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## Unplayable Games: Time and Digital Culture

In the fields of philosophy and media theory, a great deal has been said about technology and time, particularly concerning the time of modernity and the time of what is now being called ‘contemporaneity’. Modernity has been characterised by a critical discourse on mechanisation, faster transport links and faster electronic communication networks that give daily life a new rhythm. What’s more, since the middle of last century, the arrival of extremely fast computing power has given rise to what Wolfgang Ernst calls ‘micro-temporalities’, the undetectable but hugely significant and extremely fast operational processes on which modern computer culture is based.<sup>1</sup> We have also been told that the time of the digital has given rise to a 24/7, always-on culture,<sup>2</sup> where markets and time in general are accelerating in ways not before seen.<sup>3</sup> The speed with which humans can send messages around the globe, receive news and buy and sell commodities has reached break-neck speeds. This is supposedly mirrored in the shorter attention spans of our children and the capacities they have developed for carrying out multiple tasks at once.

Another perspective on all of this is that experiences of time have fractured into multiple temporalities, rather than accelerating as an almighty and homogenous push towards the future. The time of the digital given to us by people engaged in this style of thinking, including myself, could be described as ‘multi-temporal’. Sarah Sharma, for example, has explored the multiple times produced in contemporary society by digital capitalism.<sup>4</sup> Terry Smith, Peter Osborne and Boris Groys – focussed more on questions of the contemporary condition than the digital per se – have explored the multiple histories that make up the global present.<sup>5</sup> Before them, Michel Serres explored the way multiple times are implicated in the design of our newest technologies, which use the most-up-to-date developments in engineering but are also

based on our most archaic practices and cultural routines.<sup>6</sup> That time is speeding up for some people is undeniably true. But it is also slowing down for others. It seems to be leaving others behind, some occupy multiple times at once, and still more are looking towards older solutions and ways of living to try and escape the pressures of digital, always-on, contemporary life.

In all these cases, there is an overwhelming invitation to perform, to act and to play, which takes place within and sometimes in opposition to the structures that produce the time of digital culture. But let’s ask, what opportunities are there not to perform, *not to act, to resist taking on the identity as a player in the time of the digital?* Are there opportunities to try and occupy other modes of temporality other than that which is characteristic of acceleration and progress? In this essay, I’m going to look at some art games that deal with the time of the present and that may offer up, to those of us that are concerned with the contemporary issues of temporality, history and memory, new ways to critique the relationship between media technologies and time.

### Too quick and too slow

Let’s start with two fairly short examples: One that is too quick to play and one that is too slow: In Anna Anthropy’s *Queers in Love at the End of the World* (2013), a screen asks a player if they would like to begin: A clock starts to count down from 10 seconds. The game ostensibly allows the player to make choices about the way that they would like to spend the last moments on earth with their lover. “Kiss her”, “hold her”, “take her”, “tell her”. The player clicks an option. They read the next set of narrative text, then make another choice. The clock is up, time has run out. As the game tells us, “everything is wiped away”. The game is over after only ten seconds, before the

player has had a chance to start to play. The so-called-player is barely given the chance to develop an identity as a *player* in the game.<sup>7</sup>

The notions of ‘a player’ and of ‘control’ are also obscured in Pippin Barr’s *A Series of Gunshots* (2015), but in this case by giving the player too much time instead of too little. The game opens on a static monochrome scene of the exterior of a suburban house. When the player presses a key, a flash appears in the window accompanied by the sound of a gunshot. The game then fades to black and opens again onto the next static scene: another monochrome exterior. Again, the player presses a key and ‘triggers’ a gunshot, this time in an alley way. The shooter, the victim, the before and after is never seen. The ‘player’ never really becomes a player in the sense that they are never allowed to explore the scene or to make more than one choice in the scene (to trigger the gunshot). The game slowly cycles through five set pieces, not moving to the next until the player decides to press a key. In *A Series of Gunshots*, a different temporality is produced to *Queer’s in Love*, one in which reflection is prioritised, largely produced through slowly cycling static scenes. In contrast, *Queers in Love* is premised on quick reactions and time-pressured decisions. But in both games, the experience of play is produced by the struggle to interact within the time of the game. Interaction is limited to pressing a key in *A Series of Gunshots*. It is in the waiting, not in the play. Likewise, *Queers in Love* emphasises struggling and, ultimately, the acts of not playing – the frustration of never having enough time, never knowing anything other than 10 seconds of play. The ‘game’ paradoxically seems to occupy the times at which the player is not playing.

These games highlight the production of temporality by the gaming system; a temporality that is composed of a time of ‘doing’, as we read text, select choices and press buttons, but also a time of frustration that things happen without ‘us’, as the computer goes through its routines and produces an outcome based on its internal clock. This suggests that the individual that we often refer to as the ‘player’ or the ‘user’ is only ever able to exist in relation to those technological objects that they interact with. By doing

this, games tend to forefront a relationship that we might describe using the term *technics*, a term given to us by the philosopher of technology Bernhard Stiegler and his modulation of the paleoanthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan. Stiegler writes,

*“[t]here is today a conjunction between the questions of technics and the questions of time, one made evident by the speed of technical evolution, by the ruptures in temporalization (event-ization) that this evolution provokes, and by the processes of deterritorialization accompanying it. It is a conjunction that calls for a new consideration of technicity”.*<sup>8</sup>

What Stiegler means here is that technology evolves just like human functions once did. However, this technical evolution is much faster than biological evolution and causes ruptures in the way humans once lived. For Stiegler, more and more, humans now live in the time of technological evolution, rather than the time of natural, biological evolution. This is a conjunction that, in other words, expresses that to be human is to be with technology. To understand the human, one must also understand technology, especially the temporality that it composes. This is also the conclusion that Serres reaches, both basing their observation on a reading of Leroi-Gourhan, who first showed how technologies form the niche in which humans live and grow. For Leroi-Gourhan, any understanding of the human has to be mediated through an understanding of technology, precisely because this technology forms part of the environment through which hominisation takes place. Not only this, but for Leroi-Gourhan, technology is always an externalisation of the function of the human body, so much so that he is able to think of technological developments as biological ones, too. He writes:

*“[G]enerally regarded as historical phenomena of technical significance, the invention of the four-wheeled carriage, the plough, the windmill, the sailing ship, must also be viewed as biological ones – as mutations of that external organism which, in the human, substitutes itself for the physiological body”.*<sup>9</sup>

The human lives and changes within the environment created by tools, which act as external substitutes for parts of the body. This observation leads Stiegler to say that “as a ‘process of exteriorization’, technics is the pursuit of life by means other than life”.<sup>10</sup> The hammer is an exteriorization of the function of the fist, the knife is an exteriorization of the teeth, writing is an exteriorization of memory. These technical objects then enter into the time of evolution and develop in place of the human body. Hammering becomes mechanised and more powerful, the knife sharper and more precise, external memory develops into computers and the internet. These technologies then, after dislocating from the body and its functions, then return to the human as external parts of their body. Games, and simulations in general, ratchet this up. Many games quite obviously externalise the body, placing the user in new contexts, new environments, with new abilities and the capacity to make new choices. Games like *Queers in Love* and *A Series of Gun Shots* explore how these simulations return to the body, how the computer and the interface, rather than the user, compose the time of digitally mediated play. In this, both could be seen to express the conjuncture between technology and what it feels like to live amongst these machines, moving both too fast and too slowly

Stiegler calls this conjuncture the “event-ization of technics”. In identifying this, he reconfigures the usual distinctions in Western philosophy between the empirical and the technical, arguing that there is an irrepressible presence of technology in all human experience and, following this, he indicates the way that our relationship with technology is always temporalising; technics always produces the time in which this relationship plays out. Stiegler’s thought makes possible a philosophical engagement with digital culture that can both describe the conditions produced by levels of technicity but also prompt us to start to think through alternatives. Specifically, Stiegler may offer us a way to discuss the levels at which both users and designers are engaged with the temporal structures of electronic technologies. For Stiegler, we can’t think of the human without thinking of the technical network of which they are a part and which organises or arran-

ges them. In this sense, the human individual is a being that is organised by and expressed through their relationship within the technical world. The operation of machines, the ticking of clocks, the measurement and surveillance of imaging technologies, the very fast processes of computers, the playing of games with computers, give rhythm to what it is to be human at this stage in the 21st century. It is not that the human is necessarily determined by these technical processes, but that they cannot be thought of at all without also thinking of their place within this ensemble of technical devices. The question then needs to be asked, what are the possibilities to find novel relations with technology, to find new conditions for possibility.

### Writing about time and technicity

Whenever anyone takes the trouble to write about time and temporality, it is always difficult to avoid general statements: Citizens of a particular place at a particular moment may experience time in this way or that, as linked to work or to rest, or to their body’s cycles, to ageing, to boredom, to personal memories and so on. But, as Stiegler shows us, this always already takes place within a larger condition of technics, where temporality is produced by the technical systems that make human life both possible and knowable. For Stiegler then, the relation of being and time is always a technological relation precisely because it always takes place within the originary horizon of technics.<sup>11</sup> Stiegler’s work in the philosophy of technology reverberates with the foundational work of media studies: Innis, McLuhan and Kittler, all made it possible to speak of the enframing of time by media systems of both storage and transmission.<sup>12</sup> That humans experience time in many different ways depending on their identity and their place within the world is undeniable. But what is also undeniable is that technical media systems produce a temporality to life that enframes these experiences. In the contemporary, technical world, thinkers interested in critiquing the time of the present need go beyond phenomenology, beyond descriptions of experience. This experience, after all, cannot be described without also describing the technical ensembles that give it expression. Instead, we need to understand experience in the terms

of an expression or localisation of media systems and the temporality they produce. Following Stiegler, these ensembles are always already grafted onto and productive of experience and are implicated as an a priori condition in the control of time, wholly real but often invisible. A game is just this a priori condition, which has rules and the conditions for possibility at its interior. In what follows, I explore the way in which games display an organisation of time through an expression of this interior.

### Time and games

In most discussions of time in games, temporality is thought of as a design problem. Usually, the problem is both posed and addressed based on the relationship between in-game events and the time experienced by a player at the controls. This is what Markku Eskelinen has previously described as “user time” and “event time”.<sup>13</sup> Jespur Juul<sup>14</sup> and Michael Nitsche<sup>15</sup> have also written about game time in a similar way. In this paper, I want to do something different though: As I hope is already clear, I’m trying to use a description of some art games as ways to think about a general philosophy of time with regard to contemporary digital media, asking what they can show us about the contemporary condition, about performing and the possibility not to perform in the digital era. The task when trying to use games and game temporality to approach questions in contemporary media philosophy is to explore the way the technology itself creates temporality, rather than mapping the relationship between the game and other aspects of reality. Miguel Sicart has written about time in a similar way, thinking though the experience of games and everyday life, including games that he uses to pass the time, games that stay with him throughout the day and games that play themselves while he’s off doing other things.<sup>16</sup> In addition, in his book *Game Time*, Christopher Hanson significantly expands this work to begin charting the different temporalities in contemporary games.<sup>17</sup> Hanson’s work goes further than the diagrammatic accounts of time and instead begins to engage with the creation of concepts that grapple with time and the production of temporality in ways beyond the gridding of experience. Instead of this, Hanson adapts concepts such as presence, liveness,

arbitrariness, contingency, control and temporal thickness to open up new ways to talk about games and time. Of course, this also runs a similar risk to the diagramming of time, with temporality being represented as only that which is able to be articulated by the concept. The way around this, however, is to use the careful descriptions of the experience of the games to further *develop the concepts*, rather than using the theory itself as a pre-existent model for explanation. As Hanson shows, to understand game time we need to first grasp the way the design of game structures is productive of temporalities. In what follows, I try to extend Hanson’s work and to explore the temporality of games within a general philosophy of technology. In particular, what an analysis of game time from the perspective of the philosophy of technology offers us is a description of the way these games can highlight the complex and multiple of the experience of time in digital culture.

The examples that I explore in what follows show how games and play might fold back on themselves, expand, frustrate and fracture standard linear models of time and progress. Secondly, these unplayable games, or ‘anti-games’, give us ways to see the relationship between time, technology and performance, with a particular emphasis on programmability and the control of time. Thirdly, and perhaps the main point, these ‘anti-games’ may give us ways of describing alternatives to the standard definitions of performance in digital culture and the accelerating time of the digital.

Games offer players a chance to exist in a time that is not what we usually think of as a time of life. Perhaps this is one of the attractions of games and why they are often thought of as an escape from the day-to-day. Perhaps this is why games invite so many of us to become transfixed for hours and hours on end. As Juul has shown, games, after all, invite us to perform within a temporality produced by technical systems and rules. There are other games that invite a different form of temporal engagement: These types of games invite experimentation and exploration, rather than an immersive flow of quick-fire back-and-forth, move and counter-move. They invite us not to

perform in the usual way demanded by cybernetic systems, and, potentially, offer a way to think differently about the demands of an accelerating present. They might be thought amongst the current strategy of non-performance as an opposition to the conditions of the present, marked by the techno-scientific principles of rationality, measurement and calculation. *A Series of Gun Shots* and *Queers in Love at the End of the World* tap into such an oppositional trend in digital culture. Another game that does this is David Haines and Joyce Hinterding's *The Outlands* (2011) (fig. 1), an art game that offers players a chance to experience the time produced by software programmes and the limits of the game's interaction design. This game was developed before the term 'walking simulator' swept through the gaming scene, around the time of the release of genre-defining titles such as *Dear Esther* (2012), *The Stanley Parable* (2011) and *Gone Home* (2013). As a precursor, it displays a number of the characteristics of wandering and exploration common to the walking simulator, but through the work's interface – two thin tree branches – it does so in ways that draw attention to the difficulties associated with navigating the game space.

As I held the control in *The Outlands*, there was seemingly not much to do. When I played the game, installed at the Art Gallery of NSW, I took over from a player before me that had somehow gotten themselves stuck at what seemed to be the bottom of a cliff, between two trees. After some careful manipulation of the joysticks, I was free. This seems to be indicative of the larger experiences of the game. It is based on chance events, on a certain contingency of player and game system, rather than any type of goal or endpoint. Within the context of not having much to do, the player is asked to explore, to test the limits of what can and cannot be done in the game. The art game was built using the Unreal engine and, based on the engine's landscape system, offers players the chance to navigate around an open world made up of four levels, resembling the familiar types of environment encountered in a first-person shooter, but without the violence or the stress and without the player being directed through a linear story by tasks or objectives. All the weapons are removed. All human figu-

res are removed. What the player is left with is simply the landscape and the portals between levels, navigated through using the interface of two twigs that take the place of joysticks in the art gallery installation.

*The Outlands* takes the form of a game in order to offer alternative experiences of play than that which was available in the mainstream games of the 2000s. Since then, the experience of free wandering in a game space has become more popular in game design and the control of time has become more central to the experience of digitally mediated play.<sup>18</sup> As an art game that experiments with the temporality of play at a moment when this was starting to become a key concern for many game designers, it, along with *Queers in Love* and *A Series of Gun Shots*, is a good example to illustrate the structuring of experience by programmed digital systems and the temporality of play.

The images of nature on the screen and the 'twig interface' of *The Outlands* are ways that the player/viewer is asked to connect with a deeper, more reflective sense of time, similar to the one presented in *A Series of Gunshots*. As play begins, it prompts a sense of 'being-in-the-present'; the player is asked to navigate the digital landscape in the here and now. But the experience of drifting through the landscape combined with the texture of the controller, the feeling of the sticks, fragile in your hand, is an artistic device which suggests to the player that they are in touch with much longer durations.<sup>19</sup> For example, in the installation, overly aggressive movements cause the sticks to break: The fragile twigs require that the player use slower, measured movements, preventing anything faster, jolting or more aggressive. The installation is paradoxically about using digital gaming to put players in contact with natural, slower rhythms. Playing this art game, there is an opportunity to experience both what is usually considered 'contemporary' media – that is the up-to-date, and the digital – yet also to encounter a different type of time, one that is folded into the game and unfolded through the contingencies of play, where the present involves 'drifting' through the expansive times and spaces of the game. This is the type of experience signified by the term

'multi-temporality' at the beginning of this paper, both slow and fast, the old and new, at the same time.



Abb. 1: Still from David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *The Outlands*, 2011

In this art game, the player, via what Rachel Wagner calls the “ordering making activity” of games, is asked to engage with a controlled sense of time.<sup>20</sup> In *The Outlands*, this is made overt and actually constitutes one of the main features of the art game. *The Outlands* not only allows users to interact over long durations, exploring without direction or objectives, but also, because of the fragile interface, the old twigs that only allow slow and gentle movements, reminds users that they are experiencing a controlled sense of time. The experience of the contemporary provided by Haines and Hinterding is one where the game is used to put players in contact with new senses of time, but only through the affordances provided by the cybernetic system of the game. This game focuses attention both on the present of interaction, on the contingent, and the way media systems organise this present as well as other exterior or intuitive perceptions of historical or extended time.

Two other games that focus attention on the mundanity of time and its systematic organisation in games are Robert Yang's *Stick Shift* (2015) and *Rinse and Repeat* (2018). In the driving simulator *Stick Shift*, the player, rather than steering the car around the city streets, begins a sexual relationship with his car. In the game, the player sometimes brings the car to climax, at which point the player waits with the car, parked, until they are ready to go again. Yang has coded the game so that 52% of the time the player reaches this level of success. The rest of the time, the car is

arbitrarily pulled over by heavily armed police, who detain your character for ten minutes, or even more if you decide to blow them a kiss. Potentially, one could get locked out of the game this way for hours.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, in *Rinse and Repeat*, the player needs to wait for the game's schedule. In a men's locker room, the player waits for the 'hunk' to finish his class. On schedule he enters the showers and asks you to help him wash his back, abs and buttocks, going further each day. The game bases its schedule on the first time that it is run and the first time the hunk enters the showers. After that, his gym class finishes slightly later each day. The player can log in up to an hour before the end of each gym session to wait in the showers.

Yang has said that the waiting in both games was designed as a mechanic, where players need to learn to wait and to make timely actions, mirroring the wait, the foreplay and the eventual climax of sex. As well as this, the waiting in these games seems in opposition to the usual fast paced reaction of the blockbuster action games that the game's 3D graphics resemble. Players of *Rinse and Repeat* and *Stick Shift* occupy a different temporality than that of mainstream play. The player is asked to inhabit a time that either gets targeted by the police and then controlled by them, insisting on a waiting time, or they have to occupy a tightly scheduled routine, where satisfaction is always promised but never really completed (at the end of *Rinse and Repeat*, the player is ultimately rejected and left alone in the shower room). The time of waiting and boredom played out in these games might be thought of as a deviant time when compared to the time of linear progress and sociability, a time where, in the case of *Stick Shift*, the player gets stopped and 48% of the time, mirroring the report that “of the LGBT violence survivors who interacted with police, 48% reported that they had experienced police misconduct”.<sup>22</sup> What these games make apparent is that the time of the present, the time that we might call contemporary, is made up of multiple rhythms and multiple temporalities, some slow, some fast, some linear, some repeating, all organised by different control mechanisms.

## Contemporaneity and games

In previous work over the last decade or so, I've tried to address the question of how media technology is implicated in what it means to be contemporary.<sup>23</sup> Or, to put it another way, I've tried to give cultural theory a way to describe contemporaneity and the time of the present through an understanding of the technical operations of media systems; occasionally, this has included media art<sup>24</sup> and sometimes video games.<sup>25</sup> The question as I've posed it previously is what do we see in these games that represent what it is to be contemporary, to be in time, to have experiences organised by technical systems? The term 'contemporaneity' as I use it here and previously is designed to capture an intense depth of temporal difference, depending on one's place within the technical ensemble and its method of organising their time. As a replacement for the conceptualisation of history found in discussions of Western modernity and post-modernity, as mentioned towards the beginning of this paper, the term 'contemporaneity' is now being used in cultural theory, art theory and philosophy to discuss new ideas about the multiple, and often conflicting times, memories and histories of global, twenty-first century culture.<sup>26</sup> Modernity was described as marked by a type of time that was one-dimensional, progressive and oriented towards the production of a shared future. Post-modernity, on the other hand, was conceived as, among other things, the aftermath of this type of time. The term 'contemporaneity' is a way of getting beyond a one-dimensional model of time, framed solely via the concept of progress and history, as moments with clear boundaries, bracketed off from one another. It instead encourages thinking about the present as a conjuncture of other, multiple and sometimes conflicting versions of time.<sup>27</sup>

Contemporaneity is not simply a way to conceptualise the coming together of individuals *in* time, but, as Peter Osborne argues, it represents a way to conceive of the condition of global networks as a coming together of times:

*"we do not just live or exist together 'in time' with our contemporaries – as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together – but rather the present is increasin-*

*gly characterized by a coming together of different but equally 'present' temporalities or 'times', a temporal unity in disjunction, or a disjunctive unity of present times".*<sup>28</sup>

Contemporary art – in which I would insist on including the contemporary media arts such as video game design – differentiates itself from modern art in that it expresses, engages with or otherwise reflects these conditions of the present. Modern art was an art for the future.

*"Being modern means to live in a project, to practice a work in progress. Because of this permanent movement toward the future, modern art tends to overlook, to forget the present, to reduce it to a permanently self-effacing moment of transition from past to future".*<sup>29</sup>

The present for what we now call contemporary art, which is its proper subject, is not one step in the progression of modernity, promising a transition to a better, shared future, but rather a location where multi-temporalities and multiple competing histories are possible. In digitally mediated games, this not only happens via the game as text, but it is also facilitated by a technical a priori that privileges discrete states and non-linearity. The computer, as Ernst has argued, exists as a technical a priori for contemporary culture, one which is based on recursions, loops and micro-temporalities that are beyond the human perception of time as a line.<sup>30</sup> If we think this way, the present is not simply a point on a line moving towards the future but is instead a point that is thick with multiple, other, mechanically produced (non-human) temporalities and rhythms – and this type of time is embedded in the technical qualities of the way the game works. "If modernity projects a present of permanent transition, forever reaching beyond itself, the contemporary fixes or enfolds such transitoriness within the duration of a conjuncture".<sup>31</sup> In *The Outlands*, for example, this conjuncture is forefronted. It is the moment of the present that is filled with other durations and other temporalities, the slowness of wandering, the quick-fire reactions that have to be carefully tempered so that they don't cause the twigs to break, the

processing time of software procedures and the to and fro that locks the user into the time of the game.

To play a game, an individual needs to become a player. To avoid being a spoilsport, the player then needs to become a character. These actions, like in the rites that Johan Huizinga once described, bring about an order of things. But in the games that I have looked at this is prevented in different ways – the games are made unplayable either through quickness, slowness, interface design or the games' content, which makes the idea of 'playing' seem impossible. The experimental games discussed in this essay may offer an alternative to the digital order of things. A critique of these games allows us to start to talk about the differences and alternatives to time that digital systems can produce, over and above the speeding up of the time of capital and the reduction of the world to a global 'now'. In this way, we might start learning to speak of the time of the digital as offering new opportunities, moments of stillness, reflection and unplayability, rather than locking us into a system of faster than lightening symbolic exchange. The concept of contemporaneity should start to include these accounts of time, in addition to those that grapple with acceleration and 24/7 global society.

We could say that the cultural techniques that define "being contemporary" involve the fixing of an intense focus on the present, rather than a past or future. As Groys writes,

*"being contemporary can be understood as being immediately present, as being here-and-now. In this sense, art seems to be truly contemporary if it is perceived as being authentic, as being able to capture and express the presence of the present in a way that is radically uncorrupted by past traditions or strategies aiming at success in the future".*<sup>32</sup>

For Groys, the time of the present is manifest in the seemingly extended delay or usurpation of progress, in the hesitations and blockages that are produced by conflicting individualised times and that stop the transition to a shared future. The speed of *Queers in Love*, the expanse of *The Outlands*, the moments of con-

templative inactivity in *A Series of Gunshots*, those things that interrupt play, acts as just this blockage, which interrupts and organises the flow of experience. The games are a blockage that manifests the present, that postpone a transition to a future, in that they are machines that introduce multiple, possible, time-based scenarios. These simulations of events are not open to manipulation, they do not invite participation, but instead produce temporality on their own terms, without the human player needing to perform. And this is why we need to study them.

## Endnoten

1. Wolfgang Ernst, *Digital Memory and the Archive*, trans. Jussi Parrika, Minneapolis 2013.
2. Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, London and Brooklyn 2013.
3. See for instance Benjamin Noys, *Malign Velocities: Acceleration and Capitalism*, Winchester and Washington 2014 and Mark C. Taylor, *Speed Limits: Where Time Went and Why We Have so Little Left*, New Haven 2014.
4. Sarah Sharma, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics*, Durham, NC 2014.
5. See for instance Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art*, Chicago 2012; Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophies of Contemporary Art*, London and Brooklyn 2013; and Boris Groys, "Comrades of Time", in: *E-Flux*, no. 11, 2009, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/11/61345/comrades-of-time/>.
6. An example of this is Serres' description of the Challenger space shuttle disaster, arguing that it revealed the connection between sacrificial rituals and technological progress.
7. The phrase 'so-called-player' is a reference to Kittler's regular use of the phrase "so-called-Man" to insist on a technological apriori.
8. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. George Collins and Richard Beardsworth, Stanford 1998, p. 17.
9. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech*, trans. Anna Bostock Berger, Cambridge 1993, p. 246.
10. Stiegler 1998, *Technics and Time 1*, p. 17
11. Daniel Ross, "A Summary of Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*", 2019, [https://www.academia.edu/20136235/A\\_Summary\\_of\\_Bernard\\_Stiegler\\_Technics\\_and\\_Time\\_1\\_p.10](https://www.academia.edu/20136235/A_Summary_of_Bernard_Stiegler_Technics_and_Time_1_p.10).
12. See for instance Harold Innis, *Empire and Communications*, Oxford 1950; Marshal McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Oxon 2001[1964]; Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, Stanford 1999[1986].
13. Markku Eskelinen, "Towards computer game studies", in: *Digital Creativity*, 12:3, 2001, pp. 175-183.
14. Jesper Juul, "Introduction to Game Time", in: *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, edited by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Pat Harrigan, Cambridge 2004, pp. 131-142.
15. Michael Nitsche, "Mapping Time in Video Games", *Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference*, 2007.
16. Miguel Sicart, *Play Matters*, Cambridge 2017.
17. Christopher Hanson, *Game Time: Understanding Temporality in Video Games*, Bloomington 2018.
18. See for instance Matt Knutson, "Pause, backtrack, rewind: Queering chrononormativity in gaming", in: *Game Studies*, vol. 18(3), 2018.
19. For more on this see, Justin Paton, "Artists, David Haines and Joyce Hinterding on their work 'The Outlands'", in: *Unguided Tours (Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2011)*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdstMcTGijE>.
20. Rachel Wagner, "The Importance of Playing in Earnest", in: *Playing with Religion in Digital Games*, eds. Heidi Campbell and Gregory Grievies, Bloomington 2014, pp. 192-213.



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22. Ibid.
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## Abbildungen

Abb. 1: Still from David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *The Outlands*, 2011

## Zusammenfassung

Contemporary digital culture seems to be characterised by an overwhelming invitation to perform, to act and to play. The time of the digital is often thought to produce a 24/7 world, always on, marked by quicker than lightning exchanges, always connected, always communicating. In this paper, I wish to probe more deeply into the time of digital culture and the larger questions of contemporaneity, by looking at a number of art games that seem to provide an alternative to mainstream digital culture. These games – special types of cultural objects that I refer to as 'anti-games' – resist interaction, provide obstacles to play and block the usual experiences attributed to more traditional video games. Using these games as starting points, in the paper I ask: what opportunities are there not to perform, not to act, to resist taking on the identity as a player in the time of the digital? And are there opportunities to try and occupy modes of temporality other than that which is characteristic of acceleration and progress? In short, using recent anti-games, I begin to explore the contemporary issues of temporality, history and memory, and start to offer new ways to critique the relationship between media technologies and time.

## Autor

Timothy Barker is a Professor of Media Technology and Aesthetics at the University of Glasgow. Working in the tradition of media archaeology, and spanning the fields of media theory, art theory and the philosophy of technology, he conducts research that is fundamentally about understanding the human through an understanding of technology. In particular, he has explored the ways that both old and new media technologies have facilitated the potential to generate new experiences and philosophical concepts of time and memory. He is the author of two books, *Time and the Digital* (Dartmouth College Press, 2012) and *Against Transmission: Media Philosophy and the Engineering of Time* (Bloomsbury, 2017), both of which outline a media philosophical approach for addressing questions of time and mediation in the contemporary world.

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