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## Video Games: Beyond the Violence

Bradley M. Gardner

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First place winner

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Many claim that a video game is simply another piece of violent media which is responsible for corrupting society. Few people though see a video game as what it truly is, a playable piece of art.

“It takes a lot of design and a lot of artists to design characters and environments,” Jon Councill `15 said.

Like any piece of art a video game is a form of expression. The Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in the 2011 *Brown vs. Entertainment Merchants Association* that like the protected books, plays and movies that preceded them, video games communicate ideas and even social messages through many familiar literary devices and through features distinctive to the medium ([washingtontimes.com](http://washingtontimes.com)).

In a video game a player is often times taken away to a different reality and many are unlike anything which can be seen on this Earth. In order to create these different worlds a lot of work is necessary.

During the creation of the game’s world several artists along with the game’s original creator, work around the clock sketching out several drafts of the concept. The concept is then tweaked and animated ([www.buzzle.com](http://www.buzzle.com)).

“Far Cry 3 has great environments because the leaves on the trees and the background noises of the rivers, animals, and insects make you feel like you're actually there,” Councill said

“Darksiders II has some really good looking environments because of its hand painted look,” Tyler Simmers `13 said.

Besides the environmental design there is also the characters in the game. Each character is skillfully created by an artist and brought to life by a voice actor.

“[I think the character] Vaas [from Far Cry 3 is well designed] because he closely resembles a real person along with the voice acting and the facial expressions,” Councill said.

“[The character] Kratos [from the God of War series is well developed]. In the game you really do get to feel the pain which Kratos endures through his journey,” Simmers said.

Most games also feature a musical score to help drive the game forward.

In most cases some music is specifically designated for the game and the rest is just from popular recording artists. However some games have an entire musical score designed just for that game.

“[The game] Skyrim has a great soundtrack, the Dovahkiin theme song really gets you in the mood for fighting dragons,” Councill said.

“The God of War series soundtrack is done very well, it really does a good job of matching up the music in the background with what’s actually going on in the game,” Simmers said.

Many critics claim that video games provide a certain degree of narrative storytelling that cannot be found in many other forms of media. This is due to the player being placed into the story themselves instead of simply watching the story unfold ([litreactor.com](http://litreactor.com)).

“[The game series] Halo [has a good story], [In Halo] you play as the Master Chief who is trying to save humanity from the covenant. It’s gripping and keeps you on the edge of your seat,” Councill said

“Silent Hill 4 was a well-written masterpiece that was full, complete, and just plain made you feel as if you were in the game,” Simmers said.

Recently though there have been strides to recognize video games as art. In 2011 The Smithsonian Museum of Art released a year long exhibit which was solely based around the art of video games and their progression over the years in their 40 year evolution showing how they have grown from a small cluster of pigments to the vast and realistic worlds that are seen in today's games.