

# Sex in Games: Representing and Desiring the Virtual

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## **ABSTRACT**

No sooner is a visual medium invented than it becomes used for pornographic representation - games are no exception. This paper chronicles depictions of sexual intercourse within game content and the presence of pornographic imagery that utilizes the game aesthetic whilst attempting to examine some of the motivation behind its creation and use. Unlike historical accounts of the stimulating effects of art, such as men's arousal at the realism of Sansorino's nude *Venus*, or Pliny's account of a man's infatuation with the sculpture of *Aphrodite of Caridos*, sex in games exists within a cyber-culture that offers access to a broad range of erotic, graphic and specialized pornographic materials. The authenticity of digitally mediated experiences – desire-driven assemblages of the social and technological – is given consideration in terms of whether the perceptual nature of sexuality is undergoing a transformation, allowing for wider patterns of variation in erotic sub-cultures. This paper recognizes how these sub-cultures remain focused upon, and constructed around phallogentric fantasies and desires, but begins to reflect on how the substance of the body and the sexual object is continuing to shift and diversify.

## **Keywords**

Sex, Pornography, Visual Culture, Celebrity, Arousal, Effects Debate

Opportunities for engaging with pornographically-tinged material within game spaces have developed so radically that it is now possible to experience interactive photo-realistic 3D bodies performing explicit sexual acts. The seemingly unstoppable flood of pornographic materials into cultural interstices has led to the mediated presence, articulation and consumption of sexual content via game technologies, possibly sparking a new cultural expression of sexual desire and expanding ever-chaotic global electronic

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cultures. The articulation of sexual content within digital spaces add to the already ‘seriously fractured’ (Seidman, 1992, p.211) grasp of the moral boundaries of legitimate sexual expression. Indeed, Heim (1993) has argued that the allure of technology is itself erotic. He states that, “our affair with information machines announces a symbiotic relationship and ultimately a mental marriage to technology” (p. 61). The utilization of game aesthetics and its interactive characteristics in the widening of pornographic territories now pose further questions relating to its affects upon the constitution of desire. In the context of this paper, a hyper-real authenticity propelled by ‘technological advancements’ evokes the “literal-minded behaviorism of the public discourse around sexualized images” (Gaines, 2004, p.31), that the aim is to physically move and manipulate bodies as a result of their engagement. Here we encounter a very different ‘effects’ debate to the one that game studies has become accustomed.

Although, the main focus of interest in this paper is the discussion of the representation of the body and simulated sexual acts within games or virtual spaces, it is probably necessary to acknowledge that there have *always* existed a trend for games that have been labeled ‘adult’ or erotic’ that have served mainly as a conduit for pornographic material. Of the many ‘adult’ games designed for the Commodore 64, they include *Cover Girl Strip Poker* (Emotional Pictures), *Curse of Ra* (Trans X), *Harry der Fensterputzer* (Brilliant Software), *Erotica* (Cybertech) and *Girltris* (Reliance). These games use play as a screen, often for removing or revealing pornographic imagery extracted from the sex industry itself (see Fig. 2.1). In these examples we find the pornographic artifact lodged in the mesh of play discourses, often self-canceling as pornographic in its re-assemblage as part of game territory and removal from the contextuality of pornography. Conduits for pornographic content continue to exist today, as exemplified by the development of the online environment of *Red Light World* (Nightcandy) where the aim is to offer an experience similar to Amsterdam’s infamous Red Light District, where visitors can access XXX Movie Theatres, Strip Clubs, Viagra outlets and other Adult themed stores. Most of these in-game representations inevitably lead the visitor to third part conventional pornography sites.



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**Figure 1.1:** Example of Early Adult/Erotic Games

## TOWARD SIMULATION: REPRESENTATION

In this exploratory examination of the prevalence of sexual content within games and the more general permeation of desired digital bodies throughout modern visual culture it was possibly to identify the initial predominance of ‘insinuation’ over graphic representation as a mode of address for depicting sex in games. The impetus for many early games that addressed sex was largely comedic where sex is equated with something risqué, titillating, fun and often treated in an ironic fashion. It is possible to interpret games that fall into this category as having been forced into this mode of address due to technological and representational limitations associated with gaming technologies of the period. Although this might constitute one explanation for the inclination toward this approach, this interpretation can undermine the traditions of sexual humor against which such games position themselves.

From a representational perspective, in 1987 the infamous sexual-conquest game series *Leisure Suit Larry* (Sierra Quest) game ran on DOS and Apple II, with 16-color enhanced graphics enhancer<sup>1</sup> (EGA). The game content itself was a graphical remake of one of the first adult only text adventure games *Softporn* (On-line Systems) created in 1981. Written in AppleSoft BASIC, it is reported that On-line Systems sold around 20,000 copies, to about one-fifth of the registered Apple user population at the time. By contrast, *Leisure Suit Larry* sold disappointingly to begin with (4,000 copies in its first month), but eventually went on to enter the top ten game sales due to word of mouth. The combination of the game’s success and its adult themed content prompted the unsuccessful "Leisure Suit Larry Bill" in California which attempted to make the inclusion of adult content in video games illegal. Instead, in 1987 the game won the award for ‘Best Adventure/Fantasy Role-Playing Game’ by the Software Publishers Association and went on to become an eight game franchise – the latest version of which, *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude*, was released in 2004 featuring Larry’s nephew, Larry Lovage.

The developers of *Leisure Suit Larry* (Sierra Quest) have always highlighted the games’ preference for “outrageous humor and raucous game play” (Vivendi Universal Games) that draws heavily on a brand of humor that many perceive as focused around sexual degradation and humiliation. Yet, the game exploits the concept of the ‘leisure suit’ and those who sported it as signifier for a particular set of attitudes towards sex associated with the 1970’s, the height of the leisure suit’s popularity, that is also characterized by a certain cheapness and brashness (the garment itself was constructed

<sup>1</sup> EGA supported 16 colors out of a palette of 64 at a resolution of either 320×200 or 640x350

from synthetic materials). In the game, the ‘suit’ constructs a role for the player, replete with moves, lines and strategies of the ‘pick up artist.’ A participant at the Annual Leisure Suit Convention, run in Des Moines Iowa every year, outlines the transformative effect of donning a leisure suit:

It does change people's personality. You can tell by the way they use their walk. When I met Tony, he was the swaggering image of John Travolta, dressed in mocha brown pants with front stitching and a comb wedged in his back pocket. I was blinded by the light of gold medallions nestled under his nest of chest hair while his polyester shirt collar threatened to take flight at any moment. But after the convention, Tony became Anthony, the boy-next-door in his baseball cap and sweatshirt. His cockiness had rubbed off and was replaced by a sensitive-man meekness (<http://desires.com/1.4/Style/Docs/leisure.html>).

The game predates the highly popular US television comedy show *That 70's Show* (Carsey-Werner Productions) that also functions to ridicule the now out-dated attitudes of that period and shares humor with contemporary comedy films such as *American Pie*, *Road Trip* and *Scary Movie*.

The game-play in *Leisure Suit Larry* revolves around one evening in the life of protagonist Larry Laffer. During this one evening he goes out on the town looking to coax/charm ladies into love (or sex) with just his self-perceived good looks, breath freshener and \$94 in his pocket. In the original version (prior to its 256 color and ‘point & click’ interface remake), game-play primarily consisted of using the arrow keys to navigate Larry and a text parser to interact with the environment. Larry encounters four female characters (see Figure 2.1) throughout the course of the game. The first, a ‘hooker’ in the upstairs bedroom above Lefty's bar to which he loses his virginity (and life if the player does not seek out a convenience store and condoms). Second is an ‘attractive blonde’ named Fawn encountered in a disco. In the casino, he encounters Faith, a security guard, but Larry's ultimate goal remains Eve in the penthouse of the casino hotel. Puzzles are mostly of the ‘obtain items’ variety, with each female character requiring something particular to satisfy her before she satisfies the character. The sex itself is shown in real time masked by a black box with the words CENSORED that comically, in the *Benny Hill* sense of the word, rises up and down with the motion of the characters.



**Figure 2.1:** Female Characters within Leisure Suit Larry

Sexual encounters in the 2004 version of the game have been supplemented by the ‘comical’ use of a sperm icon that requires navigation and the avoidance of gas clouds that cause Larry to slip up when ‘chatting up’ females. Instead, the aim is to hit green icons that guarantee Larry will feed the best lines. A heart icon is also used within the game interface to signify the current attraction level of the female currently being engaged. Each of the conversations occurs in real-time with over 90,000 words of dialogue to offer the game player variety. The latest version of the game also includes naked 3D modeled sex objects that retain a cartoon-like quality and a game environment peppered with innuendo, for example, bull statues with exaggerated male genitalia (following in the tradition of Capcom’s 1984 game *Knights of the Round* which featured Tigers with highly exaggerated genitalia).

A second early example of a game that attempted to incorporate and depict sexual acts into its narrative in a bid to include adult themes was *Golgo 13: Top Secret Episode* (1988, Vic Tokai) based on Takao Saito's 1960's comic of a Bond-esque hitman (e.g. *Olgo 13: Muyonosuke or Samurai Bounty Hunter*, Ninja Comics). In this side-scrolling game that used a third-person view in cut-scenes we get “the first ever (implied) sex scene on a Nintendo” (mobygames.com). In line with the tradition of British Intelligence spy James Bond, *Golgo 13* encounters intelligent and skillful female operatives who supply him with vital information for his progress and development but also predictably and inevitably supply themselves. The game also employs Bond’s approach to mixing sex with humor. Bond films typically operate on cloaked sexual euphemism and innuendo (e.g. the double entendres of Pussy Galore, Plenty O'Toole, and Xenia Onatopp). Take this typical Bond exchange from the film *Goldeneye* (1995) for example:

Caroline: James, is it really necessary to drive quite so fast?

James Bond: More often than you'd think.

Caroline: I enjoy a spirited ride as much as the next girl, but ... (A woman pulls up alongside and smiles.) Who's that?

James Bond: The next girl.

Caroline: James, stop this, stop it! I know what you're doing.

James Bond: Really? What's that, dear?

Caroline: You are just trying to show off the size of your, your ...

### James Bond: Engine?

During the course of the game Golgo 13 has sex with numerous partners. The first example of this is when Golgo 13 runs into Cherry Grace from the Fixer Group who assists him. On parting company a mere seconds later Cherry says: 'When you've finished work, stop by the hotel.' Later on, a mystery man advises Golgo 13 that Cherry is waiting in room 702, reinforcing the first directive. After an equally short conversation with Cherry in the hotel room we gaze voyeuristically at the couple as they are silhouetted in a hotel room window engaging in an embrace (see Fig. 2.2). The comedic twist that alludes to the confirmation of sex comes from the restored energy levels of the character the next morning. The follow up, *The Mafat Conspiracy* (1990) possessed more by the way of foreplay dialogue and gave its silhouetted figures a more distinct body outline that conveyed nakedness (much in the same way as the title credits in Bond films).



Figure 2.2 – Golgo 13, History in the Making

## CREATING A DEMAND

Players tired with lifestyle reality games denying full voyeuristic access to the pet sims that they had constructed and spent hours nurturing, famously responded by customizing *The Sims* (Electronic Arts) through the construction of the nude patch. In addition to early depictions of adult themes in games, the participatory cultures of gaming have pushed the demand for adult-oriented content thus extending its representational and experiential boundaries. By infiltrating gaming culture, the patch has contributed to the formation of new configurations of game characters, game spaces and game play (Schleiner, 1998). Accommodating every body shape and skin color, the nude patch battled the pixelated censorship of R-rated areas of the body. In doing so, these acts have also created cyber-celebrities of those who make patches for others to use, both free of charge or for a small fee (e.g. JD's SIMulated). Nude patching extends across gaming genres, including games such as *Neverwinter Nights* (BioWare Corp.) and *Morrowind* (Bethesda Softworks LLC).

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In doing so, it prompts transformations amongst a range of game protagonist and supporting characters, such as the brief appearance of females who signify the start of the race in driving game *F1 2002* (EA Sports) or topless prostitutes in *Grand Theft Auto 3* (Rockstar Games). Recognizing the popularity of the phenomena, the means for disrobing game characters have occasionally been endorsed or supported by the industry itself. Ritual Entertainment, developers of the game *Sin*, hid a skin (models/pl\_elexis/folder-x) for the character Elexis in its own software. Likewise in a response to censoring its own game content to guarantee shelf presence in US supermarket Wal★Mart, Planet Moon made modification simple for players of the game through the deletion of a file (arpfix.gzp) to create topless Sea Reapers in its game *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

### **Glamour Grammar**

A key point of interest in the nude patching phenomena is the virtual representation of celebrities, both real and virtual. Firstly, pornography and games collide, as porn star and *Unreal Tournament* (Epic Games) fan Asia Carrera reportedly created topless skins of herself for the game. Likewise, the character Julie from *Heavy Metal* (Ritual Entertainment) who has also received the nude patch treatment is a character based on the physique of Penthouse Pet of the Year Julie Strain (and wife of Heavy Metal creator Kevin Eastman). A form of commercial extension of these acts can now be found in the game *Playboy: The Mansion* (Cyberlore Studios), an adult-oriented management simulation that offers a blend of tycoon and social *SIM*ulation gameplay. As Hugh Hefner, the player is required to throw parties, live the free-minded playboy lifestyle whilst constructing the content of *Playboy* publications (including both images and articles). The game contains celebrity representations that include Carmen Electra, Tom Arnold and more than 100 real Playmates. However, in a similar vein to *Leisure Suite Larry*, the digitized Hugh Hefner is a younger version of the magazine mogul who strolls around in his red smoking jacket with half-naked women (large-breasted automatons with skin colors and hair styles) latched to his arms.

The nude game patch has been used more sensationally to expose celebrities that have not previously consented to appear nude. For example, the nude patch for the Britney Spears' game *Dance Beat* (Metro Graphics) is described by NudeSkins.com as "jail-bait Britney finally bares her chest like you knew (and hoped) she always wanted to." The same phenomena can be found aimed at the virtual stardom of Lara Croft who was transformed into Nude Raider by patchers. The desire to depict a virtual character naked is in part a consequence and reflection of the way in which such game characters grow in popularity to achieve a life beyond the game text. Take, for example, the inclusion of a 'brief' topless shot of *Siberia* (Microids) character Kate Walker within one of its cut-scenes (see Fig 3.1). Regardless of whether this scene adds authenticity and realism to the narrative of the game, the game players who took the trouble of capturing and posting these images online, expressed that they had glimpsed beyond her game-

determined costume to witness the real Karen Walker. Response to this insertion into the game thus appears comparable to the dual interpretation of a nude 'in character' appearance of a desirable actress,

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**Figure 3.1:** *Siberia* cut-scene depicting Karen Walker waking up

The nude exposure of celebrities is a familiar feature of online pornography. Nude scenes from films, tabloid exposé of celebrities on vacation and other voyeuristic materials find themselves archived online within countless nude celebrity websites. Where images have yet to be uncovered, celebrities have long suffered from having their image enclosed within doctored photos. It was a ‘faker’, the purveyor of pixel-based Photoshop remixing that was responsible for sublimely genuine and widely distributed images of Ashley Judd mid-stride at an awards ceremony minus her underwear. A sub-culture of online fakers gathered momentum with the creation of binaries.pictures.nude.celebrities.fake newsgroup in the mid 1990’s and now face online resistance from such groups as CyberTrackers (formed by the mother of film actress Alyssa Milano). Unlike the newspaper industry which is prohibited from distorting reality in order to convey a false or damaging impression, rights and ownership laws have permitted such practices to become commonplace within the magazine industry. Indeed, UK men’s magazine *GQ* famously admitted to having ‘digitally altered’ its cover-star Kate Winslet in order to make her slimmer. Particular attention was drawn to this case as Winslet discussed her comfort with possessing a ‘fuller figure’ within the accompanying interview. From the styled, manicured and flatteringly lit to the ubiquitous use of digitally manipulation and composites in magazine images, photos of celebrities consistently

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erode the line between reality and artifice. Commenting on these visual untruths, model Cindy Crawford is oft quoted as stating that: “I wish I looked like Cindy Crawford”.

A cult of perfection clearly pervades our culture. In her film *Killing Us Softly: Advertising's images of women* Jean Kilbourne (1979) argues the ideal woman has no scars or blemishes, or even pores. Alternatively the rationale for the construction of virtual model Webbie Tookay, who appeared in mobile communication advertising, is that she will never grow old, fat, develop a drug habit or drinking problem. In the Hollywood film *SlmOne*, film director Viktor (played by Al Pacino) proclaims: ‘Our ability to manufacture fraud now exceeds our ability to detect it’, referring to his digital actress. In this film, the narrative touches on the issue of replacing flesh and blood with CGI models or ‘synthespians’ as happened in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* that ran the tagline ‘unleash a new reality.’ The examples cited here point to how the digital is becoming appealing to both producers and audiences. Indeed, in 2004 a Miss Digital World competition attracted 3600 entries, the winner Katty-to (a digital representation of the entrant’s wife) received 17,000 online votes. These practices are reminiscent of the ‘techno-orientalism’ (Erceg, 2004) of Oshii’s *Ghost in the Shell* and the construction of the female cyborg body.

Theorists have considered that it is the disembodied experience of electronic spectatorship that is signaling a ‘crisis of the flesh’ (Sobchack, 2000). Yet, given the preoccupation with the digital image, are we so surprised by players’ desire to see digital naked versions of digital game characters like Lara Croft? Baudrillard (1988) has argued that: “America is neither dream or reality. It is hyperreality” (p. 253) and “the only physical beauty is created by plastic surgery” (p. 257). Even prior to Angelia Jolie taking on the film role of Lara Croft, the character has always possessed a dual existence as both virtual (*Tomb Raider*) and real (Natalie Cook, Rhona Mitra). Yet, it is the polygon pin-up version of Lara that has prevailed to make the front cover of *Playboy Magazine*, it was also the virtual version of Lara that was voted the female that British males would most like to go on a date with. Indeed, pornographic models have donned the Lara outfit (only to lose it again quickly) in order to appeal to this desire. Lara Croft fantasies are regularly played out online, for example, in an animated feature on [www.interactivexxxgames.com](http://www.interactivexxxgames.com) that sees Lara engaged in explicit sex scenes during one of her adventures. What makes these examples more fascinating is that they are situated in a culture of ‘pornotopia’ (Williams, 1989) characterized by “sheer ifinitude and availability” (Gaines, 2004, p.36) that include ‘webcam babes’, ‘pee fanatics’, ‘horny teens’ and ‘fatties’ to quote some of the enticements contained in e-mail spam received since researching this topic.

## INTERSECTIONS

In this context, pornography like games requires a breach of ‘real world’ ‘fantasy world’ separation, in which dissolution occurs between spectator and ‘scene’. Described as a ‘body genre’ (Williams, 1989), pornography is perceived academically as not just being consumed (as an audience or witness) but also ‘used’ (in masturbatory acts).

Furthermore, pornography remains devoted to fantasy despite divulging the harshest realities. Laura Kipnis (1996) argues that, “its fantasies traverse a range of motifs beyond the strictly sexual” (p. viii). Situated within the mechanization of pleasure, we find a widespread set of practices attached to virtual sex such as; phone sex, ‘netsex’ and futuristic ‘teledildonics’ that enable ‘erotic’ interaction between individuals whose bodies may never touch. In this age of progressive denaturalization, Lacan’s notion of desire arising from, and perpetuated by a ‘lack’ is exemplified by aspects of ‘netsex’ that is based upon the absence of the body and requires individual construction of pleasure through alternative forms of exchange. Returning to internet pornography and gaming, in both situations, the user has been described as simultaneously looking and touching. As Gaines (2004) argues:

We seem to produce the real-time screen image with our fingertips. And it is this simultaneous looking that touches and touching that looks that suggests the paradigm that I think has so much to offer as it takes us beyond the limits of voyeurism and towards a theory of perception in the electronic age (p. 39)

Such screen-based mediation offers both voyeuristic distance and deceptive proximity, bringing about a balanced illusion of connection and the reality of disconnection. Brisbane based new media artist Thea Baumann has picked up this parallel, having developed a strap-on joystick, *The Strap-On Love Pack* that extends the joystick rhetoric (e.g. *Thrustmaster Joysticks* and the acts of banking and shooting) to its logical extension. Her creation *Polymer Slut Lab*, uses a strap-on dildo as a joystick in a audio remixing game which involves the construction of lyrics from differently themed ‘porn spam’ (e.g. Viagra). Likewise, the intersections of appendages between these two industries was also evident in a post on the *Game Girl Advance* website that discussed alternative uses for the *Trace Vibrator* that shipped with the game *Rez* (developer):

We sat side by side on our makeshift couch, I with the trance vibrator and Justin with the controller. As the levels got more advanced, so did the vibrations ... revving up to an intense pulsing throbbing ... (Jane, posted 26/10/2002)

Comments to the post extended this perspective by offering further examples of the use of game rumble packs and advantages of different game software: “as the gunner in Warthog, you have unlimited ammo and you can just park yourself somewhere and rat-tat-tat to your heart’s content,” or “If you want hard vibration on your controller you should try Rallisport Challenge and Crash Bandicoot on Xbox.” In a playful take on the idea of ‘playing with oneself’ and a future that contains wireless vibrating controllers on wearable technology, Hot Topic sold a Controller Hot Pant (see Figure 4.1). In contrast to

the above discussions of machine-based representation of the body, these uses of game hardware, like the electromechanical vibrator, focus around directly producing what Williams (1989) calls the 'thing' (p. 72) or involuntary convulsions.



**Figure 4.1:** The Nintendo Controller Hot Pant

## IDENTIFYING GAME PORNOGRAPHY

D.H. Lawrence (1936) argued that one can identify ‘genuine pornography’ firstly by the manner in which it is “almost always underworld, it does not come into the open,” and secondly, it can be recognized by “the insult it offers, invariably, to sex, and to the human spirit” (p.23). In relation to the various cultural constructs and social spaces in which pornography appears, the utilization of game aesthetics present such an alternative encounter with sexual content. Somavision, for example, is a website devoted to interactive erotica aimed squarely at an audience old enough to complete credit card transactions. The site boasts realistic-looking models in a variety of ‘erotic poses’ that are placed in interactive situations (‘Strip-o-Matic’) where users can issue commands and playfully strip them naked. Intimacy and immediacy are offered through spectatorship by means of an aesthetic mediation. Such interactive features appropriate the adult re-imagining of Interactive KiSS dolls that migrated from Japanese *shoujou* (girl) Manga paper comic books to computers in the mid 1990's. Similar to the active cultural production and online exchange of game mods, the operating principles of KiSS or *kisekae ningyou* ("clothes changing game") were also founded on the hacker gift economy. The ‘Adult Game Reviewers’ website contains another example of this clothes shedding phenomena or exposure with its ‘Interactive Lara Croft Gallery.’ The movement of a cursor over images of Lara Croft automatically removes her clothing to

reveal carefully matched upper bodies extracted from pornographic images. Likewise, the pornography industry have responded to these trends and innovations by also incorporating interactive modes into DVD products such as those produced by Digital Playground, that offer greater viewer input and control via ‘Point of View Interactive Sex,’ ‘5.1 Digital Surround Sound’ and ‘True Interactive Multi-angles.’

The DVD *Penthouse Interactive Virtual Photo Shoot* corresponds directly to Somavision’s 3D ‘Photo Studio’, that combines the site’s interactive viewing features in an ‘erotic game’ that places the player behind the lens of a camera. Here the aim is to gently cajole and persuade a coy innocent female model to take her clothes off and reveal herself more explicitly. The player is given early text based RPG-like dialogue options (see Fig 5.1) that make the model more or less amenable to the players suggestions. In this anatomical description and spatial treatment the body is produced, regulated and disciplined by the player. The game furthermore conforms to conceptualizations of pornography as continually engaged in process of interrogating the female body. Furthermore, we not only have an example of the *mise en scene* of desire (Cowie, 1997), but in this case the laying out *always* leads to ‘having’. The model is not only objectified but is also reduced to a sexual essence for the voyeuristic pleasure of the spectator, always ending with the model giving oral sex to the player’s avatar who steps out form behind the camera. In this way, the ‘game’ moves away from the manner in which erotica is understood and conforms more to Dworkin and McKinnon’s definition of pornography as the presentation of females as dehumanized sexual objects, things or commodities, presented in submissive postures in scenarios of degradation (cf. McNair, 1996).



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**Figure 5.1:** Somavision's 'erotic game' "Photo Studio"

Other sites, such as [www.3d-adult-games.com](http://www.3d-adult-games.com), emphasize interactivity as a means of distinguishing themselves from conventional net-based pornography. Indeed, promotional material for the site asks the potential consumer: "Did you ever want to get more than just passive images and video?" Upon subscription users are promised "3D movement and interaction with realistic lifelike girls never seen before!" Sexual objects within these digital realms are also presented as robust and inexhaustible: "Only you can make us scream in ecstasy as we come again and again." Somavision's creator Alan Watts offers a similar rationale for 3D, interactive sex:

what we want to offer to our audience is an experience that is indistinguishable from their favorite porn movie. The only difference is they will have the ability to interact with the actors in a way that will affect the attitude and actions that are played out in the scene. Once the player finds something that he/she likes, that moment could be slowed or frozen in time, rotated and zoomed into so that they could see everything they were interested in without the limitations of a real camera.

In positioning themselves as an alternative to pornography such sites draw heavily on the conventions of both soft and hardcore pornography. The inclusion of a 'monthly 3D babe' on Somavision gives users a mock photo shoot that chronicles the featured model disrobing, consistent with the generic qualities of softcore photographic pornography. Watt's comments casually equates his company's 3D creations with pornographic models, the photo-realistic qualities of the object are underplayed and taken for granted. Instead, the point of departure is the degree of control and input.

Alternative approaches to adult encounters do exist and include games like the online anime RPG *Playskins* that places greater focus on flirtation in order to obtain cybersex. Melinda Kaufman, a designer on the game, states that the "goal is to flirt". In trying to seduce other players, part of the representational motivation during the character design phase of the game includes which 'moves' to give the avatar (e.g. Pony Ride, French Kiss, Lick, Suck, Bite and Penetration). In this game touching is an essential form of communicating with fellow players. In contrast, the utilization of 'moves' forms an integral part of *Great Oyaji The Acrobatics of Sex* (Studio Kinky). This game features a middle-aged businessman with a comb-over hairstyle who wears nothing but socks and a barrel over his penis (see Fig. 5.2). Oyaji is presented as someone with superhuman prowess with regard to business and mating. The game information contain descriptions of some of his more outlandish 'moves' or acrobatic tricks available to Oyaji that include

being able to somersault over the windscreen of a convertible car, landing neatly (with penetration) on the spread-legged girl on the bonnet. This game moves securely away from the subtlety of the courtship process behind *Playskins* into a performance space where ‘feats’ become the goal and energy levels develop into a preoccupation.



Figure 5.2: The 'Great' Oyaji

## CONCLUSION

Beyond discussions of the sexualized representation of female (and male) characters within digital games (e.g. Garner-Ray, 2004), this paper has primarily functioned to survey the presentation of sex within games. For most part, examples provided here have found sex have to been addressed in quite a clichéd, facile fashion, relying upon unadventurous, out-dated attitudes. One of the many areas that this paper has not had the scope to address is the impact that including, or engaging in sexual encounters will have upon the pleasures and experiences associated with the act of *playing* digital games and the narratives themselves. A further catalyst for investigation from this paper rests with the idea that 'bodies without flesh' are achieving a representational or aesthetic status where they are perceived as capable of evoking bodily intensities. For many scholars pornographic consumption lies squarely in "arresting the visual, in the enthralled spectatorship of the eye" (Wicke, 2004, p. 179). By pursuing a purely realist aesthetic, in common with pornography, will we reach a point where digital bodies will be able to directly hack into the central nervous system to actualize their virtual affects for pleasure? It is suggested here that the digital may therefore hold further potential for re-territorialising or re-mapping pornography. To date, social forces have concentrated upon film, video and photographic incarnations of pornography, largely to the exclusion of its digital modalities which do not currently appear to exercise as many individuals. Is this the pathway that sex in games will explore or are there other realms, new intensities that will open with the virtual/real-world liaison?

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