COLLECTIBLE COMPANIONS

PHYSICAL TOYS AS COMPANIONS IN GAMES

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The premise: transport your favourite toys into your favourite games!
How it works: It’s a glorified RFID reader (& writer)
WHO IS THIS GUY?
Research: mostly design theory/game design-related
Events: CEGC
raghaaav
Anne Clausen
Johannes Følsgaard
Lise Ivanouw
THINGS I DID

SEVEN MILE BOOTS

BAGATELLE CONCRETE

Exhibited ~ 2004
THINGS I ALSO DID

Chasing Aurora by Broken Rules – Wii U launch title, 2011
>100 million Wiis sold – down to not even 10 million Wii Us.
TOYS VS. GAMES

Play has no performative, quantifiable goals.

Toys are designed to facilitate play.

When we apply rules to playing with a toy, we are creating a game.
QUESTION: WHO OWNS ANY OF THESE?

Funkeys do not re-use any existing IP despite the fact that Mattell owns Masters of the Universe, Matchbox and Barbie.

Skylanders added saving of character stats on the figure

Angry Birds are not NFC but QR
Who would think that people would pay for cars in a racing game?

What if your radio controlled car could level up in a game?

(Yes, Hot Wheels has a toys-to-life iOS game but the target group for Hot Wheels is not the same as for simulation games)
“People don’t really acknowledge how amazing it is to put these toys on the portal and have them glow, and have them remember the adventures they have been in.” (Paul Reiche, Toys for Bob – inventors of Skylanders)
Collectible + RFID = In-game character

Read/writable in the case of Skylanders!
Skylanders Editor
Reads Skylander data into a simple unencrypted binary file which can then be edited to modify character stats and so on.
There's a reddit entry dedicated to reverse-engineering the amiibo digital information. Spooking it is currently difficult because the RFID chip used is only produced by one specific vendor and has an unusual high byte count.
Spoofing is easier for Skylanders because they use more standard RFID technology.

According to Reddit, this is a fake – there was never a silver version of this particular character.
Amiibo cards – over 8 million units sold so far. About $1/card.
A well established ecosystem.

QUESTION: WHO'S PLAYING A TRADING CARD GAME?
Trade cards – the ancestor of trading cards. They date back to the 17th century.
Left: Working with existing brands: **John L. Sullivan** (1858-1918), the link between bare-knuckles and glove fighting. Leading heavyweight champion of his time!

Middle: How to hold a pet.

Right: The Honus Wagner card, which is the most expensive baseball card, issued by American Tobacco Company in 1909. It recently sold for $2.8 million.
Nintendo was started at about that time (1889) as a card manufacturing company.
Rarity leads to the wish to collect!
It's like a modernized version of the same principle.

One could also call it “bringing physical scarcity to the digital space”. Actually a lot of freemium games also build on “artificial scarcity” and “planned obsolescence” is also just another example of this mechanism.
Sometimes considered the first toys-to-life product. Eye of Judgement turned trading cards into controllers.

Technology to solve the question: What is where?
Eye of judgement is based on the Matrix Method:

The Matrix method (also known as "CyberCode") is a new technique for augmented reality that identifies real world objects and estimates their coordinate systems simultaneously.
Nowadays Qualcomm’s Vuforia SDK makes that possible on mobile phones
Actually this mashup of the real and the virtual space is called Augmented Reality (Microsoft Hololens)
Project Tango by Google
SelfieTennis – as VR becomes more physical, the border is approached from that side, too. With the new generation of VR devices, the room you’re in is measured and sometimes mapped in-game.

QUESTION: WHO’S WORKING ON A VR PROJECT?
I can not encourage you too much to play around with the possibilities that existing hardware already offers.

Johan Sebastian Joust, Dark Room Sex Game, Spin the Bottle: Bumpy’s Party
Copenhagen Game Collective
Less immersive but also an application bridging the virtual and the real: Nintendo StreetPass.

(It is basically Tinder for your Mii)
“Series of Tubes”. Photo shows a Google data centre which is actually full of tubes.
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What you can not deny is that tinkering can bring us physically closer to virtual worlds. We can bridge the gap between the real world and the digital space.

Littlebits prototyping kit. Actually “compatible” with Lego.

3D printing. Laser cutting. The possibilities are endless!
Tinkering can lead to innovation. Like this product of tinkering made by the son of a Syrian immigrant.
“We were constantly hacking the toys and tinkering. The whole Skylanders thing came out of tinkering”

—Wei Huang, character artist and co-inventor of Skylanders
What the toys-to-life games achieve is that they **connect the free play of physical toys to the gratifying challenges of games and thereby create a new magical place**.
QUESTIONS?

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