Electronic Literature Organization

To facilitate and promote the writing, publishing, and reading of literature in electronic media.

| main | about | contact | join | programs | directory | publications |

March 15, 2005

Mystery House Taken Over

The MHTO Occupation Force is pleased to announce the launch of Mystery House Taken Over.

The Mystery House Advance Team — including ELO board member Nick Montfort, working with Dan Shiovitz and Emily Short — has reverse engineered *Mystery House*, the first text-and-graphics adventure game. Members of the Advance Team have reimplemented it in a modern, cross-platform, free language for interactive fiction development, and have fashioned a kit to allow others to easily modify this early game.

Modified versions of *Mystery House* have been created by the elite Mystery House Occupation Force, consisting of individuals from the interactive fiction, electronic literature, and net art communities:

- Adam Cadre (*Varicella, Photopia*)
- Daniel Garrido, a.k.a. dhan (*Ocaso Mortal*)
- Michael Gentry (*Little Blue Men, Anchorhead*)
- Yune Kyung Lee & Yoon Ha Lee (*The Moonlit Tower, Swanglass*)
- Nick Montfort (*Ad Verbum, Implementation*)
- Scott Rettberg (*The Unknown, Implementation*)
- Dan Shiovitz (*Lethe Flow Phoenix, Bad Machine*)
- Emily Short (*Savoir-Faire, City of Secrets*)

Visitors to the site can play these modded games and can also create their own versions to offer online there. The Mystery House Occupation Kit allows artists and authors, with or without programming experience, to hack at and reshape *Mystery House*, easily modifying the "surface" aspects. Artists and writers may also choose to undertake more substantial renovations, engaging with, commenting on, and transforming an important interactive program from decades past.

Mystery House is a primitive interactive fiction for the Apple II by Roberta and Ken Williams, who published the game in 1980 through their company, On-Line Systems (later called Sierra). The game was a hit — Sierra sold more than 10,000 copies in a very small, new market for home computer software. *Mystery House* accepts one- or two-word typed commands from the user and presents crude, monochrome line drawings and terse textual descriptions. In 1987, in celebration of Sierra's 7th anniversary, *Mystery House* was placed in the public domain. The modifiable Mystery House Taken Over reimplementation has likewise been placed in the public domain by the Advance Team.

Mystery House Taken Over is a 2004 commission of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc., (aka Ether-Ore) for its Turbulence web site. It was made possible with funding from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

(New E-Lit)

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uncategorized

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