

Introduction

by Rosanna Pavoni

Anyone who has played a videogame needs no explanations. For those who have never played, we could start by saying that a videogame is something you buy (on or offline) thinking that it is a pastime, and then you find you can't keep away from it or get it out of your head for months (the number of months depends on how cool it is, according to the gamers – and sometimes it can be an endless thing). Because videogames are teeming with attention-grabbing scenarios, fulfilling roles, adrenalin-packed competitions, absorbing projects, intriguing situations and challenges that you just can't let go of. It's not all shooting, either. Or all competition. It is a world that is neither bland nor neutral. It exists "elsewhere" but you end up taking it and all its baggage with you, like a snail with its shell. It has its own form of beauty, which is technological, playful and artistic. The study and critique of videogames in terms of their semantic, textual and aesthetic complexity is an academic discipline with a wide, complex literature of its own. And now videogames (above all the most popular ones, which boast hundreds of thousands of players around the world, and which have now become icons in their own right) have been chosen by a new generation of artists as fertile terrain for experimentation and creativity.

Five international artists - Cory Arcangel, Mauro Ceolin, Jon Haddock, Eddo Stern and Carlo Zanni - who have been working this "terrain" for years, have been invited to offer examples of their creative processes, and the results accentuate the differences in their modus operandi and approach to the videogame. This points up the extraordinary potential – instrumental and narrative – that this realm possesses. This show is dedicated to the role of muse, advanced technological tool, scapegoat and all the others that the videogame has acquired in the hands of Italian and international artists. It has a variety of aims: as a confirmation and reconfirmation of the efforts of those who work in game art; to provide new connections and stimuli for those who play; and to introduce those who up till now have occasionally given videogames as Christmas presents, to a different form of artistic expression.