

Junkyard Bowling as an Arithmo-Political Statement

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The world premiere of Junkyard Bowling took place Thursday, August 4, in a hallway at the LA Convention Center, during the SIGGRAPH 2005 Conference. The Junkyard Sports event, produced by the Ludica (a game design cooperative) Game Atelier, also included a similarly sweetly significant game of Junkyard Golf. The significance? That we were playing with junk (posters, bags, paper cups, a Rubik's Cube and other miscellaneous exhibitor bric-a-brac) at probably one of the highest of high technology events. It wasn't so much that we were trying to make a particular point, but rather a counterpoint.

Junkyard Bowling was created collaboratively by whoever happened to be in the hallway at the time. The design, manufacture, and layout of the "pins" turned out to be a work of art in its own right.

In searching for an object heavy enough to knock our pins over, we came upon a Rubik's Cube of all but perfect heft. Then someone noticed that the cube looked very much like a die, as in one of a pair of dice. Then someone put numbers on the die. And the rest is history. Junkyard Bowling. Played with a die. Your score, the number of pins you knock down, multiplied by the number on the die when it finally comes to rest. And oh, the unanticipated glee of it all. The arithmetic delight of scoring a potential 56 for a single throw (we were playing nine-pin bowling), the subtle properties of the rolling cube bouncing off the wall and into the remaining pins, and, best of all, the unparalleled joy of being part of a collaboratively and spontaneously contrived work of play, made out of junk, in the hallway of the LA Convention Center, during a conference dedicated to heightening high technology!

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