

Staring at my phone: Play and presence in Batuu

Theme parks have long been spaces of play, from affect and attitude to embodied practices and social interaction. There has been some fascinating initial work exploring the role of play, and particularly games, *within* theme parks versus, for example, looking at how Disney IP has been utilized in the production of digital games (see, for example, Moulton 2022, Pearce 2007, Raffe et. al. 2015, Raz 2002, Schell & Schochet 2001). Much more can be done to bring game studies into conversation with theme park studies and this talk will pick up that thread and seek extend it. In particular, I will explore the ways gaming has come to be situated as a socio-technical assemblage in the theme park. Using the case study of Star Wars Galaxies Edge at Disney World (for more on this space see Geraghty 2022 and Williams 2019), this piece explores not only how play and games are being constructed by Disney within the park, but offers empirical qualitative data from my ongoing research project on the subject. The talk will explore not only the ways the company has produced both a physical and digital gaming space (mediated through the Play Disney app) but how players are taking up, and navigating often in complex and sometimes fraught ways, that invitation.

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Bio

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