

EUROPE'S MOST INNOVATIVE GAME DESIGNER

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Bounden's game designer Adriaan de Jongh on artistic games, the Dutch Game Fund and going abroad.

Adriaan de Jongh is internationally known as the creator of highly original games like *Fingle* and *Bounden*. As co-founder of Game Oven he has always been on the forefront of game development that goes beyond pixels on a screen. His designs bring people together by making the act of play exist outside the device. They are all about human interaction, the games are just the tool.

Recently, De Jongh and his co-founder decided to close down Game Oven. He had become too much of a project manager and wanted to go back to being a full-time game designer. Which is understandable, considering the many awards thrown at him over the last couple of years.



His latest 'invention', **Bounden**, is a game that makes people dance a duet. It's one of those games that really only a few people can come up with. Looking at the sheer amount of innovation awards and nominations *Bounden* has, well, hoarded, we can officially say it's the most innovative game in Europe.

But *Bounden* could not have been made if it weren't for the Dutch Game Fund. Control had a conversation with the ever merry game designer on the subject of this fund.

Why is it important that there is a Game Fund that will support games that might otherwise never get made?

"More people should play games because games can be tremendously strong and immersive experiences. A lot of people don't play video games because of a few simple reasons: difficult controls, illiterate themes and narratives, and alienating user interfaces. Experimentation on all aspects of video games shows that there is more to games than shooting aliens in the face, Pong and Super Mario. Besides, making games is expensive and investors look for a level of viability that video games have yet to reach. Without initiatives like the Game Fund, it is extremely difficult to financially allow for experimentation."

As a developer you received a grant from the Game Fund yourself, for Bounden. What did it mean for your studio and the game?

"Game Oven, the studio I co-founded, received 35.000 euros to make *Bounden*, a mobile dancing game with choreography by the Dutch National Ballet. The money simply covered a large part of the costs of our studio. After the amazing experience of working together with the Dutch National Ballet, and with more than 11 awards, great finan-

cial figures, a larger network, contacts at distribution platforms, and many other things, *Bounden* was a huge success that would never have happened without the Game Fund."

Game Fund supports the development of artistic and innovative games. What makes a game artistic in your opinion?

"Artistic games tend to do a good job in communicating the developers' wanted experience, feeling, or unique workings. Artistic games show no compromises in design, art, tech, music, or the overall experience. They don't have to be anti-commercial. In contrast to a lot of works in other media, I'd say that games as artistic works not only need to express the artists' vision, but also execute well in delivering that vision. Games are, after all, interactive, and artistic games embrace that interactivity."

De Jongh himself was recently added as the latest member of the Game Fund Committee. Among a few others, he will be the one judging the projects from now on.

What are the things you will be focusing on most as a member of the Game Fund Committee?

"When it comes to games that are submitted, I first look at a game's mechanics, defined as the physical input of the player translated to an in-game event. I think there is a lot of potential in creating unique game mechanics that developers aren't tapping into enough, so I hope to give developers who try to enter that domain a chance. After that, I ask myself a bunch of questions, mainly: how does an actual play-through go? Is the game pretentious or will it actually achieve what the developer wants it to achieve? Does the game have style or character? Looking at the portfolio of games previously funded by the Game Fund, will this game fit in terms of quality?"

The Creative Fund also helps developers going to conferences and events abroad. Why is that, what can studios learn from going abroad?

"If you are reading this, you probably already know why conferences are important! Conferences and events attract representatives of platforms like Sony, Microsoft, Nintendo, Valve, Apple, or Google, and it attracts representatives of publishers like Ubisoft, Team 17, Big Fish, and many others. Striking a deal or even just talking to these representatives is likely to pay back in the long run. These large events are also crowded with specialists, and if you ever need advice or need someone to work on certain aspects of your game, knowing the right people can help tremendously. Besides, talks can lead to big insights, and attending the right industry parties can help to make international friends."

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