delighted that I have been given two opportunities to share the outcome of my work with interested readers. First, I had the honor to contribute a chapter to the book *Playful Materialities. The Stuff That Games Are Made Of* by editors Hanns Christian Schmidt, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, Benjamin Beil and Raven Rusch. And now, with this book, a slightly adapted version of my original thesis becomes available in print, hopefully finding its way to fellow game enthusiasts and any other curious person with a soft spot for childlike playfulness. I am excited about this and would like to thank my publisher Werner Hülsbusch for reaching out to me in the first place.

I hope you enjoy this book. Maybe afterwards, you even feel inspired to let a game carry you back to being a child.

Copenhagen, January 2023
Cordula Heithausen