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PlaySFMOMA Announces Call for Game Designers and Presents New Games Programming



The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present new, participatory ways for visitors to explore the museum and its collections when the museum reopens in 2016. Notable among these is PlaySFMOMA—an initiative that recognizes games as an expressive medium and emerging curatorial discipline, and commissions game-based artworks and engagement tools. Committed to collaboration, PlaySFMOMA will launch a new designers-in-residence program in May 2015, and it seeks candidates who will help create iterative versions of games and activities for museumgoers.

“Often in museum and gallery contexts, games are programmed through the lens of existing curatorial paradigms, or seen as tools for education,” said Erica Gangsei, head of interpretive media at SFMOMA, and creative lead for PlaySFMOMA. “Through collaboration with local game designers and thought leaders, we hope that SFMOMA can become a platform for dialogue about games as a medium in their own right. We also hope the process will be a lot of fun for our visitors.”

Interested designers are welcome to apply to the designers-in-residence program at sfmoma.org/playsfmoma. Selected designers, representing leaders of the San Francisco Bay Area gaming community, will work with the museum on a seasonal cohort model. Designers will lead workshops that explore game design as a creative medium, and will prototype both digital and analog games for staff and visitor playtesting and input. Including visitors in this iterative process will help foster an environment of dialogue, experimentation and play.

Each residency cohort will be given a PlaySFMOMA primer, containing background on museum visitor engagement and a framework for bridging the gap between arts-interested audiences and the physical

and intellectual spaces of the museum building. Designers-in-residence will be provided honoraria, and will own the intellectual property to games created during their residencies.

The museum's past games programs, including the 2012 exhibition [ArtGameLab](#) and the 2013 pop-up [Ahhcade](#), have attracted the national and international independent gaming community as collaborators, participants and attendees. PlaySFMOMA will build on the strength of these past efforts with a concentrated emphasis on creating a local hub for exploration of the medium.

A crucial element of PlaySFMOMA is its Games Advisory Network (GAN)—a diverse group of industry professionals who will inform program decisions and assist in cohort selection. GAN members include:

- Sarah Brin, new media curator and art historian, working as public programs manager at Autodesk's Pier 9 workshop
- Mathias Crawford, Stanford University graduate fellow studying infrastructures of play and teaching game design at Stanford's d.school
- Veronica Graham, visual artist
- Adam Gutterman, longtime industry professional working in business development at GooglePlay
- Robin Hunicke, a video game designer, cofounder of Funomena and professor of games and playable media in the Art Department at UC Santa Cruz
- Michael St. Clair, who holds a PhD in theater and performance studies from Stanford and has completed a dissertation about games and currently teaches game design at the d.school.

The PlaySFMOMA initiative and announcement come at a critical time for the gaming industry. "Games, now more than ever, are expanding," said GAN member Hunicke. "They are reaching new audiences via new devices and technologies, exploring deeper subjects via evolving modes of interactivity and empowering bright new voices from all over the world." Hunicke continued, "Now is the time to focus on how this medium will grow and shape the ways we think of art, entertainment and social commentary in the years to come. As a researcher, maker and evangelist of games as an expressive medium, I am honored to help SFMOMA lead this charge."

Striving to expand its range of cultural experiences offered, SFMOMA continuously embraces new ways to make art meaningful to its community. With initiatives such as PlaySFMOMA, the museum will make available numerous nontraditional opportunities for participation and connection.

PlaySFMOMA games will be both analog and digital. Bloomberg Philanthropies is lead sponsor of SFMOMA's digital experience.

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Founded in 1935 as the first West Coast museum devoted to modern and contemporary art, SFMOMA is currently undergoing a major Snøhetta-designed [expansion project](#) to open in 2016 that will significantly enhance gallery, education, and public spaces, enabling the museum to better showcase more of its

[expanded permanent collection](#). While the museum is temporarily closed, from June 3, 2013, to early 2016, SFMOMA will be [On the Go](#) with an extensive array of off-site programming across the Bay Area and beyond.

Visit sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

Image credits:

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