

ARTISTIC AND PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT

As the artspeak trope goes, my work *explores* the *intersection* of ideology and entertainment. It's the bastard child of the Berlusconi era and the global justice movement of the turn of the century. It was a strange time, when politics became entertainment and vice versa, when masked Zapatistas in a remote Mexican jungle formed an unlikely alliance with disaffected flexible workers and Rastafarian hackers.

Molleindustria [soft industry/soft factory] is a project of reappropriation of video games, a call for the radicalization of popular culture, an independent game company committed to negative profit.

In the last ten years I produced homeopathic remedies to the idiocy of mainstream entertainment in the form of free, short-form, online games.

My games range from satirical business simulations, to Marxistexistential meditations on labor and alienation; from playable theories to agit-prop media interventions.

Since I started in 2003, many things have changed.

Experimental and expressive games, while still relatively underground, are becoming more and more accepted.

The art world's wild infatuation with game culture, which resulted in a proliferation of faddish game+art exhibitions, eventually settled into a healthy marital relationship.

Games dealing with social issues are not a curiosity anymore and are being awkwardly co-opted by the no-profit industrial complex.

The dark period following 9/11 is finally over and people all over the world have started to “dream dangerously” again. The abuses of the financial/corporate class are now as self-evident as the failure of our military adventures or our environmental policies.

These are some of the factors I'm taking into account when thinking about the direction of my work. I predict I'll keep making games responding “tactically” to current events but I also intend to pursue several strategic objectives. I can break down my next five-year plan in a few areas of inquiry:

- . Artistic research and practice around local multiplayer games is still rather meager (*local* as opposed to online worlds or games on social networks). Most of my games so far are single player. I plan to experiment with games as protocols of interaction for people in the same physical space.

- . I've been claiming for years that the expressive and rhetorical potential of games lies in their ability to depict complex systems in an approachable way (rather than using narrative strategies).

I created several works meant to prove this concept but now I'd like to push this idea forward and create a generalized framework for qualitative system analysis. Which sounds nerdy but it's not: imagine a drag and drop visual environment that allows you to create a interactive diagram of a system like, for instance, the labor market, including factors such as government incentives, automation, education, outsourcing and so on.

The creation of this dynamic model, more than the user interaction, would discourage reductionist approaches to the problem (i.e. “China is taking our job”) and hypothetically foster a new kind of holistic critical thinking.

. Working at Carnegie Mellon gives me the opportunity to interact and affect an upcoming elite of cultural producers. However, I came to the conclusion that much of what I oppose in the mainstream games boils down to the homogeneity of the developers' community. New powerful voices are emerging from the margins of the industry, feminism and queer theory is finally contaminating the independent gaming scene, but there's still a lot of work to do in terms of including minorities and non-college educated folks in game development (not to mention people from the Global South). My effort as co-organizer of a game and simulation track at the Allied Media Conference in Detroit is the first step in this direction, and I hope to facilitate other initiatives of this kind.

. My work is often presented in an artistic context despite not being specifically conceived for it. The results are varied: games in galleries and museums often feel out of place, they require more time and effort than the typical art consumer can afford, they present all sorts of challenges in terms of "entry point" and visual clutter.

The question of where non-gaming aficionados can be exposed to alternative games is an intriguing one. There have been, in the past few years, some efforts toward the creation of spaces for games beyond the white cube: alternative arcades, festivals, game-infused dance parties and so on. I'm planning on starting a group or collective with this purpose in the Pittsburgh area; something that can potentially inform my courses, interface with VIA and the art "scene" in my neighborhood (Garfield gallery crawl etc.).

I have an array of more specific projects lined up including: a series of utopian city planning simulations inspired by Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, an

experimental documentary about an actually existing labor-themed amusement park, an interactive narrative in collaboration with a queer artist, an educational iPad app for children based on Karl Marx's Das Kapital and so on.