

GALLERIES

# What's up at Boston-area art galleries

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT MARCH 19, 2013



From “The Game’s Afoot,” at the Boston Cyberarts Gallery, Anthony Montuori’s “Into the Void With Yves Klein” invites the player (as Klein, the artist) to jump across rooftops.

The gamers are coming. The PAX East gaming convention takes place March 22-24 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, and the wily folks at Boston Cyberarts have seized the opportunity to demonstrate how sweetly art and video games dovetail.

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games for viewers to play. The 80-foot-tall multi-screen LED marquee outside the convention center, which is programmed by Boston Cyberarts, is displaying six videos inspired by gaming culture.

With the marquee as their stage, the super-short videos dazzle, with giant tigers and battling pandas, but the games at the gallery are more engrossing.

The game-playing branch of visual art goes back to the Surrealists, who devised games to introduce chance into the production of their work. A game provides a basic structure in which the imagination is free to roam, experiment, and take risks.

In “The Game’s Afoot,” Anthony Montuori’s “Into the Void With Yves Klein” takes off from a 1960 photo (or photomontage) of the French artist throwing himself off the roof of a house. Klein’s paintings and conceptual work strove toward explorations of the immaterial — space and the void.

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Montuori’s conceptually rich, visually basic game invites the player — as the protagonist, Klein — to run and jump across rooftops. It has a 1990s arcade feel; the pixels are gigantic, the colors just black, white, blue, and red. As you play, you learn a little art and philosophy. Klein encounters Marcel Duchamp, in drag as his alter ego Rose Sélavy, who instructs: “Take a leap of faith. Only the brave may enter [the void]. Once in it, it is up to you to stay inside, for the void wants to remain a void.”

Then the player, as Klein, sets out on an adrenaline-fueled rush to the finish.

Victor Liu’s absorbing “Airlock Park,” powered by a PlayStation 3, more environment than game, riffs on the delicious virtual realities available today, with their deep, tilt-a-whirl spaces. You can steer through tableaux stocked with fractured bits of cultural history: ghostly statues, veils of sketches or diagrams. It’s hard to read exactly



### **The Game’s Afoot: Video Game Art**

Boston Cyberarts Gallery, 141 Green St. ,  
Jamaica Plain 617-522-6710.

<http://www.bostoncyberarts.org>

**Closing date:** April 14.

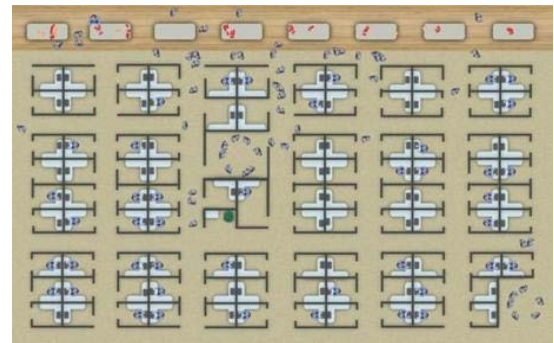
what these are; the experience of navigating through the colorful worlds is more captivating than what history they have to offer.

Rob Gonsalves's "Campaign Horse — 2012 Election Edition" has players tossing a foam basketball tethered to clotheslines toward a net on a screen. Sensors attached to the lines determine whether you make a basket. If you do, you get a letter toward spelling out an insult hurled during the last election. The game is a hoot, but I had no desire to recall past vitriol. Gonsalves needs to come up with some equally pertinent, but more evergreen, content.

Over at the convention center, the marquee screens artists' videos intermittently with ads and announcements. Blink and you might miss one — they're all roughly 30 seconds long. They have little time, but a lot of space, to make their point.

Highlights include Chris Florio's "LARP," with a game console at the bottom and scenes from nature swimming above, with insects that recall tiny predators from early arcade games. A giant cat appears suddenly and hunts down a butterfly; it's quick and dramatic. Fiercer felines appear in William Russell Pensyl's "Tiger Training," which, like Liu's environments, demonstrates how lush video animation is these days. Jeffu Warmouth's funny, existential "1UP" also pays homage to old arcade games, but here the protagonist is a man, not a Pacman, desperately scrambling through endless tests.

While it's too bad these aesthetic morsels have to mix it up with commercials, Art on the Marquee, which opened a year ago and has now screened five rounds of videos, is a piece of public art for Boston to be proud of. Boston Cyberarts's fleet-footedness in programming work pertinent to the moment makes it all the more something to see.



At right: a detail from Rob Gonsalves's "O.f.f.i.c.e.A.n.t.s."

Vigor that is challenging

And now for something completely different: "The Origin of the World /\ The Force of the Source \/ The Cause of the Vigor," a group show at Samson, celebrates the vagina.

There are plenty of reasons to celebrate the vagina. At the same time, making art about it is inevitably charged with art historical baggage about objectifying women. This show nods to that with art historical references, such as to Gustave Courbet's daring 1866 painting "The Origin of the World," depicting a nude from waist to thighs, legs open. Since the 1970s, feminist artists such as Carolee Schneeman and Hannah Wilke have tackled the subject; both have pieces here.

There's some very smart, if deeply provocative, new work here. "July 8, 2009," by Daniel Gordon, echoes Courbet's painting, but it's a photograph of a nude Gordon ingeniously constructed, mostly from cut paper. For Rohan Wealleans's "Brides Maids," the artist painted the bodies of two women and stacked them to photograph one vagina above the next, each painted concentrically in bright tones. Wealleans's stacking, cropping, and coloring makes a totemic abstraction.

The feminist in me bristled — both these artists are men. But let's face it, the feminist in me can be a reactionary crank. The art critic in me lit up, because the work is sharp, original, and challenging.

More information:

### **Art on the Marquee**

At: Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, 415 Summer St., South Boston, through May 2.

617-954-2000, [www.artonthemarquee.com](http://www.artonthemarquee.com)

### **THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD /\ The Force of the Source \/The Cause of the Vigor**

At: Samson, 450 Harrison Ave., through March 30.

617-357-7177, [www.samsonprojects.com](http://www.samsonprojects.com)

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