Institution: Abertay University		

Unit of Assessment: UoA 32 – Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory		

Title of case study: Abertay Game Lab: Play, Performance, and Public Engagement with Games		

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2014 to February 2019		

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Names:	Roles (e.g. job title):	Periods employed by submitting HEI:
Prof Gregor White	Dean of School of Design and Informatics	August 2002 to present
Dr Dayna Galloway	Head of Division of Games & Arts	August 2004 to present
Dr Lynn Parker, née Love	Lecturer in Computer Arts	August 2010 to present
Dr Iain Donald	Senior Lecturer in Game Production	August 2010 to present
Dr Robin Sloan	Senior Lecturer in Game Design	August 2011 to present
Dr Paul Robertson	Lecturer in Computer Games Technology	August 2012 to present
Dr Mona Bozdog	Lecturer in Immersive Experience Design	January 2019 to present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: June 2014 to April 2020	

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No	

1. Summary of the impact

Practice-based and published research undertaken by the Abertay Game Lab has achieved impact in two related areas:

1. Research into **performance and play**, both within the development process and in the outputs presented to players/audiences, has impacted on the professional game development community through the promotion of interdisciplinary networks and generation of innovative game projects.

2. Research into **playing in public** has impacted on the development of play-parties, festivals and exhibitions resulting in reaching new audiences, enhancing footfall, and developing a better understanding of how to present games in public spaces.

2. Underpinning research

1. Performance and Play
Abertay Game Lab research has investigated the creative processes of student, amateur, and professional game-makers (grant i and internally funded project *Development Cultures*). Published in the launch workshop (Pacific Grove, CA, 2015) of what would become the annual International Conference on Game Jams (ICGJ), our article *The game jam movement* **[3.1]** made a significant theoretical contribution to the growing field of game jam research, with its original positioning of jams as artistic performance.

This research into creativity and the intersection of games and performance was extended into practice-based research (grant ii). One output of this activity was the *Inchcolm Project*: a site-responsive, promenade performance set on Inchcolm island in the Firth of Forth **[3.3]**. This original demonstration of hybrid game/performance production was underpinned by a rigorous practice-based methodology and had significant impact within the field reflected through publication in Scottish Journal of Performance, and presentations at Game Think 2.0 (Glasgow), ELO Conference and Media Arts Festival (Cork), and Wandering Games (Bangor).

The cumulative contribution of these research projects was the formalisation of original strategies that could be used by either individuals or organisers to facilitate the creation of new games, playful media, and interdisciplinary digital media projects.

2. Playing in Public
Complementing the above research, our work went on to consider how audiences engage with games and related experiences in public spaces. *Do we need permission to play in public?* **[3.2]** was one of the first papers to consider in-depth the design and hosting of social play events, including play-parties and game festivals, and is an original and significant contribution to the emerging field of games curation, underpinned by a rigorous interview-based research methodology.

Inquiry into how play is presented and engaged within public spaces has been extended through practice-based research that has focused on experimental game-making driven by questions around play, participation, and spectatorship. *Their Memory* **[3.4]** was produced as part of the ground-breaking AHRC call for Next Generation of Immersive Experiences (grant iii) and demonstrated an original approach to the use of virtual reality (VR) in public to enhance documentary and storytelling techniques in engaging hard to reach audiences with wartime memories. *Installations, Disruption of Technology and Performing Play* **[3.5]** is an original portfolio of experimental social play games linked by questions around temporary relationships, awkwardness in social play, and the role of the screen. *Virtua Walker '87* **[3.6]** is a solo-play VR installation game that positions the participant as a performer within social settings and encourages spectatorship through the framing of VR as a spectacle.

Our practice-based research into *Playing in Public* has toured internationally in Europe and North America, providing academic, professional, and general audiences with playable exemplars of games as public and social performances. It has produced and disseminated applied knowledge of play in public with implications for developers, curators, and event organisers.

3. References to the research

Publications:
3.1 Locke, R., Parker, L., Galloway, D., & Sloan, R. J. S. (2015). The game jam movement: disruption, performance and artwork. In Proceedings of the 2015 Workshop on Game Jams, Hackathons and Game Creation Events, Foundations of Digital Games, Pacific Grove, United States. https://globalgamejam.org/workshop2015/proceedings
3.2 Love, L. H. C. (2018). Do we need permission to play in public? The design of participation for social play video games at play parties and 'alternative' games festivals. Media and Communication, 6(2), 69-79. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v6i2.1382

Practice-based research outputs:
3.3 Bozdog, M. (Author), & Galloway, D. (Designer). (2016). Inchcolm project. Performance. Available from: https://rke.abertay.ac.uk/en/publications/inchcolm-project
3.4 Donald, I. (Producer) and Houghton, E. (Developer). (2018). Their memory. Digital or Visual Product. Available from: https://rke.abertay.ac.uk/en/publications/their-memory
3.5 Love, L. (Designer) and Bozdog, M. (Designer). (2020). Installations, Disruption of Technology and Performing Play: A Social Play Design Portfolio. Available from:

https://rke.abertay.ac.uk/en/publications/installations-disruption-of-technology-and-performing-play-a-soci

3.6   *Sloan, R. J. S. (Designer), Robertson, P. (Developer), and Galloway, D. (Designer). (2017). Virtua Walker '87. Digital or Visual Product. Available from:*
https://rke.abertay.ac.uk/en/publications/virtua-walker-87

Links provide access to documents, photographs, and videos of the practice-based research outputs.

Awards for the research:
3.4, **3.5** and **3.6** have demonstrated significance though awards and national/international showcases, including: Audience Choice Award (IGDA Dundee Play Party 2017, 2018, 2019), Best in Showcase (ICGJ, San Francisco, 2017), Bronze Medal at the International Serious Play Awards in the category Museum Games (2019), installation at Scottish Parliament (2017), Games Are For Everyone V/VI (Edinburgh, 2017), FuturePlay (Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, 2017), Perth Museum and Art Gallery (2017, 2019), Arcadia (Dundee, 2017), Filmby Aarhus (Denmark, 2017), Interactive Pasts, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (2018), Wandering Games (Bangor, Wales, 2019), V&A Dundee (2019), ACM CHI (Glasgow, 2019), BBC Click Live (V&A Dundee, 2019).

Related grants:
i.   White, G. and Long, K. *Video Games in the Museum*. AHRC Research Networking Grant, Jan 2014-Jul 2015, £34,810 (AHRC Reference: AH/L009412/1)
ii. Galloway, D. *Connecting performance and play: Establishing interdisciplinary design methods for the development of games and performance*. Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities (SGSAH) Applied Research Collaborative Studentship, Aug 2015-Jun 2018, £31,581
iii. Donald, I. and Scott-Brown, K. *Their Memory: Exploring Veteran's Voices, Virtual Reality and Collective Memory*, AHRC Immersive Experiences Grant, March 2018-December 2018, £59,987 (AHRC Reference: AH/R009589/1)
iv. Sloan, R.J.S. *Process, product and play: Research in support of videogames exhibition*. Association of Art Historians (AAH), Jan 2016-Sep 2016, £669.

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4. Details of the impact

Our experimental development practices **[3.1]** have generated new knowledge and recommendations for the curation of videogames and play experiences in social settings **[3.2]**. Our research has had benefits for 1) arts practitioners, 2) cultural organisations and charities, and 3) the games industry.

Relationship with the V&A museum
Abertay and the V&A led an AHRC-funded research network that facilitated debate about the collection and display of video games, their acquisition, and display, with impact achieved through national (Dundee, London) and international (California) workshops **[5.1]**. Events were attended by 23 games development companies, 21 cultural organisations, and a range of beneficiaries including ethnographers, oral historians, educationalists, organisers, artist/curators, performers, and musicians. There were approximately 150 attendees across the 4 workshop events, around two thirds of whom represented games industry or cultural organisations. The research collaboration also led to two new appointments at the V&A museum **[5.1]**.

A significant impact was the development of the V&A exhibition *Videogames: Design/Play/Disrupt* which ran at the V&A (London) from September 2018 to February 2019, and the V&A Dundee from April to September 2019. The London show attracted 138,000 visitors, a quarter of which were first-time visitors, 56% male, and 69% under 35 years old. 23.8% of visitors identified as BAME: a higher proportion than for most V&A exhibitions **[5.2]**. Additionally, the Dundee show attracted 46,478 visitors.

1. Arts practitioners

We Throw Switches **[5.3]** provides testimony to the impact of the *Inchcolm project* **[3.3]** on the development of portfolio of practice. Creating work for this challenging environment not only enhanced their portfolio but also developed the technical and practical skills of a studio that has since gone on to achieve international success (e.g. the Alt.Ctrl.Party at the Game Developers Conference in San Francisco 2018).

Love's research on playing in public has influenced their organised public and cultural events, including *Games Are For Everyone* (attended by 700 people in 2017) and *Arcadia* (300 visitors), shows in which work by Love and Bozdog **[3.5]** and Sloan and Robertson **[3.6]** were exhibited.

"we feel that this relationship has undoubtedly positively impacted us as an organisation, both in allowing us to play a part in ambitious, important projects within the medium, as well as giving us access to an incredibly knowledgeable, high-calibre (and, frankly, rare) resource in terms of the department's insight into interactive hardware, performance and curation." Directors of We Throw Switches **[5.3]**

2. Cultural organisations/charities

Sloan's co-curated *Player: Videogame Interaction from Atari to Toys to Life* was exhibited at Perth Museum and Art Gallery between July and September 2016 [grant iv]. Culture Perth and Kinross **[5.4]** stated:

"Player … had a positive impact on Culture Perth and Kinross as an organisation, enabling staff development, income generation, audience development, and increased footfall to Perth Museum and Art Gallery." Senior Officer, Collections Management, Culture Perth and Kinross, **[5.4]**

Sloan and Love's research and practice had significant impact on the museum, including a 58% rise in visitors (to 16,900) and a rise in shop income from £3,049 to £20,702 compared with the previous summer exhibition.

Poppyscotland credit Donald's VR experience *Their Memory* **[3.4]** with providing "*new institutional knowledge*" and "*audience insights*". The VR experience used in *Their Memory* was incorporated into Poppyscotland's touring learning centre, Bud launched in May 2019. As of March 2020, Bud had visited 97 schools and had attended 30 events in 27 (out of 32) Scottish Local Authorities, engaging over 13,000 school pupils **[5.5]**. In mid-March 2020, Bud was withdrawn from visiting schools and events due to the growing uncertainty over Covid-19 and has not yet been reinstated.

3. Games industry

Brighton-based developer Gunfish Games provides testimony that our research supported not only the development of their practice, but also the launch of original intellectual property (IP) **[5.6]**. Their first console release was conceived as part of a game jam curated by Love, Galloway and Sloan **[3.1].** They note:

"through the support of the community developed by Abertay Game Lab and subsequent research, we were able to ... develop the original IP for Jump Stars, which we released with publisher Curve Digital in 2017." Studio Director, Gunfish Games **[5.6]**

Pocket Sized Hands **[5.7]** cite that *Their Memory* **[3.4]** helped them:

"think differently about the relationship between design, technology and audiences – especially with Virtual and Augmented Reality". Studio Director, Pocket Sized Hands **[5.7]**

Pocket Sized Hands have continued to grow as a result of the project success doubling the team-size and securing new projects utilising co-design and game jams at the core of the process.

The Scottish Game Developers Association **[5.8]**, provide evidence that shows in which Love, Bozdog, Sloan and Robertson exhibited were attended by 300+ visitors including industry, students, and representatives of arts and cultural organisations.

"it is clear that the Abertay Game Lab enriches our work and that of the wider community and industry." Scottish Game Developers Association **[5.8]**

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Grant report: White, G. (PI, Abertay University), Long, K. (Co-I, V&A Museum), Wiltshire, A. (Project Coordinator, V&A Museum). *Video Games in the Museum: AHRC Videogames Research Network*. AHRC: AH/L009412/1. Provides evidence of the impact of the Abertay and V&A led AHRC-funded research network.

5.2 Testimonial letter from Joanna Norman, Director of V&A Research Institute, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Provides evidence of impact from the development of videogames exhibition

5.3 Testimonial letter from Andrew Dyce and Craig Fairweather, Directors, We Throw Switches, Edinburgh. Provides evidence of impact on the development of portfolio of practice.

5.4 Testimonial letter from Rhona Rodger, Senior Officer, Collections Management, Culture Perth and Kinross, Perth. Provides evidence of impact from the development of summer exhibition, *Player: Videogame Interaction from Atari to Toys to Life*.

5.5 Testimonial letter from Gordon Michie, Head of Fundraising, Poppyscotland and Kerry Crichton, Deputy Head of Learning and Outreach, Poppyscotland. Provides evidence of the impact of *Their Memory* on Poppyscotland's touring learning centre, Bud.

5.6 Testimonial letter from Jordan Morris, Studio Director, Gunfish Games, Brighton. Provides evidence of the impact on the development of original intellectual property and studio formation.

5.7 Testimonial letter from Gary McCartan, Studio Director, Pocket Sized Hands. Provides evidence of the impact of the development and growth of Pocket Sized Hands.

5.8 Testimonial letter from Matt Barr, Scottish Game Developers Association (SGDA), Glasgow. Provides evidence of the Impact on the Scottish games community in education and engagement, tracing IGDA Scotland activity into SGDA.

Testimonial letters outline evidence of impact within their respective organisations. All named individuals can be contacted to corroborate claims.