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Master's

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Digital collage of 3d models
(Background photo taken
From Grant Notley Park,
Edmonton, Alberta)

Katamari University: Consuming Higher Education

Semi-finalist

The image portrays the University of Alberta's buildings rolled up into a 'katamari' ball from the Japanese videogame Katamari Damacy (塊魂). This game satirizes capitalist excess by asking the player to roll up the objects of daily life, consuming them to grow the size of the katamari. Players begin by rolling up small objects like dice and strawberries, progressively growing and incorporating beer bottles, tables, humans, trees, cars, buildings, and entire continents.

My research explores the semiotics of videogames, using concepts from Embodied Cognition (affordances, image schemas, framing, and metaphor) to unpack how virtual worlds can communicate spatially to their players. This image speaks to how videogames implicitly teach new cognitive frames, which players are free to project back upon the world. In the case of Katamari, its satirical frame parodies excessive consumption while emphasizing a radical equality between all material objects: humans can be consumed as easily as anything else.