



Call for Papers

for the game studies anthology

Zwischen|Welten. Atmosphären im Computerspiel.

(Engl.: *Between|Worlds. Atmospheres of video games.*)

Already in the mid-90's, the German philosopher Gernot Böhme began to sharpen his concept of the atmosphere – the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived – with his *Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (1995). The atmosphere should form the basic term of a new aesthetics that puts the focus back on its initial roots: The aesthetics should again be a theory of perception instead of a means for criticizing art and opinion. Among others, he is indirectly supported by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, who criticizes the humanistic preference for semiotic interpretations over the bodily perception of presence phenomena in his book *Diesseits der Hermeneutik* (2004). **The planned anthology wants both to be a continuation and elaboration of these methodical and conceptual topics and to harness the term of the atmosphere as an important research object and instrument for the game studies.**

„One doesn't know for sure, if one should attribute them to the objects or surroundings, from which they emanate, or to the subjects, which experience them. One also doesn't really know for sure, where they are. In a sense, they seem to nebulously fill the space with a feeling tone.“

(Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre als Grundbegriff einer neuen Ästhetik*, own translation.)

The publication project is underlain by the simple observation that the video game industry went through profound changes in the last five to ten years. At the latest since the early 2000's, game developers began anew to discover and exhaust the potentials of the medium of the video game. More and more games – often designed in the independent gaming scene – move traditional game mechanisms –

„The important thing is [...] that one can only determine the character of an atmosphere by exposing to it. It can't be determined from a neutral observer's point of view, but only in affective involvement.“

(Gernot Böhme, *Ästhetik – Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*, own translation.)

time-, decision- and configuration-critical queries to the players – into the background in favor of an emphasized ‚Erlebnishaftigkeit‘ – the presence of a (gaming) experience, so to speak. Thus, video games like *SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS* (2006), *BRAID*, *THE VOID* (both in 2009), *AMNESIA: THE DARK DESCENT* (2010), *BASTION*, *LIMBO*, *TRAUMA* (all in 2011), *ANNA*, *BOTANICULA*, *HOME* and *LONE SURVIVOR* (all in 2012) – as well as many others – offer a gaming experience that is clearly targeting on an atmospheric

effect. In many cases, the evoking of an atmosphere even is the central intention of the game – like in *THE GRAVEYARD*, *THE PATH* (both in 2009), *DINNER DATE* (2011) and *DEAR ESTHER* (2012). **Up till now, hermeneutic examinations, that**

Submission modalities and deadlines

The proposal submissions (max. 5,000 characters) will be checked by the editors. The abstracts should contain a title, the author's name, institution and address.

Acceptance or refusal happens after the submission deadline. The texts can be written in German or English. The layout specifications and a stylesheet for the articles will be given after the confirmation deadline.

The release is scheduled for the summer of 2013 in the Verlag Werner Hülsbusch.

Submission of abstracts: 15 December 2012

Confirmation till: 15 January 2013

Submission of full text: 31 May 2013

Planned publication: Summer 2013

Please send your proposals to:
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make use of the interpretative methods of literary studies and ludological structure analysis, couldn't do justice to the meaning and variety of this trend and its subjects. In particular the specific act of playing and the aesthetic experience of the players get lost in the blind angle of insufficient concepts like ‚interactivity‘ and ‚immersion‘. Hence, the intended anthology *Zwischen|Welten – Atmosphären im Computerspiel* wants to gather analyses, essays and interviews concerning atmospheric video games and ask – with the help of the new aesthetics as defined by Gernot Böhme – for the actual aesthetics of the medium, the (bodily) presence in virtual rooms, the production of atmospheres and the worlds between video game and players.

Possible questions and research topics:

- By which means (e.g. level/graphic/sound/game design) can atmospheres be created and how do they affect the players? How does the real space influence the game space and vice versa? How do atmospheres change the relation between player and avatar? And besides, to what extent do video games correspond with other aesthetic practices like architecture, music, painting and film in terms of the production of atmospheres? Both single and comparative analyses (e.g. the atmospheres of different survival horror games) as well as interviews or workshop reports with and by game designers are of interest to this purpose.

- Is this trend towards atmosphere just a marketing strategy to profitably distinguish own games from those of others, is it only a temporary fashion, or is it a cultural indicator for an increased desire for (bodily) presence and a symptom of the fading of strict (game) rule structures? The steady decrease of mechanical complexity, as can be observed for example in casual gaming, and the disappearance of the screen interfaces is also of relevance here. Could the exclusive perception of atmosphere in video games possibly require the reduction of game mechanics and interfaces at first?
- Can subcultural practices – like the nostalgic retrogaming (cf. Sebastian Felzmann, *Playing Yesterday – Mediennostalgie im Computerspiel*, published in 2012) – be explained by the concept of the atmosphere and the new aesthetics? Do pixels and chiptunes possibly evoke atmospheres of homecoming in the own childhood?

The submitted proposals may or may not be subject to a strict scientific approach; rather an excellent readability of the articles is desired. Hence, essays are as welcome as academic texts. We recommend a previous reading of Böhmes *Atmosphäre – Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (published in 1995, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp) and/or *Ästhetik – Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre* (published in 2001, Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag), but that's not a requirement. **We are looking forward to your submissions!**

About the editors

Christian Huberts, born in 1982, has a diploma in cultural studies and was at last a scientific employee at the institute of media and theatre of the university of Hildesheim. He gives seminars about video game aesthetics and writes for scientific publications and cultural magazines about the participation in virtual worlds, game studies and independent games. At the moment he prepares his dissertation and a research project about the mediation of history in video games. For further information visit his homepage www.christianhuberts.de.

Sebastian Standke, born in 1988, has a B.A. degree in cultural studies and since 2011 is working on his M.A. degree in the staging of the arts and media at the university of Hildesheim. His bachelor's thesis deals with the burlesque-humorous elements of World War II first-person shooters using the example of CALL OF DUTY (2003). At the moment he is preparing a reenactment of Klaus Kinski's „Jesus Christus Erlöser“ to analyze the potential of this form as a instrument of media science in his master's thesis. He writes for the German gaming blog www.superlevel.de.

In March 2012, both editors published (together with Daniel Appel and Tim Raupach) the game studies anthology *Welt|Kriegs|Shooter – Computerspiele als realistische Erinnerungsmedien?* released by Verlag Werner Hülsbusch.