

VERTUAL
REALMS

VIDEOGAMES TRANSFORMED

An immersive exhibition redefining videogame creativity

Virtual Realms presents six new interactive experiences conceived by leading videogame developers, working in partnership with media designers. Curated by the celebrated game designer Tetsuya Mizuguchi, in collaboration with the Barbican Centre, this exhibition reimagines videogame creativity and reshapes how we can play together across virtual and physical realms.

Guest Co-Curator:

Tetsuya Mizuguchi

Tetsuya Mizuguchi is an award winning Japanese video-game designer, producer and media artist. He has led the creation of boundary pushing games and media projects investigating multi-sensory experiences. At the core of his work lies the experience of synesthesia, the crossing of the senses.



'By creating these exciting new collaborations, Virtual Realms offers game developers a unique opportunity to break free from the constraints of consoles and formal game playing and really push the boundaries of how video games can be experienced together. This exhibition paves the way for a future where the world of the videogame spills out beyond the screen.'

- Tetsuya Mizuguchi, Co-curator



The background features a vibrant, abstract art installation. It consists of a wall covered in numerous out-of-focus, colorful circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, and red. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of several people are visible, some appearing to interact with large, dark, geometric shapes that resemble blocks or platforms. The overall atmosphere is one of a dynamic and immersive digital or virtual environment.

6

Commissions

Six groundbreaking game designers paired with
six major media designers studios

Each of the commissions, or realms, is the outcome of a unique collaboration between a leading game developer and an acclaimed media design studio. Through these partnerships, Virtual Realms expands and transforms the videogame medium and opens up new ways to experience this rapidly evolving artform.

6

Immersive Realms

The realms - **SYNESTHESIA, UNITY, PLAY, CONNECTION, EVERYTHING, NARRATIVE** - present six distinct experiences that draw on the themes in the developer's gameography. From playful adventures in uncharted virtual worlds, to meditative reflections on life itself, the commissions form experimental installations that reimagine videogames within a physical, communal environment.



SYNESTHESIA

Enhance x Rhizomatiks

The commission

Rezonance

Entering the SYNESTHESIA realm, you become a part of the pulsing rhythmic beat, and a 'traveller' on the *Rezonance* journey. For those travellers performing with the haptic spheres, you carry in your spheres the seeds of life. When holding the spheres, move and interact together to sculpt the light and shape the sounds to the rhythm; your performance will create a synesthetic metamorphosis for everyone in the space to experience.

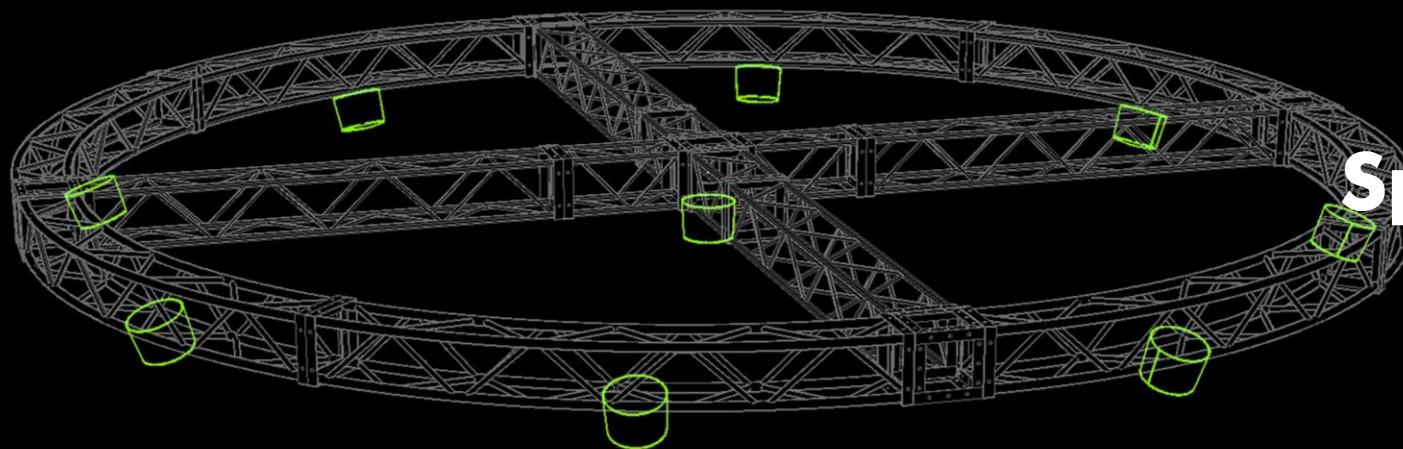
Rezonance Visitor Experience Storyboards

The experience of synesthesia, wherein the senses cross or become blurred, is the focus of research and inspiration for the creators at Enhance. Within the realm of SYNESTHESIA, your senses will be transported to new dimensions; where sounds can be seen, and visuals felt.

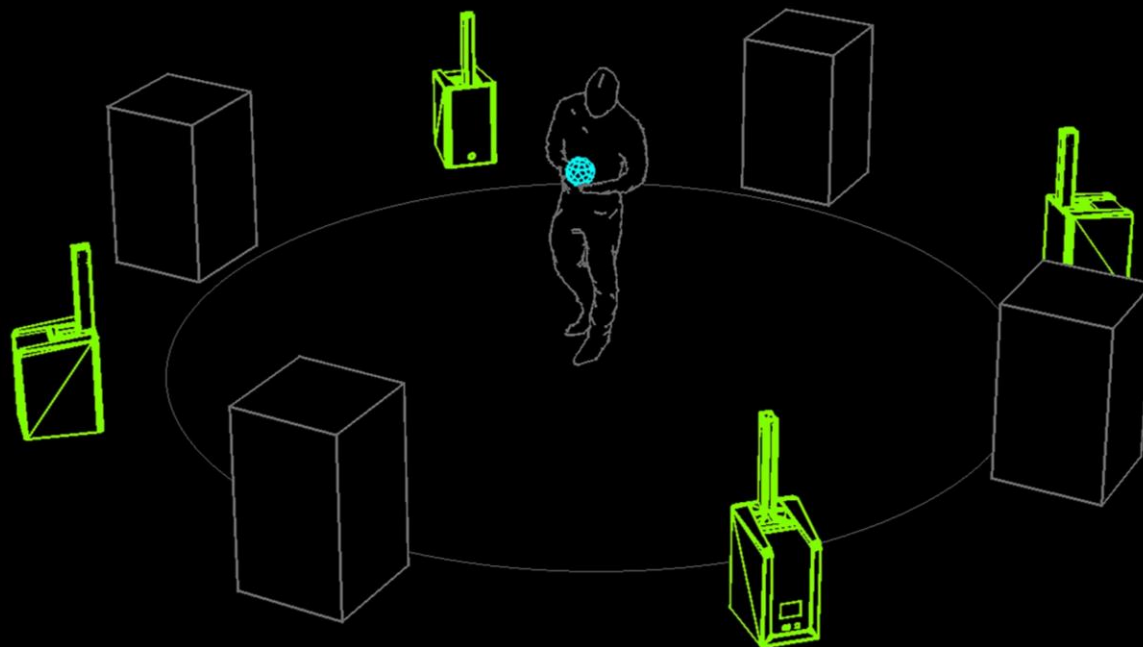
Rezonance installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore



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Rezonance
Spatial layout





UNITY

thatgamecompany x FIELD.IO



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The commission
Together:
The distance
between (us)

In the UNITY realm, the dreamlike world of thatgamecompany's *Sky: Children of the Light* (2019) has been transformed into an immersive spatial environment. As you move beneath the circular light sculpture, music and audio fragments from the game *Sky* are triggered, and a choreography of light sequences unfold.

Together: the distance between (us), invites everyone to become a player in the all-encompassing generative instrument. Explore the relationship between movement, light, and sound and use your presence to influence the composition of the space. In keeping with the emotional arc found across thatgamecompany's oeuvre, by working together and collaborating, the fragments of light and melody will build, culminating in a collective crescendo and a moment of unity for all to experience.



Together: The distance between (us)
Visitor Experience

Together: the distance between (us), installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

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Together: The distance between (us)
Spatial layout



PLAY

Media Molecule x
Marshmallow Laser Feast

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The commission

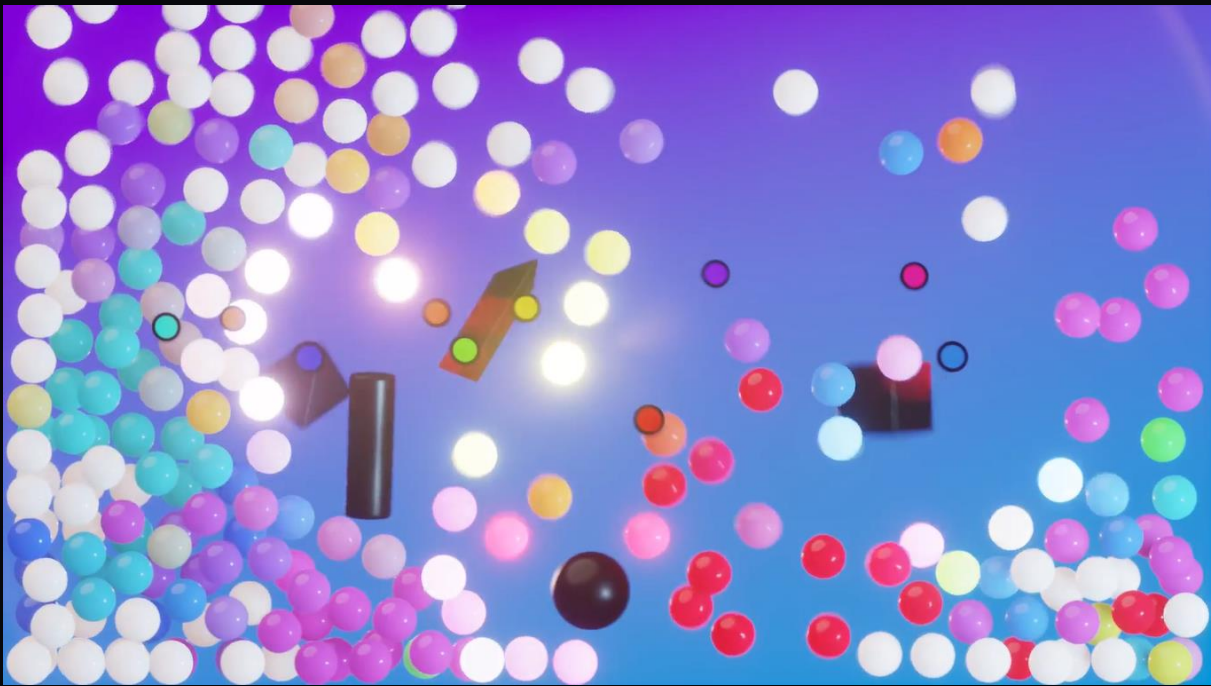
Dream Shaping



The realm of PLAY celebrates the joyful and performative sensibilities that videogames inspire in us, their players.

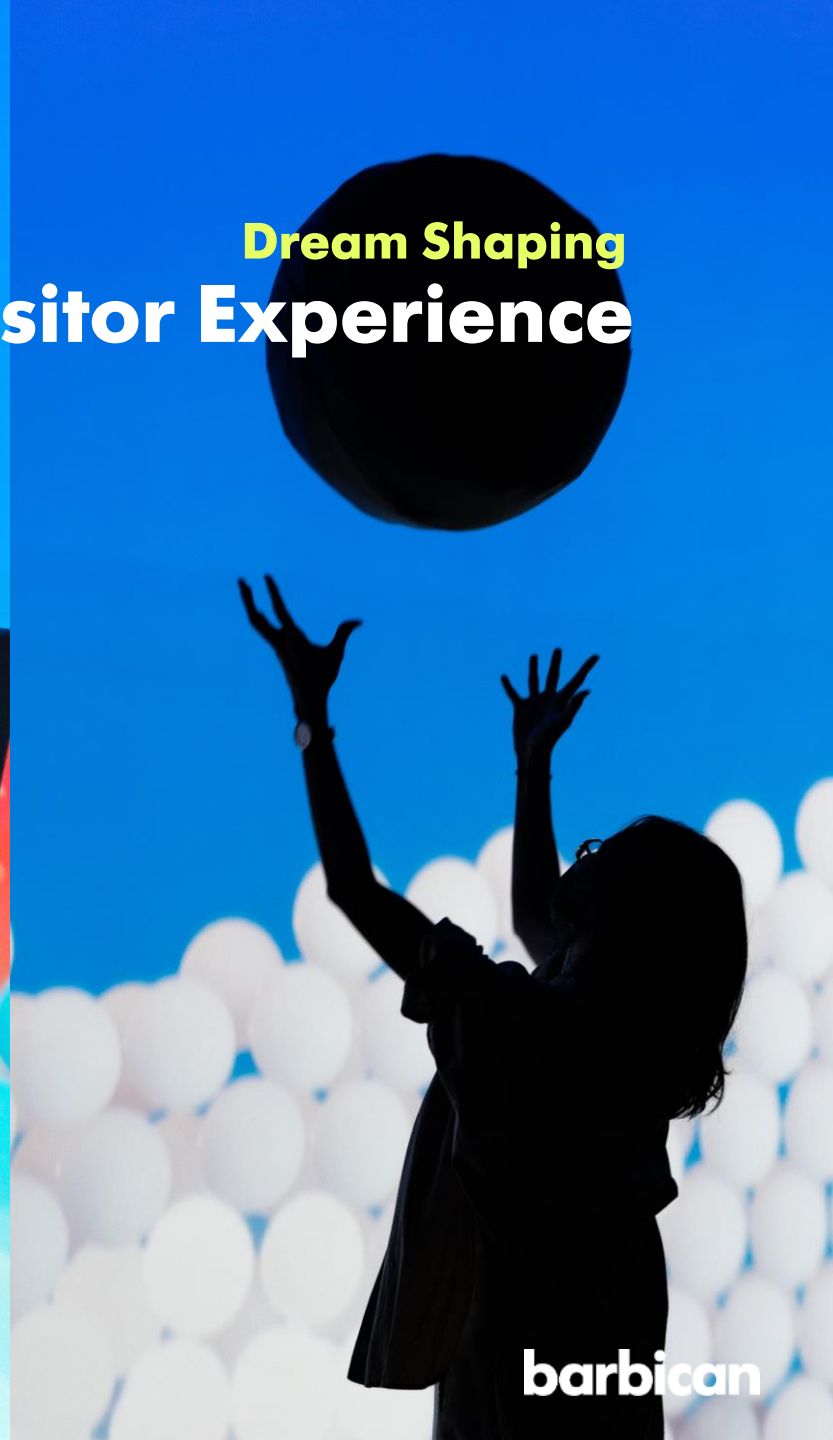
Dream Shaping has been created in *Dreams* (2020), Media Molecule's vast digital toolset that empowers makers to build and share their creations whether games, music, art or animation.

In *Dream Shaping*, your helmet connects you to the virtual world of *Dreams*, while the oversized soft shapes in the play-space are your props. Moving through the three acts of play, you will be transported from a multicoloured ball pit to the creation of the universe, and back. Sharing shapes and experimenting with movements around the space will create a spectacle within both the physical and virtual worlds.



Dream Shaping
Spatial layout





Dream Shaping
Visitor Experience

Dream Shaping, installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

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A photograph of two women in white shirts and hats, standing in a dark environment. They are reaching up and touching their hands together. The scene is dimly lit, with a blueish-purple hue. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting with vertical elements like a door or wall.

CONNECTION

KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS x The Mill



The commission
WALL

The key theme of human connection in KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS' game *DEATH STRANDING* (2019) has been reimagined for the *WALL* experience. The wall divides two opposing worlds - one alive with biological cells, and the other flowing with galactic energy particles - explore these two spaces and find ways to communicate between them.

As you approach the wall, the cells and cosmic particles will respond to your presence, dividing and clustering as you grow nearer, and creating mesmerising patterns with your every movement. Amongst your interactions and imprints, traces of other silhouettes will emerge, and snapshots of past interactions replayed. These signs of life within or beyond the wall hint to the structure as a channel of communication between different spaces and time.



WALL
Visitor Experience

Left: WALL, installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

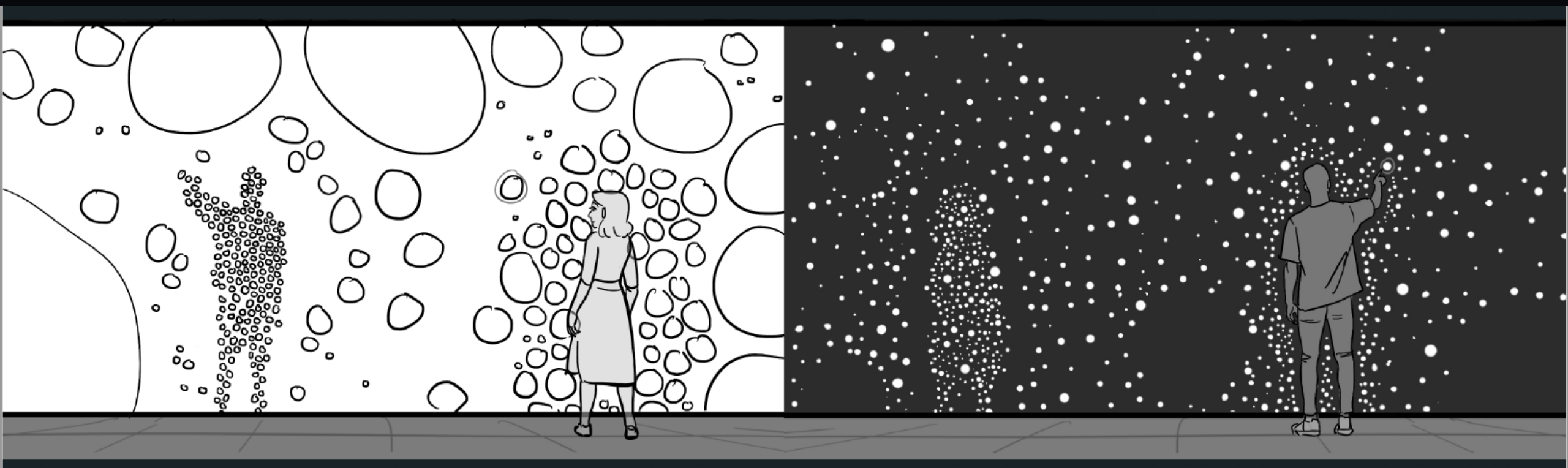
Right: WALL, installation photo ©Miles Noel Photography, courtesy Western Australian Museum

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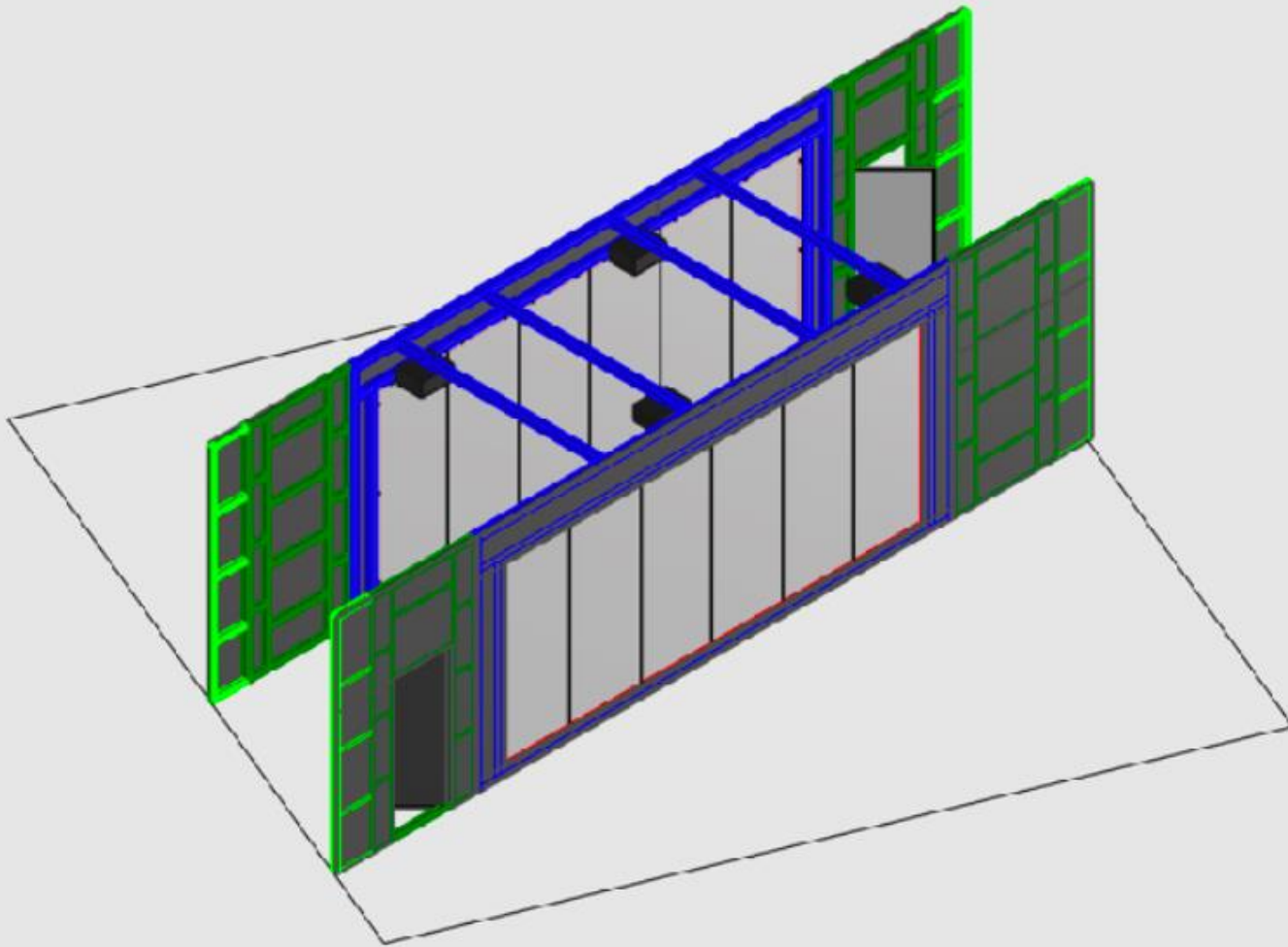
WALL
Visitor Experience



WALL
Storyboards



WALL
Structural
layout





NARRATIVE

Tequila Works x The Workers

The commission

Book of Sand

The NARRATIVE realm showcases the power of videogames to tell stories and create new forms of fiction. Step into the mysterious Mediterranean world of Tequila Works' game *RiME* (2017) to begin the next chapter of this ever-evolving tale of discovery and loss.

Inspired by Jorge Luis Borges's novella of the same name, *Book of Sand* explores the notion of an infinite story with neither 'any beginning or end'. Follow the lead of the spotlights - stepping into the light to trigger changes on screen such as the crumbling of statues or shifting night into day. Depending on your choices and how you collaborate, each rendition of the narrative will be different.



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Book of Sand Key visuals

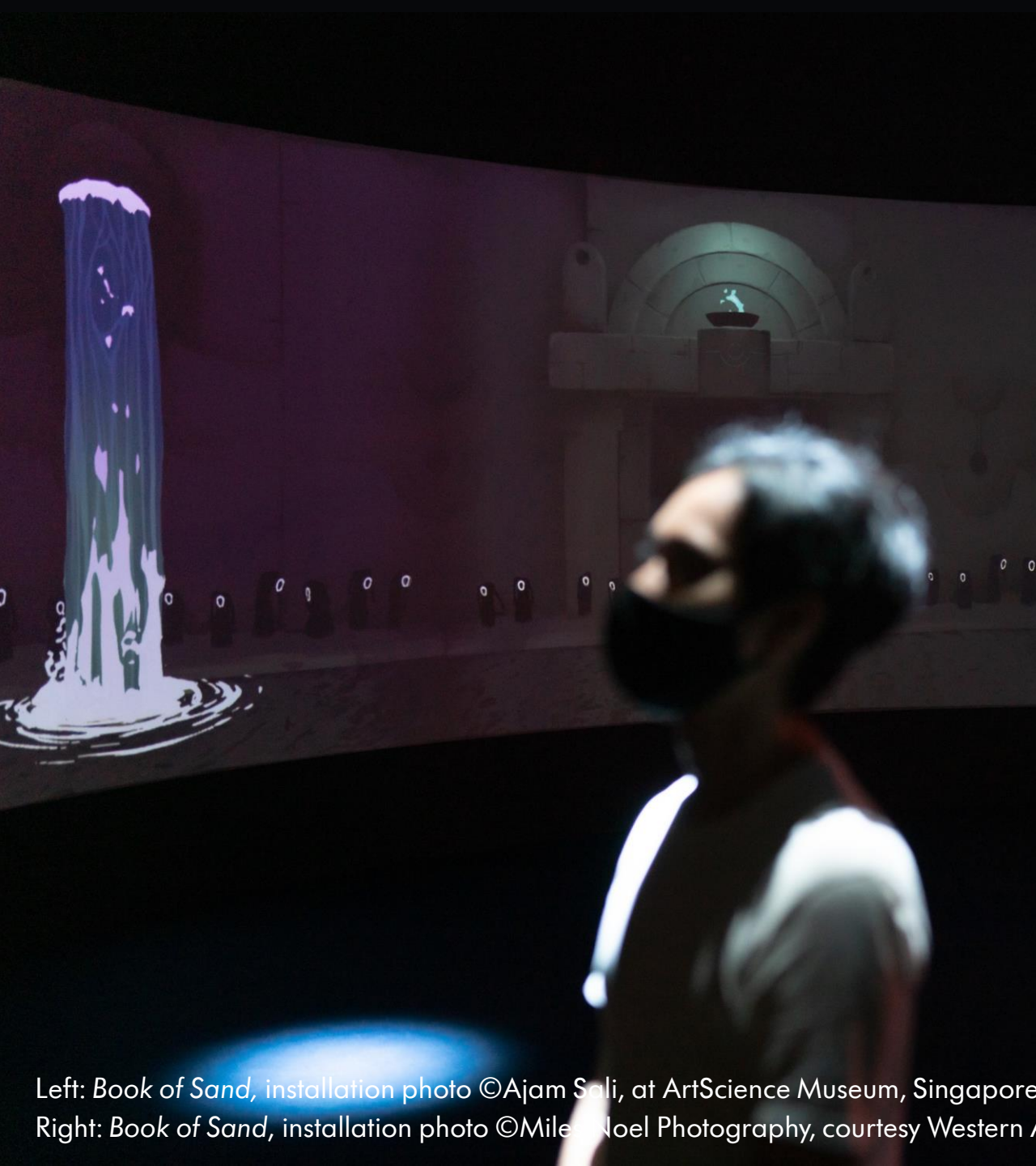




Book of Sand
Spatial layout



Book of Sand, installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore



Left: *Book of Sand*, installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

Right: *Book of Sand*, installation photo ©Miles Noel Photography, courtesy Western Australian Museum



Book of Sand Visitor Experience

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EVERYTHING

David O'Reilly x onedotzero



The commission
Eye

The EVERYTHING realm celebrates the capacity of videogames to generate expansive universes and give shape to the infinite potential of our imagination.

Eye is a unique reactive environment based on the concepts of O'Reilly's game *Everything* (2017). Rotate the three oversized controllers to play with the 'flow', 'scale' and 'warp' of the shifting kaleidoscopic formations on the screen. The patterns of living and non-living forms are continuously being generated; no mandala created will ever be seen again.

Eye takes you on a visual journey through time, from the Big Bang through to the end of the universe. With soft spongy seating to lounge on and a synchronised soundtrack from the London Symphony Orchestra, sit back and bathe in this psychedelic wonder.



Left: WALL, installation photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

Right: WALL, installation photo ©Miles Noel Photography, courtesy Western Australian Museum



Book of Sand
Visitor Experience

Eye
Spatial layout





Exhibition spatial and graphic design

by Chiara Stephenson and Stinsensqueeze

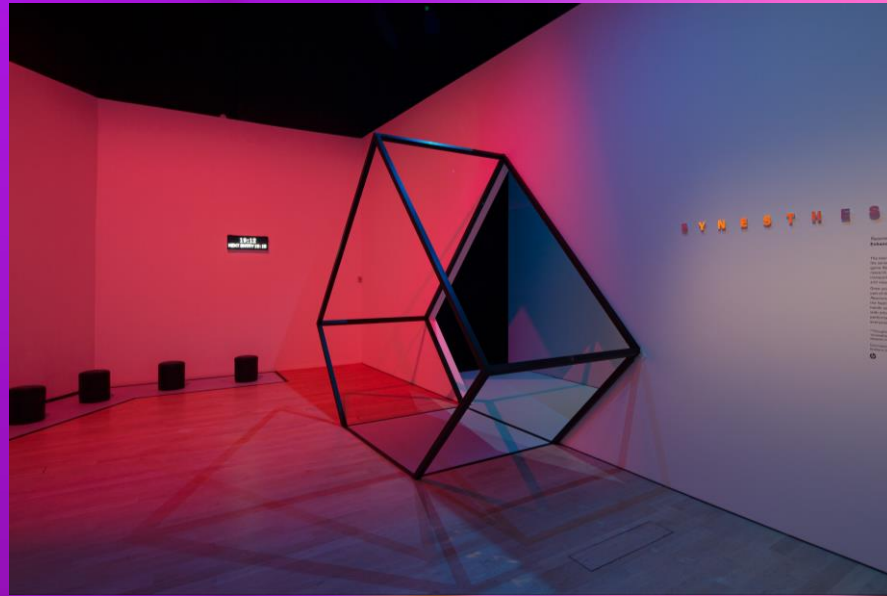
In advance of visitors entering each commissioned artwork, they can explore playfully designed introductory spaces with information about the work and its creators. These introductory spaces will provide context to visitors who are not familiar with the commissioned studios, or even videogames at all.

The biographical and contextual information will be conveyed in a combination of wall texts and video clips. Each commission introduction will include two videos displayed on separate screens or monitors running as continuous loops. The first will feature a voice-over providing biographies on the collaborating studios, along with key visuals.

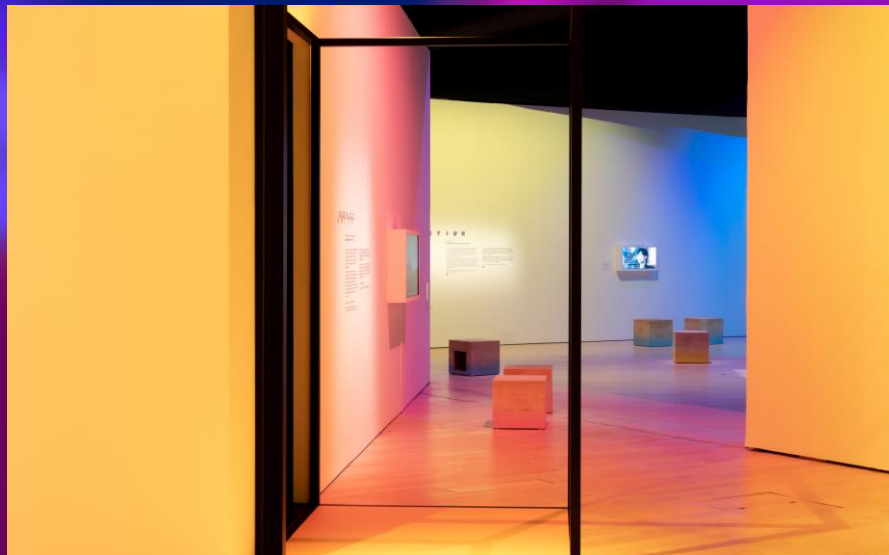
The second video will feature a recorded discussion between the game developers and media designers, focused around the commissioned work, and the curatorial framework of Virtual Realms.



Spatial Design
Introductory
spaces

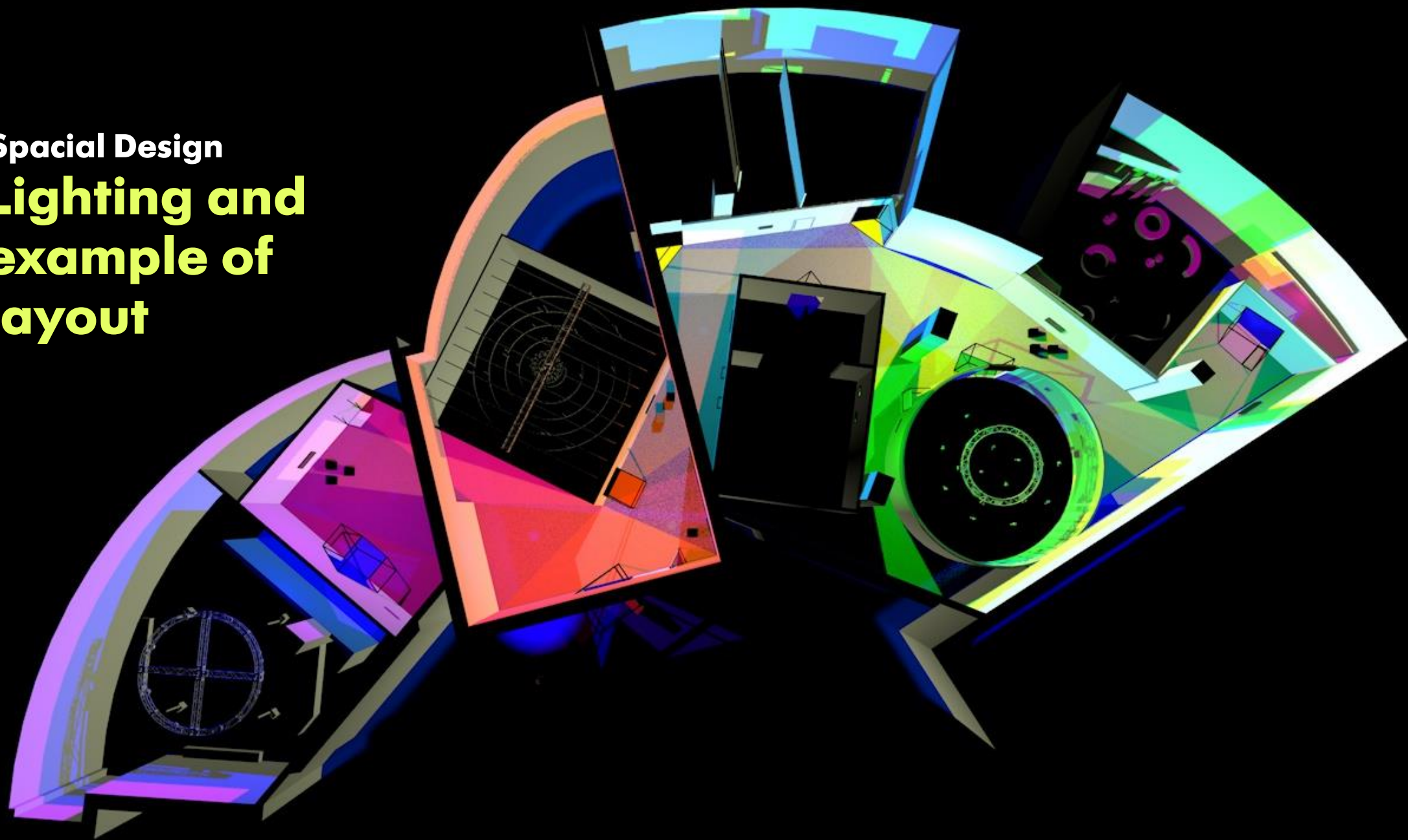


Spacial Design Commission Entrances



Gallery photo ©Ajam Sali, at ArtScience Museum, Singapore

Spacial Design
**Lighting and
example of
layout**



Graphic Design Exhibition catalogue

Enhance
[videogame developer]




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Founded:
2014; by
Tetsuya Mizuguchi
Studio location:
Tokyo, Japan

Key games:
Rez Infinite (2016),
Lumines Remastered
(2018), *Tetris Effect* (2018)

Spotlight on:
Rez Infinite (2016), the
musical rail shooter that
explores the synchronicity
between music, visuals,
gameplay, and vibration
feedback to create a sense
of synesthesia.

Known for:
Creating synesthetic
experiences in video-
games and beyond;
collaborations and
research with
Rhizomatiks as part of
the Synesthesia Lab.

Virtual Realms 28

In *Rez* and *Rez Infinite*, as you play, you create sounds which gradually build the musical score, whilst synchronizing with the visual and haptic sensation delivered through the controller. For *Resonance*, our team at Enhance worked with Rhizomatiks to reproduce the *Rez* experience as a spatial environment with custom-made devices. It's our most ambitious project to date.

AG: When interpreting *Rez* as a physical installation, the core element of synesthesia was key. In designing *Resonance* in a spatial environment, I knew both audio and visuals were important, but also the integration of haptic technology, an area done with the original *Rez*. It was important to not only carefully extrapolate the key elements of the game to this new environment, but to also improve and enhance the overall experience in the process.

What were the key aspects of Enhance's games that you wanted to focus on for your commission?


AG: When approaching the concept for this experience-based installation, I wondered what kind of new experience would be produced by adding the three elements of physicality, spatiality, and multiplayer to *Rez*. In particular, what kind of experience would emerge as multiple people are having a session together in one space. This presented a very interesting challenge.

TM: The game world always has some restrictions. In order to come into existence as a game, things must be designed to fit within the realness of a screen or monitor. For *Resonance*, the essential elements of *Rez* have been incorporated, such as game mechanics, sound effects becoming music, and the process of reacting to visuals becoming tactile. However, in terms of having sessions with multiple people and being able to walk around freely, it is beyond the limitations of the game, and provides an entirely different work as an experience. That is the point I found interesting. I think it would be wonderful if everyone who experiences *Resonance* can feel the freedom to at least once you lift these restrictions. *Resonance* is a linear for each person, but multi-linear as a whole. There are multiple threads happening at the same time that interfere with each other like a chemical reaction. The whole group moves in a linear fashion, which is very interesting. If you think of it as music, your performance is free-form and it increasingly becomes more interactive. There are no rules to play by and there is a linear development, but it's also different from a typical narrative + style development. If you are the only one player, you cannot go to the next phase—it can only happen with others involved.

< each player is given an instrument and decides how to play [...] it's a collective remix experience >



Virtual Realms 40



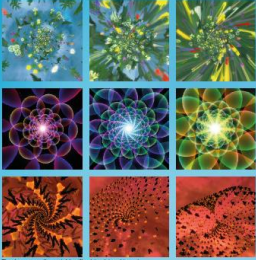
Eye, 2021
David O'Reilly and onedotzero

The EVERYTHING realm celebrates the capacity of videogames to generate expansive universes and give shape to the infinite potential of our imagination.

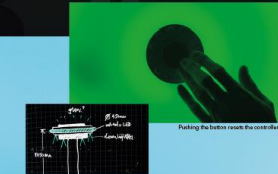
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Eye takes you on a visual journey through time, from the Big Bang through to the end of the universe. With soft spongy seating to lounge on and a synchronised soundtrack from the London Symphony Orchestra, visitors can sit back and bathe in this psychedelic wonder.

EVERYTHING 127



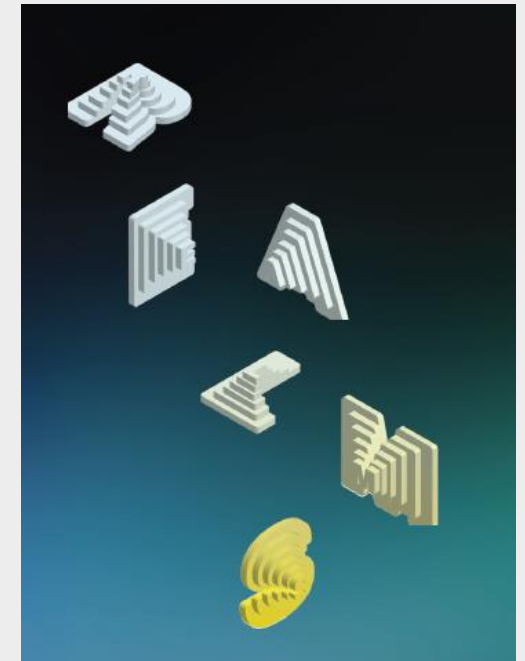
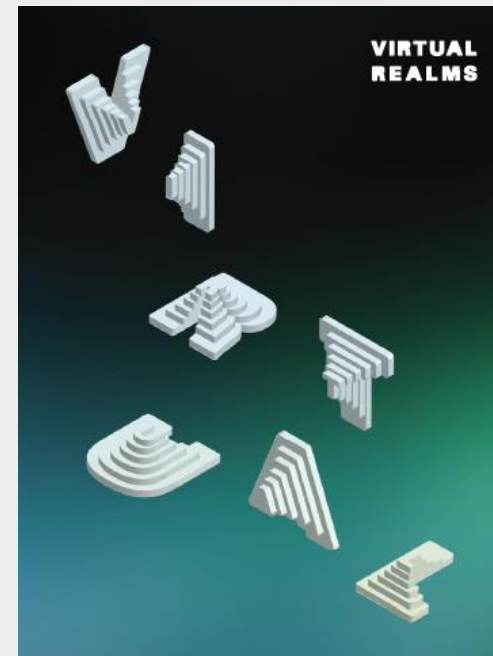
The three controller variables: flow, scale, and warp.



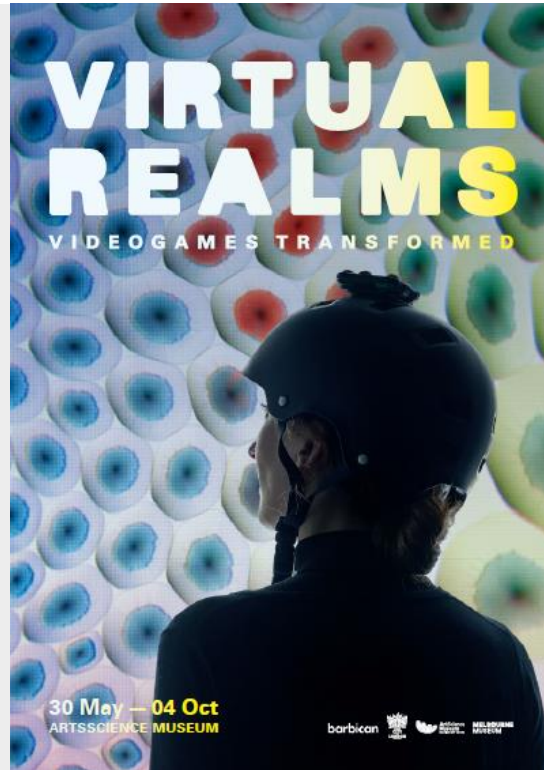
Pushing the buttons results the controller.


The three controllers can be turned to manipulate the variables flow, scale, and warp in the visual simulation.

Virtual Realms 134



Graphic Design
Examples of
exhibition
marketing





BIE is a world leading creator of exhibitions and experiences that aim to reframe visitors understanding of familiar subjects and explore some of the most challenging and inspirational topics in the world today.

With a focus on contemporary culture, emerging technology and digital creativity. BIE create holistic environments in which contemporary art, immersive experiences, historical artefacts, design, music and videogaming can provide the platform for a creative exploration of essential narratives.

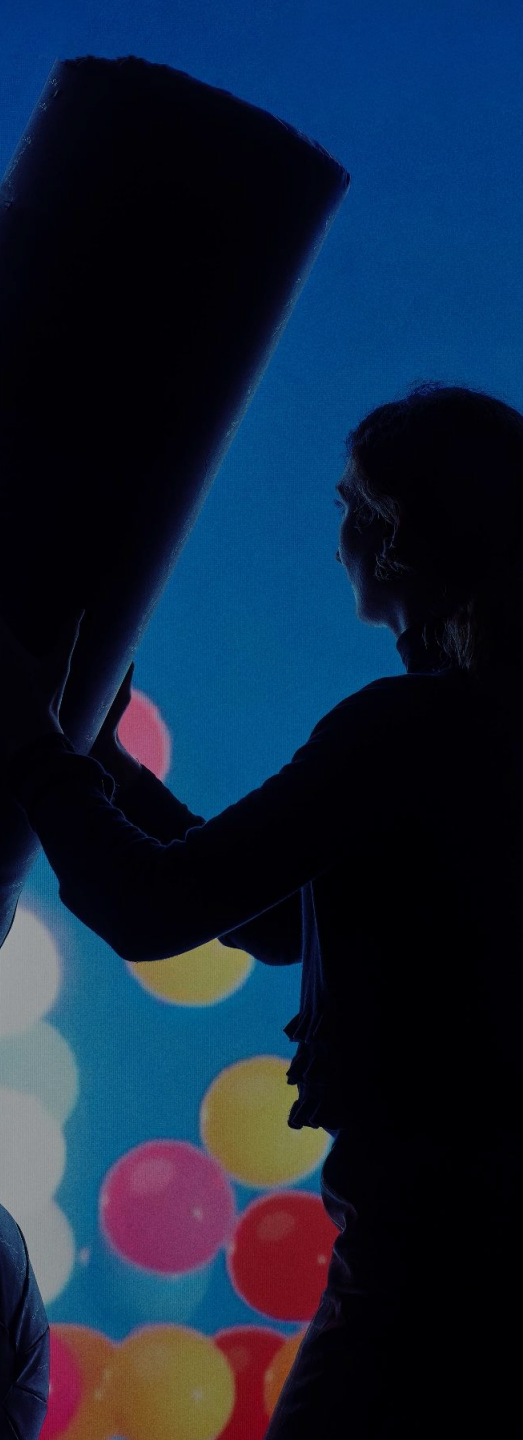
Presented by

**Barbican
International
Enterprises**

BIE has been to **54** venues across **27** countries and still growing
Worldwide **Over 6,407,216 visitors** have visited a BIE exhibition



BIE touring exhibition locations



Current Exhibitions



A selection of previous artists and collaborators

- Tetsuya Mizuguchi
- Chris Milk
- Es Devlin
- teamLab
- Marshmallow Laser Feast
- Rhizomatiks
- Will.i.am
- Conrad Shawcross
- Hideo Kojima
- Larissa Sansour
- Trevor Paglen
- Isaac Julien
- Massive Attack
- Neri Oxman
- Joy Buolamwini
- Takeshi Murakami
- Jenova Chen



A selection of previous Venue Partners

- Miraikan, Japan
- Kunsthall Rotterdam, Netherlands
- BRANDTS, Denmark
- Guangdong Science Center, China
- Forum Groningen, Netherlands
- Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Brazil
- Detroit Institute of Arts, USA
- La Vilette, France
- Multimedia Art Museum, Russia
- Fundacion Canal, Spain

A selection of previous sponsors and media partners



The Barbican

The Barbican is a world-class arts and learning organisation that pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does.

We are:

- One of the largest arts and learning organisations in Europe;
- Registered Charity in the UK.

We have:

- 3 Theatres, 2 Concert halls, 2 Galleries, 3 Cinemas

- 1,000,000+ tickets sold last year
- 3,835+ events across all art forms every year
- 4,310 + artists from 58 nations
- 20,00,000+ estimated visitors
- 4,100,000 million unique website visitors
- 2 million+ social media followers
- 40,000 people reached through creative learning programmes



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An aerial view of a modern urban plaza at dusk. A canal runs along the left side, with several circular fountains spraying water. People are sitting on concrete steps and benches, some under large umbrellas. The background shows a multi-story building with balconies and a sign that reads "at Barbican: music, dance, film, education, art, theatre, cinema, library, restaurants, bars".

Thank you

Contact

patrick.moran@barbican.org.uk

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