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## **Creative Time Launches the World's First Transgenic Virtual Pet Game MetaPet by Action Tank**

**March 27, 2002:** On April Fools day, 2002, Creative Time is pleased to release the Beta Version 0.9 of MetaPet, an on-line virtual pet game by Action Tank, a collaboration between Natalie Bookchin and Jin Lee. With MetaPet, Action Tank explores the complex social and political issues surrounding genetic engineering and corporate behavior. Player feedback to the MetaPet Beta version 0.9 during April 2002 will be used to inform MetaPet 1.0, scheduled to launch on May Day, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2002. MetaPet is part of DNAid, Creative Time's ongoing series of commissions addressing themes around genetics, and was produced in association with Hamaca.

### **MetaPet**

Are you ready to manage the worker of the future? In MetaPet, the collective Action Tank playfully takes on three cultural behemoths: the biotechnology industry, the electronic gaming industry, and corporate culture at large. To play MetaPet is to enter a world in which the uncooperative worker dilemma has been solved with a genetically engineered human. To play by the rules of MetaPet, you, the player, are the manager. As a worker pet manager or employer, your challenge is to discover the right balance between a firm hand and a gentle coax without ever losing site of the bottom line. You are responsible for manipulating physical and psychological characteristics of your worker pet, by offering promotions or vacations and motivating it to work hard and efficiently. By the same token, you can determine their fate by firing your worker pet if they do not perform well. The player is placed in the center of the intricate matrix of corporate biotech culture and is poised to emotionally experience the complicit role as manager of the worker pet— for example, as the worker pet's actions generate or lose "dollars", the stocks of the employer biotech company go up and down.

Games allow for free play and discovery within the formal structure of a pre-determined set of rules. Games are not a new form for artists -- from the Surrealists to Fluxus, the last century has found artists pulling compelling games out of their bags of tricks. However, with the surge of contemporary gaming culture, and the recent development of the electronic gaming industry as a major cultural force, there is still a niche to be carved between the individual pursuits of artists and the slick, critically unexamined product of the mainstream electronic game industry. Creative Time's launch of MetaPet marks a new phase in the evolution of artist-made games and stakes out new territory for independent, creative practitioners. [www.metapet.net](http://www.metapet.net)

## **Action Tank**

Action Tank is an independent mobile network that deploys high leverage technology as ammunition against the current state of affairs. Action Tank was formed in 2000 by Natalie Bookchin and Jin Lee. As an open collaborative unit, Action Tank currently includes Bookchin, Lee, Cathy Davies, Mark Allen, Jerry Hamby and Lem Jay Ignacio.

## **Natalie Bookchin**

Natalie Bookchin is an artist who works with the Internet, computer games and other popular media. She will be releasing her newest project, "MetaPet" on May Day, 2002. Her previous game project, "The Intruder," which was recently featured in Game Show at Mass MOCA and Animations at P.S.1, can be played at <http://calarts.edu/~bookchin/intruder>. In 1999-2000 Bookchin organized <net.net.net>, an eight month series of lectures and workshops on art, activism and the Internet at CalArts, MOCA in LA, and Laboratorio Cinematek in Tijuana. From 1998 to 2000 she was a member of the collective @TMark. She is currently a 2001-2002 Guggenheim Fellow and a faculty member at CalArts in Los Angeles.

## **Jin Lee**

Jin Lee is a visual artist based in Chicago. Her recent project is a series of large digitally constructed panoramic landscape photographs that contrast Western and Eastern approaches to the tradition of landscape representation. Her works are included in permanent museum collections such as the Art Institute of Chicago, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, MacArthur Foundation, Madison Art Center, and Museum of Contemporary Photography Chicago. She was a contributing member of the collective @TMark from 1999-2000 and is a founding member of artist collective Action Tank.

## **Creative Time**

Creative Time is a nonprofit arts organization with a thirty-year history of presenting public arts projects of all disciplines, through both grassroots activism and highly prominent venues. From the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage, Grand Central Terminal and Times Square to milk cartons, billboards, and skywriting over New York City, Creative Time has a distinguished history of commissioning and presenting art that enhances the public realm, inspires and provokes discussion of socially relevant topics such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS pandemic, genetic engineering, and now, the proliferation of developing technologies in the arts and society at large. For more information about Creative Time, please visit [www.creativetime.org](http://www.creativetime.org).

## **Hamaca**

Hamaca is a platform specialized in production, dissemination and debate around Net art. Various contemporary art institutions have agreed to collaborate on research and experimentation regarding new creative languages connected to the Net, and the multiple possibilities that this field offers. Each year, Hamaca awards a commission based around the development of three or four artistic projects from their initial planning stage as, for example, a workshop, to the completion as Internet-based projects. [www.hamaca.org](http://www.hamaca.org).

