

Adam Martin & Giselle's Books about *Your Demise*

GISSELLE'S BOOKS

The title of the exhibition is striking and somewhat confrontational. Who is the “you” in *Your Demise*? What does “demise” refer to in the context of the work? Without giving away too much, could you explain the significance of this title and how it sets the tone for the viewer's experience?

ADAM MARTIN

I like to let titles emerge naturally. Whenever I've overthought them, I usually end up regretting it, they start to feel off, or like I missed the mark. *Your Demise* felt right instinctively. It brings a sense of tragedy, of suffering. I think of these games as “suffering games” in a way, they're meant to provoke unease, discomfort, even anguish. Those emotions are powerful. I'm drawn to them because they can create an emotional charge that lingers. I like the idea that after someone finishes playing, the world outside feels a little brighter, more miraculous by contrast. But it might just depress some people, and that's okay too. I want to create experiences that move people. But I feel like there is so much organizing, planning and trial and error with this medium that I want some things to feel prescient and intuitive. I think saying "Your" in the title also acknowledges the audience, or "players" as I call them.. they are very important to this work. just as important as the work is for me.

GB

You frequently use visual novel-like formats and draw on video game culture in your work. How does *Your Demise* incorporate these interactive or game-inspired elements? Did you design it as a playable experience for the audience, or is it more of a linear narrative presented through multimedia? Describe how visitors might navigate or engage with the story.

AM

This show very much uses the visual novel format. It's designed to be clicked through, you sit down, read, make a few choices, and experience the scenes unfold. Some parts have branching paths, others are more linear, but all of it is presented in that visual novel format. It's interactive, but not in the gamified sense of “winning”, it's more about being drawn into the story and becoming part of its rhythm.

GB

Your work often “explores the intersection of personal history and systems of power”. In what ways does *Your Demise* reflect this collision between intimate personal memory and larger institutional or societal forces? For example, are there autobiographical elements or specific memories that you've woven into the project to comment on broader power structures

AM

The visual novel *Your Demise* is structured around a chapter-selection interface, and two of those chapters are directly based on memory. The third is more of a writing exercise. The other game in the show, *Gotham Art Whores*, is a composite, a mix of real experiences and imagined characters. I never try to make something overtly autobiographical, but my life bleeds into the work whether I want it to or not.

GB

A notable thread in your practice is the “conflicted psychology of young, angry men within structures of economy, desire and institutional domination”. Does *Your Demise* continue this exploration of masculinity under pressure? If so, can you describe how this theme manifests in the narrative or visuals of the exhibition (e.g. through a particular character, voice, or scenario)?

AM

Yeah, though I never set out to explore that directly, it always seems to emerge. Maybe because I'm a man myself, and that tension just lives in the work. There's this dance between masculinity, repression, violence, pressure, and my emo, overly sensitive side. I often feel like I'm in a trance when I make this work, guided by something buried, I want it to come from an unconscious place. I don't always have a clean answer for it. It's like this meme* pretty much explains it. (laughs) *MY D*CK HAS LEAD ME TO PLACES, I WOULDN'T GO WITH A GUN.

GB

In video games, players expect a degree of agency over the story. In your past works, you've been interested in subverting stereotypes of agency and narrative authorship. Does *Your Demise* give viewers choices or an illusion of choice in how the story unfolds? How do you want the audience to relate to the narrative (more like readers, players, or witnesses)?

AM

Your Demise definitely gives the illusion of choice, like most visual novels do. Even if there are multiple endings, you're being guided. It's not like you have enough information to make fully "informed" decisions. And I'm not that interested in total freedom anyway. To me, real agency is the ability to walk away. You can close the laptop, sure, but within the story, often your only choice is to keep clicking forward. That's very true to life. In distressing situations, we rarely get to opt out, we just endure. I like how visual novels make the player an active participant rather than a passive viewer. The work doesn't really exist unless someone plays it.

GB

Given that *Your Demise* lies at the crossroads of art and game, are there particular visual novels, video games, or even works of literature that influenced its style or content? Do you see parallels between the way *Your Demise* unfolds and how a novel or a game might unfold for its audience?

AM

This is always the hardest question because I've consumed so much media my whole life. I grew up on comics, Marvel, DC, and shows like *Batman: The Animated Series*, *Mobile Suit Gundam*, *Banana Fish*. There's a lot of tragedy in those stories. Early 2000s reality TV also had a huge impact, not the fake-scripted stuff of today, but things like *The Real World* or *The Girls Next Door*, where it felt like you were seeing behind a curtain.

The first visual-novel-adjacent games I played were the old Nancy Drew PC games by HER Interactive, spooky, slow-paced, tense. And I have to mention fanfiction. I used to read so much of it, especially the kind with emotional chaos, drama, and sex. A lot of it was written by women, even when it was about gay male characters. I don't know how to explain the influence exactly, but I know it shaped how I write and what kinds of stories I gravitate toward.

GB

Your themes have been described as involving "traded intimacy", the idea that intimacy or personal experiences can be bought, sold, or exploited (as seen in your previous project inspired by the fetish video industry). How does this concept play into *Your Demise*? Are you examining any form of commodified personal experience or relationship in this work, and what questions do

you hope viewers will ask themselves about it?

AM

Yes, especially in *Gotham Art Whores*, which is the other visual novel in the show. It's not strictly autobiographical, but it's infused with personal experience, particularly my relationship with the contemporary art world. That piece came out of a kind of disillusionment, realizing the art world, which I once saw as full of potential, wasn't so different from other systems I'd already tangled with. In my early 20s I worked in the fetish video industry and sex work in LA, and that world had its own specific oppressions. I started to notice overlaps, how power, desire, and performance played out similarly across industries. I'm not trying to give a literal comparison, but I wanted to write something that communicated that eerie resemblance. It's a fictional story made up of composites, but the feelings behind it are very real.

GB

Another idea in your work is "institutional opacity", the hidden or opaque workings of institutions and systems of power. In developing the work in the show, were you responding to any particular institution or structural issue (for example, corporate culture, the art world itself, technology platforms, etc.)?

AM

That always seems to be in there, even if I'm not consciously trying to write about it. I don't think of myself as a victim, but I've often found myself caught in these shadow economies, worlds just beneath the surface of legitimacy. Sometimes I resent that, but I also know I don't really function in the "real world" either. It's tricky. One of the games in the show touches directly on that. And *Your Demise*, the title piece, maybe speaks more to internal systems, the power structures within sexuality, shame, and emotional memory.

Interview realised on the occasion of *Your Demise*, Adam Martin's exhibition at Giselle's Books
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