The Medium That Ate The World

Raph Koster
I’m here to talk about games.
People say games are frivolous.
friv·o·lous

adj. 'fri-və-ləs

1. Unworthy of serious attention; trivial: *a frivolous novel.*

2. Inappropriately silly: *a frivolous purchase.*

[Middle English, probably from Latin frivolus, *of little value,* probably from friare, *to crumble.*]

friv o·lous·ly adv.

friv o·lous·ness n.
People are nuts.
I’m here to tell you that games aren’t
pointless,
childish, or
inappropriately silly.
GAMES ARE HERE TO EAT HUMAN BRAINS.
Consider this a clarion call of warning.
(It’s too late for me – save yourselves).
Where did games come from?

The world of boards
The regular world
Higinbotham’s oscilloscope
What is a game?
What are media?

Art
Music
Literature
Games are models

The boardgame model
The sports model
The play model
The videogame model
Picture a “magic circle.”
“Rules” are the laws of physics within the circle:
Topologies.
Algorithms.
Causality.
All games are turn-based.
(Some turns are really really fast, and run on a timer).
Some games are symmetric
and others asymmetric.
Why do games exist?
What is fun?
Kinds of fun

Ludus
Paidia
Ilinx
Vertigo
Alea
Mimicry
Fun is learning.
What does that tell us about ourselves?
Killing.
Aiming.
Projecting force.
Assessing arcs.
Timing actions.
Collecting.
Exploring.
Building.
Forming tribes.
Seeking understanding.
Seeing the world as a gamer means...
Goal-oriented behavior.
Quantification.
Collaboration.
The rise of play?
Games are eating popular culture.
How many of you play games?
100% of kids aged 6-10 do.
$7,548,000,000 dollars spent on games in 2004.
Not to mention pop culture impact...
Where are games going?
There are two kinds of video games today.
Incredibly expensive CGI movies with occasional interactive sequences.
And “pure” games.
One path leads to the holodeck.
The other is the models model.
One swallows the other.

(models > holodeck)
Can there be a metaverse?
Modern games are composite media.
It’s easier to imagine a TV show within a game than the other way around.
The pace of cyberspace is being set by games.
The future of play is ubiquity.