Digital games & XR

Craft, culture and creativity drive global impact

DANSK ERHVERV

NMBI

GAMES DENMARK

CreativeDenmark

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About Creative Denmark
Creative Denmark supports international stakeholders and decision makers in exploring solutions, products, and processes within the Danish creative industries. As a not-for-profit public-private partnership, the initiative connects international demand for innovative solutions with Danish creative companies and competencies. The aim is to raise awareness about the transformative potential of Danish creativity as a driver for sustainability and enhanced quality of life.

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Introduction

01

Not just building games

Asbjørn Malte Søndergaard & Niels Wetterberg
Tactile Entertainment & Games Denmark

Behind every powerful digital experience lies craftsmanship.

Denmark's games industry is becoming one of Europe's most promising creative sectors. Driven by consistency, originality and a growing ecosystem that brings together talent, trust, and technical depth, the country has shaped a new creative model that is succeeding through collaboration and originality. And with the creation of Europe's first dedicated game institute and the establishment of a unified industry platform through Games Denmark, the sector is maturing.

The country has long invested in design thinking, interdisciplinary education, and team-based learning. Through programs like DADIU, bringing together students from 11 national institutions to form full production teams, it prepares graduates to lead and work as a team as well as make games. Real time technology and creative education are also being integrated across sectors, from classrooms to professional training, preparing a new generation of digital creators.

However, what we believe makes Denmark truly stand out is its creative output. Our country consistently delivers games that are global in reach but unmistakably local in tone. IO Interactive's Hitman franchise shows how Danish craftsmanship can build world-class IP. SYBO's Subway Surfers remains one of the most downloaded mobile games of all time. Ghost Ship Games' Deep Rock Galactic proves that mid-sized, creatively led studios can generate passionate global fanbases while retaining full control. Tactile Games, with hits like Lily's Garden, exemplifies how strong storytelling and mobile-first design can build a loyal, global player base over time.

And alongside them, studios like Triband and Northplay embody the next generation; bold, humorous, and culturally anchored. Whether it's Triband's absurd comedy mechanics or Northplay's award-winning children's games made in collaboration with Denmark's public broadcaster, the message is clear: Danish studios are not just building games. They're building trust, community, and IP with longevity.

Beyond entertainment

02

It's about more than just saving the princess

Mikkel Thomassen & Simon Løvind
NIMBI - The Danish Institute for Game Development

When creative freedom meets cultural care, games become tools for reflection, connection, and change.

The Danish games industry consists of myriad small companies and a few bigger ones. This structure fosters a unique ecosystem that allows for personal storytelling and bold, experimental game design. Mature studios often support new talent, creating a collaborative culture where ideas can flourish.

Together they cultivate a creative environment that inspires other studios to take risks and create meaningful, experimental games. When these games become global commercial successes, they offer players something truly original – born from a culture that embraces risk and creative freedom.

This mindset builds on a legacy from the golden age of Danish children's television in the 1970s, when content treated children as active participants. That approach continues in today's children's games and public service media, where respect and purpose still guide the work.

The responsibility for the player and the creation of meaningful experiences extends beyond gameplay and story. Many larger studios actively engage with themes like sustainability, diversity, and social responsibility both in the workplace and in the development process.

As a result, the story and gameplay in many Danish games have more at stake than just saving the princess. Many developers aim to change something in the player's life – whether by addressing loneliness, mental health, self-esteem, or by empowering young girls.

In Denmark, games are seen as more than products. They are cultural expressions, educational tools, and potential catalysts for change. The founding of Europe's first dedicated Game Institute in Denmark stands as a clear example.

Empowering creativity and collaboration

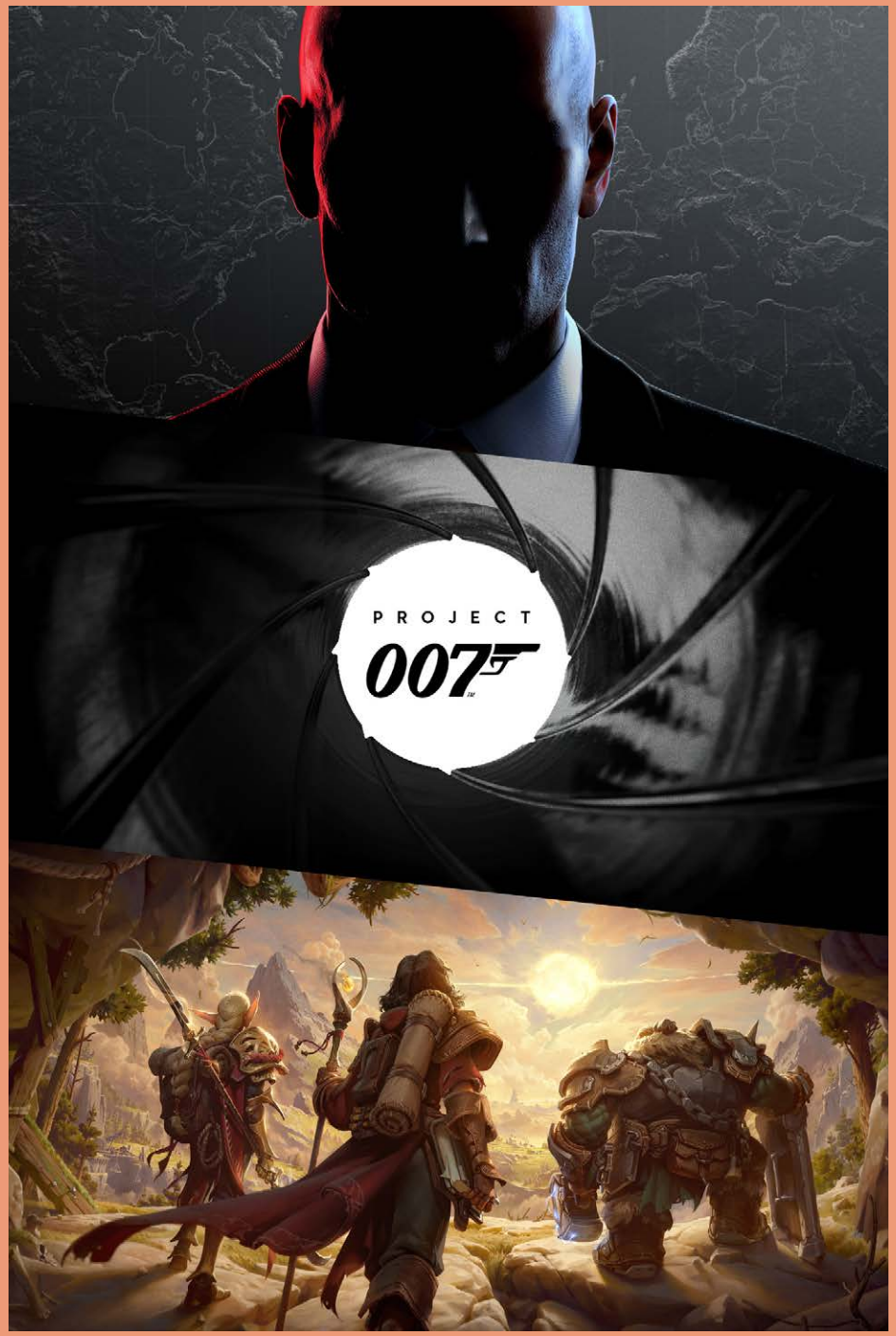
Founded in Denmark, IO Interactive is a leading AAA studio with offices in Malmö, Barcelona, Istanbul, Brighton and Copenhagen.

—

With a 25-year legacy, IOI is known for creating iconic titles like HITMAN, Kane & Lynch, and Freedom Fighters. The studio is currently developing Project 007, a James Bond origin story.

IOI's responsibility as an employer is reflected in its commitment to attracting, nurturing, and retaining top talent. With a team spanning over 40 nationalities, the studio fosters a supportive work culture where collaboration and creativity are prioritised to give everyone an equal opportunity to thrive and succeed. Flat hierarchies and a shared sense of ownership empower employees to innovate while ensuring a healthy, inspiring work environment. This culture not only strengthens internal collaboration but also enhances the quality and depth of the games IOI produces.

At the core of IOI's success is Glacier, its proprietary game engine, which enables immersive, system-driven worlds tailored to player choice. Built and refined in-house, Glacier gives IOI full creative control while supporting innovation at every level. By investing in both technology and people, IOI exemplifies how the Danish games industry creates innovative interactive experiences while maintaining a strong, people-first approach to game development.



A new tool for treating hallucinations

Heka VR help users to master anxiety in multiple different scenarios.

Heka VR is pioneering responsible innovation in mental health through its immersive VR therapy tool, designed for individuals with schizophrenia who experience malevolent auditory hallucinations.

This groundbreaking solution empowers patients to take control of their symptoms by enabling them to create and interact with a digital avatar of their persecutory voice in a safe, guided environment.

With real-time voice modulation and customizable avatars, therapists can support patients in confronting their hallucinations and developing effective coping strategies that enhance their well-being. Heka VR also benefits caregivers by providing deeper insights into the patient experience and strengthening support networks.

By merging mental health expertise with cutting-edge technology, Heka VR exemplifies how Denmark's XR industry is shaping meaningful, human-centered solutions. Heka VR is not just a breakthrough in treatment, it stands as a testament to how responsible innovation can transform lives.

Reinforcing acceptance, diversity, and inclusion

SYBO, the studio behind Subway Surfers, is dedicated to making games a platform for positive change.

— With around 150 million monthly active players, the Copenhagen-based studio SYBO leverages its global reach to champion acceptance and social responsibility, both in-game and beyond.

In June 2024, SYBO launched its annual Pride Month campaign, aiming to empower LGBTQIA+ members of its community and create a more inclusive world. This included a partnership with Skate Like a Girl, an organization dedicated to empowering individuals through skateboarding. For three weeks, the Subway Surfers World Tour transported players to celebrate in San Francisco –one of Skate Like a Girl's home bases. The game also introduced Riley, a character styled in pink, white, purple, black, and blue to represent the community's flag, joining SYBO's extensive lineup of past LGBTQIA+ characters.

The initiative was an extension and reinforcement of SYBO's core values of acceptance, diversity, and inclusion. This starts at an internal level, where the studio ensures all team members feel heard and empowered through an annual Neurodiversity Week event, International Women's Day celebrations, and extensive sustainability initiatives. By integrating meaningful themes into its games and partnering with organisations driving real-world change, SYBO demonstrates how Denmark's gaming industry leads with purpose.

Quote: Lena Mech, Cozy Game Studio

“Games are really powerful in motivating people to do practically anything.

So, why not use them to make people happier?”

Mindfulness becomes gameplay

With their debut title Spirit World, Cozy Game Studio is merging self-care and play into a new genre of mindful mobile gaming.

— Creating games that nurture mental wellbeing is the core principle behind Cozy Game Studio. Their mission is to challenge the conventional separation between entertainment and self-care by prioritising player wellbeing through accessible, enjoyable games that build mindful habits. The studio's debut title, Spirit World, embodies this innovative approach.

Spirit World is a self-care mobile game about becoming a caretaker in a forgotten sanctuary for mythical creatures. The game is a carefully crafted experience that integrates proven wellbeing practices into captivating gameplay. Players step into the shoes of the character Amy to explore a magical world full of mystery, discovering tools for inner peace along the way.

The game subtly weaves mindfulness techniques like guided meditation, breathing exercises, and gratitude journaling into the core gameplay loop. This "stealth wellbeing" approach directly responds to research showing that many young adults, despite feeling stressed, struggle to engage with traditional self-care tools due to a lack of motivation. Spirit World approaches this problem by making wellbeing fun, enticing and inherently rewarding.

Collaboration shapes education

03

Designing the future starts with play

Kasper Kruse
TAW - The Animation Workshop

Game education links play, learning, and collaboration, preparing creators to shape digital experiences with skill and purpose.

Learning begins with play. From an early age, games foster creativity, problem-solving, and collaboration. They shape how people engage with the world and influence how they think and interact. This connection between play and learning is essential to how games are understood and how they are designed. Danish game development builds on this foundation and prepares future creators to craft experiences that are both innovative and meaningful.

To support both technical expertise and creative thinking, Danish education encourages experimentation, interdisciplinary work, and a strong sense of community. Play acts as more than a method of engagement. It prompts reflection, supports critical thinking, and opens new ways of seeing the world. Students are also asked to consider the long-term impact of what they create, including how games affect society and the environment.

Collaboration runs throughout. Game development education reflects the cooperative nature of the industry. Students work in teams across disciplines, and often across institutions, forming partnerships between schools, universities, and the professional field. This approach brings diverse perspectives and shows how shared effort leads to better results.

More than a path into the job market, game education in Denmark helps shape the future of digital experiences. Students are encouraged to push boundaries, design with purpose, and explore gaming's evolving role in society. With a focus on creativity, collaboration, and ethical awareness, the Danish model reflects the values driving the country's digital industry forward.

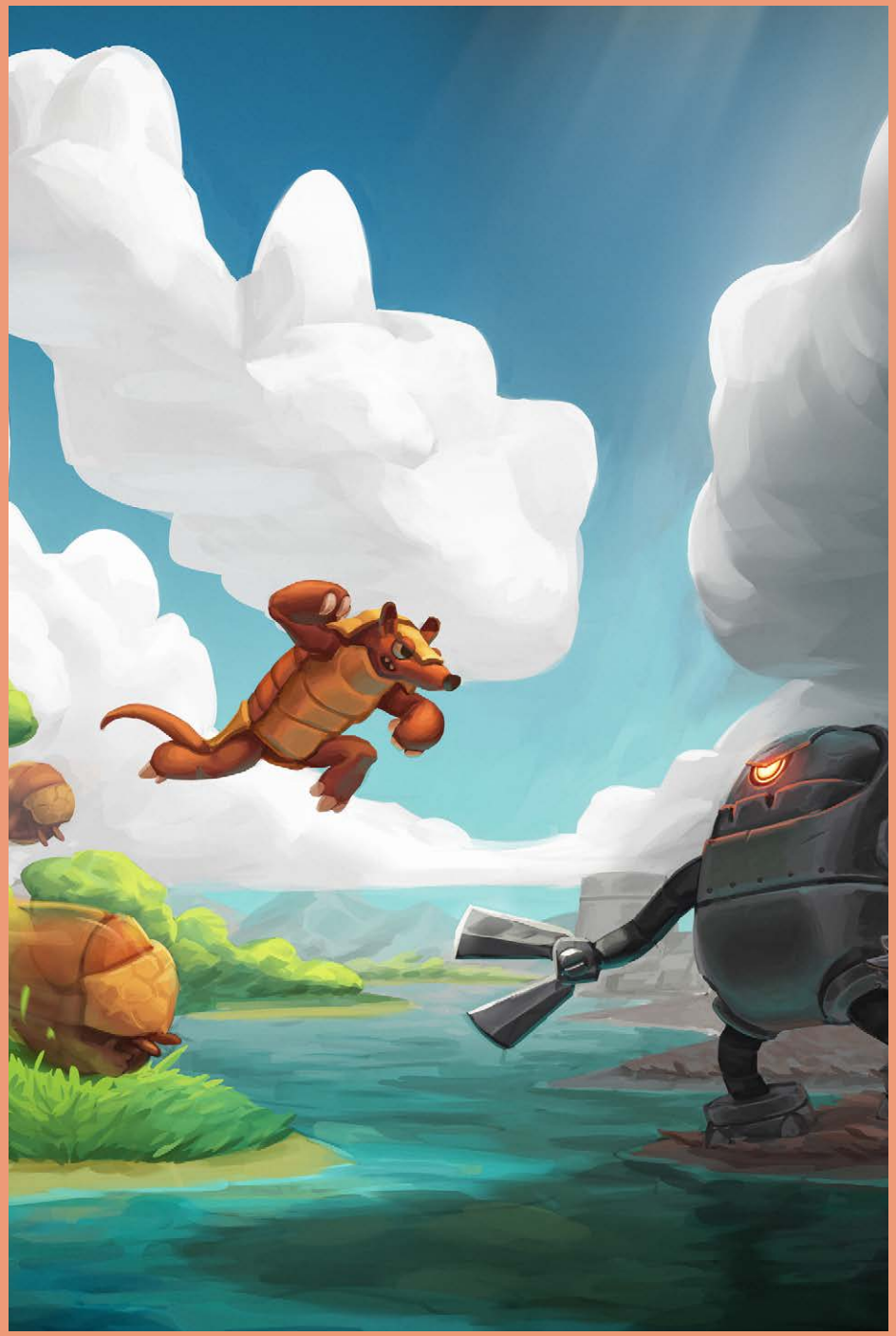
Learning to protect the planet through play

A playful learning universe inspiring youth to act on climate and sustainability challenges.

PoN! Armadillo Island combines mobile gameplay and classroom learning to make climate education interactive. Players become armadillos defending their island from robots that pollute and destroy natural ecosystems. As they explore five Brazilian biomes, the game encourages reflection on biodiversity, sustainability, and climate change.

The project is led by the Danish Cultural Institute in Brazil, which developed the concept and educational toolkit. The game was created with Brazilian studio Ilex Games, alongside youth organisations, educators, and partners across Latin America and Europe. The toolkit brings the experience into schools, cultural centers, and communities, promoting teamwork and real-world discussion.

With over 40 partners – from NGOs to ministries – the project has reached students across Brazil and Colombia. PoN! Armadillo Island shows how playful learning, driven by creativity and global collaboration, can inspire young people to act on urgent environmental issues.



Quote: Chris Ebeling, Epic Games Denmark

“Denmark’s deep commitment to creativity, digital learning, and responsible design makes it the perfect place to grow a new generation of creators.”

Teaching game design through collaboration

Peparing the next generation of game makers for real-world game development through practical education.

— DADIU (The Danish Academy of Digital Interactive Entertainment) is a national network across 11 universities, art academies, and technical institutions that rethinks what game development education can be. The network's mission is to prepare students for the realities of collaborative, team-based production. The programme unites creative and technical disciplines in game design, programming, animation, QA, audio, project management, and visual arts.

Every autumn, DADIU offers 1000 masters-level students a full-time, one-semester experience that prepares them for the pace and pressure of the professional games industry. Students work in interdisciplinary teams that function like real game studios, where they must develop and deliver three original game productions over the course of the semester.

This setup teaches more than technical skills. It fosters a shared creative language, sharpens communication across roles, and builds the ability to solve complex challenges collaboratively. DADIU is a visionary example of how collaboration in education can empower the next generation of game makers.

Playful learning meets public mission

Public broadcasting supports interactive learning and entertainment for the next generation.

— Digital games have become a growing part of how children explore the world. In Denmark, this is seen as a cultural and educational responsibility. Public service institutions support digital play as something to be shaped with care, rather than left to commercial interests alone.

The longstanding collaboration between the Danish Broadcasting Corporation, DR, and Northplay is an example of this approach. Northplay has helped DR transform its public service into playable experiences that meet children where they are, on screens with care and intention, and develop games that entertain, educate, engage, and reflect Danish values.

Games like “The Island Ramasjang” have become digital touchstones for children. The games are free from ads and offer full national accessibility. They provide entertainment, as well as a safe, value-driven space for learning through play. Northplay’s ethos: ‘the funniest idea wins’ mirrors DR’s broader commitment to creating content that respects children’s imagination and need to play.

Creative capital

04

Culture at the core of play

Jakob Rasmussen
Raw Power Games

Creativity forms the infrastructure of game development

There is something quietly radical about the way Denmark approaches game development. It is neither loud nor overly polished, but deeply intentional. At the heart of our creative ecosystem is a belief that games are more than entertainment. They are tools for self-expression, imagination, and connection. They are often built with a sense of humor, a respect for players, and cultural awareness.

This mindset comes from a long tradition of play as serious work. Designing with care and curiosity has become second nature. Early design thinking shaped by toys like LEGO and a collaborative work culture that values kindness as much as curiosity both contribute to the way Danish studios create games with personality and purpose.

This is part of a wider cultural code that holds creativity as something that should be accessible. Developers embrace irreverent humour, build inclusive workspaces, empower children, and support player creativity. The ambition across these different directions remains consistent. The aim is to do things differently and to do them better.

At a time when much of the global industry leans into scale, speed, and monetisation, Denmark continues to lean into values. Creativity is treated as a team sport. Experimentation is welcomed. Innovation is not measured by volume or spectacle, but by the strength of the idea.

The studios featured in this series build absurdly funny worlds, foster positive player communities, and turn players into makers. These are not outliers. They are the result of a national investment in trust, talent, and the belief that games can be both fun and meaningful.

This is what makes Denmark a uniquely fertile ground for the future of games.

Playful minds, bold ideas, and creative collaboration

Funday Games brings playful creativity to life through bold, collaborative game design.

— Since its founding in 2011, Funday has cultivated a work culture that encourages experimentation and innovation, believing that great games come from an environment where creativity and fun thrive together. This belief shapes everything from team dynamics to project development, which makes playfulness a serious asset in their creative process.

This philosophy is reflected in both their games and their development process. Funday specialises in crafting engaging, community-driven experiences across platforms, and they partner with major brands like LEGO, SYBO, and Ghost Ship Publishing. Their approach blends technical expertise with a willingness to explore new ideas, ensuring each project brings something fresh to the table and resonates with a broad and diverse player base.

Beyond game development, Funday actively contributes to the industry through knowledge-sharing, educational initiatives, and a focus on sustainability. The team mentors emerging talent and takes part in broader industry dialogues. This strong commitment to collaboration and continuous learning makes Funday a standout example of how Denmark's gaming industry fosters bold, playful, and meaningful innovation.

Quote: Jakob Rasmussen, Raw Power Games

“We don’t just make games, we design futures where creativity, kindness, and play go hand in hand. **That’s our competitive edge.”**

Games as creative playground

Flashbulb Games is redefining interactive entertainment by giving players the freedom to create, experiment, and shape their own experiences.

— Instead of following linear gameplay, Flashbulb designs physics-based worlds where imagination drives the action, making every session unique.

Their hit game, Trailmakers, allows players to build custom vehicles from modular blocks, each with realistic physical properties like weight, aerodynamics, and traction. Success depends not just on skill but on innovation and creativity – encouraging players to think, test, and refine their creations. This commitment to emergent gameplay extends to Rubber Bandits, a chaotic multiplayer bawler built on Flashbulb's proprietary Pionet technology, enabling seamless real-time physics synchronisations.

Flashbulb Games represents the essence of Danish creative capital – pushing the boundaries of what games can be by transforming players from consumers into creators. Their work showcases how Denmark's game industry blends technical excellence with a deep understanding of playful, open-ended design.

Fun is a serious design strategy

Humour as a design tool turns playful chaos into genuine laughter, surprise, and experiences to remember.

Triband Games is a Danish comedy game studio with one clear goal: to make people laugh. Rather than chase trends or make AAA blockbusters, they make games that embrace the strange, the silly, and the unexpected. This philosophy allows them to create highly accessible, instantly entertaining experiences that blend playful chaos with tight, thoughtful design.

They have created a unique identity in the global games space as creators of comedy games that don't just aim for laughs, but for joyful, memorable experiences. Their signature "WHAT THE" series is a genre-bending portfolio of playful absurdity that surprises and delights players of all ages. Whether you're golfing with houses, have baseball bats for hands or race a car with legs, each game leans into chaos in a controlled and thoughtful way.

Triband combines a playful, unconventional mindset with a strong dedication to creativity and collaboration. With playful ways of working and open culture, ideas are shared freely, which allows experimentation and unexpected solutions to thrive. They represent the best of Danish game design with a fearless sense of humour, a commitment to accessibility, and a bold creative identity. And while their games speak to a global audience, they still manage to hold on to a distinctly Nordic tone. In a world where many games aim to look the same, Triband's strength is that they never do.

A poetic world built by hand

Two friends search for their voices in a handcrafted world and discover how trust and words shape their journey.

Out of Words is a co-op platformer adventure from Kong Orange and WiredFly, published by Epic Games. Based on an idea by poet Morten Søndergaard, the game invites players into a handcrafted stop-motion world where every character and environment reflects Denmark's creative capital.

Players follow Kurt and Karla as they set out to find their lost voices and discover what it means to hold hands for the first time. Their journey leads them through clay skyscrapers and ancient catacombs, testing their trust and communication at every step. The story unfolds with themes of love, vulnerability, and the quiet power of words.

Out of Words shows how Danish game studios turn creative capital into meaningful experiences. By uniting poetry, art, and gameplay, Kong Orange and WiredFly create a game that feels both imaginative and deeply human, proving that Danish creativity continues to craft worlds with care and purpose.

Perspective

05

Creating play with purpose

Mathias Gredal Nørvig
SYBO

Creative choices in games can shape how players think, live, and connect. The future of the industry depends on how seriously we take that.

I have worked in the gaming industry long enough to understand games' ability to influence the people who play them each day.

At SYBO, we are proud to entertain hundreds of millions of players each day, and with over 3 billion gamers globally, the industry has an opportunity to reach and spread joy to half the population. Games can support wellbeing, provide a space for reflection, shift perspectives, and offer a sense of belonging. This is where intention becomes essential.

We've learned that creativity flourishes when fueled by passion and empathy. It's not only about what we build, but also how we build it, ensuring our teams feel empowered to ask "why" and brave enough to imagine "what if." As developers, the choices we make refl ect both the values we hold and the world we want to be a part of. This mindset has allowed us to craft game experiences that resonate far beyond the screen.

In Denmark, we've seen how a culture rooted in intention and collaboration curates the conditions for the best ideas to take shape. Progress in this setting is measured less by speed and more by the depth and relevance of what is created.

As creators, we have a responsibility to amplify voices, nurture diversity, and embrace sustainability in everything we do. By doing so, we ensure that gaming is not just a source of entertainment but also a force for positive change in players' lives.

Games are an integral part of how people understand themselves and the world around them. When we treat that influence with the care it deserves, we can help shape an industry that leads with purpose.

Photo: Triband

What defines digital games & XR development today, and what sets it apart?

This publication highlights a sector shaped by creativity, openness, and a strong sense of responsibility. Digital games & XR development in Denmark grows from a collaborative culture where play is seen as a serious method for learning, expression, and connection.

The featured cases explore themes such as education, mental wellbeing, sustainability, and player agency. They reflect a shared ambition to use games as tools that contribute to cultural understanding and social engagement.

Together, the cases provide a snapshot of an industry that is both established and evolving. The Danish ecosystem supports creative ambition and encourages partnerships that combine artistic vision with social and commercial relevance. It presents a strong foundation for continued innovation and long-term investment.

Founding partners of Creative Denmark

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