MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

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SPACEWAR!, THE FIRST DIGITAL VIDEO GAME, AND ITS 50 YEAR LEGACY CELEBRATED IN NEW EXHIBITION AT MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

More than 20 playable videos games and a simulation of *Spacewar!* on a model PDP-1 computer feature in the exhibition

On view December 15, 2012–March 3, 2013

Astoria, New York, November 28, 2012 (Updated December 18, 2012) — The year 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of *Spacewar!*, the first digital video game. To celebrate this milestone and the game's enduring legacy, Museum of the Moving Image will present *Spacewar! Video Games Blast Off*, a highly interactive new exhibition and series of accompanying programs, from December 15, 2012, through Sunday, March 3, 2013.

The exhibition looks at the first 50 years of video games through the lens of *Spacewar!*, its development, and the culture from which it sprang. The centerpiece of the exhibition is a model of the original PDP-1 (Programmed Data Processor-1) computer running a playable simulation of *Spacewar!*, presented alongside 20 playable video games ranging in platform (arcade, console, handheld, PC), genre (shooters, platformers, action, arcade), and developer (commercial, independent, experimental). From *Computer Space* to *Portal*, the exhibition draws connections and contrasts between these games and *Spacewar!*, signaling the latter's central place in the development of video games as a cultural form.

"Since the Museum's opening in 1988, video games have been central to our mission," said Carl Goodman, the Museum's Executive Director. "In 1989 we presented *Hot Circuits*, the very first museum retrospective of the video arcade game, and since then the Museum has regularly exhibited video games. The games in this show reflect the vast diversity of the medium, from classic arcades to the latest console extravaganzas, and collectively pay tribute to the incredible legacy of *Spacewar!*"

Spacewar! was created by a group of students and researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1961, conceived of as a demonstration for the new Digital Equipment Corporation PDP-1 computer. The game premiered at the 1962 Science Open House at MIT, and was later made available for order to computer labs with PDP-1 machines via DEC's printed software catalog. This "computer toy" influenced untold technological advances and gave rise to the cultural phenomenon

now known as video games. Among other things, *Spacewar!* set the template for the game development industry and its relationship to technology, created a model for how communities of players interacted and modified games, established shooting as a common aspect of game play, and inspired space and science fiction themes for future games.

"The Museum exhibition traces the extraordinary impact of *Spacewar!* on the subsequent history of video games," said guest curator John Sharp, who organized the exhibition. "*Spacewar!* set off a seismic rumble in the early computer science community, the ripples of which are still felt today in the game industry, academia, and player cultures. It even inspired the first coin-operated arcade game, as well as industry pioneers like Nolan Bushnell, a co-founder of Atari."

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Museum will present special programs, including talks with video game pioneers, hackathons, tours and workshops for student groups, and classes, camps, and design jams for children, teens, and families.

Support for *Spacewar! Video Games Blast Off* was provided by the Entertainment Software Association.

Curator biography
John Sharp is a designer, art historian, and educator. He has been involved in the creation and study of art and design for over 25 years. Sharp is a member of the game design collective Local No. 12, which focuses on games as a research platform, and also a member of the Leisure Collective, a group dedicated to the intersection of games, narrative, and art. Sharp is the Associate Professor of Games and Learning in the School of Art, Media and Technology at Parsons The New School for Design where he co-directs PETLab (Prototyping, Evaluation and Technology Lab), a group exploring games and their design as a form of social discourse. He is also a partner in Supercosm, where he focuses on interaction and game design for arts and education clients.

Digital media at Museum of the Moving Image
As the first museum to include video games as part of the scope of the "moving image" and the first to appoint a full-time Curator of Digital Media in 1992, the Museum is considered a leading institution in the exhibition of digital media. Changing exhibitions focusing on this subject area have included *Hot Circuits: A Video Arcade* (1989), the first exhibition of video games ever presented in a museum (which then proceeded onto a ten-city tour) and *Interactions/Art and Technology* (2004), presented in conjunction with Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria). *Real Virtuality* (2011), featuring six experiments in art and technology, was the first digital media exhibition in the Museum's newly renovated and expanded facility. The Museum has regularly exhibited video games in its core exhibition, *Behind the Screen*. Jason Eppink, the Museum's

Assistant Curator of Digital Media, assisted with organizing *Spacewar! Video Games Blast Off*, and organized the installations *Pretty Loaded* and *DVD Dead Drop*, currently on view at the Museum.

Playable games featured in *Spacewar! Video Games Blast Off*
(Please note that games on this list are subject to change.)
Spacewar! (1961–62), playable simulation on model PDP-1
Computer Space (1971), arcade
Space Wars (1977), arcade
Space Invaders (1978), arcade
Asteroids (1979), arcade
Battlezone (1980), arcade
Defender (1980), arcade
Missile Command (1980), arcade
Tempest (1981), arcade
Planet Zeon (1982), Tomytronic
Yars' Revenge (1982), Atari 2600
Star Wars (1983), arcade
Galaxy Force II (1988), arcade
Metroid II: Return of Samus (1991),Game Boy
Galaga '91 (1991), Game Gear
Star Fox (1993), Super Nintendo Entertainment System
Vertical Force (1995), Virtual Boy
Portal (2007), PS3
Osmos (2009), iPad
Super Mario Galaxy 2 (2010), Wii
Child of Eden (2011), Xbox 360

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Museum of the Moving Image (movingimage.us) advances the understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of the art, history, technique, and technology of film, television, and digital media. In January 2011, the Museum reopened after a major expansion and renovation that nearly doubled its size. Accessible, innovative, and forward-looking, the Museum presents exhibitions, education programs, significant moving-image works, and interpretive programs, and maintains a collection of moving-image related artifacts.

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Friday, 10:30 to 8:00 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 11:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Closed Monday except for holiday openings. **Holiday hours:** The Museum will be open Monday, December 31, and on New Year's Day (January 1) from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Museum will be closed on Thanksgiving (November 22) and Christmas (December 25).
Film Screenings: Friday evenings, Saturdays and Sundays, and as scheduled. Unless otherwise noted, screenings are included with Museum admission.
Museum Admission: $12.00 for adults (18+); $9.00 for senior citizens and for students (13+)

with ID; $6.00 for children ages 3-12. Children under 3 and Museum members are admitted free. Admission to the galleries is free on Fridays, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. Tickets for special screenings and events may be purchased in advance by phone at 718 777 6800 or online.
Location: 36-01 35 Avenue (at 37 Street) in Astoria.
Subway: M (weekdays only) or R to Steinway Street. Q (weekdays only) or N to 36 Avenue.
Program Information: Telephone: 718 777 6888; Website: movingimage.us
Membership: 718 777 6877, members@movingimage.us

The Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operations are made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation). The Museum also receives generous support from numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. For more information, please visit movingimage.us.

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