
Bozar

Bozar Arcade

Love and Emotions in Video Games



Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg © Fuzzy Ghost

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12 Oct.'24 »→ 5 Jan.'25

Brussel, October 10 – Bozar Arcade is back! Following the success of last year's Arcade x Afropolitan, this new edition of our space dedicated to video games and interactive media arts focuses on the theme of love, in connection with the exhibition *Love is Louder*.

To bridge the gap between traditional art forms and contemporary digital stories, Bozar launched Bozar Arcade. This project is designed to offer visitors a diverse range of interactive and immersive digital media art that not only entertains, but also inspires and challenges perceptions.

Bozar Arcade is an integral part of our Bozar Digital programme. It explores the impact of digital arts by providing a dynamic platform where various artistic disciplines can flourish in the digital realm.

"High and low culture? That is a division that has been critically examined by many artists since the 1960s. Digital technologies open unprecedented worlds. With Bozar Arcade, we offer a curated video game program that combines the element of play with artistic imagination and emotional experience."

Christophe Slagmuylder, CEO and Artistic Director at Bozar

Love and Emotions in Video Games

This edition explores not only romantic love, kinship, and friendship but also societal bonds and how we connect to others in society. The arcade shows how video games are powerful tools for emotional engagement and storytelling. In the hands of artists and creatives, this interactive medium offers a possibility for deeper emotional connection with characters and immersive narratives.

Some of the games selected show how you can develop strong attachments to virtual characters, experiencing feelings like real-life romances or quarrels with your parents. Others provide spaces for exploring romantic fantasies and emotional depth. And games like *Queer Man Peering into a Rock Pool.jpg* address a rather philosophical definition of romance and personal growth.

Quotes from the Curators

“The emotions conveyed by video games are powerful vectors of social bonding between those who play them. Social bonds capable of showing that society is stronger than the merchants of hate: love is indeed louder.”

Julien Annart, Co-curator of Bozar Arcade

“Bozar Arcade is an innovative project at Bozar, a form of complementarity to the existing artistic programming, and one for which we’ve worked to find the right balance between aesthetic and artistic quality, game-play and game-feel – or so to say, the playability of the games.”

Emma Dumartheray, Coordinator and co-curator of Bozar Arcade

“Can anyone attending the next Bozar Arcade be trained to become ‘better’ at love? In a way, yes”

Jafar Hejazi, Co-curator Bozar Arcade

Bozar Arcade is curated by Bozar with the support of:

RRF – Recovery Plan by the European Commission

VAF – Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds

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Bozar can facilitate interviews with the developers.

Discover 6 video games about love at Bozar

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Summary and overview

***Realistic Kissing Simulator*, Jimmy Andrews, Loren Schmidt, 2014**

In *Realistic Kissing Simulator*, two people sit together, contemplating a kiss. If both decide to go for it, they experience a detailed kissing simulation—complete with expanding, wobbling, squishing, and licking tongues

“Like all the best games—and like real kissin’ (I assume, haven’t tried it yet)—it’s easy to do but nearly impossible to master.”

Joseph Bernstein, [BuzzFeed News](#)

***Luxuria Superbia*, Tale of Tales (Michaël Samyn & Auriea Harvey), music by Walter Hus, 2013**

Luxuria Superbia is a colorful, musical journey made to fill you with joy. Exciting designs explode from your touch as you glide through playful stylized flowers.

It’s all about the experience and the interaction.

“Independent Games Festival (IGF) Nuovo Award” San Francisco, CA, 2014

“GameCity8 Festival” Nottingham, October 22, 2013

Nominee for IndieCade International Festival Los Angeles, October 3–6, 2013

“Finalist in IndieCade Showcase” Los Angeles, June 11–13, 2013

“It could easily have been some intellectual erotic essay, some lofty treatise on libidinous imagery. It isn’t, it’s fun, and challenging and kind of raunchy.”

– Keith Stuart, [The Guardian](#)

***Queer Man Peering into a Rock Pool.jpg*, Fuzzy Ghost, 2022**

Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool is a passive, narrative-driven adventure game where players explore a post-apocalyptic world through the eyes of the amnesiac protagonist, the Queer Man.

Won the *Excellence in Emerging Games* at the 2022 AGDAs,

Won the *Freeplay Award* in 2024.

ibb & obb, Richard Boeser & Roland IJzermans, 2013

ibb & obb is a two-player cooperative game set in a puzzle filled world where gravity goes both up and down. You can only succeed by working closely together.

The game answers the Friendship strand of the curation around the Love topic.

Winner of Indie Showcase Award Develop, 2013

Winner of Design Innovation Award Indiecade, 2008

Winner of New Media Jury Award Cinekid Festival, 2013

Nominee of Most Amazing Game, Amaze Festival, 2012

Nominee of Gamer's Voice Award, SXSW, 2014

Nominee of Best PC/Console Game, Dutch Game Awards, 2013

Nominee of Best Entertainment Game Design, Dutch Game Awards, 2013

Player Non Player, Jonathan Coryn, Armand Bultheel, music by Agar Agar, 2024

Player Non Player is a queer game created by the award-winning artist Jonathan Coryn.

Dealing with bereavement, gender identity and the intimacy of an encounter, this game invites you to discover an island lost in the clouds and to develop a relationship of trust with the four living beings that inhabit it. It's all accompanied by the music of Agar Agar with total freedom to experiment with sounds and environments.



"A breathtaking artistic and technical complexity." – [Le Monde](#)

"Player Non Player champions oddness and intimacy." – [NME](#):

Thirsty Suitors, Outerloop Games, 2023, Annapurna Interactive

Based on a scenario reminiscent of American independent cinema, *Thirsty Suitors* tells a story whose main characters are from South Asia and transcends it with its dynamic handling. Behind its energy, the game takes a subtle look at the bonds of family and love, showing how cooking can bring people together and enable them to share their emotions.

Finalist at D.I.C.E., 27th Annual Awards for Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game, 2024

Selected at Tribeca Festival Games Award, 2022

Discover 6 video games about love at Bozar

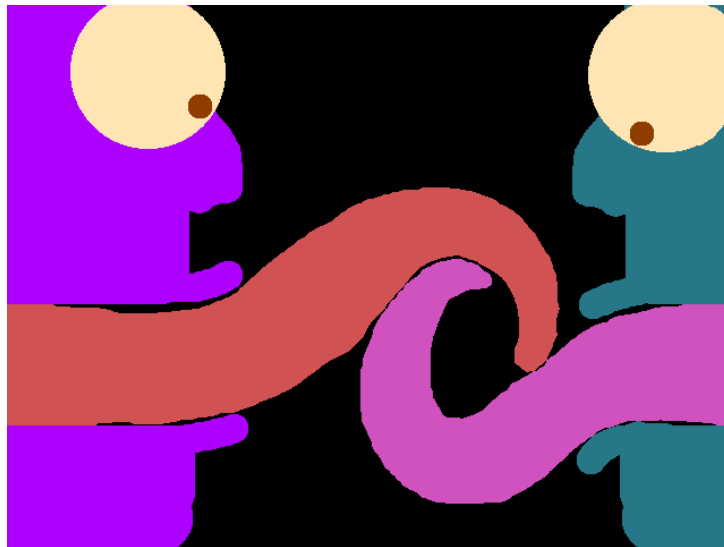
12 Oct.'24 »→ 5 Jan.'25

Appendix: About the Games & Developers

***Realistic Kissing Simulator*, Jimmy Andrews, Loren Schmidt, 2014**

About the game

What a strange phenomenon this human practice of kissing with the tongue is! Biology may explain that it's a matter of checking the state of a potential partner's immune system, but that doesn't make it any less bizarre. And that's exactly what *Realistic Kissing Simulator* is all about – seeing and playing with all the eccentricities of kissing with humour and clumsiness. There's plenty for both players to enjoy in this game that's as original as it is funny, proving that video games can deal with all kinds of love topics... especially when they make you laugh.



Realistic Kissing Simulator © Jimmylands

About the developers

Loren Schmidt is a computer artist and game designer whose works include *Star Guard*, *STRAWBERRY CUBES*, *Realistic Kissing Simulator* (with Jimmy Andrews), *beads of orange glass*, and *http://inflorescence.city* (with Everest Pipkin). They are devoted to endless experimentation, and exploring human experience and queerness through minimal, lo-fi systems.

Jimmy Andrews is a software developer and game designer whose works include *How to Be a Tree* (with B Kinney), *Realistic Kissing Simulator* (with Loren Schmidt), and *Mr. Heart Loves You Very Much*. He currently works on Unreal Engine, developing new artist tools and geometry algorithms.

"We started making a realistic kissing simulator from a conversation about how to simulate the soft, squishy physics of tongues and lips. The game grew organically from there as we developed it – exploring the simulation's inherent awkward intimacy and focus on embodiment, and ways to structurally integrate navigation of consent."

Loren Schmidt and Jimmy Andrews, Jimmylands

Luxuria Superbia, Tale of Tales (Michaël Samyn & Auriea Harvey), music by Walter Hus, 2013

About the game

At first glance, *Luxuria Superbia* is a game that's easy to get to grips with, with its rich graphics and subtle message. The couple from the Tale of Tales studio invite you on a journey of the senses that, through its metaphors, promotes listening and respect for one another. *Luxuria Superbia* shows that sensuality between human beings is an alchemy to be constructed, with no instructions or efficient techniques. It invites us to slowly and patiently discover each other.

About the developers

Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn met online in 1999 and are both part of an online artist collective centered around a server called hell.com. Since the day they met, they have been collaborating—initially on website designs for clients and net art projects, and later expanding into various interactive works. In 2002, they shifted their focus entirely to video games by founding Tale of Tales as an independent game studio.

"Luxuria Superbia is the first outcome of a larger project called CNCNTR exploring the overlap between spiritual growth and sexual experience that combines sacred architecture, geocentric cosmology, flowers and human sensuality. The game starts in physical intimacy and grows increasingly to end in a spiritual universe. But don't rush!"

Auriea Harvey and Michael Samyn, Tale of Tales

Awards & Recognition¹

"Independent Games Festival (IGF) Nuovo Award" San Francisco, CA, 2014

"GameCity8 Festival" Nottingham, October 22, 2013

"Nominee for IndieCade International Festival" Los Angeles, October 3–6, 2013

"Finalist in IndieCade Showcase" Los Angeles, June 11–13, 2013

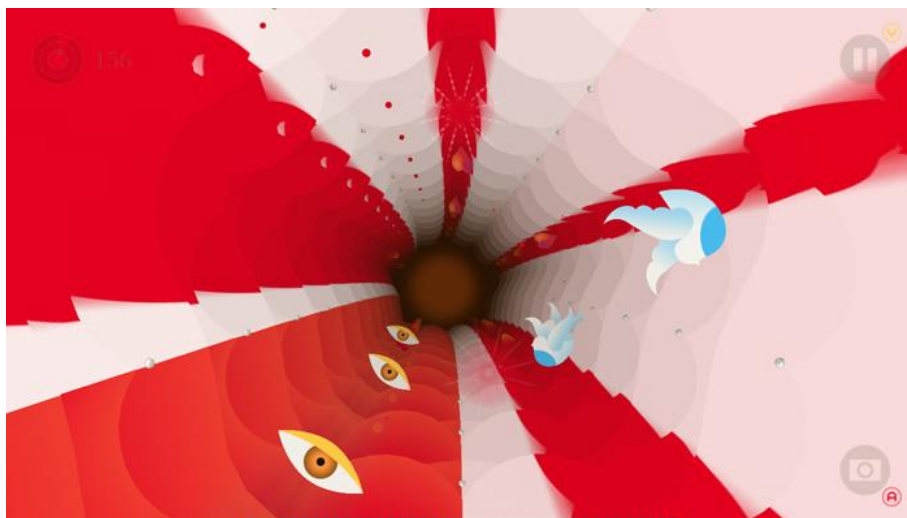
"It could easily have been some intellectual erotic essay, some lofty treatise on libidinous imagery. It isn't, it's fun, and challenging and kind of raunchy."

– Keith Stuart, [The Guardian](#)

Music by Walter Hus

A contemporary composer and pianist that thrives on experimentation, Walter Hus was, in the '80s, one of the co-founders of – and pianist with – the avant-garde group Maximalist, before embarking on the more traditional creation of work for opera, dance, theatre and film. Walter sometimes plays solo piano, but he also works with orchestras and ensembles, writers, visual artists, illustrators, rock and techno artists as well as theatre choreographers, film directors and designers of video games.²(source : website [Igloo Records](#))

[PRESS KIT BY TALE OF TALES](#)



Luxuria Superbia © Tale of Tales

¹ https://store.steampowered.com/app/269150/Luxuria_Superbia/

² Source : website [Igloo Records](#)

Queer Man Peering into a Rock Pool.jpg, Fuzzy Ghost, 2022

About the game

Through the metaphor of a world swept away by a disaster, the game questions our relationship with the memories of loved ones. In a disturbing contrast between our avatar's insouciance and the drama he seems to be re-enacting a little more each day, it invites us to reconstruct this blurred but present past. Enveloped in a vaporwave aesthetic, an artistic movement inspired by the early days of the Internet, the Fuzzy Ghost duo – who come from the world of cinema and animation – offer us a touching and delicate experience of love that lasts even when it is no longer with us.



Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg © Fuzzy Ghost

About the developers

Fuzzy Ghost is the game developer duo of **Pete Foley** and **Scott Ford**. Together they develop narrative-driven games that are bold, colourful, joyful, very Australian, and very queer.

Awards & Recognition

The video game *Queer Man Peering Into A Rock Pool.jpg* won Excellence in Emerging Games at the 2022 AGDAs, it was also nominated for the IGF Nuovo in 2023, and it won the Freeplay Award in 2024.

*“We created *Queer Man Peering* just for us. We threw everything we loved into it: ibis, rock pools, anime, Taiwanese Slow Cinema. We are so delighted when it resonates with other people too.”*

Pete Foley and Scott Ford, Fuzzy Ghost

***ibb & obb*, Richard Boeser & Roland IJzermans, 2013**

About the game

Richard Boeser initially presented *ibb & obb* as an end-of-studies project: a game designed entirely around cooperation, helping each other and the complementarity between players. Set in a universe with a different gravity, this platform game with its distinctive aesthetic requires two players to communicate and work together to solve the puzzles of this universe. Unlike the competition often associated with video games, *ibb & obb* encourages dialogue and highlights human relationships and their collective construction. It's also a nod to the theme of friendship, present in the *Love is Louder* exhibition.



ibb & obb © Richard Boeser

About the developers

Richard Boeser (1979) is a Dutch game designer and artist living in Berlin, Germany. After studying industrial design he developed himself as a game designer and released the games *ibb & obb* and *Chalo Chalo*, with a third title called *Dubio* currently in development. Each of his games revolves around a unique mechanic, such as the inverted gravity in *ibb & obb*. Through a highly iterative process these core ideas are developed into full games that aim to be accessible and appealing to a broad audience.

Started in 2007 as Richard Boeser's graduation project it had its initial release on PlayStation 3 in 2013. Since then it has sold over 400.000 copies and continues to make and break friendships all around the world.

“The initial title for the game was ‘Brothers’. A tribute to the many fond memories I have of playing video games with my brother. The game’s cooperative nature forces players to work together, creating a space for bonding and hopefully future fond memories.”

Richard Boeser & Roland IJzermans

Awards & Recognition³

*Winner of Indie Showcase Award Develop,
2013*

*Winner of Design Innovation Award
Indiecade, 2008*

*Winner of New Media Jury Award
Cinekid Festival, 2013*

*Nominee of Most Amazing Game,
Amaze Festival, 2012*

*Nominee of Gamer’s Voice Award,
SXSW, 2014*

*Nominee of Best PC/Console Game,
Dutch Game Awards, 2013*

*Nominee of Best Entertainment Game Design,
Dutch Game Awards, 2013*

[PRESS KIT by Richard Boeser](#)

³ https://store.steampowered.com/app/95400/ibb__obb/

***Player Non Player*, Jonathan Coryn, Armand Bultheel, music by Agar Agar, 2024**

About the game

In 2020, the electro-pop group Agar Agar wanted to create its new album alongside a video game, as the two works shared a common universe. Four years of work with Jonathan Coryn gave birth to *Player Non Player*. Dealing with bereavement, gender identity and the intimacy of an encounter, this game invites you to discover an island lost in the clouds and to develop a relationship of trust with the four living beings that inhabit it. It's all accompanied by the music of Agar Agar with total freedom to experiment with sounds and environments.



Player Non Player © Jonathan Coryn

About the developers

Jonathan Coryn is a French artist and video game creator making unconventional pieces with a bold artistic direction and innovative gameplay. After studying game design at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Jonathan joins the *Beaux-Arts de Paris/Cergy*, showcasing his projects at prestigious venues such as the *Centre Pompidou*. Independent, he creates games that offer new playful perspectives on grief, denial, love, sexual and gender identity. He is already working on his next 2 creations, titles that are equally audacious.

Agar Agar is a French electro-pop duo formed in 2015 by Clara Cappagli and Armand Bultheel. Mostly famous for their single *Prettiest Virgin*, they released the music album *Player Non Player* January 20, 2023, following a world tour. They notably played multiple times at l'Olympia, Paris.

“There’s something sublime in our terrible and unfair mortal condition: we love and we inevitably lose the ones we love. I made Player Non Player to be a cathartic art piece that shakes the way we put our mortality into perspective.”

Jonathan Coryn

Awards & Recognition⁴



Amaze – 2023

Most Amazing Game Award

Octobre Numérique – 2022

Official selection

Institut Français – 2024 – 2026

*Selected by the French cultural ambassador for the next edition of Novembre Numérique and will therefore be **exhibited worldwide for 2 years**, from 2024 to 2026.*

Agar Agar – Playtest tour – 2022

*Featured in an **experimental concert tour** with Agar Agar, where the game was exhibited and **played by the audience during the concerts**.*

“A breathtaking artistic and technical complexity.”

[Le Monde](#)

“Player Non Player champions oddness and intimacy.”

[NME](#)

[PRESS KIT by Jonathan Coryn](#)

⁴ https://store.steampowered.com/app/2175690/Player_Non_Player/

Thirsty Suitors, Outerloop Games, 2023, Annapurna Interactive

About the game

Returning to the American suburbs of her childhood, Jala will have to come to terms with her old loves and friendships, but also try to reconnect with her parents and family. Based on a scenario reminiscent of American independent cinema, Thirsty Suitors tells a story whose main characters are from South Asia, and transcends it with its dynamic handling. Behind its energy, the game takes a subtle look at the bonds of family and love, showing how cooking can bring people together and enable them to share their emotions.



Thirsty Suitors © Outerloop Games

About the developers

Outerloop Games, established in 2017, is a minority led, fully distributed game studio creating games about underrepresented culture and themes. The team is spread across the US, Canada, UK, Australia, India, and China

“Thirsty Suitors is a game about culture, relationships, family pressures, and expressing oneself. We know what we’re going to build but we leave enough room for some magic to happen and for the game to figure itself out. The player will get into more dramatic moments, but there’s comedy and levity. We feel like we can go between those things in a relationship game like this, and show it in very fantastical ways.”

Outerloop Games

Awards & Recognition⁵

Finalist at D.I.C.E., 27th Annual Awards for Outstanding Achievement for an Independent Game, 2024

Selected at Tribeca Festival Games Award, 2022

[PRESS KIT BY OUTERLOOP GAMES](#)

⁵ https://store.steampowered.com/app/1617220/Thirsty_Suitors/

Love in the Time of Video Games

Video game designers too strive to capture love in their work – in all its overwhelming, elusive and indefinable nuances. Moreover, the genre has undergone a remarkable evolution in that department.

“The new Bozar Arcade is dedicated to the exhibition *Love is Louder*,” says digital dramatist Jafar Hejazi. “I went looking for games about love in the broadest sense.”

Brilliant Courtship

Love has evolved considerably as a theme within video games – and it is explored with a little more nuance and complexity every decade. It all began in 1987, with the comedy game *Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards*, in which a

double entendre spewing incel was the butt of multiple jokes. A year later, the dating simulator *Romantic Encounters at the Dome* featured a ‘steward’ who exhorted overly forward players to shut it. And in 1997, the role-playing game *Final Fantasy VII* presented the very first video game romance with Hollywood aspirations. The flirtation between the main characters Cloud and Aerith (and the tragic conclusion) coloured the teenage years of millions of millennials.

Then in 2003, *Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne* served up a complex romance between two grieving lovers. And *Mass Effect 2* picked up the theme in 2010 with a near brilliant courtship: in playable dialogue scenes, the player had to put real effort into making sure their protagonist was able to hook up with one of the other

characters (m/f/x/alien). Nor should one forget the indie video game scene, which explored the theme of love from even more diverse perspectives. Obsessive infatuation in *Braid* (2008); the airport novel as guilty pleasure in *Everlove* (2014); gay men discovering their sexuality and, in a pioneering move, becoming parents in *Dream Daddy* (2017); toxic amorous behaviour in *Boyfriend Dungeon* (2021); ... The list is relatively long.

But not every title meets the criteria that Jafar Hejazi uses to select the games for Bozar Arcade. “I won’t deny that the commercial circuit has also embraced the theme in the meantime,” says the ‘games curator’. “But only in a limited way. Love is usually explored through text, which is something I try to avoid. I look for games that transcend language, but also age barriers.” Hejazi adds that commercial games are almost exclusively about romantic love. “Where are the video games about self-love? About social love? About love of family and friends?”

Queer Man Peering Into a Rock Pool.jpg is, for the co-curator, an example of something deeper. In the game, the protagonist, a middle-aged gay man, furnishes his empty house. Through this act, a reverie about sexual identity ferments in the player’s mind. “With this Bozar Arcade, I want to make people really think about love,” says Hejazi. “About how we can love ourselves as well as each other.”

Artistic Expression

Jafar Hejazi is a digital dramatist – concerned with the intersection between digital technology and artistic expression. His background often brings him into contact with ‘game engines’, the software that makes the world of a video game spin. “What interests me most is the gamification of ideas and concepts,” says the co-curator. “You can make very abstract things tangible with game mechanics.”

For the curation of Bozar Arcade, Hejazi defined several criteria. That it should be about experiences, for example, and not competition. That the games are devised by independent creators and form a canvas for artistic expression. That they be thematically relevant. That they are not merely entertaining, but also inspiring. That they do not contain extreme violence or discrimination. They do not have to imitate reality, but rather try to change it through an artistic concept. That they are, in short, art.

“Admittedly, people working on commercial games also consider their work as art,” Hejazi says. “Game designers build worlds and design experiences. But Bozar wants to go a step further. Which is what game companies would be wise to do as well, instead of just serving their

core audience. At Bozar, we want to bridge the gap between – how shall I say it – the high arts and the more popular ones.”

A video game is first and foremost a simulation. And these can be very powerful and persuasive, says the digital dramatist. “Technology companies use video games to train AI bots. But that’s how it can work with humans too, or so it seems to me.”

So, can anyone attending the next Bozar Arcade be trained to become ‘better’ at love? “In a way, yes,” believes Hejazi.

“What games already do very well is connect. I look for titles in which the characters connect with each other, where they collectively build a community, and thus try to understand one another. Video games are also successful at triggering emotions. Play a FIFA football game and you can’t help but get emotionally involved. With the next Bozar Arcade, I want to present video games that link that kind of emotional engagement with meaningful ideas about love and feelings.”

Ronald Meeus

Source: Season Magazine Bozar '24 – '25, pp. 103–107