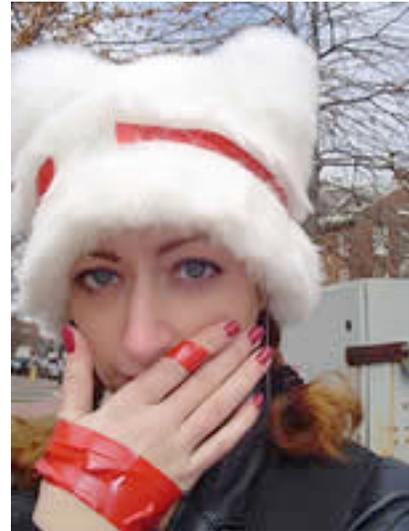


Avant-Gaming: An Interview with Jane McGonigal

Jane McGonigal is a Ph.D. candidate in performance studies at the University of California at Berkeley, where she is also a researcher with the Alpha Lab for Industrial Engineering and Operations Research. She is a game designer for 42 Entertainment, where her work on pervasive gaming projects like *I Love Bees* (2004) and *Tombstone Hold 'Em* (2005) has been recognized with awards from the International Game Developers Association, the International Academy for Digital Arts and Sciences, and by the *New York Times Year in Review*. Both her research and design practice focus on massively collaborative play and performance in everyday spaces. Jane takes play very seriously.

Her website: <<http://www.avantgame.com>>.



Scott Rettberg: You are completing a Ph.D. in performance studies with an emphasis in New Media Studies. You're also a well known lecturer on and producer of Alternate Reality Games. Could you describe the path you followed to arrive at your expertise in this area? Did you have a traditional theatrical performance study background? Does your interest in games predate your interest in performance?

Jane McGonigal: I was working off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway in New York City for two years before I started graduate school at UC Berkeley. I was especially interested in the live event aspects of theater—both stage managing, working with the actors and the crew on the behind-the-scenes stuff; and house managing, the front-of-house stuff, working with ushers and the theater-goers. Not many people study the latter, house managing, but I found myself very much drawn to it. How you invite people into the theater, the mood you set with the atmosphere of the theater, the music, the programs, how you greet the theater-goers. It's the most direct interface with the people who come to the theater, even more direct usually than the actors, who tend to stay behind the "fourth wall." I'm very much interested in the interface, and so I guess that's why my favorite job before becoming a games "puppet master" was being an usher, of all things, at the Jane Street Theater in Greenwich Village. Every night I was an interface between the show and the audience. I loved that—setting expectations, warming people up for the experience, gauging their reactions. When I started graduate school, I intended to study audiences and reception theory. I guess that was a continuation of my interest in the interface.

My gaming background on the east coast all tends toward the live event realm. For instance, I worked with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to plan major gaming festival and events, like a massively multiplayer Easter Egg Hunt in Central Park. Any kind of game that was live, in-person, lots of people in a public space... that was my specialty, even before I moved into the digital domain.

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Speaking of which, the theater stuff was my night job—by day, I was an original dot.com producer in Silicon Alley. Sadly I did not get rich on stock options, but that was where I first started in the web world.

Funny thing is, while I was toiling away in Silicon Alley, and not getting rich on stock options, and not really loving it, I read this book called *I Could Do Anything I Wanted... If Only I Knew What It Was!* It has chapter after chapter of exercises to figure out your special love and skill in life. It included looking past at your whole life, since early childhood, and looking for things you were consistently successful at and happy doing. I came up with two things: behind-the-scenes theater and designing and running real-world, face-to-face games. I had no idea what to do to find a career in the latter, it seemed so fanciful and impractical and absurd. So I decided to go to grad school for theater. Little did I know I would figure out how to combine the two!

SR: In a general sense, how would you describe the relationship of games and performance? Is every game a performance? Is every performance a game?

JM: Richard Schechner, theater practitioner and founder of the field of performance studies, famously argued in *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, the first major performance theory treatise of the 21st century: “Playing is at the heart of performance.” In any performance act, Schechner believed, the performer is always already playing. There is no performance without play.

For game studies and game designers, the time has come to acknowledge and to explore the converse of Schechner’s proposition: *Performing* is at the heart of *play*.

All game play is performance. There is no gaming without performance.

John Reaves, artistic director for the groundbreaking digital performance group The Gertrude Stein Repertory Theater, once made a bold proposition on behalf of theatre practitioners everywhere, in the essay “Theory and Practice” for the online journal *CyberStage*. In the mid-1990s, from the front lines of digital, interactive theater practice, he wrote: “In the coming century, we can take a timid, parochial view of what theater is, or an aggressive, imperialistic one. [...] Why not be aggressive in the tumultuous context of the Digital Revolution? Why not claim all interactive art in the name of theater?” The future of new media, Reaves believed, belonged to the performance artists. All new media art installations provided sufficient grounds for a theatrical event. All new media art installations were playgrounds for performance.

Reaves presented two cases for claiming all interactive art in the name of theatrical performance—the first, phenomenological, the second typological. “Multimedia as art is much closer to theater, and the performing arts in general, than it is to film, video, or the visual arts,” Reaves wrote. Because new media art tends toward the live, collaborative and mimetic, it has an essential theatrical quality. This is the phenomenological case. There is also the typological case. “Theater has always been an integrative, collaborative art which potentially (and sometimes

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actually) includes all art: music, dance, painting, sculpture, et cetera,” Reaves argued. Theater is a total art capable of incorporating all other arts—why not the emerging digital arts, as well?

Reaves claimed all digital art in the name of theater in order to call attention to the potential for live performance as an end-product of digital networks, broadcasts and platforms. His theater company had a vested interest in locating opportunities for embodied action and interaction in an increasingly mediated culture.

For the same reasons, I choose to make a corollary claim. I stake out all digital *game* art in the name of theatrical performance. Art games are not new media installations, objects or systems. They are scripts for embodied action and interaction. They are opportunities for live, collaborative mimesis.

I claim all digital games in the name of theater.

All game play is performance, all digital games belong to theater — but there is more.

The current leading edge of digital game design — the *avant* game — represents a particular kind of performance: *all* performance.

As digital games become more immersive, more pervasive, more persistent, and more massive, they clearly and convincingly approach *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Richard Wagner’s classical ideal of “total performance,” the theatrical event that encompasses all art practice in a single unified experience.

To what field of art do digital games belong? The visual arts? Yes—think game graphics. The literary arts? Yes—think interactive storytelling. The media arts? Yes—think code, audio production, and A.I. processors. The plastic arts? Sure—think game hardware and innovative interfaces. Architectural arts? Indeed—think real-world game environments.

Digital games belong to all of these art fields simultaneously, and the platform that connects them is performance. It is through the players’ collective performance that games create a total aesthetic experience.

Gamers create *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Wagner wrote of his desire for a total performance genre, through which “the public, that representation of daily life, forgets the confines of the auditorium, and lives and breathes now only in the artwork which seems to it as Life itself, and on the stage which seems the wide expanse of the whole World.”

Jordan Weisman, game designer, describes the creative vision for his company’s groundbreaking alternate reality, massively multiplayer, pervasive games *The Beast* (2001) and *I Love Bees*

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(2004): “Install base: Everyone. The entire public. Platform: The world. The entire electronic sphere. If we could make your toaster print something we would. Anything with an electric current running through it. A single story, a single gaming experience, with no boundaries. A game that is life itself.”

Weisman channels Wagner. Gaming *Gesamtkunstwerk* is here.

Game designer Ernest Adams recently stated in an interview with *Game Programming Italia*:

I certainly don't think Wagner would recognize the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in today's video games. They don't contain the breadth and depth of vision that he expected of himself. Could they perhaps be a *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the future? I'm not sure. We have to remember that Wagner lived in the days before motion pictures, before recorded sound, and in a time when all art was presentational, not interactive. Therefore Wagner's own intentions were informed by an assumption that drama would be live action performed by real human beings directly in front of other real human beings. Because video games do not (and generally will not in the future) include an element of live performance, I don't think Wagner would recognize them as *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Adams is wrong. Digital games do include an element of live performance already. All game play is performance.

Digital game play is dramatic performance. Players act “as if,” that magic Stanislavski acting technique; they act as if they believe the rules are *real* limitations, as if the artificial goal is of *real* importance. Digital game play is spectacular performance. Digital game play, especially physical, pervasive and tournament game play, generates attention and audiences. Digital game play is demonstrative performance. Players demonstrate their mastery of the game system, showing off their understanding and skill in manipulating and reading the game system's input, feedback and control mechanisms. Digital game play is expressive performance. Players reveal aspects of their personal identity through their choices in avatar and verbal exchange. And digital game play is, increasingly, about traditional kinds of performance: singing, rhythm, dance, movement, social engineering, and even in-game protest.

The same year that John Reaves claimed all interactive art in the name of theater, new media theorist Lev Manovich wrote in “Reading Media Art” that “We are still waiting for a true digital *Gesamtkunstwerk* which will take full advantage of the ability to interweave the distinct languages of different media.”

We are no longer waiting.

All games are performance, and today's avant game is already approaching the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

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Total performance *is* the state of the digital art game.

SR: On your website you describe yourself as a "big fan of deep play, dark play, and collective play." How do you distinguish between those three forms of play?

JM: Deep play, a topic I learned much about from reading the brilliant Diane Ackerman as well as anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who coined the term, is play with an edge—play that makes you feel really alive, play that helps you experience “flow,” play that comes with risk... physical, psychological, or social. People usually think of rock climbing, for instance, but playing in a public space that you are not supposed to play in (cemeteries, for instance!) is just as dangerous as an extreme sport. I specialize in the extreme social risk kind of game, as well as the extreme psychological risk. Lots of these alternate reality games ask you to be radically cooperative and selfless. That is deep play!

Dark play, a term I borrow from performance studies co-founder Richard Schechner, is play in which there is no clear frame separating the game and reality. Some players know they’re playing, other players might not, and people looking on might mistake the gameplay for reality. I am less a fan of dark play now than I used to be—I prefer “transparent play,” which allows onlookers to grok the rule set quickly and join the gameplay.

Collective play is gaming that brings people together to work on a problem together. Everyone is working toward the same goal, and the win condition is either met by everyone or met by no one.

SR: The first project documented on your site, *Get Lost Berkeley*, was an online project that utilized real-world sound and imagery. Your more recent projects seem more focused on interactions in the physical world, supported by material on the internet, text messaging, and other technologies. I'm interested in this transition from projects that are designed to be experienced primarily online to those that are meant to be experienced in the physical world. Do you see a kind of transition taking place in your work?

JM: Actually, *Get Lost Berkeley* was intended to have quite a robust real-world component! For instance, there is a photo of a payphone in the online game, and the audio is an actress reading from Beckett’s play *Endgame*. If you went to that payphone, a page from the script was ripped out of the book and stuffed into the coin slot! There were all kinds of real-world traces meant to overlap with the online experience, and we wanted to encourage players to do a kind of game-inspired geocaching. You know, you could take the script page, and leave something behind that reminded you of the game or was meaningful to you in that space. However, at that time in my collaborations, it was difficult to get people as excited as I was about the real-world gameplay. Today, it is much easier—there has been a major transition in both the general art world and gaming world toward reality-based play. Things like geocaching and big urban games have really changed what people understand as games and proper spaces for gameplay.

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SR: Some of the projects you've been involved in seem intended to use games as a form of education, others such as *I Love Bees* are ultimately focused on marketing a product, others seem to be making a kind of political argument, and others seem to be art in the traditional sense of art for art's sake. Do you see games as useful in all of those various contexts and how, as a practitioner, do you balance those various purposes?

JM: I start from a core belief that a well-designed game is beautiful. A well-structured experience, an elegantly architected interaction, is a form of art. So any game that I am working on, regardless of the purpose, falls into art practice. Likewise, I do believe that there is a real social good that comes out of encouraging people to play cooperatively, and giving people an opportunity to be powerful and superheroes in everyday public spaces. That means for me there is something political in all of these games, as well. Now, whether it is educational, or a marketing experience, or just something I am doing as design research, I will stand behind every game I work on as art and as a political intervention.

Because I think it might be helpful, let me just paste in a very short manifesto I recently wrote in response to people asking me about my motivations for the Ministry of Reshelving project. I call it "A Minor Statement on Avant Gaming."

I believe:

Games are the dominant art form of the 21st century. Not just videogames (but those too). All games.

We should make benevolent games for all spaces and all technologies.

There should be more benevolent gameplay in public spaces.

Many people find public gameplay threatening. This is not a reason not to play games. It is a reason to play more. It is also a reason to make gameplay transparent, so others will not be confused or alarmed by what you are doing.

Games are serious. Some people dismiss them as "pointless," but they are blind to the power of pointlessness. The power of games is in their intrinsic pleasure. The nature of games is not to point. The nature of games is to experience. And experiences can be extraordinarily powerful things.

Games are a persuasive platform. Games are a self-expressive platform.

Collective gameplay helps us gather the collective wisdom of crowds.

Collective gameplay can mobilize and harness the benevolent power of the public.

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There should be more bottom-up decision-making in public spaces. Massively multiplayer collaborative gameplay may help achieve this.

There should be more folksonomy in public spaces. Massively multiplayer collaborative gameplay may help achieve this, as well.

We should define public spaces as the spaces where you can find the public. Rarely will you find the public in public plazas.

We should treat privatized spaces that open their doors to the public, make money off the public, and serve for better or for worse as the primary public and social spheres of our society, more like public spaces.

When powerful and benevolent phenomena emerge online, we should conduct experiments to see if they can be translated into a real-world power as well.

SR: What aspects of alternate reality gaming would you describe as narrative? For instance, how plotted was *I Love Bees*? How much work goes into developing characters? How much does the plot change in reaction to moves that the players themselves make?

JM: I can't speak to the narrative of the games in the sense that these games are telling stories, or unfolding a plot about characters. To be perfectly frank, I often have no idea what the "plot" of the official story of the game is before the game starts; when it's over, I'm lucky if I've caught half of it. The story I help write and tell is the story of the players. My relationship to story and games is in giving players stories to tell about their experiences, creating narratives of their interaction in particular spaces and with each other. I write mission scripts and rule sets that ask players to perform in public spaces, to take actions and create moments, and then I write and document those moments so there is a record of the live gameplay. This can take place on an in-game blog, or an in-game Flickr photo-pool, for instance.

What is the story prompted by a GPS coordinate, a date, and a time? It asks players to locate a physical space, to take whatever (often extraordinary) measures necessary to get there at the right time, and to really be there, ready for anything to happen. The story is the story of what players were feeling, waiting in that spot, for something to happen: the anticipation, the adrenaline, the burning curiosity. The story of how they got there—crossing international borders, driving eight hours, leaving work even though the boss said no, sweet-talking a manager to open a locked door, calling a distant cousin six states over that you haven't talked to in years to go to the location on your behalf, as a personal favor. Those stories about the ingenious, impassioned action and interactions of the players—that's the narrative. This "emergent narrative"—the story of the game, rather than the story told in the game, is a major area of interest for many game designers; I am one of them.

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Let me put this another way: In Jane Wagner and Lily Tomlin's great *Search for Signs of Intelligent Life*, a stageplay I first saw when I was ten years old and which has framed the way I think about theater and games since, Lily plays a homeless woman named Trudy who teaches visiting aliens from outer space the difference between "soup" (an actual can of Campbell's soup) and "art" (Andy Warhol's paintings of Campbell soup cans). "Soup, art, soup, art, soup, art"—it's the mantra of the play. Can you tell the difference? At the end of the play—and this is the moment that always stuck with me—Trudy the bag lady takes the aliens to see a play. She asks them what they thought of the actors, and the aliens confess—they were so busy watching the audience that they forgot to watch the stage! They tell her: "The play is soup, but the audience... the audience is art." That is how I feel about gameplay. The game is soup; the gamers are art. I try to tell the story of the gamers' art.

SR: How many people are typically involved in the development of one of the large-scale ARGs such as *The Beast* or *I Love Bees*? What types of roles do the different team members play in the development of these experiences? Could you describe the role that you played?

JM: Well, let me show the credits for ILB to give you an idea. There were four full-time puppet masters, but a much larger team of designers, producers, writers and collaborators: <http://ilovebees.com/MIA.html>.



In these kinds of projects, I typically specialize in writing the real-world missions and orchestrating the live action reality-based play. I also track and document the live play and the players' creations, to weave them into the official record and story of the game. My role is like a dramaturge (writing the missions), sometimes like a stage manager (running the live play from behind the scenes, or "behind the curtain") and other times like a house manager (when I am hosting the live gaming events "in front of the curtain"), and then as a real-time historian, creating the record and archive of the gameplay.

SR: I'm also curious about the way that ARGs are funded—the fact that both *The Beast* and *I Love Bees* were ultimately designed to promote the release of other major media commodities—the film *AI* and the computer game *Halo 2*. Do marketing goals ever interfere with the development of the ARG itself?

JM: Great question. Actually, for me and my collaborators it has not been a conflict—successful experiential marketing and experimental game design actually share a really close core set of goals and practices. Maybe because the best experiential marketing campaigns to date have been designed and developed by gamers, who understand that games are a perfect social and interactive platform, a "tool for engagement" as I sometimes say.

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The goal of games like *The Beast* and *I Love Bees* is to create an immersive experience that is really community-drive, personally rewarding, intensely engaging, memorable, and unlike anything the participants have experience before. This set of goals works equally well as a set of experiential marketing goals—it gets attention, builds good-will and loyalty, and showcases the original IP and brand in a really exciting way—and as a set of experimental game design goals—to develop new tools for engagement.

SR: You were also involved in the development of *Go Game* -- a company that develops corporate team-building experiences based in specific locations and customized for specific companies. Could you describe how the game works? What do you mean when you describe these games as "pervasive"?

I made my debut as a puppet master (PM) on January 19, 2002 as the lead writer and mission designer for an eighty-player *Go Game* in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco—a year and a half before I started organizing flash mobs and two and a half years before I took my place behind the curtain of *I Love Bees*. That day, on the winter-green lawn of a public city park, I experienced a spontaneous rupture in what I had imagined would be a smooth and uncomplicated PM-player dynamic: We tell the players what to do, and they do it. Since that day, the same little *Go Game* kink has emerged again and again in many different genres and contexts. It is a pattern I now recognize as the highly complex, and consistently collaborative, texture of a puppet mastered game.

A bit of background: *The Go Game* is an afternoon-long urban adventure in which competing teams receive clues over their cell phones to specific locations around their city. When players arrive at each location, they download a superhero-themed performance mission: assemble undercover disguises using whatever you can find at a nearby thrift store; make a secret agent waiting for you on the #30 bus laugh by any means necessary (not that you have any idea which of the dozens of people on the bus the secret agent is); conduct a séance on the floor of a crowded café to improve the psychic atmosphere; figure out how to get onto a luxury hotel rooftop and attract as much attention as you can; get a whole barful of strangers singing and dancing along with you to any song you want to play on the jukebox.

That day, we were putting up only the second *Go Game* ever—Wink Back, Inc. has produced hundreds of games for over 20,000 players across the U.S. since—so as puppet masters, we were still experimenting and making last-minute tweaks to our scripts. Just before the game started, another *Go Game* writer decided to revise the opening text message I had prepared. My text was a bit dry: “Welcome, superheroes! Press GO when you’re ready to start the game.” We both agreed it would be better to set a more playful mood, so she added a colorful interjection to the welcome message: “Howdy superheroes—hold onto your hats, it’s time to drop your pants and dance! Press GO when you’re ready to start the game.”

I had already forgotten about this minor text change when the teams assembled in Washington

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Square Park to receive their first set of instructions. I hid in a group of park-goers and watched as the players huddled in small groups, switched on their phones, and downloaded our welcome message. I was waiting for the teams to scatter and hit the streets—once they pressed “GO,” the first round of clues would send each team off in a different direction. But that didn't happen.

Instead, half a dozen players began unbuckling their belts, unzipping their jeans, and showing off their underwear while waving their arms in the air. This caught the attention of other players, who quickly realized—*Aha! ‘Drop your pants and dance’—this is our first mission!* So they, too, dropped their pants and started dancing. Before long, most of the players were dancing merrily in their underwear. And they were busy taking photos of each other to ‘prove’ their success in completing the mission.

Of course, the opening message “drop your pants and dance” wasn't a mission at all. But by the time the park was full of pantless performers, my fellow puppet masters and I were already behind our curtain. There was nothing we could do to intervene. We just watched from a distance, with our mouths hanging open.

The first time I told this story at a lecture, an audience member challenged me: “You puppet masters must really get a kick out of manipulating these players to do whatever you want. That must be such a power trip.” But in fact, the opposite was true. We didn't get a rush of power when the players misinterpreted our simple welcome message. We actually felt completely out of control. We had worked so carefully to craft just the right text for our mission scripts, and yet from the very first moment of gameplay, our actual, effective authority was stripped away. Yes, we could give the players a set of instructions—but clearly we could not predict or dictate how they would read and embody those instructions. We were absolutely *not* in control of our players' creative instincts.

In Washington Square Park that day, as the players danced in their underwear, I turned to another puppet master and said, “It's their game now.” He nodded, and that's when I realized: No matter what it looked like to outsiders, we were not pulling these players' strings. Yes, the players were following our commands, but their interpretation of the commands left them fully in charge of their own experience. The scripts had been delivered; the actors were putting on the show. In that moment I realized that the players in a puppet mastered game are not performing objects; they are performing subjects. And that performing subjectivity is never ceded, even in submission to a puppet master's orders.

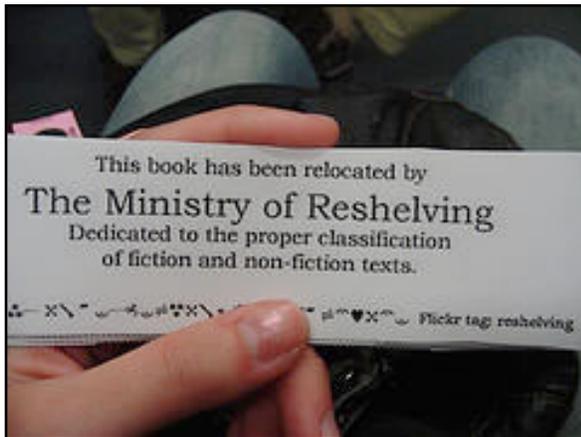
The willful subjectivity of a performer is in its own way a kind of self-determination, a co-authorship with the writers. Media critic Thomas De Zengotita acknowledges this in *Mediated* (2005) when he discusses the flash mob phenomenon as a kind of middle ground between reality and optionality. In the middle of “so many flash mobs... you were being the phenomenon as you were seeing it represented, in real time, unfolding before you. You could see the impact of your role on the national stage in essentially the same way you can see the impact of your button-pressing in a videogame. You were the agent, you were the star” (152). As De Zengotita points

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out, performing in the public eye gives players an expressive visibility and an audience that provides the same quality of feedback a digital game offers. The audience reaction becomes the new metric, equally capable of giving players a sense of responsibility for a given outcome.

In *The Go Game*, were the players simply mistaken, or alternately willfully misinterpreting their mission scripts? No, I do not think so. The pushing back was more organic, more instinctive. It was a matter of exuberance and desire, rather than conscious strategy or disruption. In *The Go Game*, players dropped their pants to dance because they wanted to; it seemed like a reasonable interpretation of the game's dramatic text because it was already in the realm of possibilities imagined by the players to be fun and appropriate for that particular time and context.

SR: In addition to *The Go Game* and ARGs, you've also developed or been involved in several different types of “happening” type projects: Flash Mobs, The San Francisco Zombie Mob, Cookie Rolling, and The Ministry of Reshelving. Do you see these projects as fitting into an overall aesthetic?



JM: First: An overall aesthetic – yes! Here are the key words: public, social, spectacular (designed to attract attention), transparent (onlookers should understand that it is play and be able to join in), and ludic (structured like a game: a clear goal, a win condition, rules limiting action).

There's plenty of information about all of the projects you mention available on my site, but let me tell you, at least, a secret about Ministry of Reshelving—deep down, that was an experiment in taking “folksonomy” and “social tagging” to the real world, doing to physical media in public

spaces what we are so successfully doing in online social network spaces to digital media.

SR: Do you see your work as coming out of a particular tradition or set of traditions?

JM: Some of the traditions I feel a part of, and have been greatly influenced by include: Happenings, Fluxus, Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed*, theater games, and good-old-fashioned parks and recreation. Parks and Rec is a hugely overlooked wealth of history and knowledge about how to bring communities together in real-world spaces for play and collective experience.

SR: What are some of your favorite games and why?

JM: Digital: Lucas Arts' adventure game *Grim Fandango*, because it is a love story about the dead, and my husband and I fell in love playing it together over the course of a few weeks when

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we first met. We still quote it to each other on a near daily basis; it is the most beautifully told story in a game, and the most character-driven game I have ever played.

Non-digital: Zen Scavenger Hunts. I didn't invent this genre; I think the guys over at the Science Fiction event WorldCon did. But I run them a lot. In a ZSH, you collect your objects and THEN you get a list of what you're supposed to find. You have to prove through creative demonstrations, hacks, performances, mods and fast talking that the stuff you brought before you knew what you were supposed to find is, actually, a PERFECT match for the list. Now, the art of running a ZSH is in the design of the list. Recently, at a ZSH, one of the items on the list was "Edible computing." As a kind of script for performance, you can imagine what amazing and hilarious feats that item produced. Some of the most important writing in game design is the writing of mission scripts and performance prompts—so a ZSH is a great opportunity to experiment with this.

SR: Do you think your work offers any particular lessons to developers of new media narratives about the relationship between physical environments and storytelling?

JM: Stories linger in the places after we experience them. And the stories we tell about our personal experiences in a place help us own that space, to feel comfortable there, to make others comfortable there, to feel alive there. I believe the job of the designers of reality-based games like big urban games and alternate reality games is to figure out: What kind of story would players want to be able to tell about this space? For *I Love Bees*, the space was a payphone; the story that players can tell is a classic superhero, action hero tale: "The phone was ringing. I raced to answer it. The voice on the other end had a special mission for me..." Every time a player walks by that payphone, they remember that they were needed, and that they were successful, and extraordinary. So I believe new media designers need to think about the narratives people want to tell about their everyday spaces, and to design experiences that give players those stories, for the rest of their lives.

Photos courtesy of Jane McGonigal