



**EARLY CAREERS**

# 2022

## **WOMEN IN GAMES SCHOLARSHIP**

#ABKWomenScholarship  
[careers.activisionblizzard.com/abkwomenscholarship](https://careers.activisionblizzard.com/abkwomenscholarship)



## Fatima Alkhatib

School: FutureGames-Sweden

Hometown: Palestine

Degree/course: Game Artist

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: 2023

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

I would like to learn the ropes of becoming a better artist. I look forward to getting acquainted with the work of the world's best artists, exploring new environment art techniques and learning more functional pipelines to create large projects in the fastest and most efficient ways.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

Mini Ninjas, it was one of the first adventure games I played. I just love the silly chibi characters style, the beautiful environments, how you can roam around and explore, and I love the description that says: 'you are the last Ninja that anyone would expect to save the world'. It also just reminds me of the good old action-adventure games.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

Never say you can't before you try. When you fail, always try again and look at things from a different perspective. The more you push yourself the higher you go.



## Noor J. Amin

School: The University of Chicago

Hometown: Washington, DC

Degree/course: Bachelor's in Neuroscience  
and Game Design

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: June 2023

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

Dr. Celia Hodent, the author of *The Gamer's Brain*, is a huge personal inspiration to me. I would love to meet her and learn more about how I can approach design problems using my background in neuroscience.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

I've played *League of Legends* since I was about 14 years old, and it's helped me think through questions about player empathy and orientation, balance, and character design in my own work.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

One of my mentors shared a quote from Megan Smith with me when I graduated from high school: "Take your whole selves. Be inclusive. Be open. Make history in the infinite ways that your heart takes you."



## Ally Guo

School: University of Southern California

Hometown: Mason, Ohio

Degree/Course: Computer Science

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Graduating: 2025

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

Broadly, I want to learn more about multimedia storytelling. I've always loved to write and draw, and I'm super interested in how those elements can be combined with others to tell compelling, emotionally evocative stories that an audience can interact with.

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

Maybe someone like Lindsay Ellis or Dan Olson. I sometimes have trouble consuming media critically, and I really admire how people like them can analyze a piece of art and simultaneously find enjoyment while understanding and contextualizing its flaws.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

"There definitely is something special in your arts which I cannot capture" – my dad. I'm not sure if this counts as advice, but it's encouraging to know my dad supports me even when he doesn't understand what I do or why I'm interested in it.





## Claire Krupela

School: Northwestern University

Hometown: St. Louis, MO

Degree/course: MA in Sound Arts and Industries

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: August 2022

What do you geek out about?

Theme Park Design! I love thinking about how people experience theme parks and how different decisions were made to influence guest experience.

What are your hobbies?

In my free time I like to sing and make fun/experimental patches using Max MSP.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

Animal Crossing—it provides such a sense of calm and routine during these incredibly chaotic years!



## Sope Lartey

School: Drexel University

Hometown: Abuja, Nigeria

Degree/course: Animation and Visual Effects

Pronouns: She/her

Graduating: June 2023

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?  
I would love to have Neil Druckmann from The Last Of Us as my mentor.

What do you geek out about?  
I love African Literature! Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Taiye Selasi. I can talk about my favorite African writers every single day.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?  
Fail early and fail fast! Failing fast has helped me to try different interests and pick myself back up after every setback.



## Thora Magnusdottir

School: Stockholm University

Hometown: Reykjavik/Stockholm

Degree/course: Computer Game  
Development

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: Summer 2023

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

I'm most excited to learn about immersive AR and VR and how the game industry will evolve with these.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

The Last Of Us is my favorite game. It helped me understand the true beauty behind making and truly enjoying games.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

Bíttu á jaxlinn is an Icelandic saying which my parents have always said to me when something has been very hard. It translates to "bite the molar", and means that you're facing something difficult but push forward anyway.





## Jeniffer Maldonado

School: University of Florida

Hometown: Miami, Florida

Degree/course: Political Science and  
Public Relations

Pronouns: She/Her/Ella

Graduating: Spring 2024

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

I'm excited to learn about the process that goes into creating iconic games, especially like the ones we see today! I've always loved the marketing aspect of a video game campaign, so I'm interested in gaining insight on the technical aspects as well!

What are your hobbies?

I love too many things. In my free time, I've been teaching myself the electric guitar! I absolutely love rock music, so it's only a given that I pursue such an instrument. Besides that, I'm also a hobbyist photographer! I love taking pictures at local concerts, community events, and gaming tournaments!

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

The best piece of advice I've ever received is the idea that you're not competing against anyone but yourself. It's easy to compare your journey with that of someone else's and feel pressured to pursue certain things. When I realized that everyone has their own specific goals, I gained the confidence to pursue what I wanted and not what I thought was expected of me.





## Giulia Marchiori Pietrosanti

School: University of Trieste

Hometown: Rome, Italy

Degree/course: Data Science and Scientific computing/Artificial Intelligence

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: Fall 2022

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

I'm eager to learn more about the cutting-edge technology used in video games, especially AI, and where and how these technologies can be applied. Moreover, I'd like to learn about VR/AR as it is a subject that has always interested me. I hope to make the most of this experience!

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

I cannot decide between Spyro and Final Fantasy as I have a lot of memories related to both of them. I also enjoyed the remakes. Playing them was a lot of fun and both have amazing graphics.

What's a random fun fact about you?

When I read books, I always imagine the characters and the places as if I had to make a movie out of it. Once I even made an actual list of possible actors for my favorite book saga with a friend of mine.



## Andrea Portillo de Wong

School: University of the People

Hometown: Guatemala

Degree/course: Computer Science

Pronouns: she/her

Graduating: 2022

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

Shigeru Miyamoto!! I would definitely love to learn what inspired him, what he would have changed and how he continued improving his games.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

The Legend of Zelda: A link to the Past is my all-time favorite video game. I love the simplicity of the graphics and how the character's skills continue expanding and expanding which allows you to access areas where you might have been before.

What's a random fun fact about you?

My mom taught me how to play video games which became our hobby. I later taught my children how to play which has become our hobby.



## Aili (Alice) Qiao

School: University of Southern California

Hometown: Beijing, China

Degree/course: Ph.D. in Social Psychology

Pronouns: She/Her

Graduating: Summer 2024

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

As an aspiring games researcher, I'm eager to learn how research can better support the game development process. Attending GDC will allow me to further understand the unique challenges game developers face, and I can converse with experienced games researchers on how they tackle their day-to-day tasks.

What are your hobbies?

I really enjoy propagating my succulents! There's nothing more satisfying than taking the time to nurture a single leaf into a full thriving plant.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take. –Wayne Gretzky" –Michael Scott

Though in all seriousness, this quote from *The Office* has motivated me to shoot my shots, which landed me a PhD program, various research/internship positions, as well as this scholarship!



## Nadia Taallah

School: CNAM-ENJMIN

Hometown: Angoulême, France

Degree/course: UX design & User Research

Pronouns: She/ Her

Graduating: July 2023

### What do you geek out about?

I'm passionate about learning new things! It can be on psychology, gardening, video games, history, or even cooking! Whatever the platform ( videos, books, podcasts ...) and the topic.

### What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

Behind every difficult situation, there is something good. That's why, even if a task may seem difficult to me, I try to always look on the bright side and make the most of the situation.

### What's a random fun fact about you?

I always have been fond of exploring my environment and new things around me. Wherever the kitchen I am I can cook a feast with almost anything. I always find creative recipes (even with Brussel sprout! )





## KARINA TERUYA

School: University of Texas at Austin

Hometown: Coppell, TX

Degree/course: Arts and Entertainment Technologies, Studio Art, Plan II Honors

Pronouns: she/her

Graduating: May 2024

If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

Airi Pan or Grace Liu! They're both amazing artists that I've looked up to for the longest time: their stylizations, use of color, sense of composition... I'd love to pick their brains about anything and everything.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

I will always love Breath of the Wild. Aside from being part of one of my favorite franchises, the visuals are absolutely beautiful, and I constantly find myself going back and using the environments and character designs as inspiration and reference for my own work.

What's a random fun fact about you?

I'm currently working on a dream project of mine with friends: a cutesy farming sim set in a small town. We're still in the early stages of the game, but I'll be making the concept art for almost everything!



## Kacey Walsh

School: University of Central Florida

Hometown: Charlton, Massachusetts

Degree/course: Digital Media (Game Design track) and Emerging Media (Experimental Animation track) and minoring in Art History

Pronouns: They/Them

Graduating: December 2024

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

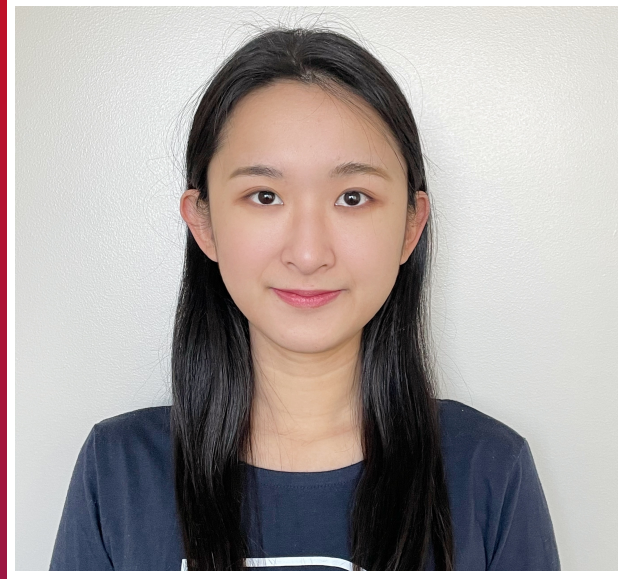
Overall, I'm very eager to network at GDC; growing up, there were very few opportunities to be involved in game development of any variety, usually being locked behind years of independent learning or unrelated studies. By attending GDC, I hope it brings more emphasis and importance to communities like mine to these new and innovative fields of work.

What do you geek out about?

I'm a huge mythology nerd; Greek, Norse, Mayan, Japanese, Egyptian, Native American, etc. I love learning about a culture through their traditional stories shared through generations of people and how those traditions reflect each culture differently.

What's a random fun fact about you?

I have had developing game concepts since late 2015 and originally wanted to learn how to be a developer so it could become a reality.



## QIAO ZHANG

School: Drexel University

Hometown: Bayonne, New Jersey

Degree/course: PhD Student in Information Science

Pronouns: She/her

Graduating: June 2025

What are you most eager to learn at GDC?

I'm excited to networking with great researchers, developers and designers, and get a chance to demo a game tutor that I developed.

What do you geek out about?

Outside of lab and research, I bake mind-blowing cakes and I'm always curious to learn something that's totally new to me, for now it's Radiology.

What are your hobbies?

I host Friday Game Night every week. Besides, I enjoy watercolor painting, boxing and exploring new tools/frameworks/platforms. Recently I'm playing around with Unity.



## Joy Zhou

School: Academy of Art University

Hometown: Fremont, California

Degree/course: Concept Art in Game Development

Pronouns: they/them

Graduating: Spring 2023

What do you geek out about?

I love any media based off of history, especially stories and worlds set in the Roaring 20s, Prohibition era. Give me a fedora sporting, trench coat clad mafia man and I'll be immediately sold on whatever you're selling.

What is your favorite video game and/or boardgame and why?

By far it has to be Hades, from Supergiant Games. The story, the artwork, the music, the gameplay; everything about it is absolutely stellar.

What is the best piece of advice that you've received?

Don't take things too personally; take the criticism, learn and grow to become better.