

## Panel proposal for DiGRA ITALIA 2017

### Camera Ludica: Reflections on Artistic In-Game Photography

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As video games continue to culturally and technically evolve, so do many correlated creative practices that often introduce novel ways of playing. One example is in-game photography: the addition of photo modes to games has become prominent and basic image capture capabilities are now offered by most consoles, including the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One. Unsurprisingly, within an interconnected media ecosystem, the production, circulation, and consumption of images created by players with their favorite games has gained visibility. Although scholars have examined this phenomenon from different angles (e.g. Sandor & Fron 2001, Poremba 2007, Giddings 2013, Moore 2015, Bittanti 2015, Möring 2015, 2016, Gazzard 2016), the existing scholarship is far from exhaustive and most contributions focus on the vernacular production. As more and more artists use game spaces for their photographic practices, a scholarly examination of their intentions, strategies, and aesthetics cannot be postponed. The goal of this panel is to provide an overview of this alternative field, by focusing on four genres:

#### **1. The Human Face of Games: Portraiture (Poremba)**

In Robbie Cooper's *Alter Ego* (2003) avatar portraiture series, the viewer is invited to directly contrast photographic subjects with their online representation. While Eva and Franco Mattes' *Portraits* (2006-07) ostensibly also document avatar self-representations, the subject-image relation is here left provocatively ambiguous. Skawennati's "machinimagraph" portraits, like *Birth of an Avatar (Homage to Mariko Mori)* (2015), do not draw upon documentation paradigms, but instead reclaim ownership over self-representation, allowing the artist to explore alternative indigenous futures.

#### **2. (Re)enacting War Photography (De Mutiis)**

Artists Kent Sheely and Marco Cadioli both reference famed war photographer Robert Capa in their work. They restage the aesthetics and sometimes content of

war photographs, and enact war journalism practices. However Ashley Gilbertson problematizes the notion of photos that look like war photographs, adopting a position which attempts to find the human element in images of conflict.

### 3. **Reenactment of Artistic Practices (Möring)**

In a series of photographs, entitled “At War With The Obvious” (2016), Daniel Latzel emulates the aesthetics of William Eggleston, a US American photographer pioneering artistic color photography in the 20th century, to *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013) with astonishing results. For their work “Battlefeld” (2016) the artists Henrik Fischer and Ugur Yildirim strolled through the game *Battlefield Hardline* (2015) and photographed different kinds of chairs encountered in the game in the style of the real-world photo artist Hans-Peter Feldmann.

### 4. **Virtual Landscape Photography (Bittanti)**

In the work of practitioners such as Justin Berry, Mark Tribe, and Robert Wetzer, video games spaces - and specifically landscapes - become a new pastoral model, a bucolic template inspired by the work of Ansel Adams and Edward Weston. Their aesthetic is *dense*, referencing both the history of landscape painting and photography. And yet, these idyllic images inevitably depict a loss: the loss of the real. Moreover, these images often bring forth the mechanics of their own construction, the artifice of reproduction, and the ideologies of simulation.

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