

PAX East goes for big game

Digital designers exhibit their art ahead of confab

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By: [Ira Kantor](#)

Bay State digital artists are taking their creations to a new level for this year's PAX East video gaming expo, which kicks off Friday.

Visible from a half-mile away on a digital canvas, six marquee artworks have gone live on an 80-foot-tall LED tower outside the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. All the videos were designed by video game company employees or video game design teachers.

"This is the future of public art," said George Fifield, president of Boston Cyberarts, a local nonprofit arts group that organized the display with the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority. "The first time (the artists) see something they made on something so humongous, you see their jaws drop and their eyes open wide."

The 30-second works on the digital billboard reflect gaming culture, either in vintage or modern forms. For example, a group of eight artists who work for Needham-based game design company Turbine Inc. created "Mists of Mortal Legends" featuring "high-flying intergalactic combat where issues of control are turned upside down."

Meanwhile, Fitchburg State College media professor Jeffu Warmouth's "1UP" shows a self-inspired character "moving through a shifting set of game environments drawn from the Golden Age of arcade games."

Warmouth, 42, a Groton resident, said he spent about 100 hours creating his video, which recalls scenes from the classic 8-bit games "Donkey Kong," "Joust" and "Dig Dug."

"I've always done work with kind of a popular bent to it and I've done a lot of work about pop culture, and I've always been interested in venues that are not white gallery space," said Warmouth, who has made two previous videos for the BCEC marquee. "There's something great about the marquee being in the public space where people are not expecting art. Definitely, it's expanded my audience."

Other digital works include "LARP" by Chris Florio; "Space Plants" by Fish McGill; "Tiger Training" by William Russell Pensyl; and "Growing Phones" by Joshua Pablo Rosenstock.

The artists and teams chosen to produce marquee art are paid a \$500 honorarium for their work, which take about a month to complete.

PAX East, which attracts thousands of video game enthusiasts from around the globe, runs March 22-24.

"(The marquee's) become something of a landmark for the South Boston waterfront and reflective of the fact this is the Innovation District," said convention center chief Jim Rooney, adding the agency would consider calling for more videos geared toward future BCEC events.

A separate Boston Cyberarts gallery exhibition in Jamaica Plain titled "The Game's Afoot: Video Game Art" runs until April 14.

"The whole gaming industry has been in retreat these days as people change the game platforms they've been using," Fifield said. "When all gaming finds its feet again, Massachusetts is positioned to be a really important player."

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8-BIT WONDER: Video game artist Jeffu Warmouth poses in front of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center's 80-foot marquee as his video art work is on display. PAX East begins Friday.



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