

SELECTION

Introduction

Unless you're presenting a comprehensive history, you're going to have to at some point make some choices about what goes into your exhibition or show. Those decisions can be tough, but understanding how and why you've chosen things will strengthen the final selection. Choosing what to select is equal parts what to include and what not to; a purposeful omission can say more than an obvious inclusion.

This Wiki will consider the following core questions:

- What is the purpose of your selection?
- Who is it for?
- What are your constraints?
- What process(es) should you use?

Purpose and Meaning

Having a clear, concise statement for what you wish to convey will greatly help you to address questions that come up throughout the process. Your purpose should be clear enough that it keeps you on track, but broad enough to allow for new interpretations and inspiration.

Something such as "The history of games" is arguably too broad, meaning something else to each person and not giving you reason to include any one item over another. If you were to pick the most significant games throughout history are you choosing based on cultural impact? Commercial success? Critical reception? Player base? Innovation?

Consider what you want an audience to learn, and the feeling you want them to come away with.

Some outward facing examples of this are:

- Ludicious (Zürich) - "...puts the spotlight on new games with a unique voice."
- Design / Play / Disrupt (London) - "What does it take to design a videogame in the 21st century?"
- A MAZE. (Berlin) - "...representing the current experimental and artistic movement of thoughtful and reflected playful content in games, virtual reality and playful media."

Make sure that you define internally what you consider to be fact, and what is open to interpretation. The clearer you can be as a team in sharing a common vision, the easier it will be to select items to represent that vision.

Audience

Considering who you're selecting for and presenting to is an important step. It will help you to define your communication strategy as well as the knowledge level you're assuming your audience has. The

general public has a different understanding and expectation from an exhibit than a hardcore gamer, and again from a seasoned developer.

Try to put yourself in the shoes of who you're curating for; consider how you can satisfy and subvert their expectations. There's nothing to stop you from having multiple audiences in mind and having something for everyone, but recognise that it may need some compromise.

More on the topic of [audience](#) can be found here.

Constraints and Bias

Being aware of your limitations is something that is good to note early, but is something you should return to and re-examine often.

Before you start, make sure to write a set of guidelines that define your scope. Consider some of the following questions:

- How many titles you can include?
- What platforms can you display games on?
- Do you have the space for VR?
- Does a game need to be playable to be included?
- Can you afford custom installations?
- Do the developers need to be physically present?

None of these need to be definitive reasons for excluding titles, but being aware that you'll need to find a solution for them helps to guide your thinking.

Make sure to consider the knowledge and biases of yourself and your team when making a selection. Thorough research is critical, else you can fall into the trap of presenting history from the perspective of the loudest voice in the room. Is a game really the "first gay representation in games", or is it "the first openly and on-screen gay representation in a AAA game that is commercially successful in the West"? Both are significant, but the distinction is important.

If in doubt, have external voices examine and give feedback on your selection in order to give a more accurate and well rounded selection.

Selection Process

Hopefully with all of the above taken into account, the hardest part of the process is already behind you. Now comes the part where you actually choose what you want in your exhibition or festival, knowing to look for things that represent the stated vision.

There are three main ways of selecting pieces to exhibit: research with individual choice, competition, and commissions. A "call for projects" sits somewhere between the latter two. An exhibition can use a range of techniques to complement its final selection, but the method used for a given piece should be clear in its presentation.

Research

The techniques you need for research will vary enormously based on what you're looking for, and are too numerous to list here. If you're looking for immutable information such as sales and revenue, there are lists for different countries. More niche topics will be better serviced by interviewing known developers to find their influences and recommendations for places to look.

For each piece that you shortlist to include, ask yourself the questions "What am I saying with this inclusion?" and "Is there something else that could say the same thing better?".

Competition

More commonly used by festivals, a competition is suited to formats that focus on contemporary inclusions. A competition format requires less research from the curator, but requires outreach, marketing, and a prize instead. Be aware of the work that a submission asks the developer to do, and what their expectations in return are.

A competition should be as fair and transparent as possible in its process and judging. Nominees are always chosen at the discretion of the organising team, but unclear practices will foster confusion within communities.

An example process used by the 2019 edition of Ludicrous was:

Submission portal: Free entry via a Google form, asking developers to submit media or link to a Press Kit, as well as answering questions about how their game matches the competition's specific criteria. The prizes and expenses able to be covered are made clear.

- Round 0: Competition manager removes any invalid entries that clearly go against submission rules
- Round 1: The team watches a trailer or gameplay video from every submission, with a majority vote allowing a game to progress. Each team member allowed a certain number of "automatic passes" that they can assign to games they disagree with the team failing. No limit on games passing this point.
- Round 2: A selection committee of industry professionals are asked to play 10-20 games each, independently, rating each one against criteria set by the Competition Manager.
- Round 3: The scores are tallied, adjusted for weighting, and a shortlist double the number of potential nominees is created. The festival team, together with a smaller number of industry professionals who were not involved in Round 2 play the games together and narrow the list down to the nominees.
- Round 4: The main jury receives the games in advance, but also has the opportunity to play the game at the festival and speak to the developers. They convene and choose a winner through discussion.

Be aware that over a number of years, it is also possible for a competition to become somewhat stale in its nominees if steps are not taken to freshen up the judging criteria and committee. This is because the nominees in a given year or years will encourage those with similar games to apply, and discourage those who feel they don't match the same criteria.

Commissioning

If the curator feels that a particular angle or interpretation does not yet exist, or cannot be found, it is possible to commission the creation of a piece. In doing so the exhibition will have a potentially unique piece that represents the vision, but has large cost and time implications to go alongside it.

Some points to consider are:

- How will the artist be chosen, and what is the brief?
- What funding is available?
- What operational assistance is available/needed?
- How involved is the curator in the creative process?
- Are there conditions attached to the deliverables?

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