



Web 2.0

Will Wright: Games Invade Real World, Brian Caulfield, 04.02.09, 03:15 PM EDT

"Spore," "Sims" creator on the future of games.

SAN FRANCISCO--In the future, videogames will be less about what is going on on-screen and more about what is going on in the real world, says Will Wright, the game designer behind "Spore" and "The Sims."

One example: The success of Nintendo's (NTDOY.PK - news - people) Wii console, which is controlled by players gripping a motion-sensitive controller and waving it through the air to play tennis.

"The Wii to me represents the idea of non-immersive games," Wright said during an interview with Federated Media Chairman John Battelle at the Web 2.0 Expo in San Francisco Thursday. "The entertainment isn't happening on the screen--it is happening around you, with your friend acting like a doofus as he swings a controller."

Wright sees games moving toward tighter connections with a player's real-world identity, latching onto social networks and reflecting what is going on in a gamer's real life. "We're starting to see more and more games where who you are matters," Wright said. "You can map things on top of that world and play games."

Wright also wants to use games as just a starting point for exploration and creativity outside of games. For example, Wright's latest game, "Spore," allows players to upload details on the creatures and civilizations they create with the game, so other players can compete against them.

Wright, however, is betting people will find uses for that information outside the immersive world of the game he has created. "We're putting up an API [application programming interface] so players have access to that database so they can build their own applications," Wright said. " 'Spore,' the game is just one instance of what you can do with that data set. In some ways, I want this data set to be the nexus of this community."

Wright's hopes for the game parallel his skepticism of traditional forms of education, and the role he sees games playing in learning. "Games are orienting kids to be general problem solvers," Wright said. "If you get a kid interested in a subject, try to prevent them from learning about it."

Let's just hope that same maxim doesn't apply to elements inside our government. "We are cybernetic organisms right now; the computer is enhancing our perceptual system so our brains can understand things in new ways," Wright said as his chat with Battelle drew to a close.

The remark drew an amusing query from Battelle. "Have you been contacted by dark organizations inside the government?" Battelle asked. "I can't say," Wright responded.

"I think that would be a yes," Battelle answered.