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taking photographs, and woodworking, and she dreamed of being an artist. At the same time, she had an aptitude for math and science and an affinity for activities that required logic and technical skill, such as her brother's video games. Hunicke "was branded as 'gifted' and given a lot of opportunities," Liz Lawley wrote for the blog *Mamamusings* (July 29, 2005). "But the opportunities were in a creative and expressive context, not in the context of procedural learning. Never tied to programming or math or problem-solving." For that reason, Lawley wrote, Hunicke's "overall enthusiasm for school waned" during her junior high and high school years.

A bright spot during that period came during the summer when she was sixteen. Her parents sent her to Cambridge University in England to participate in an art-related program. While there, she saw work by the English poet and artist William Blake (1757–1827), who had created illustrations to accompany his own poems. Hunicke took photos of the illustrations and then used a computer to alter the images. "This planted a tiny seed," she told Souris Hong-Porretta in an interview for the *Hustler of Culture* blog (Oct. 31, 2004, online), "the idea that I could use machines to communicate or create new things—combine efforts, as Blake had done."

Hunicke enrolled at the University of Chicago, where she took a course titled Computer Programming as a Liberal Art. The class, she recalled to Hong-Porretta, covered "programming, architecture, poetry, philosophy . . . all the ways that our daily lives are rich with structure

and meaning. Suddenly the seed sprouted—branches reaching to touch almost everything I was interested in!" At the university, as Hunicke explained to Kevin Kelly for *G4* (Sep. 25, 2011, online), her work "was essentially in narrative and storytelling and the ways in which humans share information." Her thesis for her bachelor's degree was a computer program designed to tell a story that changed as it was read. While working on her thesis, she began to spend time at the university's AI laboratory and to read books related to that subject, including *Scripts, Plans, Goals, and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* (1977) by Roger C. Schank and Robert P. Abelson, and she was "hooked," as she told Hong-Porretta. She added that her "heroes" tend to be artists or designers, mentioning in particular game designers Will Wright and Keita Takahashi, musicians Jeb Bishop and Aphex Twin, comic-book creator Chris Ware, and sculptor Lee Bontecou, whose work she says "transformed my sight, hearing, and playing. I admire their ability to communicate through design—which I aspire to do as well."

Hunicke told Kevin Kelly that when she enrolled in a graduate program at Northwestern University in Chicago, she "thought about whether machines could express thoughts and feelings." At an AI conference during those years, she met Will Wright, who told her that with her skills and interests, she should consider working in game design. "That really was what I wanted to do, I just didn't know it," she said to Kelly, recalling, "Back then, there weren't any schools for gaming, there weren't programs."

GAMING CAREER DEBUT

At Maxis, the company Wright had cofounded with Jeff Braun and sold to the Redwood City, California-based EA in 1997, Wright had designed *The Sims*, a game in which players create and direct the lives of virtual people. The players decide on their characters' appearances and character traits, choose their careers and homes, and make them interact and form relationships with others; the characters' daily needs are the responsibility of the players, who must see to it that, for example, the Sims have regular meals and use the bathroom. The characters speak a language called Simlish.

Sims 2 debuted in 2004. The following year Hunicke, who told Hong-Porretta that she has "had a few jobs here and there" as a "waitress, shopgirl, teacher, freelance web monkey, writer, photographer," joined Maxis and helped design additional versions of *The Sims*. She designed objects that appeared in *Sims 2: Open for Business*, which went on sale in March 2006. While *Sims* characters had jobs in the earlier versions of the game, they were never seen at work; this changed in *Open for Business*, which allows

players to have their characters sell merchandise or offer services by setting up beauty salons or restaurants, for example. Players are also responsible for characters' skills, which will determine the success or failure of the enterprises; positive interactions with customers are crucial, and businesses run more smoothly when characters fire lazy employees. The player can measure customer satisfaction, and the success of a business, by the number of stars the business receives. In *Open for Business*, characters can operate their businesses while keeping other jobs.

After working on *Open for Business*, Hunicke "was very hungry to do design," as she told Aaron R. Conklin for the website Get in Media. "I wanted to do original design, not just work on objects for a system that had already been designed." Accordingly, she was made the lead designer for *MySims*, which debuted in 2008. The setting of that game is not suburbia but rather a fantasy world that has gone awry. The premise is that that world's builders have left, followed by most of its other citizens; the character the player creates is a builder who must restore a place to which others will return. Discussing the process of designing *MySims*, Hunicke told Conklin, "I'll be totally honest—I was not ready for that job. I thought I was, and I wasn't. And it was probably the lowest point of my career. . . . The structure wasn't in place at EA to take a grad student with good ideas and turn her into a strong, confident leader. The one thing I'm really proud of is that the core mechanic of building things and giving them away stayed through the entire game. I still think that's great."

The year 2008 also saw the release of *Boom Blox*, a game Hunicke designed for EA, based on an idea by filmmaker Steven Spielberg. "I really wanted to create a video game that I could play with my kids," the filmmaker said, as quoted by Aaron Thomas for *GameSpot* (May 7, 2008, online). The game contains more than three hundred puzzles that involve very high towers of blocks; through various methods, players try to extract blocks without having the towers come crashing down. As the game progresses, players move through many levels, earning scores that bring gold, silver, or bronze medals.

A TURNING POINT

After working on *MySims*, *Boom Blox*, and *Boom Blox Bash Party*, Hunicke took a vacation in the Himalayan nation of Bhutan, where she climbed a sixteen-thousand-foot mountain. It "was pretty insane," she told Conklin. "I trained hard, but I wasn't ready. When I got over the mountain and started walking down back to my life, I realized I needed to make a change." She broke up with her boyfriend and moved out of the apartment they shared. At the same time, she thought about her next career move. During that period, she got to know Kellee Santiago, cofounder of

Thatgamecompany (TGC), who suggested that Hunicke join their game-developing business. There, Hunicke began work on *Journey*. She told Conklin, "I saw [*Journey*] and knew it was the next game for me—it's a game where you go over a mountain."

With the online *Journey*, Hunicke and her associates at the dozen-member TGC sought to create a playing experience different from that found in other games. An oft-discussed aspect of Hunicke's approach to game design is that she begins with an emotion she wants to evoke, then creates a game with that emotion in mind. *Journey* de-emphasizes structure in order to facilitate a feeling of collaboration between players, who may not know each other. The game is set in a desert, with one character seeking others. Hunicke explained to Keith Stuart for the *London Guardian* (Dec. 6, 2011, online), "The narrative of *Journey* is about what *you* do in it." She added, "If you want to follow someone you may, if you want to lead, you can lead. These things create the narrative of your own journey. That's what we wanted—we wanted to leave it up to the player, the individual."

In addition to her work for TGC, Hunicke participates in the annual Game Developers Conference, where she has helped organize such events as the Game Design Workshop and the Experimental Gameplay sessions, and speaks at game festivals all over the world. She also helped establish the education committee of the ten-thousand-plus-member International Game Developers Association; the committee's curriculum guide has been used around the world to teach game development.

PERSONAL LIFE

Hunicke writes a blog, *Geuwaw*, on the Northwestern University website. Her posts have addressed topics beyond games. In her entry for June 9, 2010, for example, she wrote, "Because of my work on games for children and families, I became very interested in climbing childhood obesity rates." She went on to say that she was "thrilled" to take part in First Lady Michelle Obama's campaign, Let's Move, which according to its website is "dedicated to solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation." Specifically, Hunicke reviewed apps for the campaign's program Apps for Healthy Kids, which awarded prizes to those who created "innovative, fun and engaging software tools and games that encourage children . . . to make more nutritious food choices and be more physically active." In another post (Apr. 2, 2010), she wrote about her participation in the 2010 Game Design Workshop, saying, "More than anything—I wanted people to take away one very important message: YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DIVERSITY OF YOUR TEAM/PROJECT/COMPANY. . . . Every time you hire someone, you should be

trying to build a more diverse, robust and creative team. That comes from diversity of thought, experience, interests, gender, sexuality and race—just to name a few.”

Selene Emad-Syring, writing for *New Moon* (July–Aug. 2007, online), a magazine aimed at young girls, asked Hunicke, “What advice would you give to a girl who wants to be a video game designer?” Hunicke replied, “Game designers are curious—they read a lot, they travel, they learn new things. They watch how people learn, have fun, and grow so they can make fun games that help people learn and grow.” She also emphasized the collaborative and creative aspects of the job, saying, “You should be good with people, because making a game isn’t just about you, but about your whole team. And you need to be a gamer. You need to play—not necessarily video games, but board games, tennis, sports, acting—any group activities that are playful. Anything creative or playful is good for a game designer.”

Hunicke is married to Ben Smith, a software engineer for the game company Blizzard Entertainment.

SUGGESTED READING

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—Clifford Thompson

Jon Huntsman Jr.

Born: March 26, 1960

Occupation: Politician, businessman, diplomat

A former Utah governor and US ambassador to China, Jon Huntsman Jr. is a moderate politician and businessman who briefly entered the 2012 Republican presidential primary. Huntsman was twice elected governor of his very conservative



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home state of Utah and enjoyed a whopping 90-percent approval rating when he left office to serve as ambassador to China in 2009. He announced his presidential campaign on June 21, 2011, at Liberty State Park, New Jersey, the same place where Ronald Reagan announced his 1980 run. However, Huntsman’s stances on key Republican issues, such as climate change and same-sex civil unions, seemed out of step with his more conservative fellow candidates. He decided to end his campaign in January 2012.

Huntsman’s life story, much like his politics, breaks the current Republican mold. He is a Mormon and former rock-and-roll musician. His father is a billionaire philanthropist whose aim is to give away all of his fortune before his death. He is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese; not to mention that, in a politically divided landscape, Huntsman is a moderate whose policies have won support from both sides of the aisle. During his tenure as governor, Utah was named one of the three best-managed states in the country by the Pew Center for the States. As chairman of the Western Governors’ Association, Huntsman spearheaded efforts to address climate change with public policy—though he famously distanced himself from this work during his 2012 primary run.

After suspending his presidential campaign, Huntsman was named a member of the board of directors for Ford Motor Company and for Huntsman Corporation, founded by his father. He has also become an outspoken advocate for reform within the Republican Party and the