

2013 Games with Friends

IndieCade East 2013

IndieCade Milestones

Launch of IndieCade East

IndieCade Events

IndieCade East, February 16–17,
Museum of the Moving Image, New York

IndieCade Showcase @ E3, June 11–13,
Los Angeles Convention Center

Oculus + IndieCade VR Jam, August 2–25,
multiple locations

IndieCade Festival, October 3–6, Culver City

The rise of the indies can be traced in no small part to IndieCade, a quirky, artful gathering that attracts people from around the world to an event that's known as the Sundance of games.

—Harold Goldberg, *New York Times*

In 2013, the indie boom seemed headed towards its apex. Indies were increasingly going mainstream, and games that had exhibited at previous IndieCade events were showing up as published console and PC games. As new platforms were proliferating, some tech companies recognized that their success would rely on content. Academics, who had been heavily involved in the rise of indie games, belatedly began to “eat their own picnics,” so to speak, and include indie games as a topic of research. In his introduction to the *Loading... Journal of Canadian Game Studies Association* special issue on indie game studies, editor Bart Simon admitted that, in the preceding decade or so, game studies had been overly preoccupied with the fruits of capitalism—mainstream Triple-A games—at the expense of developing robust scholarship on alternative forms (Simon 2013). The 2013 Digital Games Research Association Conference—which was co-chaired by John Sharp and myself in Atlanta and hosted by Georgia Tech—included a session establishing “indie game studies” as a new subset of the field.

The sponsored IndieCade LG 3D Mobile Game Jam, which had been introduced at the 2011 Festival, became an attractive method for platform creators to get a high volume of content created quickly. In 2013, IndieCade partnered with Oculus VR, which had just released its first development system, the Oculus Rift Development Kit 1 (also known as DK1). Startups Sifco and Leap Motion also came on board.

IndieCade had been on the front end of the local multiplayer game craze since its very first Festival, but 2013 saw a rapid increase in submissions of this genre (Suellentrop 2013). *Sportsfriends*—an anthology that included past IndieCade Nominees, Official Selections, and awardees *Johann Sebastian Joust*, *Hokra*, *BaraBariBall*, and *Pole Riders*—was released by Danish studio Die Gute Fabrik on PlayStation. Meanwhile, in mainstream games, eSports had begun taking off in the form of massive tournaments with huge financial stakes, video streaming, and a growing video game spectator culture (Taylor 2012). To top its game, IndieCade East introduced its own more humble flavor of eSports, with its signature focus on innovation in game mechanics.

At the end of the year, *The New York Times* called 2013 “the Year of the Indie”, inspired by the IndieCade Festival exhibition *Indie Essentials: 25 Must-Play Video Games*, which was co-curated with the Museum of the Moving Image in the run-up to IndieCade East 2014:

This has been a year when the new generation of game consoles seemed like tweaks to the old machines, a year in which many games released for them were merely good when I needed more to blow me away. But lower-budget (and lower-priced) indies . . . took my breath away. . . . In this welcome squall, the annual IndieCade event in Culver City, Calif., forecasts the tempest. Games showcased there can become what critics call “most anticipated” (Goldberg 2013b).

—Bart Simon, *Loading...*

Since its inception, IndieCade had enjoyed a strong relationship with New York’s indie, artgames, and academic communities, with a number of New Yorkers taking roles as co-organizers, speakers, Nominees, and award-winners at the flagship Festival. One of IndieCade’s earliest advisors had been Carl Goodman of the American Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI). MOMI was formed in 1988 in a historical building that had been part of Kaufman Astoria Studios in Queens, one of the first movie-making facilities in the US—analogue in some ways to IndieCade’s Screenland locale in Culver City. Goodman joined the MOMI staff in 1989 as an educator and in 1992 became its first Curator of Digital Media, making it one of the first museums to collect and display video games.

Goodman had expressed an interest early on in hosting IndieCade, but it wasn’t until 2013 that the museum’s schedule and IndieCade’s critical mass aligned to make this a reality. IndieCade East was scheduled for February 2013 to coincide with MOMI’s *Spacewar!* exhibition on video game history curated by John Sharp, who was also serving as Conference Co-Chair, along with MOMI’s current Curator of Digital Media, Jason Eppink.

The Chair of IndieCade East was Matt Parker, whose *Recurse* had been in the 2012 Festival and was now teaching at NYU. Without him, the event never would have happened. He spearheaded and more or less organized the whole event, liaising between the Los Angeles-based IndieCade team and the MOMI team. It was at IndieCade East that the first Indie eSports Tournament was organized by Simon Ferrari, then a PhD student at Georgia Tech, where I was teaching at the time.

I was warmed, then moved, by this recent history of indies, spartanly staged in low light, each a gem of shining creativity.

—Harold Goldberg, *New York Times*

Because of its timing, IndieCade East was the perfect moment to announce the opening of submissions for the fall Festival. Because of this, the majority of the games shown were curated from 2012 Nominees and Official Selections. These included awardees like *Armada d6* (Eric Zimmerman and John Sharp), *Botanicula*, *Dyad*, *Gorogoa*, *Hokra*, *Reality Ends Here*, *Renga*, *The Stanley Parable*, *Unmanned*, and *Vörheim*, as well as Nominees such as *BlindSide*, *Bloop*, *Cart Life*, *Find Me a Good One*, and *Tengami*. The exhibition also introduced some new discoveries—future hits that would end up at the Festival and Showcase @ E3 later that year. These included *Spaceteam*, and *Thirty Flights of Loving* by Brendon Chung, one of the co-founders of Los Angeles-based game collective Glitch City, which launched later that year.

Social games were a constant theme throughout. There was a “decathlon” tournament in the *Spacewar!* exhibit involving 10 classic video games and sessions celebrating the publication of the *Sportsfriends* collection on PlayStation, including a “Sportsfriends & Friends” play session organized in conjunction with a panel featuring

creators Douglas Wilson, Ramiro Corbetta, Noah Sasso, and Henry Smith moderated by NYU’s Frank Lantz. There was also an *Iron Game Designer Challenge* competition that pitted NYU faculty and students against those from the Parsons School of Design, presented by Eric Zimmerman and Colleen Macklin, who represented the two schools.

Diverse topics included “Games as Commentary,” with Paolo Pedercini, Heather Chaplin, Richard Hofmeier, and Ian Bogost. Vlamber’s Rami Ismael gave a talk about “Why We Make Games.” Kaho Abe, Katherine Isbister, and Greg Trefry gave a panel about “Jumping off the Screen” moderated by Jamin Warren, founder of Kill Screen. John Sharp gave a keynote on the *Spacewar!* exhibition and the relationship between punk rock/DIY culture and indie games.

Night Games featured the US premiere of Hide&Seek’s *Searchlight*, a Kinect-based game in which players had to move objects while staying out of a roving light. Several 2012 Nominees and Official Selections were included, such as *Panoramical*, a musical landscape by Fernando Ramallo and David Kanaga; Kaho Abe’s *Hit Me!*; and *Yamove!* by Katherine Isbister’s lab at NYU Tandon School of Engineering, a team-based dance game that took the *Dance Dance Revolution* mechanic further by capturing a wider variety of movements. Mario von Rickenbach’s *Rakete* asked five players to navigate a spaceship together by controlling one of five thrusters on a rocket ship using a foot throttle. Night Games also included 2012 Developer’s Choice Award winner *Renga*, played in the auditorium by over one hundred people using laser pointers.

IndieCade East 2013 featured a Sony-sponsored game jam to generate content for the company’s new portable platform, PlayStation Vita. A group of jammers worked on their games over the weekend, playtested, and presented them to IndieCade East attendees. The games produced included *Crystallon*, *Hermit Crab in Space* (by Jane Friedhoff and Andy Wallace aka Golden Ruby), *CRUMBLE* (by Anstabo), and *Don’t Wake the Bear* (Ramsey Nasser, Kaho Abe, and Francis Hsueh, aka Policy), a game where you had to pass the Vita around while avoiding waking the sleeping bear. All four teams received free trips to the Game Developers Conference to demo their games, and *Hermit Crab in Space* and *Crystallon* were both eventually published on PlayStation Vita. It was also here that Brian S. Chung and GJ Lee of The Sheep’s Meow created their first prototype of *EXPOSURE*, a camouflage game that they continued to develop and which became an IndieCade Nominee and sleeper hit in 2018. MTV News cited the IndieCade PlayStation Vita Game Jam, organized by Akira Thompson, as one of the highlights of the event:

It’s great how much you could take for granted at IndieCade East, held this past weekend at the Museum of the Moving Image in New York. You could take for granted that the people there love games and are, overwhelmingly, open-minded about them and want to see new things done with them. The academics there from NYU, Parsons, and elsewhere are all as far away as possible from stodgy academicism. They are grown adults who have dedicated their lives to studying play and designing games, and so it shouldn’t be surprising that they’re all fun and funny in person. You can take for granted that they take for granted the value of games, and while it’s apparent they’re exploring the expressive potential of the medium I also get this sense that they just see the inherent value in bringing play back into other adults’ lives. (Jordon, 2013)

[The] PlayStation Mobile GameJam Was the Most Productive Part of IndieCade East—IndieCade: East wasn’t all fun and games (okay, maybe it was); there was [sic] also people getting work done. Tucked away in the corner, next to the collection of honoree games, was a major player in the video game industry attempting to help some indie game developers get some much-needed exposure. Sony, one of the IndieCade East sponsors, was hosting a three-day long GameJam that leveraged their PlayStation Mobile platform. The twelve teams that participated were competing to take their creations to GDC, and hopefully win a spot at Sony’s booth at E3.

—Jason Cipriano, *MTV News*



IndieCade Showcase @ E3 2013

By 2013, it was clear that local multiplayer games had gone mainstream and that indies were leading the charge. Hundreds of local multiplayer games entered the Showcase submission pool, creating a significant jurying challenge. One of the most popular games from 2013 was *Spaceteam*, a cooperative networked local multiplayer game (via Bluetooth) for iPad. In it, each player had a different set of spaceship controls with a constant display of ever-changing technobabble instructions, some of which pertained to players' own controls and some to other players'. This meant a lot of yelling; *Spaceteam* could have easily taken the award for "Loudest IndieCade Game" at the Showcase @ E3, if such an award existed.

Local multiplayer and technological innovation could both be seen in *Spin the Bottle: Bumpie's Party* by NapNok, whose members had worked on *Dark Room Sex Game* and *B.U.T.T.O.N.* Designed for the Wii, the game had players doing strange things with a partner, such as spinning the Wiimote controller or hugging their partner with the Wiimote in their hand while jumping up and down. Another cooperative local multiplayer game was *Lovers in a Dangerous Spacetime*, an adorable spaceship simulator by Asteroid Base. Simon Ferrari hosted the Indie eSports section of the IndieCade Showcase @ E3. Examples of competitive games in this genre were Zach Aikman's territorial game *Voronoid*, *TowerFall* by Matt Thorson, and a pre-publication version of *Sportsfriends*, which would come out on PlayStation the following year.

A few other game highlights: *Luxuria Superbia*, by prior IndieCade awardee Tale of Tales, was a departure from their previous games, which tended to be story or character-driven. Played on an iPad and described as "an abstract erotic game which explores the connection between religious and sexual ecstasy," it reconfigured the well-trodden "tunnel shooter" mechanic in a fundamentally feminine way. *Luxuria Superbia* went on to become an IndieCade Nominee as well as the recipient of the Independent Games Festival's Nuovo Award the following year. Other single-player games included *Soundodger* by Studio Bean's Michael Molinari and *7 Grand Steps: What Ancients Begat*, a strategic game that played out over multiple generations, created by Mousechief (Keith Nemtzi), who was in the first IndieCade Festival. Also at the IndieCade booth was the soon-to-be-released PlayStation title *Hobokum*, which had been a Nominee at the 2011 Festival, as well as the newly-released PlayStation Vita edition of *Flower*. On the mobile side was *In a Permanent Save State*, an activist iPhone game by Benjamin Poynter that was based on real-life suicides by iPhone factory workers and had actually been banned from the App Store.

The IndieCade Showcase @ E3 was one of the first places you could get your hands on new technology platforms, including Leap Motion's gesture interface; Sifteo Cubes, small reprogrammable cubes with a video display; and, of course, Oculus Rift. As part of its sponsorship, IndieCade had worked with Oculus to organize a mini-game jam in order to generate playable content on its brand new DK1 development system. Even at this early phase in its rollout, indies were eschewing the natural temptation to reconfigure old genres for this new platform. *SoundSelf*, by Robin Arnott, Evan Balster, and Todd Cook, was a prime example: the meditation experience immersed the player in an abstract world transformed by their own voice. Other Oculus games created by IndieCade developers for the Showcase @ E3 included *The Recital*, *Homework from Another World*, *Irrational Exuberance*, and *If a Tree Screams in the Forest...* These works were something of a teaser for the Oculus "slow jam" that would take place later that summer.

Three new IndieCade Showcase @ E3 discoveries were particular standouts. Two exemplified the evolution of adventure games. The first was *Dominique Pamplemousse in "It's All Over Once The Fat Lady Sings!"* This quirky black-and-white claymation musical, featuring a protagonist of "ambiguous gender," was an act of virtuosity by a single developer, Dierdra Kiai, aka Squinky. As one juror put it, "This is the type of game that IndieCade was created for." The "breakout musical hit" (Warr 2017) was an Independent Games Festival finalist the following year, and its creator made the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list in 2015.

The second was *That Dragon, Cancer*, featured in the IndieCade Showcase @ E3 while still a work in progress. Developed by Numinous Games (Ryan Green, Amy Green, Josh Larson, Jon Hillman), it chronicled a family's struggle with the brain cancer diagnosis and treatment of their baby boy. Part autobiography, part documentary, part interactive poem, it was groundbreaking in terms of its subject matter and emotional depth. *That Dragon, Cancer* went on to be funded through a successful Kickstarter, became the subject of the 2015 documentary film *Thank You for Playing*, and was published in 2016 to critical acclaim and numerous awards.

In terms of mainstream success, the third big splash of 2013 was *TowerFall* by Matt Thorsen of Matt Makes Games. Originally referred to as "Ouya's killer app" (Kuchera 2013), the game became an unparalleled success that eventually landed on virtually every game platform.

By 2013, Nintendo and Xbox had joined Sony as IndieCade sponsors. All three exhibited prior IndieCade Nominees in their respective tents in IndieCade Village. Several 2008 Nominees, including *ibb & obb* and *The Unfinished Swan*, as well as *Sportsfriends*, were among the games featured in the Sony booth. GameDesk Edupalooza featured Cardboard Arcade, as well as other activities focused on kids.

The sheer volume of submissions—which was continuing to grow—necessitated adding personnel to oversee the process. Holly Gramazio, co-founder of the UK-based Hide&Seek (who had also been IndieCade Nominees), became the Festival's first Jury Co-Chair, working with Sam and myself to wrangle, collect, and assess juror scores and reviews. Because she had extensive experience with nonstandard game formats through curating Big Game and other experimental exhibitions, Holly helped craft creative jurying strategies; she was also plugged into an international network, including the alternative-controller and pub-game scene in the UK.

Submissions were always a good way to chart trends, and in 2013, local multiplayer games were the undisputed leader, including a spike in board game submissions fueled by the success of *Cards Against Humanity*. But these genres, which also included alternative-controller and installation-based work, placed a higher demand on in-person jurying, requiring further creative measures to accommodate them. Initially, IndieCade staff ran special jury sessions with the help of volunteers, but it became clear that the volume of special-format and board games made that method unsustainable. So in 2013, IndieCade organized its first "jury hub" at Glitch City, an indie games collective that had settled in Culver City due in part to its proximity to IndieCade. Throughout the summer, developers Brendan Chung and Ben Esposito spent multiple weekend days opening up shop for IndieCade special jurying sessions.

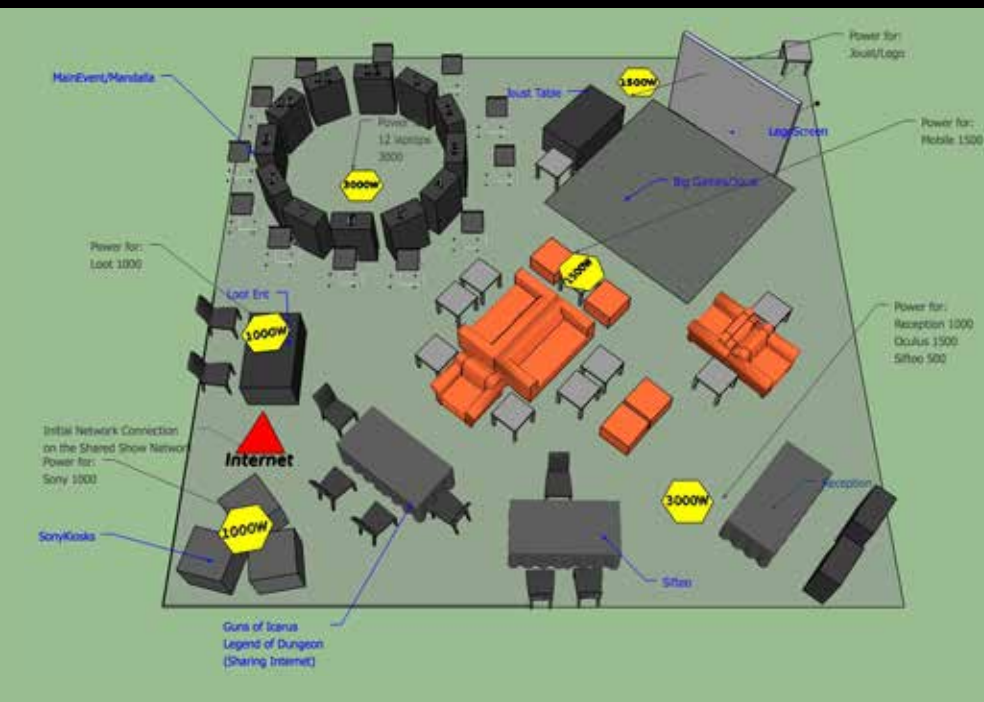
Digital gaming was getting more social and local, and numerous 2013 Festival games of this type went on to be major hits. A few examples on the consumer/digital side were *Nidhogg*, a two-player sword dueling game; *Lovers in a Dangerous Spacetime*, a hyperkinetic cooperative space-exploration game; *TowerFall*; *Spaceteam*, an early networked local iPad game; *SlashDash*, a four-player Ninja combat game; and *Spin the Bottle: Bumpie's Party*, by NapNok & Redgrim, which won the 2013 Technology Award.

IndieCade Festival 2013

Face-to-face social interaction was also driving alternative forms of play. One example was the burgeoning "new arcade" or "artcade" movement—custom cabinets that harkened back to the days of *Tron*. The undisputed hit in this regard was 2013 Developer Choice awardee, *Killer Queen Arcade*. *Killer Queen* had made its IndieCade debut in 2012 as a field game using foam swords, essentially a prototype for the digital game's final implementation. After iterating on different control schemes, they finally settled on the large arcade cabinet, which had to be shipped in a giant crate from New York to the Culver City Hotel for the 2013 Festival. *Killer Queen Arcade* went on to become one of the greatest success stories of the new arcade movement, with over 40 cabinets installed throughout the US by 2019, and spawning its own eSports tournament.

During Night Games, *Johann Sebastian Joust* creator Doug Wilson staged an installation entitled *Edgar Rice Soirée*. Inspired by Edgar Rice Burroughs's novel *Tarzan*, it involved 20 PlayStation Move controllers suspended from the ceiling of a 20-by-20 foot tent. The goal was to "swing" (still on your feet, of course) between Move controllers when they flashed your color. Two installation-based games used the body as the primary interface: Concordia University TAG Lab's *Propinquity*, and Michael Molinari of Studio Bean's *SoundodgerLIVE*, an installation version of his bullet-hell music game that projected the game field onto the ground and used players' bodies as cursors while avoiding abstract projectiles. Two featured games anticipated the escape room craze, which would begin to escalate in 2014: *The Hearst Collection*, a jewel-heist laser maze by Gabe Smedresman, and Two Bit Circus' *STEAM Carnival*, a live event focused on the intersection of art and science.

Shawn Pierre of OriGaming Games, who would go on to become Games Manager for IndieCade, showed two games: *Rainbow Bacon*, a Move controller variant of the folk game *Steal the Bacon*, and his card game *These French Fries are Terrible Hot Dogs*, a party card game in the tradition of *Apples to Apples*, which ran a successful Kickstarter and appeared in the Boston Festival of Indie Games that same year. One of the other major tabletop games that year was Liam Liwanag Burke's *Dog Eat Dog*, a roleplaying game in which you play members of a colonized community, which won the 2013 Impact Award.



Uncredited Photo from Joystiq E3 2013 Edition



IndieCade Festival 2013 (Con't)

Pervasive and alternate reality games, while a smaller niche, continued to delight with new innovations and diverse creators. These included *Extrasolar*, a major departure for designer Rob Jagnow, who later said that attending IndieCade inspired him to up his game. *99 Tiny Games* by Hide&Seek, a selection of quirky urban street games, manifested as a series of stickers distributed throughout the Festival and an online app created as a commission for the 2012 London Olympics.

A major transformation was also happening on the single-player side, particularly with regard to narrative games. In spite of the growing climate of misogyny that would reach its climax the following year, alternative voices, particularly queer and women's voices, were coming to the forefront. These brought new modes to empathy, identity, agency, and play. Among the awardees were breakouts that would go on to earn mainstream acclaim, including *Kentucky Route Zero* (Best Visuals and Story/World Design); *Gone Home* (Best Audio), which won two citations from other awards for Best Studio Debut the following year; and *Porpentine's Twine Compilation*, which won an IndieCade Special Recognition Award. *Spaceteam* took the award for Best Interaction Design. An adventure game about hacking, *Quadrilateral Cowboy*, by Glitch City member Brendon Chung of Blendo Games, took the IndieCade Grand Jury Award; the game went on to win the Seumas McNally Grand Prize at the Independent Games Festival awards in 2017. Official Selections following this trend included Zoe Quinn's *Depression Quest*, Mattie Brice's *Mainichi*, *Dominique Pamplousse in "It's All Over Once the Fat Lady Sings!"*, and *That Dragon, Cancer*, all of which went on to receive international recognition.

In response to this rise of new voices, IndieCade added a new award in 2013, the Game Changer, conceived for an individual who had made a major impact on changing the indie landscape, especially with regard to inclusiveness. Although it became a regular award, the Game Changer was initially inspired by Anna Anthropy, whose 2012 IndieCade Official Selection *Dys4ia* and book *Rise of the Video Game Zinesters* had become a major influence in a burgeoning queer and trans game scene.

The 2013 Conference Co-Chairs were Brenda Romero (*Train*), Chaïm Ginghold (*GeoBook/Earth: A Primer*), and John Sharp (*Armada d6*), all prior IndieCade Nominees, Official Selections, or awardees, with a speaker lineup that was the most diverse to date. One of the highlights of this year's Conference was the Keynote

Conversation, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of *Myst* with designer Rand Miller—in some sense the godfather of the adventure game genre—and Tale of Tales' Auriea Harvey, one of the leaders of the genre's twenty-first century renaissance. Other speakers included game designer and writer Shawn Allen, Kaho Abe, Vander Caballero—Creative Director of Minority Media, which created *Papo & Yo*, a 2012 Nominee—and many others. The blossoming queer game scene was represented by gamemakers such as Mattie Brice, Colleen Macklin, Naomi Clark, Christine Love, merritt k, Anna Anthropy, Steve Gaynor (one of the creators of *Gone Home*), Cas Holman, and Porpentine.

The Conference was bookended by IndieXchange and GameU. IndieXchange had become a major draw for developers (who received a free ticket with submission), in part due to the matchmaking with publishers and funders that took place. Sessions tended to be practical in nature. One, for instance, dealt with grants and was meant to include Alyce Myatt, Director of Media Arts for the NEA; however, she was forced to pull out at the last minute due to a US federal government shutdown. The IndieXchange Show and Tell gave developers the opportunity to show works in progress or games that did not make it into the Festival, give one another feedback, and see what others were working on. This open sharing of ideas highlighted the indie philosophy of eschewing the proprietary anxieties of the mainstream game industry, which rarely revealed works in progress for fear of intellectual property infringements.

The awards gala was hosted by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which had a growing presence in the game space. They had co-curated *Into the Pixel*, an exhibition of printed mainstream game imagery at E3, and were also collecting and exhibiting games and hosting lectures with game artists, many of whom had been in IndieCade festivals and showcases. The awards attendees assembled in a waiting area that, appropriately, featured punk-rock and new-wave concert posters from the 1980s.

Moving away from television celebrities, the 2013 IndieCade awards hosts were drawn from the IndieCade community: longtime supporters and husband-and-wife team John and Brenda Romero. During the awards, the audience played *Cat on Yer Head*, a British pub game by Playniac in which players tried to pass around an invisible "cat" and "mouse" in pursuit of a yellow "cheese" balloon.

The Trailblazer Award that year went to Tracy Fullerton of USC's top-ranked Interactive Media & Games Division program. Although the final decision was made by the award jury, honoring Tracy was significant to IndieCade because it acknowledged the growing importance of academia in educating a new generation of indie developers. In addition to having been an industry pioneer and creating her own award-winning games, Tracy was also a mentor to dozens of gamemakers who were making a mark on the indie ecosystem. It was particularly poignant that, at the time she received the award, she was also recovering from cancer.

In 2012, *INTERFERENCE*, an installation by Eric Zimmerman and Nathalie Pozzie that had been commissioned by La Gaité Lyrique in Paris for its *Joue Le Jeu (Play Along)* exhibition, won the IndieCade Interaction Award. Due to space demands, the full installation could not be shown at the Festival, and instead it was included as documentation.

In 2013, with help from Carol Stakenas, then-Executive Director of LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), Eric and Nathalie were able to arrange an installation that would overlap with the IndieCade Festival. The piece was installed at Culver City's Track 16 Gallery, near the Festival, which also hosted an opening event. In addition to being able to play *INTERFERENCE*, the gamemakers facilitated design workshops in which a number of luminaries from the indie game scene participated in prototyping new games for the *INTERFERENCE* "platform." The rules they developed were recorded and displayed in the space for the duration of the exhibition.

The sheer breadth of originality on show was eye-popping, with almost every finalist offering a completely unique approach to the competition's minimal brief.

—Paul James, *Road to VR*



XYZ: Alternative Voices in Game Design

The 2012 IndieCade Showcase @ E3 had fallen on the heels of Anita Sarkeesian's *Tropes vs. Women in Video Games* Kickstarter, and the game industry's toxic relationship with gender was very much on everyone's mind. It was here that Akira Thompson, then IndieCade Developer Relations Chair, made an off-handed remark to me: "I really want to do an exhibition on women game designers." My response: "We're totally doing that."

A year later, just after the 2013 Showcase @ E3, *XYZ: Alternative Voices in Game Design* opened at the Museum of Design Atlanta. While not explicitly an IndieCade project, the exhibition was co-curated by Akira and myself with longtime IndieCade Conference Co-Chair, John Sharp, and Cindy Poremba, who would go on to serve as IndieCade Jury Co-Chair in 2015—both of whom had been IndieCade Nominees and jurors—with support from Adam Rafinski, who was my graduate student at the time. All four had extensive curatorial experience. Cindy had co-curated *Joue le Jeu ("Play Along")* at La Gaité Lyrique in Paris along with Heather Kelley and Lynn Hughes, and John had curated *Spacwar!* at the Museum of the Moving Image earlier that year in conjunction with the first IndieCade East.

XYZ focused on women creators, many of whom had been in IndieCade. Past IndieCade projects included *The Night Journey*, *The Path*, *Analogue: A Hate Story*, *Luxuria Superbia*, *Train*, *Dys4ia*, *Mainichi*, *Gravity Ghost*, and games by Blast Theory, Nathalie Pozzi (with Eric Zimmerman), Hide&Seek, and Colleen Macklin. The exhibit also included mainstream games created with women in leadership roles, including *Journey*, *Skylanders*, *League of Legends*, and *LittleBigPlanet*. The exhibition opened in August in conjunction with the Digital Games Research Association's 2013 conference—the first to include a panel on "indie game studies"—hosted at Georgia Tech and co-chaired by John Sharp and myself.

Oculus IndieCade VR Jam

One of the biggest developments of 2013 was the release of the Oculus Rift DK1 development kit, which, at the time, was not yet commercially available. Its story is illustrative of the synergies between different aspects of the indie ecosystem. A company with ties to USC, Oculus made two early strategic moves that proved productive: sponsoring IndieCade and sending free DK1s to universities in sync with the Oculus IndieCade VR Jam. Rather than the traditional format of putting jammers in one place for a weekend, this jam was distributed across multiple locations and took place over a three-week period, thus earning it the informal moniker of a "slow jam." The call was open, and jam sites were largely hosted at university labs, many of which already had DK1s—including NYU, USC, Georgia Tech, and others—in advance of the jam. While the jam was open, IndieCade also hand-picked key developers who were invited to participate. Loaner systems were also distributed to IndieCade-affiliated groups such as the Copenhagen Game Collective, Toronto's Bento Miso, and Let's Make Games in Perth, Australia, to name only a few. Prize winners received funds to produce their games, as well as exhibition opportunities at other IndieCade events.

The two Grand Prize winners were Ed McNeill with *Ciess*, a cyberspace hacking puzzler later published as *Darknet* (James 2014), and Lau Korsgaard (of Copenhagen Game Collective and NapNok) with *Virtual Internet Hacker*, which also had a hacking theme, only '90s retro style (James 2013). Second place was tied between *Dumpy: Going Elephants*, by Georgia Tech grad Brian Schrank, a comical cartoon world with which players interacted as an elephant using only its trunk, and *Nostrum*, created by Robert Yang, a flight simulator inspired by Hayao Miyazaki's anime film *Porco Rosso*. Yang was renowned for his *Radiator* series of Half-Life mods, and his *Celestia* was in the IndieCade Showcase @ E3 earlier that summer.

The Oculus DK1 came out the same year that Valve launched Steam Greenlight, a crowdsourcing experiment in which players could vote on games they wanted to see showcased on the Steam site. The first crop of Oculus games began appearing on Steam almost immediately after the release of the DK1 and were only playable by people who had the DevKit (in other words, developers). Thus began the process of seeding the Oculus with gamemakers, an important key to its success.