

An interview with Andy Kavanagh

@deKay01 / @ToiletsInGames / <https://toiletsinvideogames.tumblr.com/>

Q: What got you interested in video game toilets in the first place?

I don't know. There's something both normal and unusual about toilets in games. They're just a normal, common thing in real life, but in games they're rarely there except for humour or story reasons. Like in TV or film - you never see anyone go to the toilet unless it's part of the story.

Q: How did you get involved with documenting video game toilets?

I was playing a game - Fallout 3, probably, and I noticed that it had a lot of toilets. I realised that most games didn't have any toilets, let alone hundreds. From then on I just started noticing them more in other games and from there ended up taking screenshots.

Q: How long have you been documenting video game toilets?

On my Tumblr blog, for about 4 years, but generally noticing them and comparing them, probably 10 or so.

Q: Why do you document video game toilets? Why toilets and not vents?

I don't know. Vents aren't funny? Being British, toilets are always funny. Vents are creepy, maybe. They have things hiding in them.

Q: What unique/special aspect of toilets sets them apart from any other part of a game?

In most games they're pointless. Useless objects that the developers have put the time and effort in to adding for often no reason or gain. Sometimes you can break them (like in Duke Nukem 3D), sometimes you can even use them (it's how you save the game in No More

Heroes), but usually they're ornamental. They also transcend game genres - you get them in all sorts of games. Platformers, puzzle games, FPSs, RPGs, "walking simulators" (I hate the term, incidentally, and prefer "narrative discovery game").

There's also the meta thing of being able to play games with toilets in, while sat on an actual toilet.

Q: Any interesting findings or discoveries you've found in your time with toilets?

I liked the Japanese toilets (described as such - they're the hover-and-squat type) in Katamari Damacy. Coming across non-western style toilets is pretty rare, I've found, even in Japanese games. There's also the toilet boss in Conker's Bad Fur Day, of course.

I also realised that out-of-place toilets is a running gag in the Lego series of games. There are a few repeated tropes in those games - pigs, sausages, and toilets being the most prevalent.

Q: What values (cultural, political, etc.) do you think toilets present in games?

I don't think there are any really, that I've come across, but I'm genuinely interested in the comments made in games where you try to enter the public toilets for the gender opposite to your character. Some games ignore it. Sometimes it depends if there's anyone in there to react. Max in Life is Strange comments on how disgusting boys toilets are. The player in Persona 4 is prevented from going into the girls' toilets in school with "you're not allowed to enter". I'd like to see how developers deal with non-binary people in this situation.

Q: Your favorite memory of a toilet in a video game:

I've a few, I suppose. One I'm not even sure even happened as I was never able to replicate it:

On the ZX Spectrum platform game Jet Set Willy, you're tasked with tidying up your mansion following a party before you're allowed to go to bed. You start off in a room with a toilet, but if you leave and try to go into your bedroom, Maria (the housekeeper) prevents you until

you'll collected all the flashing items that represent the mess. However, once, I tried to get past Maria and the computer took control of me, made me run back over to the toilet, and then put my head in it from which I couldn't escape. Too specific to be a bug, so I assume it was a random easter egg!

Another memory, was a game called Behind Closed Doors. It's a single room text adventure game (also for the Spectrum) where you're trapped in an outhouse. It was genuinely hilarious in the dialogue and descriptions, and was the first text adventure to get me into the genre. There were sequels where, again, you'd become stuck in an outhouse, which were also great. It even inspired me to write my own text adventure, including writing a text adventure verb/noun parser. Behind Closed Doors is also perhaps the earliest known example of a computer "escape room"!

And of course Duke Nukem making use of toilets while saying "ahhh, that's better". Or being able to urinate into one from a distance - aiming the flow - in Postal 2.

Q: Would you identify yourself as a gamer/game developer/game journalist/all of the above? What aspects of toilets in games do you think appeal to those parts of you? and Why?

Gamer, definitely. I've dabbled with making games but wouldn't call myself a developer, and although I've written about games for a long time - even for publications and "proper" games sites - I've never been paid for it so can't claim that title either.

The main appeal is that it's something I like "collecting". Some people like postcards of landmarks, or erasers bought from museum gift shops. I like collecting photos of toilets I find in games.

An interview with Toby Saunders

@Toby_Saunders94 / <https://tobysaunders.wordpress.com/>

Q: Why do you think people are interested in video game toilets?

People are interested in video game toilets because they add an added level of realism into a games world. Plus, toilets are there to take our waste, it is always interesting to see what they'll do in a game - I suppose we might even want to see if games will stoop so low as to make their characters use the loo for it's sole purpose.

Q: How did you end up writing about game toilets?

I ended up writing about video game toilets because I find it fascinating when games take something as mundane as the toilet and turn it into a save system as seen in no more heroes, rather than simple world realism.

Q: Do you think toilets enhance game world building? Or not?

I think toilets do enhance game world building depending on the game. In something like Yakuza, where the mundane is made surreal, you need to acknowledge toilets just as much as the arcade, bowling alley or corner shop. In a game such as Yoshi's Island though, an added toilet might come across as odd.

Q: What's so special about toilets?

Toilets are a special place because everyone uses them several times a day, some people use them to relax.

Q: What values (cultural, political, etc.) do toilets in games present?

I'm honestly too tired to think of anything for the values question, sorry.

An interview with Amy Dentata

Note: Taken after original article publication

@AmyDentata / <http://www.amydentata.com/>

Q: What got you interested in video game toilets in the first place?

Their ubiquity is absurd. They're everywhere! Games don't bother replicating other aspects of personal hygiene in minute detail in games, but toilets? Games really know how to do toilets.

Q: How did you get involved with documenting video game toilets?

I started the tumblr on a lark. I was playing the first Dishonored with a couple friends when we noticed that not only can you flush the toilets, but you can open and close the lid on them. It was a very intricate interactive object. I thought, if people are putting so much work into these things, maybe we should honor that work in a way that is equally silly.

Q: How long have you been documenting video game toilets?

It's been on and off for a couple years.

Q: Why do you document video game toilets? Why toilets and not vents?

What unique/special aspect of toilets sets them apart from any other part of a game?

They serve no gameplay function and yet appear in almost every major AAA shooter. Vents, at least, often are a space for you to crawl through. Stuff like that. But toilets? They just kinda sit there. And you can flush them. It's been a tradition ever since Duke Nukem 3D.

Q: Any interesting findings or discoveries you've found in your time with toilets?

Too many to list, level designers have gotten very creative.

Q: What values (cultural, political, etc.) do you think toilets present in games?

The ubiquity of toilets in shooters feels kind of like self-deprecating humor. Duke Nukem 3D started this trend, and it wasn't exactly what I'd call a cultural benchmark. It's a nod to that B-movie schlock quality that's still everywhere in games.

Q: Your favorite memory of a toilet in a video game:

Definitely the Dishonored story I told above. It was a shared moment of fascination and hilarity.

Q: Would you identify yourself as a gamer/game developer/game journalist/all of the above? What aspects of toilets in games do you think appeal to those parts of you? and Why?

Yep, I'm a game dev. Mostly small-time free downloadable games. I'm fascinated by the amount of attention and craftsmanship that goes into designing these things. It's a little cliché, but it's totally a Duchamp kind of thing: Shove this hunk of porcelain in a museum and call it art. Because once you do that, it is.

More Interviews to Come