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Evan Williams (EW): We are recording

David Sobel (DS): Alright

EW: Mhmm....Now we are recording on both ends....That's a backup plan

Rob Lach (RL): Mhmm

DS: Alright so the date is October 20th 2015 uh Tuesday um our interviewee Rob Lach is here with us

RL: Ya you pronounced it right, usually have to be like it's Bach with an L

DS: And those asking the questions are Julianna and David um alright so our first question this whole thing is going to be pretty game related of course so what is your favorite game you've played and why

RL: Hmm my favorite game that I've...

DS: Yeah...influential etc..

RL: Ya people ask this a lot but eh um I guess favorite and um there's a game that I'm probably most impressed with and it's Eve online

DS: Oh yeah

RL: Purely because it creates this like social structure intrinsic to its own world so it's probably one of the best games that creates uh like that fabricates a universe for people to exist in um and that's what every game tries to achieve either very like a limited experience or very uh like uh profound and connected one like that game does and that's really like one of the first games that have accomplished that um in that scale

DS: Right, and I think I've seen it played before is that that game where you can sell ships and stuff

RL: Ya it's like, I've played it for like literally 2 weeks

DS: Okay

RL: It just impresses me the most um I mean I like I'm running through games left and right purely because I'm doing like so much curation stuff um and at this point because of that I also develop games, games have sort of become academic for me um where it's hard to like look past

seeing it as a uh subject matter to study um so that's really the game that I approached in that way and really impressed me um so that's what I define favorite is currently

DS: Alright so obviously there's a big deal about copyright in the gaming industry so if you can have the rights to any game what would you want

RL: Um

DS: And I realize this is kind of a general question

RL: So like which ip would I commandeer?

DS: Essentially

RL: Uh I think it would be fun for myself to commandeer some sort of like very mainstream Disney ip and just see where I can take it from like a purely like using that universe constructed for you know like Hannah Montana, 11-13 year old demographic and seeing how I can create like a universe in it that's compelling for everyone um that would be that's like what would be the most exciting for me but also like just games from my history that I'd love to just recreate like Fallout or um Homeworld just significant games that have affected how I approach the medium

DS: Alright, now here's another favorite question, so out of everything you've worked on game-wise what is your favorite project then?

RL: Um...I think at this point my favorite thing related to the game industry is like uh the Bit Bash interactive arts festival that I curate um purely because it creates this it accomplishes all these goals that I want games to accomplish like bring people together and giving people these emotional experiences um and then like even though it's not like a game it's related to the games and putting games in this new light and in a way you yeah that's yeah that's where where I think where I think I'm most proud of. Like my own games I'm very like self critical like I always see the mistakes in them

DS: Oh that's understandable

RL: And like if I worked on this 10 more years it would've been perfect but it's like not reasonable so again that's like always a problem I have with my own work um at some point I pull the trigger and release it and even then it's very rare that I do but yeah

DS: Okay, now this was going to be a later question but we do kind of we were kind of wondering the details of bit bash kind of, you kind of explain what it is briefly

RL: Okay, so like Bit Bash is uh interactive arts festival that's organized by um small collective of people that work in the game or art/design or marketing like industry here in Chicago. The main agenda of it is to promote like the medium of the sort of the more avant garde and independent developed games um and push that out to the general public so it's like and not

everything is like a war shooter and not everything is like you know a soccer game, there's are like really interesting and profound and culturally significant um like artistic pieces that are games that are being created and it's just to a festival that brings those to the forefront and at its core it's to create something that's really inviting for the average joe and the dad who used to play Mario on like on a gamepad but now picks up a Xbox controller and is like oh a hundred buttons what do I do um but and there are games that are accessible to those people still being created they just that they've been pushed out of purely because they don't have like the marketing dollars and not even being considered and it's not as impressive on video ends things like that um but so that's like creating sort of this community and festival that brings all those things together um and shows off like, games are cool guys, and in that way it's been pretty successful like there's a lot of we've been penetrating into a lot of those like markets and we've also have like auxiliary agendas like um we want to inspire sort of at-risk youth to maybe explore working in the medium of video games or interactive art so we reach out to sort of at-risk youth organizations and give them free tickets to the festival um so they can come in as a group, play things together and be like wow, um because when you think about games you think about 400 person teams millions of dollars working on something for like 3 years but a lot of the games we show at our festival um like 1 to 4 person teams um like you can do it on your own and to show people that like you can make something really important and significant on your own um and like you don't need to be the greatest 3D artist to make something that's worth playing and um so that's what Bit Bash it

DS: Alright

RL: That's really our main festival, we also run smaller social events that are just like bringing out games that haven't played much anywhere um and just creating a social experience around them like being at a bar or something and we're like we're going to put up 4 games you've never heard of and they're all awesome and you should play them like that's what we do

DS: Alright, so we're still kinda on the topic of creation, so is there a game that you wish you had been apart of? I'm sorry that was kind of weird

RL: That's a really good question

DS: Yeah I know we kind of had the ip question but this is...

RL: Um like I think every game I ever play like I see what I would change so to give you a definitive answer would be difficult, every single game I play like I play Grand Theft Auto or something or even like old Pacman, he coulda done this, this and this and it would've been better and it's like coming from a designer standpoint and this kind

DS: Right

RL: of the reason why games are sort of ruined because all I see are things I'd change and how I'd change them and how I'm implementing that in my own topic and my own work and dissect it and um yeah

DS: You wish you did everything essentially

RL: Hahaha I mean I wish I could be apart of everything because like I work in this medium cause it's been profound for me um and I think games are the most important artistic medium currently because like it's the only medium that interacts in the way um a lot of mediums can't like when you watch a film you're being like you're exposed to it, the filmmaker is making a statement but like a game only exists the moment a player picks it up and then every time it's played it's different and it's always like a personal experience um so in a sense the player is the actual artist in that and uh like the designer is only directing the conversation versus like the game converses with you uh and so as a medium I think it's important to look forward um so yeah I'd love to be apart of everything really but and there are times where like, like I'd used to work at EA um and I was um working on the um I was part of like the working with the Madden team on something and there was like a side pitch meeting of like what can we put in there and I'm like we should put in a dating sim um into this game and I mean people laughed it off but I'm like you can have these relationships that can affect your on-field stats and like that's and every single project I see I'm like I can really turn this around and make something really interesting here like there a lot of the stuff that just keeps coming out is so like you have so much fertile ground so that just like everything I see opportunity there um

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RL: ...and like from I do a lot of independent game development it's like I have none of those resources so thinking about running a 300 person team to do something yeah I like it sounds like a nightmare but like what you can possibly do with that much resources is like it's almost mind boggling to think about currently for me

DS: Alright, so we'll move back in your history a little bit so, uh what made you interested in video games and design I guess eventually?

RL: Um, so I just touched on it, I was trying to like figure out what medium I was working in like I have, I went to school in computer science but I thought I was going to go into games for awhile like since I was probably young like just because I like games you know it was, like I'd play a game and I wanna do this, if I could make one of these that would be so cool you know and a lot of people approach it that way but as I sort of progressed I was thinking um what medium do I really want to work in where it like captures uh like the technical side of things and allows you to express yourself creatively and I think games is like the perfect cross section of those. Um like there's an enormous technical side that bounds what you can possibly create and then you actually have to create something. Especially when I work on something alone, like I'm programming one day and like figuring out how things looks the other. Other than maybe like architecture the combination of doing something from like the engineering side and the creative

side, it's pretty rare or requires like a lot of specialized knowledge which games do too, um. So like when I was looking at mediums that was one of the attractors for it and then like I thought about it as like what would the medium mean for in like the grander sense like culturally and um and like in games hit that spot where you're basically fabricating these universes for people to interact with, interact in, and I think moving forward is an important way to look at creating art.

DS: Okay, now, ya, now was there any WHO involved in this? Like is there any person in your life so far that was inspirational in a sense, you know?

RL: Like do I

DS: Parents..?

RL: No, my parents were really against me going into this

DS: Oh okay

RL: Um, ya like uh I think I'd always like romanticize early like smaller game devs back when it was like 12 person teams working on Doom or whatever, John Carmack and like 3 other people creating a game. Not that I've done it um it's like I know exactly what that is eh kinda feel silly but like a lot of people like have this celebrity factor of things they like, this is the person who did something I really like they're so awesome um so like I had a string of those, basically whoever made my favorite game that year was like the person I would be looking up to just seeing like where they went to school and like what they like how did they get into that and like I'd read up on interviews and things like that in my early teens like when I was in my preteens when I was getting interested into this, um but there was never like a single mentor or someone that dragged me along or anything like that like it was mostly just like self exploring the space myself.

DS: Alright, so we're almost done with the "personal section" as we're calling it so

RL: "personal section" haha

DS: Yah, so we just did your earlier history, now in the current time what kind of hobbies do you enjoy,

RL: Oh jeez

DS: When you do have free time

RL: Um.....haha I do like building things, outside of the computer, like um like uhfh furniture or like just like like doing stuff with my hands, whatever interests at that point like I try to get like a little hobby like that and I jump from them all the time. Like sometimes I go to the woods and chop wood cause it's just like...when you're working in the medium that's like on a

computer you're always in that 2 foot window that is your life for long stretches at a time um and like especially in the medium of games the the the length of time you took from idea to having it working is like a week, it's not like writing a sentence and being like oh that doesn't look, that doesn't sound right, this poem sucks you know like you don't have that opportunity currently working in the medium of games now it's like oh what if what if I can jump twice as high, and you have to go program a physics system and like program the jump value

DS: Right there's more to it

RL: Um so working with things in the physical space is like an immediate feedback, like cooking something is like I put something on something that is hot and it's different almost immediately. Like you start to miss that when you're working on games cause like a week away before I see what's going on um so my hobbies sort of gravitate around that, just building things electronically or even just using old methods and um that's like what I do with my free-time the rest of the time I'm doing game stuff like either building communities stuff or working on actual games

DS: Right, so obviously we know you're kind of involved in the arcade scene

RL: Yep!

DS: So, what are your favorite arcades like in the Chicago, Illinois area essentially

RL: Like the location wise?

DS: Uh well, location or style of arcade

RL: [laughs]

DS: there are some barcades here

RL: Um....I mean I'm like currently working on an arcade project with the Emporium people so if I don't say they're the best, then they'll get angry if they ever hear this um but like my favorite arcade was, like I grew up in the city here and just outside of the city in the northwest side there was this place called Caesarland and I think it's closed down now but like it was a place where all the kids in my neighborhood had their birthdays purely because they had like the best arcade. Um, so like thinking back that would be my favorite. Um, now like uh I do like the Emporium in Wicker Park, because um I was part of another project under like a local collective called Indie City Games where we built um an indie arcade cabinet and put it in there and it's just a collection of Chicago based games or games that curated to put on to there that work in that space and are sort of more international flavor um so like currently that would be my favorite cause they're really cool about just letting us do stuff like that and showing off like um like sort of the similar with the mission of what Bit Bash is showing off like what games are capable of and so like if you were to play a machine and we allow anyone to put games onto it. So, like if people reach out like I made this game and I want to just have it on an arcade machine, I'm like "yah just send

me it and I'll put it on there" so like it's that simple, and a lot of people like, like that they can play their game in a public space on an arcade machine like that's just in itself cool um so that'd probably be my favorite location.

DS: Alright

Julianna Bochnak (JB): How would you spell Caesarland?

RL: Caesarland? haha It's it's it's ehheh it's, it was owned by the Little Caesars company. So, it's c-a-e-s-a-r I think it was like a project of theirs to do like a chuck-e-cheese

DS: Oh alright

RL: But it was like twice as big...

DS: I mean I live on like in the northwest area, I've never seen anything like that so...

RL: I think it was like Harlem and....

DS: Oh that's a little more west haha

RL: Yah, Harlem and...Yah like it's I think it's not in the city I think it's like in the nearest suburb

DS: Oh, alright

RL: Harlem and....the highway, like it's I'm trying to remember but uh but ya like that's I grew up on the way northwest side like on an O'Hare flight path um basically and that's where all the cool kids had their birthday parties

DS: Alright so

RL: The pizza wasn't even that good. It's all about the games

DS: Okay, so we're on the education slash job related questions now. So, first thing we have is giving formal education I mean...

RL: hahaha

DS: it's kind of

RL: Do I have degrees? hahaha

DS: Don't mean to ask it but yes

RL: Um ya like uh I went to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

DS: Okay I do remember reading about that place

RL: And then uh I have a degree in Computer Science and a minor in Philosophy um and those are my level of formal education. I was like a year into a Masters until I ditched it to go work for Electronics Arts. Um and that's what my education was

DS: Now how was it working there if you don't mind me asking

RL: At EA?

DS: Ya, you kinda brought it up

RL: Uh haha um I was working there as like a central programmer. So I was working on like engine-side things making like very like just technical stuff like making. I was working on things like automated testing um which was pretty fun it was like making like AI's that play the game with using virtualizing controller inputs, so like when everyone would leave to go home. So like when everyone would leave to go home, like all these machines would connect to each other and play multiplayer

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RL: ...games all night to do the testing. So I programmed that system um to launch those and to launch like the latest version to every machine that existed in the place, you know it would be like 300 machines playing against each other all night and if you crashed it like it would send a report back um that was fun even though like haha that project like killed 10 jobs at the studio cause there was like 10 people that did exactly that and no longer had to um ha which was kind of sad hah also like my whole team came up through QA so like all their friends were like angry at me. Um but working there, like cause I had the strong creative side like it's, it was very limiting to me like you had like everything was done by large committees and um like all these voices have to be heard and there's like no real vision and I was working at EA Sports on like Madden Football and like Tiger Woods golf and things like that so even then like even if you had like direct control like from a design standpoint, there's only so much you can do like it's you're still bounded by the rules of football um so like that really didn't meld with like what I was about um I only lasted there, it was like less than a year, like I couldn't like I immediately went independent to work on my own things and I tried to work on my own things while I was working there but it was like you're sitting at work, all day, programming, you don't want to go home and do exactly that, even though it's like your own stuff, it's just like the energy is zapped out of you um but I did learn a lot about like process and the business side of things, like pipelines, getting the actual creation of it as efficient as possible. Um because even when you're working alone, if you don't have that down, like everything takes longer than it really should. So like working in EA allowed me to learn that and just see, like there were just people just like focused on Madden like we gotta get this texture here at this time and like and it was like they keep breaking it down and making it as efficient as possible and working by yourself it's even more important to make sure your process is done. Um so I spent like a long time just getting that down for myself after I left.

DS: Alright, so obviously we understand that you're involved in game design and such. So, in your specific um I guess version of the job you could call it, what do you, what is the process you would describe, I suppose

RL: Oh geez

DS: what do you do?

RL: I mean like at this point I'm still experimenting with the process, like my last public released game was a game called Pop Methodology Experiment One, it was like an avant garde uh experimental game and that game was literally experimenting with process like the typical process that it employs like you have is grand idea like uh like um on a wizard that shoots lasers or whatever like you have to save this thing like you create either a narrative around it or, or you think of like this is a cool way to have stacking puzzles you know like you create a mechanic and then build around that. Those are like the two common ways of approaching that, then like you flesh out your idea and then you start programming it and start putting art in. In my last game like I totally just did that, the wrong way. I made like the music first, and then I figured out what games match the music in my head. Oh this is a cool game for driving, I mean this is good music for driving so I'll like make a driving part here and then it became like a mish-mash of all these like small games that are using all these like very different mechanics and then in that process like I was like I didn't care about um like certain things that you usually care a lot about like telling the player what they are actually supposed to be doing and things like that. Like it's very frustrating to play by design purely because that wasn't part of the process and that in itself creates uh creates like interesting things like the game itself you don't even have to pick up a controller, it'll play itself all the way through, it just goes into a lot of fail states by design and it's just fun to watch. So like people that aren't good at games really like playing it, people that are kinda hate it cause it's like unintuitive and like "where's the jump button?", I'm like there's no jump. Like it's like that. Uh so like if I were to define my process I'd say it's currently unknown. I'm still trying to figure out what the best process is, there's like a common process that's used and um I've been avoiding it because I think it's, I might be all wrong here but I want to see what else you can do in what way.

DS: Right

RL: And like in creating that game I sort of implement those things into like sort of the standard way of doing things. Um there's supposedly a standard way. Now I think about the music really really early on in the process. That's like an afterthought usually but now it's like at the forefront because I saw how it affected in the creation backing cause I based it on that. So like now I just keep evolving it like that, like I still feel like I'm building my craft even though I've been doing it for years. I don't think no one really knows how to make a game like everyone just sort of tries stuff and then if it works then they do it like 20 times you know cause like if you look there's like 30 Call of Duty's or whatever cause one worked so everything else is way too scary and you take so much time like it's all guess and check still in all games. I don't think were going to be at the point where you actually like consciously design games in that way for awhile. Like all the early

games are just like "what can we get running on this hardware that's fun" now it's like "what can we get that's fun, period". You don't design from, from a goal you're just like having a bare minimum where it's playable and enjoyable um I think moving forward we are starting to explore that space and making games that aren't even fun that aren't enjoyable to play like sad games and things like that and um or just profound like personal experiences that are shown in the medium of games. Um so to answer your question, I don't have one.

DS: That's fine. Uh okay, so I guess if you don't technically have one we don't really need to ask you what your favorite part of the design is

RL: I mean we could

DS: Unless you have a specific um

RL: There are favorite parts, depending on the project like if a game is like if the goal of it is to put someone into like a very specific emotional state like, dread, designing like a situation where that happens, that you want to be in, is like the most fun thing. I do a lot of stuff that messes with players, that's always fun, because I feel like it feeds into my god complex almost where like I can just do whatever I want to you and like you've willingly submitted yourself into my universe so like you're going to have to deal with it. And like that's fun in a way and like you can use it for good and bad you know um and playing with that is always fun um so thinking of things like that. That's sort of like where Easter eggs come from, where you're like putting in things that don't really fit the universe but because you're able to do whatever you want. You go into this room and read something that I put there like, "Happy Birthday" or whatever. That's always the most fun part. The actual like designing of the game is um, there's so many unknowns it's hard, it's sometimes really frustrating to do something like unique, or accomplish what your vision is because it takes so long to.

DS: Right. Okay so, what do you do when you have a designers block of sorts or coder's block whatever you call it.

RL: [laughs] I have both uh, like I usually just step away from it a bit. Like I look for inspiration in other places, like I rarely reach for inspiration in other games because I feel like that's feeding into the system and if you're trying to explore new things, it's like you're not going to find anything new in something that's already done by just the definition of "new". So like I usually like watch a movie or go for a walk or something like that, um from the design sense, you can research. Like if you have a universe in your mind, like sci-fi or whatever, you can like put on Blade Runner and maybe catch something and just see like immerse yourself in the universe without you having to create it and see what comes to you. If whatever you're working on, isn't like narrative in that way. Like a lot of the times just stepping away from it gives you a lot of freedom for your mind to like either relax from it or just be like oh "that was simple" like I just needed to do that. Um like forcing it never works.

DS: Alright, so that being said um after all this discussion of processes and such what do you view is your favo, not your favorite success, your greatest success. I know it's kind of a very open ended question.

RL: Oh jeez, um [pause]

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RL: [laughs] Greatest success? I almost don't even want to put it in words cause then it's like defined. Um, I mean at this point I'm like in that space I'm most proud of is actually when I released Pop on Steam uh I included like a developer's commentary with it, that like explains what I was thinking as I was planning it. I think that was one of the greatest decisions I've done, regarding that game. Like it's not part of design process, but it's part of releasing of the game process and like no one does that, no one like puts the developer commentary in the game cause it's even hard to do interactive media with that and I sort of figured it out. Like each game takes x amount of time so I made sure I only talked for that amount so while you're playing doing whatever um like I'm talking to you, explaining what is going on in my head.

DS: Hmm

RL: And like doing that I created like this, I didn't anticipate it but I created this like personal relationship with a lot of people like cause the game is very player hatey um where like if you like you play and it frustrates you and then you're like "I'm not ever playing this again" but a lot of people like that listen to the commentary, they're like "oh wait there's more stuff going on here" and not to say that there's like the game is too good for you to understand or anything like that, like the game is pretty bad I'll be honest it's not a good game, but it explores a lot of interesting ideas but at its core it's not a good game and it couldn't be cause of the process I used. In doing that commentary it really like opened up a lot like it made the game something more, more than just something you sit down and pay like \$3 to play or whatever, it made it something that's showing up, the meaning is moving forward and I didn't anticipate it, I just wanted to, like I wanted to go through a process of creating a commentary since I think every game needs one. So like and that game is so avant garde, like putting it on to a commercial network like that to sell was just purely an experiment to learn how to do that process really well. In doing that it like it created like this whole new eh like almost a cult following to the game now, it's kind of awesome.

DS: So you put a lot of focus on immersion then it seems.

RL: Um, for purposely breaking immersion, there's a lot of like

DS: Okay yeah, immersion lack thereof

RL: There's a lot of, there's so many variables you can experiment into this medium that like they are all so interesting to me, like what if you are playing a game and all the rules change halfway through, you have to relearn everything and then you feel like you're dumb for even learning that

whole system. Like stuff like that, there are so many opportunities and like they are not explored. So I mean that's sort of where I focus on.

DS: Okay, so you kind of touched on this a little bit before about, you've obviously played a lot of games in your life

RL: Too many

DS: Ya, too many as you say, [laughs] so I mean which, if you had to choose a few of them, which ones in particular have been influential in your current work?

RL: Um, like the first game that really caught me was Doom, Um I like that the narrative in the game is so implicit, like it doesn't hold your hand through a story, it gives you like a screen of text, like "stuff went bad" and then they drop you in a room with a gun and things start shooting at you and it's like "ya I know what's going on", immediately, like there's no like 2 minute cut scene like "ayy we gotta jump into this level or whatever" it's just all there and that's sort of the beauty of the medium, cause you're in the moment, there's no reason you have to like hold someone's hand through it. I mean it's just like a lazy way to tell a story, but like that just tells it implicitly and then like after that it's Deus Ex. It's like the first game really that showed to me that like you can explore like actual like deep philosophical topics in the medium and be respectful about it um and even make the exploration of them, like fun, like in the game you're running around like shooting people but like in that process you're questioning why you're doing it. Um and that's was like a profound thing for me like that shows that medium has an enormous amount of depth. It's not touched upon enough cause you know if you're going mass market you don't want to rough too many feathers. But that game like even if you play it now, is very like just relevant for what's going on with like NSA and stuff it's the same storyline in game form. I play it like every 2 years or so, um just to refresh like the interface is really outdated it could really use a remake.

DS: Ya, I've only ever played Human Revolution. I like the idea that you could go through and not kill anybody or, and it does effect the ending of the game somewhat doesn't it?

RL: It does, it does, ya. Like the original one was so perfect for it. In that game there's a part where you, you go into, this is like a spoiler, but you go into like this guys house, he's part of the Illuminati or whatever and in his closet he has like a god AI you can talk to and have just like, this is like an hour long conversation you can have with it. And it's like not part of the game at all, it's just something this guy has in his house and it just fills up the universe. Um but you go into it and you're just, just like it begins putting all these like sort of um um like the Cartesian arguments for and against having a god and things like that and it's in the game. And in like in this part of the game narratively, you're like you've gone through like a lot of stuff so you want to take a break anyway, so you might as well explore this topic and it was just like perfect to see that, and that's sort of another thing about the beauty of games is that, like that, isn't like really a game, it's just going through a conversation tree. But because games are just like a combination of medium, you can put like a 2 hour film inside of your game and it would be perfectly fine if

you can justify it and like that's, just having that ability to just pick and choose what from the outside of actual interactive stuff what you want to put into it um that just gives you a lot of freedom with how to have a conversation with your audience. Um and then past that, those are probably my 2 most formative, maybe Minecraft currently, purely because it has like very little implicit uh goals in it, but it has a lot like, it doesn't have a lot of explicit goals, but it has a lot of implicit ways to create goals for yourself. Like "I'm going to build a house" and like you can do that right? It's like, it's not like it sits you down and says "build a house" you just do it because you feel like you should. Um and it wasn't designed in that way you know, when the game was designed it was designed to have like a quest, but the moment you stumbled upon that and it worked then you, they didn't bother developing it further. So like that's probably the most influential thing about my current thinking about where games are headed. Like player created structures in the game, now there's a lot of games coming out that don't have like explicit goals, it's just your gunna do whatever, you know it's like a lot of people find those boring and like breaking away from what games is and trying to like "is this even a game?" but to me that's like a non argument, games can be whatever it is like a ball isn't a ball because it isn't being kicked around you know, it's like something designed to be played with.

DS: Alright, so that being said, how has the industry changed since you put yourself into it?

RL: [laughs] Um, the biggest change that's happening, is the tools for creating games, the bar for making games is getting easier and easier, like early on when you're doing Atari stuff you're going straight like assembly level code all the time you know. As it becomes easier and easier you're seeing these voices that were initially intimidated by it because like back in the day you had to be like some computer nerd to make a game and then like and that's what all the games were sort of in that space like that appealed to that audience because like you do what you wanna do, you like make games for yourself first and foremost. Um, so like now that the tools are getting better, these outsider voices are getting more and more heard and they're all bringing these like really interesting perspectives and especially in the medium of games where you're interacting with it. Like a game designed by a woman has a very distinct like um it might not be even distinct but it has like a flavor to it that like the medium of games allows to happen particularly like um like it happens in other mediums but it's just it's such a personal experience playing a game that, it's very distinct and very like um very...

40:00

RL: ...interesting property of the medium. Um as like that's where I see the most change happening, is the tools are getting better and better. And as the tools are getting better and better the larger the scope games are getting bigger and bigger as a result cause like now when you're making Grand Theft Auto, you can make 5 billion square miles a lot faster than before when you could make a small city and that's like, even at the highest end that being affected by it. And you can make things look pretty a lot faster um which for a lot of people is, is a selling point and how they're invited to it, "Oh this looks cool!", um you know like a lot of games are approached through screenshots and videos. Um so if that gets accomplished then uh the barrier to entry for something really interesting gets lowered um so that's where I see the biggest change.

DS: Okay so where do you, what kind of improvements would you like to see though in the industry?

RL: [laughs]

DS: How's the battery?

EW: I'm just making sure it's still going. Yep, we're good.

RL: Um, so like, it's, there are things that are wrong and I don't have solutions for them um I think I touched upon having more outsider voices is an important move for the industry and I think that's, that's sort of happening naturally and there is a lot of like debate around that topic right now. Um I don't really have any solutions, um I mean a lot of people don't that's why it's being debated. Uh but like that's being considered as a positive step, so like not all games are just going to be whatever has been released in the last 20 years. Um I think generally the industry has like a curation problem, where like if you go to like a store there are way too many options and it's hard to know what would relate to you. Um and that hasn't been solved that's why like all these stores that have like really nailed getting the gamer interested in something um and like the app store has really nailed to someone who's on the train, that has 5 minutes, getting interested into something. Um and I guess like as these markets expand, like all the niches will started getting pulled in with their specialty markets. But really everyone plays games like from childhood, like you've played the floor is lava or you race down the block, so games are a universal medium. Um but the way the industry works it starts pushing people away from interacting with it in a digital way um which is like unfortunate cause the digital way is the way that's the most creative like you can create anything, you're not limited by the laws of physics for instance. Um so that's where I like, to be free, to put a game that someone would like into their hands, you show them it exists, is like where I think the industry really needs to work a lot on. Um and I think people are working on it and but like I don't know if that will happen even in my lifetime where that's like nailed. Um and it's not like having enough choice, it's like you're overwhelmed by choice

DS: Right

RL: Um so it's like a very difficult problem.

DS: Well ya it's funny I have a slight comment on it, it's almost, I want to call it um not Steam disease...

RL: [laughs]

DS: But like the idea that when, when your Steam library is 200+ games it's kind of funny how you have so many games but, like for me specifically I have like 250 games but I always feel, I feel like I have so many games but I don't want to play any of them.

RL: No no, cause you're paralyzed by choice

DS: Exactly. Yeah.

RL: Like you're like, like, should I play this, this? You know what I can't even make this decision I'm going to play what I like. It's like what it devolves down to.

DS: Yeah or I end up going to YouTube or something

RL: Yeah yeah, like it's that's I mean that's yeah that's exactly what's wrong with Steam. [laughs] Like I'd rather have 10 games that are so for me than have 200 that I bought at 99 cents because it was such a good deal but I'll never play a game.

DS: Yeah I very much miss having only 20 games in my library

RL: [laughs]

DS: Well, so you brought up a little bit the idea of bringing games like into everybody's hands.

RL: Mhmm

DS: That being said, where do you stand on mobile games

RL: Um, well mobile games are exciting that everyone like I mean not everyone like only like 40% of people have a smartphone like realistically, um in the US which is like when you say that you think everyone does that's cause everyone you know does.

DS: Right

RL: [laughs] Um, but like having having like having a device that you can put a game on, like a digital game on, that everyone can have access to is like exciting, um especially if you make something that's like very universally loved and so like I mean I'm not against it in any way. I have issues with freemium models and a lot of these games purposely like hit like uh like uh like dopamine I call em like dopamine pumps you know? It hits like a reward loop and locks you in and then like they extend it more and more until like then they put like a payroll at just right the point and that's like how they're designed. Um and I think because games work in that way there's like an ethical issue, you have to watch out for what you're doing, like, like it's possible to create a game that could be like traumatizing to someone um like no one's done that, but it's totally possible or maybe some people have, I'm not sure, but like if that is, that is a possibility of the medium because you're having such a personal experience with it and like the more immersed you are the higher probability it is that like you're doing something um in that way uh. So like regarding mobile games, like they those games target that, it's very disheartening. Uh like, but like the platform itself is very exciting to work with, just cause everyone is like familiar with it, they can touch stuff on the screen um and then having a new constraint to design around. Like if you look at consoles and like PC's and like you're you're always expanding what you're

capable of but the moment you went down to mobiles, like okay we have small screen, and you're covering half of it with your hands so you can't do that. So like those constraints are like a lot of source of creativity, like a lot of early arcade and um like Atari games and things like that they were always constrained by the hardware and that like you could only fit so many buttons on the front of an arcade machine um and like that that allowed for like uh the restrictions to create like the creativity for it, like um it allows you like a place to explore and see where you can push, like the boundaries aren't important for creativity, like if you can do anything what are you going to do?

DS: Right, so do you have any advice for somebody who's just going into this industry, game design and video games in general?

RL: [laughs]

DS: You know

[background noise of computer announcing the time is 3 o'clock]

RL: Um, almost 3 o'clock [laughs] um I guess

DS: I know it's kind of a tough question

RL: I usually just tell people don't do it

DS: [laughs]

RL: Um like if you wanna do something that's, if you wanna make a living off of this and be like creative it's very difficult. There's a lot of stuff in your way, and like nowadays when you're like leaving school with all these loans and stuff like it's not the right life. Like from a programmer's perspective I can go like work on a game and or I can go work on some like startup or go work on like spreadsheet software and like the financial incentive to go work on spreadsheet software is like twice the salary like the industry itself sort of exploits your romanticism with it. Um so if your goal is to just, "I wanna work on games" and not really have like a mission for it then like it becomes difficult and distraught and you get stuck working for somewhere you don't like and like the moment you're in it, is not what you expected um but if you, if you see sort of the beauty of the medium and if you want to really explore then like approaching it yourself, I always like. Working on like a large game team versus working at like Microsoft on Microsoft Word is like exactly the same type of work. Um so that's what I tell people to be aware of that. Like you're not going to be, the romanticism of games will be pulled away but you can always but if you work on stuff on your own, um and you want do something creative in that way, and like I totally invite you. There's like so many tools I can give you, like an easy step to try into it, like if you want to just do text-based stuff you can like load up Twine which is like purely text-based um you don't need to do any graphical arts and you can still create an experience that is meaningful.

50:00

RL: Um, and the tools are getting better and better um so the opportunity for small or one to small person teams are there, that's just like my personal view on it.

DS: Okay

RL: Like the industry will kill you [laughs]

DS: So, one last comment on industry, where do you see yourself in the future of the gaming industry?

RL: Um, I'm currently involved, like I make my own games and like um I'm involved in a few projects, like I'm involved in Bit Bash which is creating like a public space for these games to be revealed um I have like a couple projects where I'm working on distribution of games, like, like I really don't want to get into those at this point cause I don't really know where they are headed. Like a focus I see is a problem and because I've been working in it so long I have like the right connections to get something off the ground to see if it works. Um otherwise I'm probably going to be making like smaller games, a couple more, um releasing them for like on Steam or whatever or whatever medium whatever distribution points exist and eventually I want to, I probably in like 10-15 years I'd like to convert this tool-set and use it to like help with educational tools um and like creating immersive experiences where people can learn. Um cause a lot of these skills like transfer into that and that's like another important thing for my mind. So like in all these things I'm learning now I'm gunna try to put them into something that's more, more productive than creating entertainment, not that creating entertainment isn't the best cause it's awesome [laughs] like it's, there's there's value in all that, like people need to relax or whatever. But ya that's where I see myself in like 10 years, 15 years, just working on stuff that's like interactive experiences that have more of a social agenda than like a purely artistic statements or entertainment.

DS: Right, okay, so we're done with the job-related questions, well these might still relate back, we'll see how it goes

RL: [laughs] You don't have to excuse yourself just read these questions off

DS: Alright, save me the time then. So do you have a specific genre that you prefer to work on?

RL: Of games?

DS: Ya

RL: Oof uh, I don't know, I don't like the word genre when it relates to games

DS: Got some very open questions here

RL: I don't like the word genre when it relates to games in general, like um

DS: Mhm

RL: I mean there's interesting things to explore in all of them so like to think I'd be stuck in one, sounds boring. Like that's just like the juxt of it.

DS: Alright, that's good enough, that's fine. So our question here is, what kind of coding is most frequently used in your experience? And I guess by that we mean what kind of programming languages do you use?

RL: Um so like I have a like a formal background in computer science so I usually code everything from scratch, like I talk about all these tools all the time, but like all my code is usually like straight OpenGL or DirectX graphics like libraries and like whatever else I can like plug together to get like texture loaded or whatever. Purely because like I come from, I do like a lot of exploratory programming and uh like I mess with the code to make it look things appear in different ways that like are very unorthodox, like I like I load graphics memory like from random spots to see what it's look when it's pushed through a graphics card, stuff like that. Uh and like that's like all these systems, all these like tools like explicitly prevent you from that cause that's literally like a mistake but like for me there might be something cool here maybe if I put whatever's on the clipboard into the graphics memory it might be like interesting um, just things like that. So like I code basically everything from scratch using C++ or C depending on, usually C++, C-oriented like syntax. Ya, like most of my game programming is just like medium level I guess at this point um it used to be high level but like nowadays everything is low level for a lot people. [laughs]

DS: Alright, well we actually have a very specific question about some stuff you've done

RL: Mhm

DS: So, its a little long, when players immerse themselves in a game like Ham and Jam, the gun mechanics are frequently overlooked and are deemed OP (Overpowered)

RL: Mhm

DS: Or if flaws are found, so in your work on recoil systems and balance with the in-game weapons what's the most difficult aspect of that?

55:00

RL: Uhm. Well like Ham and Jam in particular was a multiplayer game so it's all based on like your main tool is play testing like sometimes you can put stuff in a spreadsheet and be like ok point three recoil equals ten power values. If I do like three damage on that you like try to balance it out that way. Uhm and a lot of like the big MMORPG stuff is like balanced like using spreadsheets uhm and it's easier because it's like you press one button, it does ten damage per second you can do do calculations like that, but any game that has a player skill element where like like your mechanic is also dependent on how precise someone is with their mouse, for

instance. Uhm it really comes down to just like play testing it a lot uhm you get a lot of people in and if everyone just starts using one thing the most if they have all the options because they want, they're trying to maximize their ability to succeed in the world you created then you like have to start cutting it down. Uhm and then like with time like people are more sensitive to recoil than this and like more sensitive to like whatever whatever variables you have and then you can start modifying things uhm just through experience and foresight. Uhm but before that, you're really in the blind uhm. Playing a lot of games allows you to know like what worked in previous projects, and that's positive if you're trying to get it off the ground somewhere uhm and negative if you're trying to do something new cause then you're like that's what worked then like I'm not gonna bother doing anything else. Uhh but ultimately when you're doing any sort of programming in that space like any mechanics, you're literally just this value is one point five now and let's see how that works. Uhm that's usually how it's done. Like no one goes out and like shoots guns in an alley to like with an accelerometer to see how it works and like you're just making stuff up uhm and that's like all those all those things you make up at the beginning really define where it heads like if Mario in Super Mario Brothers the your jump height was four tiles instead of three you know the levels would be different. Like that's just a number you pick uhm and you balance either to those numbers or you balance those numbers to work with whatever else so really like whatever's most important is where you balance against like in change the gravity, but you can't change your level design uhm so if you want it harder you can make gravity slightly harder and things like that. Uhm yeah I don't know if I answered your question.

DS: That was good. We had a more physics minded person asking the question.

RL: Oh, ok.

DS: Yeah. So, so in a game like Red Girder, how hard is it to work out the collision mechanics?

RL: Umm from a technical sense? Uhhhh like collision systems are a lot of based like in figuring out how much cost there is in checking a collision and then changing what you're checking against so it's just a lot of just like uh positional culling. Umm really like all these collisions systems are like I have a ten by ten grid and if I'm at one one I'm only checking like the next like the area around me versus everything else uhhh and you just need to figure out a system that works for what you've programmed like umm like uhh like if you're doing a first person shooter you want to divide up the 3d spaces. A lot of old ones used like BSB trees uhh which was like this room would be divided into quadrants and divided again and then you'd only check your quadrants and the one next to it and it's easy to like enough to check like me against that object and these tables and it's right next to it. It's just like different ways of culling umm

DS: Good

RL: Most collision systems are based in and then like uhh like the other thing is making like the result of a collision umm easy to calculate so if you're like bouncing off the surface it's one thing but if you're calculating like frictions and things like that all these checks become more more

expensive. Umm it's just like a balance between how accurate you want to be and how many things you want to check against. Like back in the day like culling like processing power and culling wasn't that good, so you walked into a room, it had like three things in it cause like that's all it could do but nowadays in like a pretty high fidelity game, you walk into a room there's like a billion things you could collide with cause these things have been figured out.

59:58

DS: Alright, so we're gonna move it more to the modeling uh section so do you do you feel like modeling programs like AutoDesk are a good option for creating highly detailed static 3D objects?

RL: [laughing] Uhh sure.

DS: I mean like do you do much

RL: Um so so like uh I mean personally I shied away from making high quality 3d objects since like I already live in the real world and like everything is super high fidelity. Like it can't be more high fidelity than I have. Although, like creating a game that's super realistic and then like messing with it slightly is always exciting um cause then like you're creating a really surreal experience that makes you second guess everything uhh but we're not there yet in that space so like I'm not bothering with it like for me currently I'm just trying to do things that look interesting and um using like high end tools like it's pretty overkill like those are made more for high fidelity models um and like I can do stuff in like Google SketchUp or whatever and just like I need I need a house so it's like two triangles and a chimney looks like a house and it's good enough um like I like the intent and metaphor of it is more important to me from like my process then the actual like I gotta make this house look really nice and have like windowsills and that unless unless that changes things mechanically I don't really care. Um I guess that's but yeah I mean if that's what you want to do then like um AutoDesk tools are fine like it's I guess that's the answer to your question.

DS: More than sufficient.

RL: Yeah they're more than sufficient like the free tools to, if once you learn them, like Blender it's like you can do anything you want with them.

DS: Right.

RL: Umm and we're not at the point where technically we can like be pushing out like ray traced like Pixar level um graphics anyway um so like processing has to catch up to that point.

DS: Ok, now when designing the physics for games are equations of motion utilized at all?

RL: Uhh yeah if you have like it depends on what your physics system is trying to do like if you want like a realistic physics system uh you open up a physics textbook and you start like here's what the friction values are you can calculate that um. Other times I'm just like getting stuff and programming physics in a way that feels right. Like um like instead of like having coefficients of frictions between two things I'm just like if you're touching this surface you're you're you know it's like I'm cutting your speed by half every time you touch it and like that and I just make up values like that and just make it feel right and like this is how jumping works um because like if a lot of the times like sticking to what the real world gives you um is like limiting like mechanically if you want to create like good feeling jumps um you make it so um if you hold it longer you jump higher so like you have a good feel. Yeah yeah you can have a tap and if you're like if I press uh A and it gives like a vector of negative nine point eight for like you know it creates that impulse and you have like no control over it then it feels worse even though like you're physics system is just like better. Um which it harks back to how realistic you want things to be and what your agenda is um we're reaching the point where like realistic physics is gonna be calculatable um which is cool if you wanna create something that's realistic racing simulator um but beyond that it's not interesting like I can also drive my car.

DS: Ok, now so obviously you've mentioned before that either a strong or immersive story is kinda a good aspect, but which do you when it comes down to it which do you feel is more important to a game, whether it functions well or if the story is strong?

RL: Um I mean ideally for me like

DS: Like have to balance it out

RL: It's the function should create the story.

DS: Ok

RL: Like uhh I don't know if you've ever played a game called Cannonbolt

DS: I have, yes

RL: Ok so that's like a one button game and the mechanics are literally just like jumping but and there's no story whatsoever other than what you see on the screen and it's all like implicit narrative like you see a city collapsing building collapsing and it doesn't tell you the city is collapsing you gotta get out of here. You just start running and you start jumping and then becomes like it's just natural

DS: You get it because you have to.

RL: Yeah like it's uhh the point of a game is to do that and it's just like there's no pretext that you're trying to push a narrative onto someone. So like if you can like accomplish your narrative

without being so explicit about it then that's like that's the ideal goal. Like the narrative itself is the least important thing like you can wrap any like if you have a core set of mechanics that really work, like you're stacking things, you can wrap a narrative around it. You can be like you're stacking blocks, you're building buildings in the city like you can make stuff up and make a match. That's not the hard part. Umm like a lot of early designers, they start with the narrative in their head, they're like ok I'm uh I'm stuck on this planet and like it's like you're not gonna get a game out of that. You're just gonna get what the game will look like and that's like I mean it's important at some point but that's not what it's about you know. It's like what are you gonna do. Are you going to be looking for things? Like then if your mechanic is I'm looking for things to build something to get you know it doesn't have to be that. It could be something else that might work better like are you stuck on an island or are you stuck on a planet. Like it's like the narrative the narrative becomes just like this fluid thing, it can wrap everything, like whatever your core is um since the narrative isn't the most important it's the mechanics.

DS: Alright

66:12

DS: Looking through some stuff. So how would you relate microtransactions to coin op?

RL: Um

DS: Or do you feel they can be related directly

RL: No they're definitely related directly. Uh I think microtransactions the way they're approached now is you're pulled into an experience and then um furthering that experience is like walled off with like a payment wall or like you can only progress so far unless you start paying; whereas, coin op was like you pay for the actual experience and it's like your skill becomes the most dependent thing like if you're beating everyone at arcade you play until you die, right. So like the it's like you're paying for a try versus pay to keep playing. Uh philosophically like um I'm much more behind like arcades or coin op style stuff. Like I wanna just put in like a quarter and play until like the game beats me. Um of course if your game starts feeling unfair then you feel ripped off. Um like a lot of those old coin arcade games like where you die constantly by design so you can start feeding quarters in like those became frustrating but um but it's better than having like like all of a sudden introducing a jump you can't do and being like you know what it's like a dollar for some high jumping boots like you can really get to it. Um like I think that there's a lot of that even if they're trying to hide it in like the microtransaction approach um and then there's like a lot of like just cosmetic stuff which uh just feels like a waste. Like people want to like customize their things but um like you can like use that money to do something better than give yourself a hat in a video game.

DS: Now do you think there are specific genres that don't get enough light shed on them? That's kinda a weird way to word it, but...

RL: Uhh no. Like I think I think uh whatever it's like the genre itself won't define how if something is good or bad and they think just like people like whatever like the public responds to would just get created umm so like if you like approaching it and being like the genre isn't being exposed enough is like counter-intuitive like you can just make something that's really good in that genre and people will just do it and go to it anyway like if the genre's not the defining factor of whatever that work is um so yeah no.

DS: Alright, so we have a very short question right here. Console or PC? As far as gaming experience.

RL: [Laughs] Uhhhh probably console. Um purely because it's easier to have the social like you can toss three other controllers around and play together around the same old box um I think that's like one of the beauty of games. Um from a developer standpoint PCs are much better but

DS: Well yeah cause you're already developing on PC to begin with

RL: Yeah um although like PC does give you the opportunity to make very in depth experiences that a controller won't allow. Like Eve we can't play like you have to literally have like Microsoft Excel open up on a second screen to play it right. So you can keep track of like prices like that it's like that blows my mind. You can't have that experience on a console. Um it's very closely defined, but from a developer and designer standpoint and like what I want to be doing currently with games you know like having like fun with my friends or whatever um console is the easier path to that. Um

DS: Ease of use is definitely high for console.

RL: Yeah yeah by the way I mean like they're both they're becoming the same thing essentially. Like the PC experience is becoming much more streamline and the console experience is becoming much more expand, expanded and they're all gonna be the same thing at some point um

DS: I could see that

RL: Yeah

70:43

DS: Ok so seeing as you've published a few games to Steam, what do you think of their new return policy and do you know I mean

RL: No no, I know about it

DS: Oh yeah

RL: Um so um my relationship with Steam is very like combatitive like so like I uh I'm very critical of almost everything they do uh like getting my game out to Steam like I game the system to getting to Steam like I bribe people to pay for my greenlight game like things like that. Um but uh I think it's not as bad as people think like people are gonna be malicious so um if people abuse this system those are the same people that would pirate it anyway. Um so like if anything you're wasting Steam's resources by being the file host for it like if someone plays your whatever you have and has a good experience for it like all those old games like Doom was like shareware, they gave the first four levels away um and then if you wanted more you'd mail like a check and they'd mail you another disc back.

DS: Huh

RL: Um so like that's sort of like what the refund policy has become it's like you have X amount of time to experience it. I mean for me, personally, my game can literally be beat in the time before the refund policy like like stops you from returning it, so like there's a lot of people like hey you can just play this game and beat it. It's like thirty minutes long so like don't worry about it. Don't worry about paying for it, so but like for me in the end I just want people playing it so it's like another opportunity to expand on that and some of those people were like were like I had a great experience. I'm not gonna bother returning and some people just returned it, but yeah it's totally fine with me. I don't find it that big of an issue like I purposely put all my games on like the PirateBay um because like there's people that aren't gonna don't have credit cards and just like steal all their games and like those are they're valid like audience as well. Um so if it was gonna be pirated I'd want control and like so people don't put like viruses in it and stuff. There's like the official pirated version and like

DS: Yeah some bands have been doing that, too.

RL: Yeah yeah

DS: To get their album out for free you know.

RL: So like I mean it's like it's not. The way I see it is if someone's like looking to steal your game they're just going to steal it like I can't stop it. Um I can create an experience that they feel is worthy of their money and and that's how I get paid and that's like the core of it like I'm not gonna trick someone into buying something and being like oh uh no refunds, sorry. Like it's I mean people are defensive about it but like for me it's like uh whatever like uh just play the game. I don't care.

DS: You just want to get it to people.

RL: Yeah like that's the most important thing. Like getting an audience on your own is already difficult let alone you know putting like hurdles for them to jump over or or second guess can I even spend three dollars on this, like I don't know I need, a cup of coffee today. Um yeah so like it's not that big of a concern for me.

DS: K.

RL: Although I have publicly complained about it.

DS: It's understandable.

RL: But that's because like um I complain about everything Steam does.

JB: Yeah now we're gonna kinda turn it in the other direction. What's your opinion on the use of females that to make some games more appealing to consumers?

74:14

RL: Um which consumers are you specifically saying like

JB: I don't know just like making a

RL: I mean using females to be more appealing to female gamers is awesome.

JB: Yeah or even just like the other flip side where they're dressed really proactively for guys to want to play them

RL: No I understand um I mean I think it's just in poor taste and like uh it brings on the medium. Um but I mean there is opportunity to do that in a way that like you're trying to send a message like this is like a bad thing and you're trying to explain that in the game world, so I can't just say it shouldn't happen. Um but like it you're we're talking about just sexualized marketing um and that's just uh i'm against it in almost every way uhh like it really just it defines the human as something just so animalistic not animalistic just like reactionary to whatever visual stimuli they get. Like it demeans the medium um like there's more there um not that it can't be done in a way that is meaningful. Um but I mean generally it's just like whatever like uh it's it's in the bad way.

JB: Yeah and in the games you've made, how have you portrayed the females? Like have you ever...

RL: In the games I've made I make all my like my characters agendered, so it's uh or not not explicitly gendered. They're like or the source material I pulled has a gender, but it would be irrelevant to me. Like I never put like any sexualized characters in my games um I mean it'd be pointless um I mean like Ham and Jam is a game I totally forgot I worked on for awhile. I mean

that was like a historical game so like it was based so it was hard to put like female things it was based on like actual events if there weren't like any female soldiers at the for instance um not that you couldn't just do that like games let you do anything. Um but I think generally I have a few projects in mind that I want to move forward to and I am thinking about using just female protagonists in all of them um cause like why not? Uh and I think just approaching it that from that perspective um gives you interesting narrative opportunities that are overlooked um. I don't know if I answered your question but like it's yeah like I don't do like all my games just have a lot of just abstract images so, like it's hard, there's no gender assigned to like flashing boxes. [laughs]

JB: [laughs] Do you recall making any changes so that like a game appealed to another audience like females but not

RL: Like all my most recent work is purely making games for myself, so like I don't change other than I don't like it. Um like at this point like I'm sorta not caring about my audience um it's sorta like a bad thing to say, especially for a game for a medium that's a lot of interaction with your audience. Um I'm mostly making things and hoping people will like them um and like uh I don't think there's anything uh very gender specific about my work um or you know like I don't appeal to a lot of just like like macho-ism or anything like that. It's it's mostly about like using the medium to create like comfort and discomfort and different emotional responses and those are all universal. They're human responses. They're not gendered in any way um and even then I don't know why you'd want to like make something for dudes or whatever. It seems dumb. They're just like that's half your audience immediately. If my concern is to make something that reaches as many people as possible, why would I cut half of them off um and make it so they're not accessible to it.

JB: Yeah. That sounds similar to what our teacher said, how people that make Call of Duty, they know that most of their audience only plays Call of Duty, so they're only making Call of Duty games for the people that only play Call of Duty. It's really weird, but they don't care about everyone else.

RL: Yeah, I mean Call of Duty only cares about Call of Duty. They just pump those out left and right. It's like there's no thought behind it.

JB: Ok, and do you have any projects that you're currently working on that we can hear about?

RL: Uhhhhh no. I think I'm legally bound by all of them

JB: Ok.

RL: [laughs]

DS: Trade secret.

RL: [laughs]

JB: [laughs] That's fine

RL: Uhh actually uh like we were talking before this about like making uh actually I shouldn't talk about it either. Ok, no. I'm not talking about anything um I'm not doing any projects. Let's just say that. There's nothing super secret coming out that's going to revolutionize things.

JB: So how do you think video games affected pop culture and yeah basically?

RL: Um like at this point games are just part of what it means to be like in like a rich society, like in like in Western society what they call. Like everyone plays games at some point in their life. Um and I think this is gonna be more and more prevalent. So, pop culturally it's gonna make more and more sense for them to reach like everyone knows what Angry Birds is uhhh and you know like that dumb Pixels movie came out and like it made sense to a lot of people like it's just like it's at the point where um it's part of the culture like there's no there's no people who play games and don't. It's like there's there's people play like Facebook games they log in everyday to care about their farm or whatever. I don't know what they're playing but like I mean in every sort of demographic there's a core group that's playing games and that whole demographic would relate to them um if only like they knew. Uhh so at this point, games are just pop culture, it doesn't like affect it. It just is um and I think it's becoming more and more prevalent um especially considering games can include everything else like as I said like I mentioned earlier you can put like a two hour movie inside your game. That's totally valid. There's no reason you shouldn't um and then like games don't have to be even limited to like the digital medium like they can be interacting in the real world um and as we sort of like move toward like the internet of things where everything is like connected um games could be programmed and they emerge like emerging games could be programmed with anything like um we might just sit down around the table and just like games are happening all the time. Um like every single thing could be part of like a game piece um like entering your house you might keep track of how many times you enter things and make games around it um and that we're just going to keep moving down that way where games are just gonna be more and more prevalent in our life cause it's easy it's relatable like you play games from early on um a lot of your early learning is actually gameplay like what do I do when this happens like eh you know you're having fun with things. Um so now that it's becoming more and more explicit it's gonna be more and more prevalent for sure like ehh I think in a couple generations it's gonna be like probably the most common um form of entertainment um and the most relatable um. You know how like people talk about books but no one like really reads them.

JB: [laughs]

RL: Like in the future it's gonna be like similar with tv or whatever. I mean that's how I see it, like it's there's it just becomes more. It becomes har...it becomes more effort to have the same

level of entertainment, especially if you like begin to like drill down efficiency of psychology in your game mechanics and creating like really fast immediate entertainment is like there's just so much that still hasn't been done that's possible in the medium. Um kinda scary but that's how it's gonna be. I mean that's how I see it.

DS: Alright. So we...you basically answered all of our questions about this

RL: [laughs]

DS: So that um with that, do we have any other questions? Do you have any questions?

EW: I have one. If you had it all to do over again, what would you do differently?

RL: Uh, nothing. Like I uh the way I approach sorta everything I see is like a learning experience and I kinda like what I know now and I know like my strengths and there's like things I'm really good at that like I even haven't met the other people are. Not to be bragging, but just like the combination of my experiences are like very unique and like everyone's are. Um and the moment you realize what what's unique about what you're doing um it's like very empowering so like to think that I'd lose that because I'd do things differently, um I'm sure like something else like uh like would be just as formative but I kinda like what I'm good at heh heh and I feel like if I did it differently I wouldn't be as good at it or I wouldn't like and you don't even really know what makes a good like there's a moment in my life where I just liked watching movies everyday for like two months, and like at the time I like felt guilty cause I wasn't really doing anything. I was just like being lazy, or whatever, and then like two years down the road, I'm like wait a second I have like this encyclopedic knowledge of all these films that I can borrow imagery from and then like it's just like that movie just like that movie and it's like I'd lose that if I didn't do that right and like if I'm like oh I'm wasting so much time I realize I really haven't. I was just building up uh catalog of experiences to borrow from um so like I can't really. I wouldn't want to do it from uh um. There are things about like my life that I'd want better, but that's like also formative like there's. It's all relative, you know?

DS: We all set here?

EW: I think that's it.

DS: Ok. Well I should repeat the date and such.

RL: Yeah do it.

DS: Alright. so that concludes our interview with Rob Lach, today October 20th, a Tuesday. Um yeah. That's about it.

JB: [laughs] Yayy

85:05