

ART GAMERS

by Domenico Quaranta

In *At the Edge of Art* (2006), Joline Blais and Jon Ippolito describe the art that uses media and the new technologies as an antibody against media and the new technologies. It is not a cure, but it exposes us to the media to enable us to develop the necessary defence mechanisms. The immediate corollary of this theory is the figure of the artist/hacker, keen user and capable manipulator of the media. A figure who has achieved a precarious equilibrium between passion and critical vision, with a capacity for resistance which has developed alongside the desire for exposure to the virus. A figure for whom creating art means playing with fire, because this is a person who loves fire and wants to help us understand it.

The artist is always a player. And sometimes a videogame player. Thus it may occur that the artist depicts landscapes and characters in videogames, modifies existing games, transfers their rules and mechanisms onto real life and records play sessions, or plays above the rules and creates his or her own toys. The motivation behind this lies in the fact that art is about manipulating the stereotypes of one's culture, and videogames are part of our cultural panorama: Super Mario is to Cory Arcangel as Marilyn Monroe is to Andy Warhol. Because art is about recycling, rehabilitating objects which are part of the tangible and media landscape: *America's Army* is to Eddo Stern as the Monalisa is to Duchamp. Because art is about experimenting with new idioms, and videogames are a new idiom: videogames are to Carlo Zanni as video is to Nam June Paik. Because this artist loves videogames, but at the peak of involvement has developed a further level of awareness, a detachment that has not destroyed this love story, but made way for a more mature form of love. This is why an artist can play *Counterstrike* for hours but then warn us about the violence in videogames and their use as propaganda. For this reason, as Laura Baigorri says (2004), game art is "in itself a subversive act which implies a dual intention: criticism (review) and creativity (regeneration)."

Criticism and regeneration of a medium and the society it reflects. We could say – at risk of becoming tautological – that artists use videogames because they are creating art.

Bibliography:

Joline Blais & Jon Ippolito, *At the Edge of Art*, Thames & Hudson, London 2006.

Laura Baigorri, "GAME as CRITIC as ART. 2.0", June 2004. Republished in *aminima*, n° 16, 2006, pp. 6 - 17. Online at <http://www.interzona.org/baigorri/textos/GAME.htm>