

# GENDER AND GAMING

*Two women discuss their experience in the game making industry*

BY CORINNE BOYER



ROSALIE VILE

**R**osalie Vile began making games at age 12 when she got her first copy of Game Maker, software that she uses exclusively now when she designs games. As an indie game designer at 24, she's involved in all creative aspects of a game's development — from a game's inception to writing the narrative and seeing it through to a completed final product. She programs games and crafts the art and music, too.

"I really like doing different sorts of thing — like making the types of games that I would like to see that I don't really see being made because they don't have massive appeal," Vile says. "I like to make games with a cooperative nature or with a deep narrative — mostly just experimental games is what I focus on."

Vile develops games for fun and enjoys the process. She sells and distributes them as well, but it's not her fulltime job.

Although game design serves as a creative outlet for Vile, she says she faces challenges within the gaming industry.

"I feel like especially being a queer woman in game design, in Eugene, which is where I make indie games, I'd say that the scene here is a bit of a boys club," Vile says.

While there are opportunities aimed at diverse gaming experiences — at places like Game Pub (formerly Shoryuken League) in Eugene and XOXO Fest in Portland — she says, "There have definitely, in the more day-to-day sense, been more examples of leaders in the community being less than inclusive of queer women."

Rachael, who doesn't feel comfortable using her last name or the names of her games because she doesn't want to receive "horrible messages," is a two-dimensional asset production artist. "I draw environment tiles for 2D games. I draw monsters and character portraits and character concepts and stuff like that," she says.

Both Vile and Rachael say they've felt the effects of GamerGate. In 2014, women game developers were targets of online rape and death threats across multiple websites and social media sites. The threads of misogynistic hate still trend on Twitter under the GamerGate hashtag, where anonymous gamers whine about women becoming "famous for doing nothing" because of the coverage women in gaming received from the media.

"GamerGaters" blame political correctness for the explosion and justification of threats to women. More recently, updates published in *Vox* and *Now This* about equality

efforts for women in gaming are the subject of taunts on Twitter.

"That is the one reason I decided to go anonymous. I wanted to be safe in my own home," Rachael says of GamerGate. "I also wanted people to appreciate what I'd done and not for what I am."

Rachael says there's a benefit to being part of the small indie gaming community. "Everybody knows each other, so if anybody pulled any shit, they would instantly be ostracized. It's a very close social scene going on, and it's professional."

Currently, Rachael is working on three games, but doesn't feel too overwhelmed. "It's not that bad, I just scribble on something like a madwoman for about an hour on each project a day and send them off. Then whenever I get feedback, back I go and mess with it more," she says.

And her advice for women game designers: "If you're going to put it out professionally, go gender neutral or pretend that you are a guy — if you can stomach that sort of idea."

She adds, "Get people to recognize your brand as something that is good, reliable and worthwhile." She says, for added safety, women have the option to reveal their gender after getting a job offer. ■

A stylized black and white illustration of a woman with long hair adorned with flowers, holding a basket of fruit. The background features a large, bold text overlay for a sale. The text reads: "OREGON'S CONSTANT GARDENER Harvest Sale 10%-50% OFF Store-wide on all of your indoor and outdoor Harvest and Growing Supplies\* CROPTOBER SALE... OCTOBER 2nd-7th". At the bottom, there are two boxes for store locations: "Eugene Location 990 Garfield Street (541) 636-4220" and "Springfield Location 2053 Laura Street (541) 747-8170". A small logo for "THE CONSTANT GARDENER" is also present. A note at the bottom says "\*Some Exclusions Apply".

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