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Among the notable challenges facing computer game scholars is the complexity and changeability of the game industry. Indeed, it can be difficult to deeply understand a game, its play, and the different practices and cultures arising from them without a strong sense of how that game was made. Unfortunately, the business of game making is often veiled – sometimes actively and aggressively – by proprietary and pullulating production practices, labyrinthine corporate structures, fluctuating consumer markets, and incessant technological innovation.

One way for scholars to begin to draw back this veil is to inquire at the point of labor, that is, to critically and directly engage the people who produce the cultural and playful artifacts that give the industry its dimension and direction. What follows are three excerpts from a series of such engagements we initiated this past year. The developers chronicled in these interviews represent different experiential points of the development profession, and their individual histories are in many ways the history of the industry itself over the last three decades. While the developers share certain ways of seeing, they also diverge almost violently in others, uniformly raising fascinating questions about professionalization, economics, art, education, the effects of success and failure, and the nature of commercial game making in general.

These excerpts by no means represent the full measure of the story, or even necessarily a large part of it; rather, they are but glimpses of people and processes. And yet, these glimpses probe some of the fundamental issues that have long defined the practice of computer game development. Michael Thornton Wyman (Big Splash Games), for example, talks in his way about the troubling effects of the corporatization of ludic expression. So too does Brian J. Moriarty (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), though where he points to the pursuit of art as a possible solution, Wyman seems more comfortable with artisanality, with craftsmanship rather than the invocation of cultural magic. For Quentin Rezin (inXile Entertainment), art and business are of a piece, and the work of the game developer is ineluctably and simultaneously that of artist, artisan, craftsperson, and business-savvy entrepreneur.

In the end, we hope these interviews prove interesting and useful. More than that, though, we hope they spur regular, active, and elaborate connection between game developers and scholars. It is by way of such a connection that the people who make games and those who study them can begin to more fully understand the computer game medium, its business, and its cultures.