Finding Aid to the
Atari Design Concept Sketches, 1973-1991

Summary Information

Title: Atari design concept sketches
Creator: various employees of Atari, Inc. and Atari Games Corporation
ID: 2013.atari
Date: 1973-1991 (inclusive); 1973, 1985, 1987 (bulk)
Extent: 2.5 linear feet
Language: The materials in this collection are labeled in English.
Abstract: The Atari design concept sketches are a compilation of drawings created by various employees of Atari, Inc. and later Atari Games Corporation. The bulk of the materials are dated 1973, 1985, and 1987.
Repository:
>Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
>One Manhattan Square
>Rochester, New York 14607
>585.263.2700
>library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) have not been transferred, The Strong has permission to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.
Custodial History: These Atari design concept sketches were acquired by The Strong in August 2012 from Scott Evans.
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Processed by: Julia Novakovic, August 2013

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names
- Cheng, Regan
- Graybeal, Andy
- Hata, Ken
- Huang, Barney
- Pombo, Stephen
- Takaichi, Pete

Corporate Names
- Atari Games Corporation
- Atari, Inc.

Subjects
- Conceptual art
- Gauntlet (Game)
- Street Fighter (Game)
- Touch Me (Game)
- Trak 10 (Game)
- TX-1 (Game)
- Video arcades
- Video game industry
- Video games--History.

Historical Note

The original Atari, Inc. was an American video game and home computer company founded in 1972 by Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney. Atari pioneered arcade games as well as home video game consoles. The company was divided and sold a number of times over the ensuing decades, and the current iteration of Atari, Inc. is focused on digital and mobile games.

In 1972, Atari released *Pong*, the first commercially successful video arcade game. The *Pong* phenomenon spawned several Atari arcade game sequels [such as *Pong Doubles* (1973)*, Quadrapong* (1974), and *Super Pong* (1974)], in addition to numerous competitor knock-offs. Atari also produced a Home Pong console. In 1976, Bushnell sold Atari to Warner Communications. Soon after, Atari introduced a lucrative home video game console, known as the Atari 2600, on which consumers could play auxiliary game cartridges. Subsequently, Bushnell left Atari in 1978. The founder of Commodore International purchased the home computer and video game console divisions of Atari in 1984. Warner retained and renamed the coin-op division as "Atari Games," but then sold it to Namco one year later. Several more transactions involving Atari Games occurred, though it was ultimately absorbed, and rendered defunct, by Midway Games in 2003.

The arcade coin-op division, which ran from 1972 through 1999, created dozens of well-known games, including *Breakout* (1976)*, Asteroids* (1979), and *Centipede* (1980). This department also produced many designs for games which were halted at the prototype stage.

Collection Scope and Content Note
The Atari design concept sketches in this collection range from 1973 through 1991, with the bulk of the materials dated 1973, 1985, and 1987 (though a number of drawings are not dated). These sketches are by various Atari artists, including Regan Cheng, Andy Graybeal, Ken Hata, Barney Huang, Stephen Pombo, and Pete Takaichi. (Some illustrations are not signed and may have been drawn by other artists.) The Atari arcade games most frequently depicted in this collection are *Touch Me* (1974)*, Street Fighter* (1987), and *Gauntlet* (1985), with concepts for *Air Race* (never released), *Barrel Pong* (1973), *Gotcha* (1973), *Gran Trak 10* (1974)*, Gremlins* (never released), *Peter Pack Rat* (1985), *Pin Pong* (1974), *Quadrapong* (1974)*, Qwak!* (1974)*, Red Baron* (1980), *Trak 10* (1974), *TX-1* (1984), and *4-Player Football* (1979) also included. (A number of sketches are not labeled and may represent additional Atari games.) The majority of the drawings are 14 by 17 inches. Additional scope and content information is listed for each series under the "Contents List" section of this finding aid.

The Atari design concept sketches are arranged into four series. The materials are housed in two large, flat archival document boxes.

Related Collections
The International Center for the History of Electronic Games (ICHEG) at The Strong holds a significant collection of arcade video games, including many created and produced by Atari.

The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong houses issues of related magazines such as *Atari Adventure*, *Atari Age, Atari Connection*, and *Atari Explorer*.

System of Arrangement
Series I: *Touch Me*, 1973
Series II: *Gauntlet*, 1985
Series III: *Street Fighter*, 1987
Series IV: Other Atari design concepts, 1973-1991

Contents List

Series I: *Touch Me*, **1973**
> **Scope and Content Note:** This series contains 46 pages of drawings showing potential designs for the arcade game *Touch Me* (also referred to as *Echo* and *Peer* within these documents). The first 18 sketches in Folder 1 were signed and dated by Regan Cheng, followed by 4 sketches signed by Pete Takaichi. Folder 2 holds 22 large unsigned/undated drawings and two 8½ by 11-inch pages. Many of these illustrations are in color.
>
> These design concept sketches depict assorted cabinet styles, control panels, buttons, speakers, read-out displays, and more.

Box 1
Folder 1   *Touch Me* design drawings, Regan Cheng and Pete Takaichi, 1973 and n.d.
Folder 2   *Touch Me* design drawings, unidentified artist(s), n.d. [c. 1973]

Series II: *Gauntlet*, **1985**
> **Scope and Content Note:** This series holds 24 pages of drawings showing various designs for the arcade game *Gauntlet* (also noted as "Project 443" on these documents). Nearly all of these sketches were stamped with an "Atari Coin-Op Division Industrial Design" emblem, and designer Ken Hata filled in the name and dates on these papers.
>
> These full-color design concept sketches include illustrations of assorted cabinet styles, control panels, speakers, angling of monitor screens, cabinet dimensions, assembly, and more. The drawings in this series are often annotated and labeled by the Atari design team.

Box 1
Folder 3   *Gauntlet* design drawings, Ken Hata, 1985

Series III: *Street Fighter*, **1987**
> **Scope and Content Note:** A binder holding 84 pages of Atari industrial designs, as well as a folder with 3 large tracing paper sketches and a general layout blueprint, comprise this series on the arcade game *Street Fighter*. Noted in the design documents as "Capcom 498," Capcom contracted Atari to create the deluxe edition cabinet for this game, which may not have entered production.
>
> These designs show assorted cabinet styles, control panels, joysticks, service panels, display shields, schematics, and other arcade machine components. The binder also houses six 8½ by 11-inch pages from a purchase requisition and component evaluation requests signed by Ken Hata for the *Street Fighter* deluxe cabinet prototype in May 1987. The last page in the binder exhibits seven photographs taken during stages of assembly for the *Street Fighter* cabinet prototype.

Box 2
Object 1   *Street Fighter* binder containing industrial designs, Ken Hata and unidentified artist(s), 1987

Box 1
Folder 4   *Street Fighter* design drawings, unidentified artist(s), n.d. [c. 1987]

Series IV: Other Atari design concepts, 1973-1991

Scope and Content Note: This series contains a variety of loose design concept drawings and two bound sketchpads. Only some of the illustrations are labeled, signed, and/or dated.

Information on specific folders and the sketchpads is included below.

- There are 3 large unfinished sketches for the Atari Leisure Time Game Center concept, with one drawing for an Atari Theater Kiosk.
- There is one sketch of what The Strong has identified as *Gran Trak 10*. In the same folder, there are 10 drawings of *Trak 10* cabinet designs.
- Within the "2 Game Module" folder are 10 drawings. There is one sketch of a cabinet labeled with both *Trak 10* and *Gotcha,* while another page depicts a cabinet holding *Trak 10* and *Rebound*. The remaining concepts are not labeled.
- Atari never produced a game called *Dodgem*. The 3 pages of design concepts in Folder 8 may have been applied to another arcade game project. These were signed by Regan Cheng.
- There are 6 sketches in the folder for *TX-1*; three of these are signed by Stephen Pombo, who likely made the remainder.
- Folder 10 holds 13 pages of different concepts for cocktail table-style, or tabletop, arcade cabinets.
- Folder 11 (miscellaneous design drawings) contains 23 sketches, with representations of *Barrel Pong, Gotcha, Demo Derby, Gremlins, Peter Pack Rat, Air Race,* and other unlabeled cabinet concepts.
- The first sketchpad, sized 19 by 24 inches and located in Box 1, does not have a specific artist's signature. The 26 drawings in this volume also comprise various cabinet and component designs, with notations for *4-Player Football* and *Red Baron.*
- The second sketchpad, found in Box 2, likely belonged to Regan Cheng. Within this 14 by 17-inch pad are 42 pages of various cabinet and component designs. Games labeled include *Pin Pong*, *Qwak!*, and *Quadrapong*. This volume also holds several concept sketches for the proposed Atari Leisure Time Game Centers (also shown in Box 1, Folder 5).

Box 1
Folder 5   Atari Leisure Time Game Center and Theater Kiosk concept art, unidentified artist(s), n.d.

Folder 6   *Gran Trak 10* and *Trak 10* design drawings, unidentified artist(s), n.d. [c. 1973-1974]
Folder 7   2 Game Module concept sketches, unidentified artist(s), n.d. [c. 1977-1978]
Folder 8   *Dodgem* design drawings, Regan Cheng, 1973 and n.d.
Folder 9   *TX-1* design drawings, Stephen Pombo, n.d. [c. 1982-1983]
Folder 10   Cocktail table cabinet design drawings, Regan Cheng and unidentified artist(s), 1973 and n.d.
Folder 11   Miscellaneous design drawings, various artists (Regan Cheng, Andy Graybeal, Pete Takaichi, Barney Huang, Ken Hata, and unidentified artists), 1973-1991 and n.d.
Object 1   17" x 19" graph paper with two design sketches for Project 420, Ken Hata, 1983
Objects 2-3   Two 17" x 22" pages mounted on both sides with race car game design sketches, unidentified artist(s), 1983
Object 4   19" x 24" sketchpad, unidentified artist(s), 1979

Box 2
Object 2   14" x 17" sketchpad, [likely] Regan Cheng, n.d. [c. 1973-1974]