



Join the club: "Putt-topia" at CAID.

With two sod-covered human figures lying prostrate head-to-head, Denise Fanning's earth-sculpture-cum-miniature-golf-hole "Swallow Me" seems straightforward enough. Just putt up the ass.

Shoot for the figure's rectum so it comes out its mouth, rolls into the other figure, out that one's butt and into the cup. If you'd like, let the game be cathartic. Envision the first figure is Ann Coulter and the ball is covered with really sharp spikes. "Swallow Me," which gives a whole new meaning to the phrase "play it as it lays," is one of some three dozen artworks in *Game Show Detroit*, hosted by Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID). The exhibit demonstrates that art can be intellectually challenging and playful.

Play right

**A handcrafted Hell Hole?
Foot-thick blue balls?
Stakes of life or death? Let
the games begin!**

by **Vince Carducci**
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Jack Johnson's "Monoprification."

Curated by University of Michigan Professor Emeritus Fred Goodman with assistance from CAID board chair Nick Sousanis (full disclosure: Sousanis is a *Metro Times* contributor) and board member Andy Malone, *Game Show Detroit* encompasses all types of games, from chess boards to inspired inventions, handcrafted by local artists as well as others from across the country.

Even the show's postcard announcement, designed by Malone, is a game. Bunches of the cards can be put together to create puzzles or playing boards, with rules posted on the show's Web site, gameshowdetroit.com. There's also a catalog, hand-drawn, lettered and inked in comic-book style by Sousanis.

Only a few of the pieces directly refer to art. "Air Judd" by Jacques Liu looks like an early work by famed sculptor Donald Judd. It's a plain, unfinished plywood box with a sheet of red plastic on the top. A thin orange puck is batted around by two players who aim for orange-rectangular goals at either end. Because it isn't pneumatic like most arcade hockey tables, it plays kind of slow, but it does have the virtue of being minimal.

Neil Hennessy's video games are more complex in manufacture and play. "Calderoid" is based on Atari's early video game *Asteroids*. In Hennessy's version, players shoot up pieces of Alexander Calder mobile

sculptures. Truly sublime is “Ms. Pac-Mondrian,” using the Dutch artist’s 1942 masterpiece “Broadway Boogie-Woogie” as the maze to be negotiated by chewing up bits of color.

Most of the artists take the game concept as a jumping-off point. Teresa Petersen turns the childhood classic Operation into a self-portrait festooned with collaged butterflies set against an idyllic hand-painted landscape. A tour-de-force is Jack Johnson’s “Monoptrification: A Game of Life and Death.” The large circular game board mounted on the wall satirizes those versions of Monopoly where local businesses buy squares as self-promoting boosterism. Here, Detroit is put on display in all its dysfunctional glory.

Some of the pieces are essentially props for performance art. “Dimsumadis” by Mike Richison uses super-realist dim sum sculptures to pit contestants against one another in hoarding most-favorite foods and avoiding least-favorite ones. Krista Connerly’s “Urban Party Games” and three projects for mapping Detroit’s environs by the University of Michigan’s Art & Design Teams ask people to take art out of the gallery and into the streets. All raise issues of social interaction and identity.

Outside in the garden, Graem Whyte curates a miniature golf course with holes designed by artists. Most of them accept the premise of miniature golf and do something with the environment in which it’s played.

Clint Snider’s “365 Rosa Parks” is a “signature” piece. Like installations he’s done at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Artcote in Windsor, and elsewhere, Snider collects pieces of the Motor City’s ruined landscape and assembles them — in this case, into a small wood-frame shack complete with rusty eaves, peeling paint and a satellite dish (the latter a reference, according to the artist, to his Hamtramck neighborhood).

Scott Hocking’s “Hell Hole” is a large turtle covered with AstroTurf that floats free in a pool of water. Players tee off from a ramp to try to get the ball into the cup set on the turtle’s back. Aptly named, “Hell Hole” is listed as a par 2 but par 200 seems more like it, as the dozens of balls floating in the pool around the ever-moving turtle attest.

A couple of artists tease the miniature golf concept. Matt Hanna’s “Play A-Round with Babe’s Balls” envisions putt-putt from Paul Bunyan’s perspective. It uses blue balls about a foot in diameter (presumably from the lumberjack’s ox companion) and ax heads for clubs. “Vertihole” by Justin Templar and Ken Poirier is a mash-up of miniature golf and carnival games of strength. The par-4 hole requires first putting up a steep slope — so that the ball drops into a Rube-Goldberg assembly of tubes — and then using a sledge hammer to launch the ball through holes in a giant rotating wheel.

Players choose from standard putters or custom models by various artists, including one where the head is attached to a weed whacker. *Game Show Detroit* is best experienced with a group of people. If you do play a round of golf, make sure to give the ball a good whack.

Game Show Detroit runs through July 22, at Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID), 5141 Rosa Parks Blvd., Detroit. Entry to the show is free; Putt-Topia is \$3 per round (all proceeds benefit CAID). Call 313-899-2243 for information.

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