

And now for something completely different:

HEEBONICS



By **RITA POLIAKOV**
Staff Reporter

Meredith Kinrys has created a monster. Well, she's created many monsters.

Kinrys, 23, is the designer for the iPhone game *Monster Dice Theatre*. In the game, which was recently released, players throw dice at tomato-hurling monsters, all of whom Kinrys drew and helped animate.

"It's fun and simple, but still addictive," Kinrys said of the game. "If you're playing it, you can get lost in it... I'm happy with the art, it's supposed to be arcade-like."

The gaming artist/ animator, who is currently doing freelance work, first got into computer animation because of a career aptitude test.

"In Grade 10, we had to take one of those [career] surveys and my number 1 [career suggestion] was computer animator and I thought, 'That is exactly what I want to do,'" Kinrys said.

So she did. After high school, the artist attended Seneca College's animation arts program, where she learned about animation and design.

"I couldn't do programming to save my life. I'm focused on the arts side," she said, adding that she's interested in video game animation and character design.

Which is what led her to *Monster Dice Theatre*.

"After I graduated, I got an internship at Heroic Interactive. While interning, I met a couple of guys. One had just made an iPhone game with a friend... he was really successful. We were all like, 'Oh, this could be something,'" she said.



ANIMATOR GETS LOST IN HER GAME



After Kinrys finished her internship at Heroic Interactive, a computer game company, Daniel Yu, an iPhone game designer, gave her a call.

"[He] contacted myself and other programmers there to work on a game with him. I was the artist," she said.

Kinrys, Yu and Josh Yaw, who was in charge of programming and coding, spent more than half a year working on the game.

For her part, Kinrys designed and animated the characters in *Monster Dice Theatre*. This included creating the monsters, the tomatoes and the backgrounds for the game.

"I figured out how they would look and move... it was a tricky process... [Yu] said the monster characters [should look] cute but kind of scary. I can do cute and scary, but it was a matter of figuring out the size. An iPhone is small. You have to make sure it'll look good for that style," she said.

While Kinrys drew many different versions of the monsters, nothing felt right.

"When someone tells you to do something, as an artist, it's hard to get something out there they'll like right away," she said. "I'll keep trying, take a break, sleep on it. When I'm feeling refreshed and I haven't thought about it too much, then it'll click... it'll eventually come to you in some sort of magic moment."

Kinrys' magic moment led to horned, multi-coloured, animal-like creatures. Some have three tails, some have muscles and all enjoy throwing tomatoes.

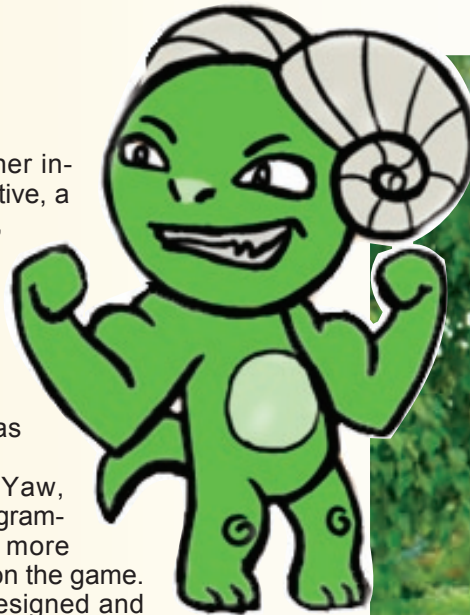
While Kinrys doesn't necessarily like playing video games more than watching TV, she does prefer designing video game characters.

"I tend to like the style of video games more. Animation can be very simple and cartoony, whereas in video games, you're looking at cool characters," she said.

Kinrys' penchant for art started in middle school, when she realized she liked sketching more than she liked listening to her teachers.

"I also had one or two friends that already knew they were artists. They were drawing and sketching all the time. I wanted to be like that," she said. "I still feel like I'm an artist doing artist work."

While Kinrys is continuing to freelance, she currently works on the other side of the gaming industry,



Meredith Kinrys helped create the iPhone game *Monster Dice Theatre*.

selling video games at EB Games.

"It's not the end I wanted to be on," she said. "My goal right now is to get a job working at a studio full-time. My ideal would be to work at a video game animation studio."

But this isn't as simple as it sounds.

"The thing about the video game industry is... it's sort of hard to break into... 10, 20 years ago, it was such a new industry that, as long as you wanted to be in it, you just were," she said.

"Nowadays, it's grown so popular... There's so many people who are really good at what they do, it's not just a matter of wanting to get in... they already want you to have the experience coming out of school."

Kinrys is trying to get that experience through projects such as *Monster Dice Theatre*, but the game hasn't been as well received as she hoped.

"We don't have anyone in marketing, which is a problem. The market [used to be] really small for iPhone games. Now that ours has come out... there's so many games out there that unless you have a lot of marketing behind it, it's really hard to get your game noticed."

So far, Kinrys and the team have been posting on forums and depending on word-of-mouth to sell their game.

For more information about the game, visit www.monsterdicetheatre.com.

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