

# There is Magic in Games

Forward for *Game Design Workshop!*

Tracy Fullerton, 2008 edition

There is magic in games.

Not magic like a level 19 fireball spell is magic. Not the kind of magic you get when you purchase a trick in a magic store. And not the kind of mystical experience that organized religion can go on about. No, games are magic in the way that first kisses are magic, the way that finally arriving at a perfect solution to a difficult problem is magic, the way that conversation with close friends over good food is magic.

The magic at work in games is about finding hidden connections between things, in exploring the way that the universe of a game is structured. As all game players know, this kind of discovery makes for deeply profound experiences. How is it possible that the simple rules of Chess and Go continue to evolve new strategies and styles of play, even after centuries and centuries of human study? How is it that the nations of the entire world, and even countries at war with each other – at war! – can come together to celebrate in the conflict of sport? How do computer and videogames, seemingly so isolating, pierce our individual lives and bring us together in play?

To play a game is to realize and reconfigure these hidden connections – between units on a game board, between players in a match, between life inside the game and life outside – and in so doing, create new meaning. And if games are spaces where meaning is made, game designers are the meta-creators of meaning, those who architect the spaces of possibility where such discovery takes place.

Which is where this book comes in. You are reading these words because you are interested in not just playing games, but in making them. Take my word for it: *Game Design Workshop* is one of the very few books that can truly help you to make the games that you want to make. Those games bursting from your heart and from your imagination. The ones that keep

you up at night demanding to be designed. Games that are brimming with potential for discovery, for meaning, for magic.

*Game Design Workshop* presents, with sharp intelligence and an eye to the importance of the design process, tried-and-true strategies for thinking about and creating games. More than just fancy notions about how games work, *Game Design Workshop* is a treasury of methods for putting game design theories into practice. The authors of *Game Design Workshop* have real experience making games, teaching game designers, and writing about game design. And I can honestly say that they have personally taught me a great

deal. In the ambition of its scope and the value of its insights, you hold in your hands a very unique text.

Why do we need a book like *Game Design Workshop*? Because despite the fact that games are so very ancient, are part of every society, and are increasingly important in people's lives, we hardly know anything about them. We are still learning. What makes games tick? How do we create them? How do they fit into culture at large? The explosion of computer and videogames in recent decades has multiplied the complexity and the stakes of such questions. For better or worse, questions like these don't have simple answers. And *Game Design Workshop* won't give them to you. But it can help you figure out how to explore them on your own, through the games you design.

We are living through the rebirth of an ancient form of human culture. Just as the 19<sup>th</sup> Century ushered in mechanical invention, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the age of information, the 21<sup>st</sup> will be a century of play. As game designers, we will be the architects, the storytellers, and the party hosts of this playful new world. What a wonderful and weighty responsibility we have. To bring meaning to the world. To bring magic into the world. To make great games. And to set the world on fire through play.

Are you with me?

Eric Zimmerman

New York City, October 2007