

## Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia - Fact Sheet

20 April 2010

roma, milano, venezia  
new york

## GameCulture – from game to art

**With its GameCulture programme lasting until 2012, Pro Helvetia is drawing attention to the social, economic and aesthetic aspects of computer games and exploring the characteristics of the genre as a new art form. To launch the programme, the Swiss Arts Council, in close cooperation with the Fantoche animation film festival, invites domestic computer game developers to submit their work as of 9 September 2010.**

Pro Helvetia  
Schweizer Kulturstiftung  
Hirschengraben 22  
CH-8024 Zürich  
T +41 44 267 71 71  
F +41 44 267 71 06  
info@prohelvetia.ch  
www.prohelvetia.ch

Computers have become both a principal tool in our working life and one of our favourite toys. Games are now an integral feature in the daily life of a growing number of people from a broad social spectrum, and the number of those involved in the creation of the associated, increasingly complex digital worlds is also on the rise. Game producers nowadays are clients for artists from a variety of disciplines – graphic designers, script writers, composers and others. The ever closer link between the world of computer games on the one hand and visual arts, music and film on the other makes the involvement of cultural promotion institutions inevitable. UNESCO has recognised computer and video games as a cultural industry and acknowledged the contribution they make to cultural diversity. In France, Germany and the Nordic states, video games have been on the cultural agenda for a long while already.

### Significance of computer games in Switzerland

The market is booming, the games industry has proved resilient to all forms of crisis so far and has, in fact, advanced to the cultural industry with the highest turnover. In 2007, sales amounting to over EUR 30 billion were generated worldwide. Switzerland alone registered a turnover of around EUR 27 million, three times more than in 2004. Beat Sutter, a lecturer involved in the game design programme at the Zurich University of the Arts, has created a survey of the Swiss game design scene based on the network of game developers set up by Pro Helvetia. Dr Sutter's study underscores the potential of the games scene in Switzerland especially in the areas of technology, design and casual gaming.

### Computer games as art form

Similar to television and cinema two or three generations back, computer games are faced with the generic suspicion of being nothing more than trash and a mindless diversion for children and childish adults. Gamers and non-gamers find it hard to understand each other's attitude. There is a sharp generational divide. Public debate tends to be more emotional than factual, with the focus mostly on addiction and the depiction of violence. Few non-gamers realise that there is a diversity of genres in computer games similar to that of feature films. Through its GameCulture programme, Pro Helvetia aims to raise public awareness and understanding of the wealth and complexity inherent in this new medium.

## GameCulture agenda

Computer games will be in the spotlight from autumn 2010 to 2012 at three exhibitions and various panel discussions at conferences and festivals.

- **9 September 2010: Programme kick-off**

Bid for game submissions at the international animation film festival Fantoche in Baden.

- **2010 – 2012: Knowledge transfer – panel discussions, presentations, symposia**

Discussions and presentations hosted by existing platforms (NIFFF, Fantoche, Cinéma tous écrans etc.) focusing on social, aesthetic and economic aspects of computer games.

- **22 October: «Home. Willkommen im digitalen Leben» (welcome to digital life) exhibition**

conceptualised and realised by Stapferhaus Lenzburg. The exhibition highlights social, cultural and political issues in connection with today's number one entertainment medium. It is aimed at a broad audience of gamers and non-gamers alike.

- **Autumn 2011: DVD «Swiss Game Design» travelling exhibition**

on Swiss contributions to computer games, game technology, simulations and 'serious games'. «Swiss Game Design», scheduled to go on a tour around the world, is realised by plug.in in Basel.

- **Winter 2011: «Playtime | Game mythologies» exhibition**

conceptualised and realised by Maison d'Ailleurs in Yverdon (curator: José Luis de Vicente, director of the Prado museum's VISUALIZAR Medialab in Madrid). The focus is on gaming as a cultural technique, the archaeology of the digital playground, games as pop culture, and utopian worlds in an age of increasing complexity.

Further details on the programme can be found on Pro Helvetia's website at

[www.prohelvetia.ch](http://www.prohelvetia.ch).

Media relations: Sabina Schwarzenbach, Head of Communication,

tel. +41 44 267 71 39, fax +41 44 267 71 06, [sschwarzenbach@prohelvetia.ch](mailto:sschwarzenbach@prohelvetia.ch)