

"Only the skilled may live – the rest will die"

In this highly eccentric collection of essays Alex Kierkegaard conducts a penetrating analysis of the principles of virtuality and its underlying logic. Combining a matchless knowledge of the history of electronic gaming with a firm grasp of philosophy, psychology and computer science, Kierkegaard delineates, demystifies and clarifies virtuality's key concepts, all the while debunking the abortive theories of his arch-nemeses: the pseudo-intellectuals and the artfags. Witty, sarcastic, funny, and boundlessly malicious, *Videogame Culture* presents the world with the definitive answers to all of virtual reality's most fundamental problems.



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ALEX KIERKEGAARD
VIDEOGAME CULTURE

VIDEOGAME CULTURE

ALEX KIERKEGAARD

VOLUME I

INSOMNIA

*“Everything is motivated by fear of loss
and lust for power”*

Is there such a thing as a “serious” game? Or are games by their very nature forever condemned to remain “merely”... playful? And how can we define the concept “genre”? or “cutscene”? or “grinding”? or “meta-” and “mini-gaming”? And what conclusions can we then draw from all these definitions? And what is the connection between videogames and simulation? or violence? or ethics? or “social responsibility”? And what about motion sensing? Or accessibility and innovation? Or retrogression and decadence? And what is so special about gambling as a form of gaming? And can videogames ever hope to arouse powerful emotions? And if so, what would it take for them to accomplish this? And is it even actually desirable? And can the entire range of possible game designs really be reduced to a handful of schemas of button presses? And what about taste in games? Is it really something that can be acquired, and if so how? And to what extent? And what, finally, can be the only definition of a “better game”?

These are some of the questions Alex Kierkegaard assails in the second volume of his extremely influential collection of essays on videogames and virtuality, bringing to bear on them the entire formidable analytical prowess of philosophy and contemporary science. Is it any wonder then, that none of them survives?

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VOLUME II

ALEX KIERKEGAARD VIDEOGAME CULTURE



VIDEOGAME CULTURE

ALEX KIERKEGAARD

VOLUME II

INSOMNIA

“Because some lies are worth living”

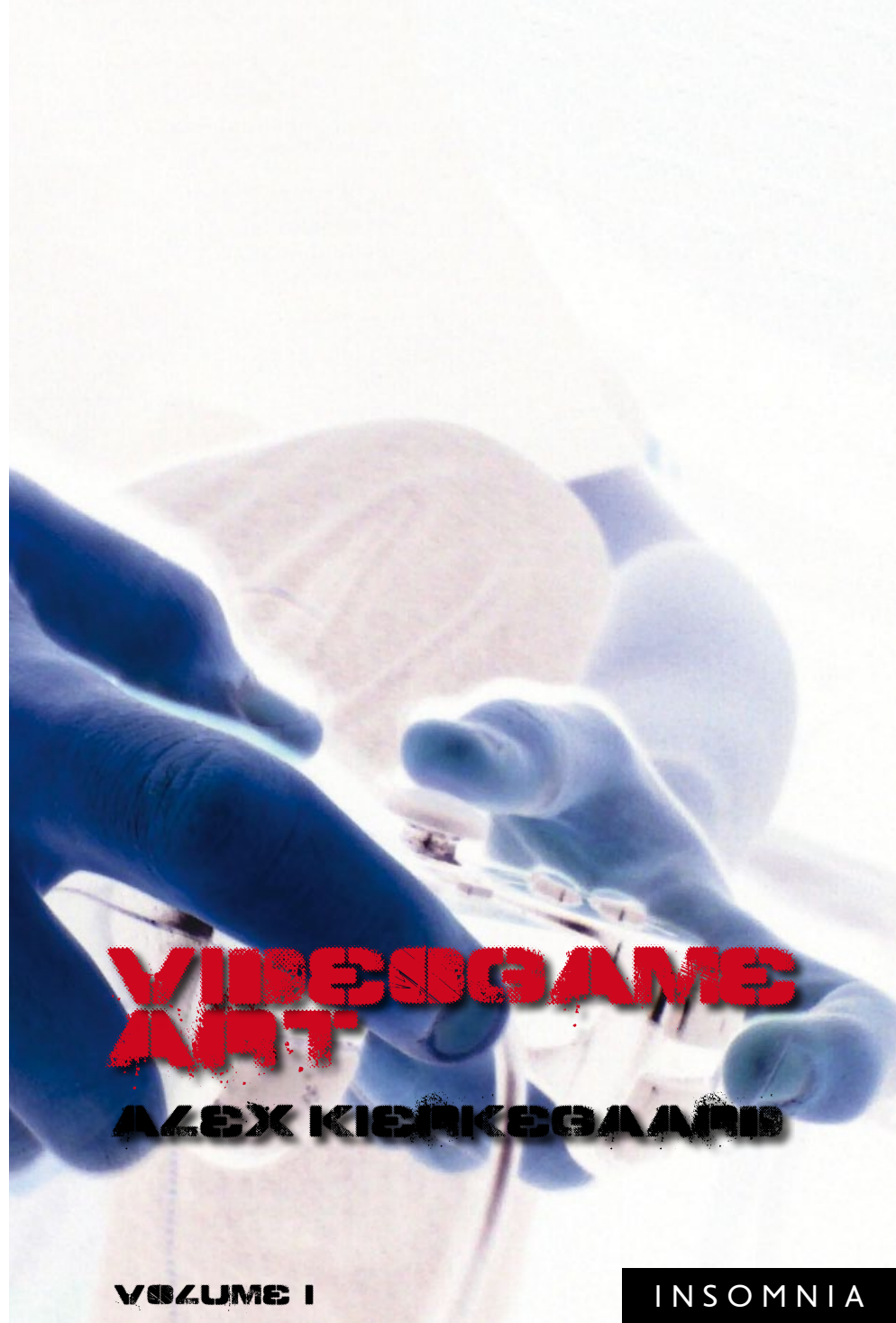
In Alex Kierkegaard's *Videogame Art*, art criticism arrives at its peak, at an unimaginable height above the venality and nihilism of so-called “contemporary art”, and the interminable chatter of the inferior critics and pseudo-theorists on whether or not advanced artforms can “be art”. Kierkegaard sets all of that pitiable drivel aside here as he plunges into five decades of genuine modern art, from early classics such as *Spacewar!* (1962), *Rogue* (1980), and *Civilization* (1991), to *Grand Theft Auto III* (2001), *Far Cry* (2004), *Dead Rising* (2006) and beyond, analyzing each one with a set of unmatched aesthetic rules and an instinct seemingly clairvoyantly in tune with the essence of art, as he examines, documents, and even predicts the efforts of the greatest contemporary artists to outdo each other in the creation of startlingly strange, ruthlessly challenging, hauntingly beautiful, and above all irresistibly seductive illusory worlds.



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VOL
I

ALEX KIERKEGAARD
VIDEOGAME ART



VIDEOGAME
ART
ALEX KIERKEGAARD

VOLUME I

INSOMNIA

*"Then did the gods make resolve and
ordain unto men destruction, that in after
times too there might be matter for song"*

Odyssey, Canto IX

In *On the Genealogy of "Art Games"* Alex Kierkegaard shows, not merely that videogames "are art", but the highest art that could ever possibly exist. Patterned after Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the three essays that comprise this extraordinary book trace the history of the decline of the various artforms as a consequence of the rise of democracy, and their subsequent hijacking and debasement by talentless money- and fame-craving thugs to compensate for their sheer ineptitude. In a parallel account, Kierkegaard unfolds the evolution of art as a function of scientific and technological progress, defining art here for the first time as "the craft of illusion", and pointing towards immersion and complexity as the key concepts for its understanding, before tearing apart all competing theories of art in terms of pathetic "messages" and "meanings" and uncovering what lies *beneath* the shallow moralistic chatter of journalistic hacks and pseudo-academics — the fundamental message of the universe.

Far from merely a study of the art of videogames, as a superficial reading would suggest, *On the Genealogy of "Art Games"* is the definitive analysis of the history of art: and of its future.



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ALEX KIERKEGAARD ON THE GENEALOGY OF "ART GAMES"



**ON THE
GENEALOGY
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