

# AU Game Lab Opened a Video Game Arcade at the Smithsonian Over the Holidays

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Right before winter break began, the American University Game Lab opened up a one-day pop-up indie arcade at the Smithsonian American Art Museum stocked with what you'd expect a gamer to dream of come nightfall.

More than 4,000 people of all ages and sizes entered the museum on Dec. 7 to play a whole series of action-packed shoot 'em up games, virtual board games and even classic arcade games.

"Visitors learned that games are more than *Super Mario Brothers*, *Halo*, and *Call of Duty*," said Lindsay Grace, director of the AU Game Lab and Studio after a successful Smithsonian launch. "They experienced games that experiment with emotion, affection, storytelling, history, politics, and

more. The indie games we selected helped to open people's eyes to the wide variety of games being made today."

Video games are a growing part of American culture, which is why when the AU Game Lab was first approached by the Smithsonian the idea of a pop-up arcade became a reality. Creative game-making is art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum's recognition of the culturally relevant industry proved to be quite the hit when the indie arcade came to life.

Four organizations partnered to create the indie arcade: the AU Game Lab, the International Game Developer's Association, MAGFest and the Smithsonian Art Museum. AU spearheaded the efforts by developing many of the games in the pop-up arcade itself and choosing other games create din the mid-Atlantic region.

As most games were developed in D.C., Maryland or Virginia, arcade visitors also got the chance to meet the creators of the games and learn from the developers how to build their own.

"When I was growing up, games seemed to be made by mystery guys who lived far away," said Chris Totten, AU Game Lab's artist-in-residence and chair of the Washington, DC, IGDA chapter in an interview (<http://www.american.edu/cas/news/indie-arcade-smithsonian-american-art-museum.cfm>) with the university. "This is no longer true, and we want the general public to meet real, local people just like them who make games. We want them to know that they can make games too—and that they can express themselves through games they create."

Totten and Grace agree that the arcade proved video games aren't solely for entertainment purposes: many are capable of changing the way people think. They plan to hold a similar event with the Smithsonian and possibly other museums in 2015.

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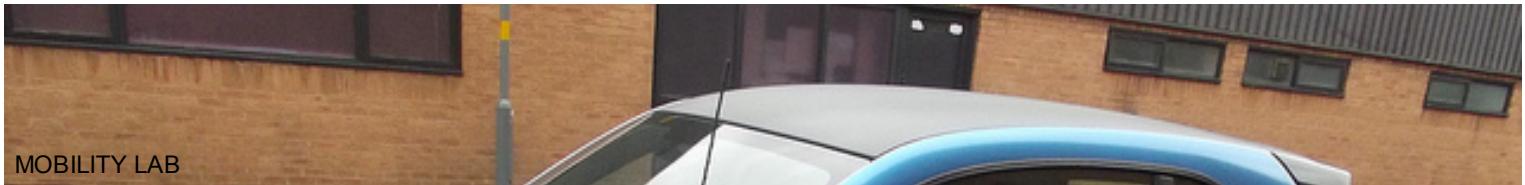
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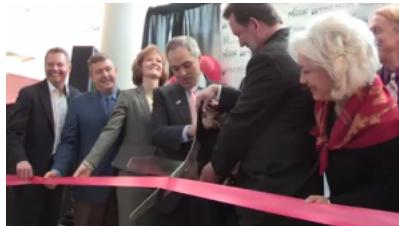
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**Molly Greenberg**

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