
PLAY THINGS
Ludic Method Objects
we act with
the way you touch
25/26
experimental game cultures



Contre Attaque, see page 15

26 PLAYTHINGS we ACT with.

Ludic Method Objects
Mission statement by Margarete Jahrmann, Vienna, May 2026

Art is the social play between humans - triggered by objects. And the haptic, the physical, the touch sensation connects us with the world, with all non-human players.

In the field of Experimental Game Cultures the epistemic object, in German Erkenntnis–Gegenstand, can be physically touched, the plaything can be squeezed, turned around, understood. Through this touch of an object in the process of play, a closer look to society, to the world as we know it, to the democratic forms of coexistence is based on personal experiences. Through the ***LUDIC TOUCH*** the world can be investigated and understood, and in the best case it is collectively formed.

Ludic insight is reached through play with artifacts. The significance of tangible play is found in the **psychophysical sensation**: the haptical toy surfaces activate and tackle topics through the ilinx, the bodily experience made in an installation. In the plaything exhibition parcour we feel the act of the transgression of borders as essential. The playobject is not put on the arts pedestal because it should no more be touched, but because it awaits the players soft stroke. This is real „joussance" in the sense of Julia Kristeva, wherein the children´s toy is put on a symbolic pedestal to be „toppled" any moment. We roleplay Rrose Sélavy as adult toy: we draw from the act of Dadaist revolte against war and pauverty, we act like R´Mutt by converting toys, out of the red loot box of trash. Instead of only putting everyday life objects on an exhibition pedestal, we reconfigure playthings into tangible art on a podest - and invite You to ***ACT IN PLAY.***

The plaything was central to all ages and all social areas before the liberal canonisation of games and toys by the Bildungsbürgertum. Play was educationally domesticated, toys became social adaption tools for kids in the 19hundreds. Now, in the present, playthings are meaningful objects of the arts.

Hic et nunc, now and here, in the exhibition of the toy artifacts the shift between players, artists, those who design the rulesets and those who enact and activate these objects blurs: this is the BLEED of reality into play.

Playthinga are a miniature of the world as we know it. However, in arts context it is fictionally scaled. The plaything becomes a microcosmos of a world or a gigantic makro object of a minature toy. We transfer the plaything out of the childrens room into the political reality, ***in the orbital center.***

Like the PLAY ORBIT show the 26 Playthings foster and enable players into critically



Play Orbit, Jasia Reichardt, London 1969

Right Now GAMES 'R' US



Uncountable Board Game - with so many pieces, rules, and arguments about whose turn it is, that nobody remembers who was winning.

SAVE $3



Magnetic Cuddly Caterpillar - it keeps falling apart just so it can hug itself back together.

99'99 ea.
Reg. 12.99

SAVE $5



Spinning Top - Spin first. Question later. Balance in perpetual motion.

GET IT NOW!

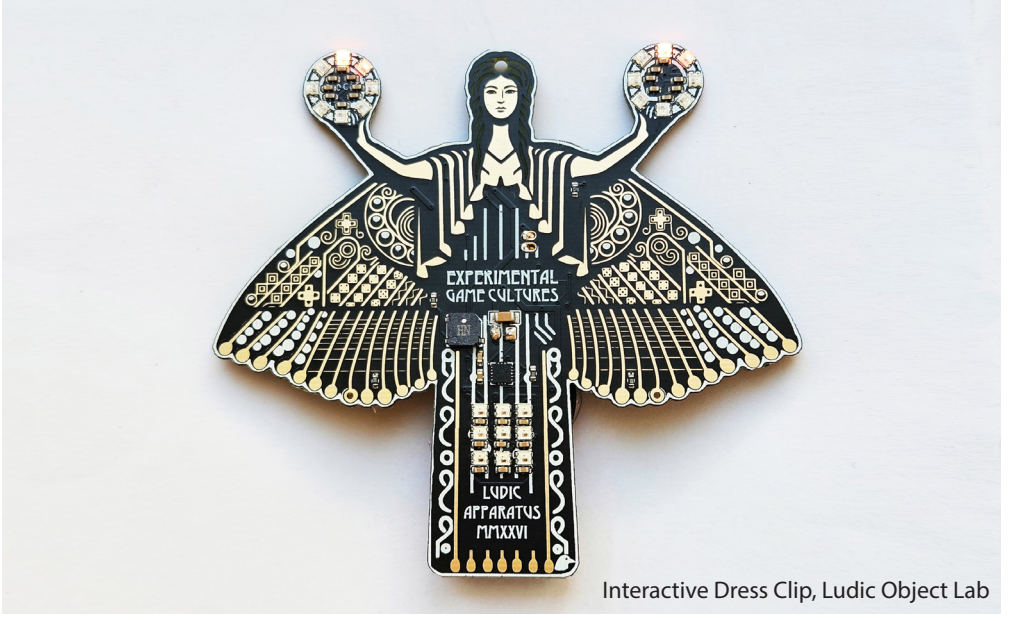
SAVE $40



Wavy Slide - a bumpy regret machine for anyone who forgot how much friction exists.

99'99 ea.
Reg. 139.99

Now thru Nov. 4



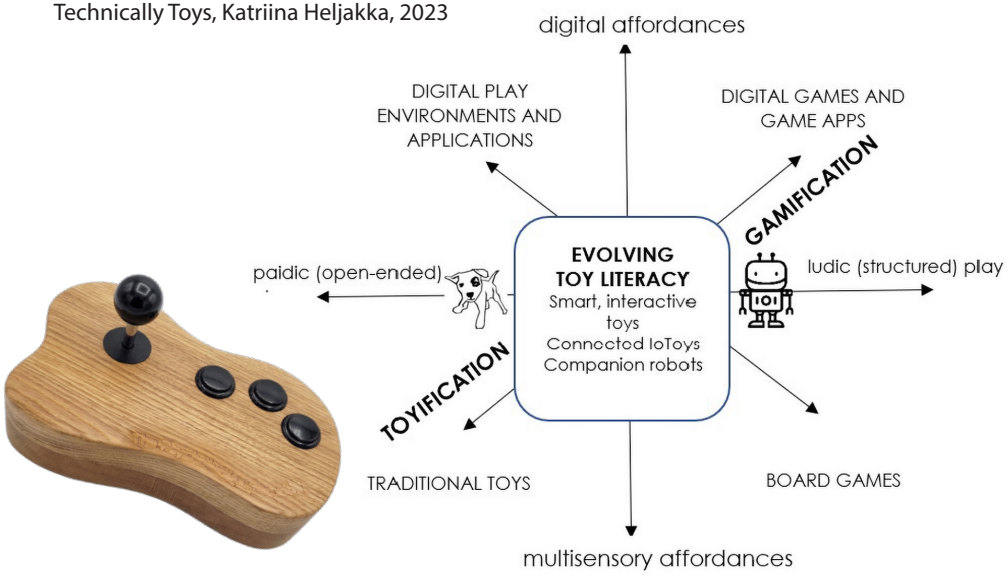
Interactive Dress Clip, Ludic Object Lab

un-learning toys into artists´ playthings
We reanimate ludic objects into actants of discourse. Our playthings are artistic artefacts that enable a sustainable flow of exchange. Similar to the ars memorandi elaborated in a physical space furnished with objects, we read the ***plaything space of Experimental Game Cultures*** as an arsenal of thoughts, equipped with fetishlike storage objects. The artseeking „players" orient themselves towards objects distributed in space, which serve as triggers for arguments and thesis. A theory of objects that drive the game of cognition can be developed for this purpose. Physical objects, artefacts as representatives of social and democratic shifts are exhibited and made accessible. In ***a memory theater of play objects***, we enter a state of action.

ACT NOW with 26 Playthings!
Therefore with the objects of play presented in this brochure, we invite You to critically act. These are discourse activating objects, the 26 Playthings connect You to meaningful actions. In an ongoing continous playtest, in a public showing, in an arts exhibition we offer the experience of play as a method to socially intervene. Use our toys to reshape yourself and the world. These ojects are not capitalist Toys R´us but transform us by the act of tangible play into **„Arts Toyers": We R´Toyers!** Through this ludic neologism we all aim to describe the activated player, reflecting in deep play and social action.

glossary

1. discourse-activating objects
The difference between ludic discourse objects and artistic epistemic things is essential. The discourse-activating objects are not already epistemic things, but they become such things when they are part of an insight momentum, where the discursive element is not located after but before this transformation. Only when the entire assemblage of artistic objects, discourse objects, reflection and settlement generates research data, then the epistemic object arises in play out of the artefact. The difference of this discourse to discussions in scientific research is the reciprocal value of continuous play from idea to object to discourse to theory, towards findings that allow new knowledge, emerging new research questions in a fascinating new magic circle of artistic play!



2. psychophysical playthings

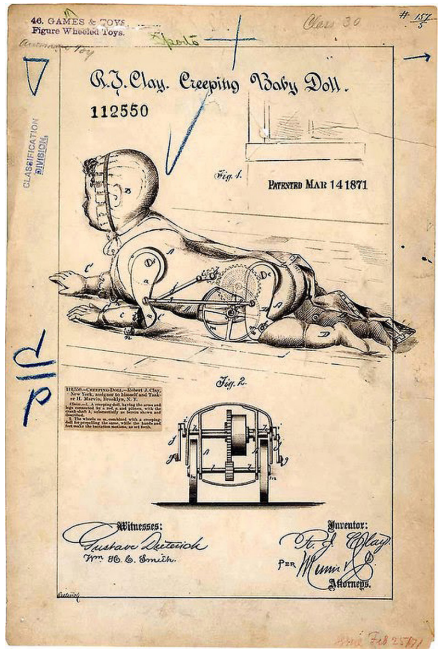
A bodily experience caused by the sensation of touch can be juxtaposed with the demand for epistemic insight. In this sense, the ludic approach of agency in balance of a social group of artistic peers can be made public. A new interpretation of a plaything inherently holds a potential for social impact.

3. performative playthings

The element of the physical, of inner and outer psychophysical space is achieved in performance situations in the presence of a protected, selected and persistent space of experience. The exhibition space allows the joyful interplay between very different and deeply individual positions and provides a source for the development of a common discourse culture. Out of this a toolbox of performative play as vehicle evolves.

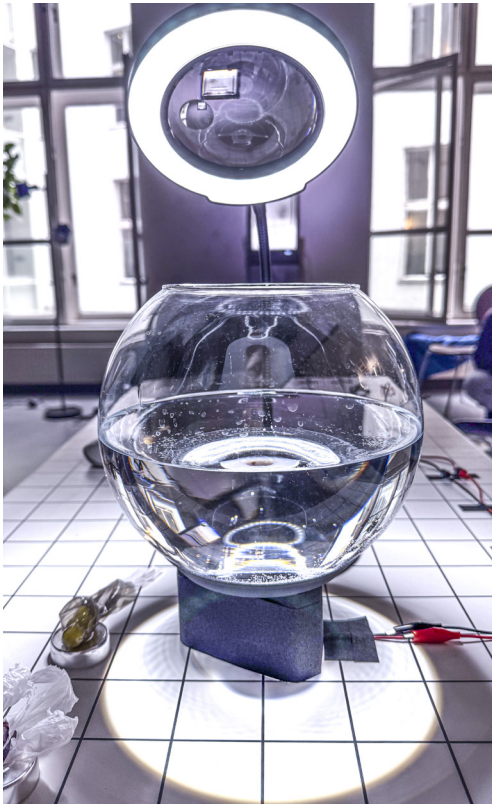
4. ludic objects

The ludic object is an artifact of individual meditation, a form of personal expression and opens the cognitive process in the form of a situated play in ludic arts exhibitions. The gradual difference between an exhibition object and a ludic object becomes evident, when we consider the artistic plaything as philosophical toy, associated with an idea, question, goal and rationale.



Improvement in Creeping Dolls, Patent 1871





DONT FORGET TO BE HUMAN

Tobias Taibon

Play is a liberation from our own thinking. To truly feel human, we have to play. We need it to be present with ourselves and to reconnect with the shared human condition that binds us all.

THIS is a play companion.
It will assist you on this endeavour. It does not demand achievement or understanding. It's just here, enjoying life. Sometimes it moves, sometimes it rests. Sometimes nothing happens at all.

It may not have a brain but it most certainly has a heart. The heart of the plaything hopes that you are curious.

Perhaps THIS is like a window.
Perhaps an open door.
It invites you to come closer.
It wants to show you more.



Cilj Sveta

As a child, I rarely saw toys as objects meant only for play. My grandmother Lela quickly realized this and often bought me two identical toys. I would take the first one apart to see how it worked, driven by curiosity about its "hidden" mechanisms. The second would remain intact, but even then I rarely played with it as intended. Instead, I would extend its possibilities through imagination, assigning it new roles, stories, and purposes beyond its design. For me, toys were both objects of investigation and tools for creating alternative worlds. This combination of curiosity and imagination shaped the way I engaged with play from an early age. Cilj sveta i izbacuvanje. These conceptual toys, archaically called Cilj Sveta ("The end of the World") and Izbacivanje ("The Ejector"), functioned as imaginary devices with specific purposes. Izbacivanje could transform matter and construct any form, while Cilj Sveta was a kind of teleportation system—a network of underground tunnels leading to any place in the world.

Zarko Aleksic, artist and artistic phD cand. EGC

Toy Worlds

Like many children growing up in a small town in the 1980s, bicycles were the most important means of asserting freedom and independence. They allowed us to easily meet our friends without having to beg parents to drive, they made it possible to go to fun places (the abandoned gravel pit where we went for swims, for example) and they invited us to prowl around and see new, interesting places and people.

Toys are bicycles for the imagination. When I remember the toys that we played with, the first thing I notice is that I never see myself playing alone. I have a brother who is not quite two years younger than me and, as children, we almost always played together. Most of our toys didn't even have a specific owner, especially our favourite, LEGO, which was stored dismantled in boxes, from which everyone took whatever they needed for their building project. Outside the family, toys allowed us to connect with other children and immediately find a common language and activity. Toys also made it possible to go to places - most of them imaginary, of course, and many of them influenced not only by the toys themselves but by the stories and images we got from media: movies and TV, books and comics. Toys allowed us to engage with this content, appropriate it, rework it to our taste and create something new out of it. A lot of things have been said about toys as commodities and about the ideologies baked into their design and their affordances, and rightly so. However, it is important to never forget that children are not passive recipients of ideology but are active and creative and intractable. Even toys as strongly branded as, for example, Star Wars action figures (of which we owned a few - there was no Star Wars LEGO yet!) couldn't be contained in the world of the official "canon". As we didn't get the expensive spaceships and

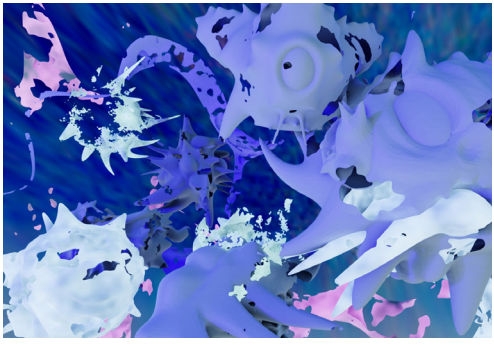
other accessories, we built some out of cardboard (I remember egg carton being involved in some way) and included those constructions (which of course looked quite differently from the official spaceships) into our play. Hand beats commodification: manipulating stuff (plastic figures) led to manipulating other stuff (cardboard, wood, other toys). Boundaries established by the branding of the toys and the narrative established through box art, catalogues and other media were transgressed by the act of playing and its accompanying drive towards experimentation: Could this box become a spaceship? Let's try and see. Hey, it looks more like a sailing ship! And we are already leaving the world of Star Wars as defined by the movies and other official media and entering a yet unexplored world created in some ways by our collective imagination.

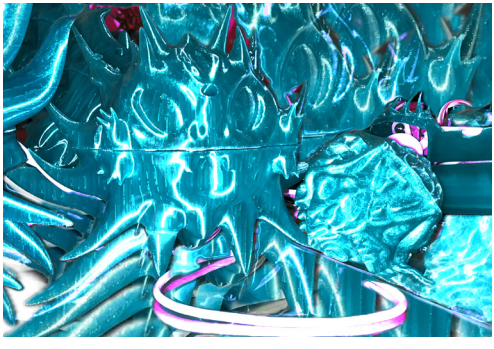
In this way, toys also invited us to see new places, or better: to see places anew. In cultural studies, miniaturisation (which is a keystone of many, if not most, toys) is usually explained as a means for control: it creates an overview and makes things manipulable that are usually out of control for humans, especially children. In this interpretation, making something small tames it and the world. While this is not altogether wrong, there is another aspect to this, at least in my experience: We used to take some of our toys, especially figures, along with us when we had to go for a walk with our parents (not something we were keen about). The toys, however, made this dreary ritual fun (or at least bearable - for children, there seems to be the general rule that you never must admit that walks can be fun). Even when we didn't actively play with them (parents weren't keen on making play breaks on their walks), we could imagine how those figures would see and traverse the world we were schlepping ourselves through. And what a world it was! The grass was a jungle, probably teeming with dangerous creatures. The knothole in the tree was a spacious dark cave leading to who knew what secret passages. The pond was an ocean that only the bravest dared to venture onto. In a word: the mundane everyday surroundings, well known to us, were transformed into a wild unpredictable world that was as limitless as our imagination, and the toys were avatars ready to take us on adventures in this world.

In this way, toys take the imagination on a ride and neither children nor adults, neither toy companies nor cultural theorists, can be certain where they will lead it. So, let's play and find out!

Thomas Brandstetter, Ludic lecturer







swamp.lost

Malcolm Schmidt, Pal Klusacek

Once there was a forest, now it's a swamp. We used to surf meaning but now it's all slop.

sswamp.lost is a play machine, an interactive media installation, that immerses players within a post-digital world, wherein all the authenticity has become rare and synthetic systems dominate human communication. The internet has not disappeared, it has become overgrown. The project combines game design, media art, and the Dead Internet Theory into a physically embodied play experience. Players interact with will-o'-the-wisps that transmit signals and guide them through a system of verification and trust. The goal is to decide whom to trust. The game transforms one of the central questions of our time into a lived experience: How do we navigate a world in which signals replace human presence?



Lucy

Kanya Chiara

"Lucy" is a modification of a 2007 Furreal Friends parrot. I discovered that over the years, Furreal Friends has had a major design shift. The once "very lifelike" animatronic toys, that I knew from my childhood, were now "extremely kawaii". Big shiny eyes, round heads, almost cartoonish. I started wondering if this change has something to do with the uncanny valley effect. Because a robotic parrot, that looks and acts like a real parrot, can become very creepy very fast, if something is just a bit off. To avoid this, designing it less like the real thing and overwhelmingly cutesy instead might be one way. But there is also another one.
What if instead of fighting it, we embrace the uncanniness of the robotic parrot? What if we stop trying to create something that should resemble a real animal, but rather show what it really is. A surreal being, not bird, not robot, but both. Not real, not imaginary, but something in between.



HERE AND NOW machine ™

Kozlova Evgenia

Here and Now — Catch the uncatchable.
Try your luck!

25% WIN RATE. LIMITED TIME ONLY AT THE ANGEWANDTE FESTIVAL! For a limited time, visitors are invited to reach for something that is already slipping away even as you read this sentence. HERE AND NOW machine™ is an arcade claw machine where focus, timing, and attention decide what can be briefly held. In case of success, an official receipt is printed instantly and can be taken with you — a certified record that something unrepeatable was, for a moment, exactly here.

Disclaimer: Hybrid conceptual installation game taking place on screen. 25% win chance. Results and interpretations may vary. ™ is decorative only and not a registered trademark. Images shown in the catalogue may differ, as the machine has not yet been fully built.





Bluefriend

Alexander Hackl

POV its your first day on the job

Bluefriend is a plaything consisting of a viscous mass, characterized by moving through an interactive obstacle course with extreme slowness. The slowness of the entity stands in stark contrast to the constant overstimulation that bombards users/consumers through the media world. bluefriend absorbs everything in slow play. From brainrot to political propaganda or work, it acts as a catalyst for the violence that fights for space in our minds in the form of attention engineering, leaving behind rent-free existential dread.



E.L.S.A. doesn‘t play

Martin Krammer

It does not need your touch.

E.L.S.A. is an ongoing experiment in intuitive relational practice between artist and “toy.”

Triggered by a personal chance discovery, a symbolically charged object virtually transcended into a subject: an injection-molded figure produced for commercial play purposes, embodying a fictional character from a children‘s film. This artificial model of a female body negotiates conditioned anthropomorphism, animism, and both shamanistic and erotic forms of fetishism.

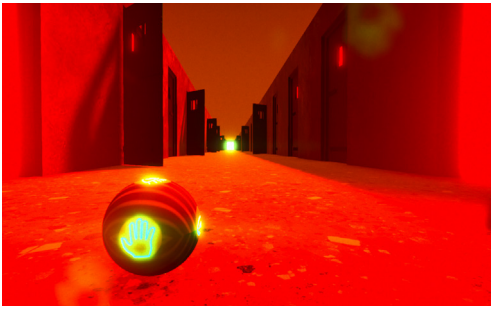
The common human–object relationship is hierarchical and non-consensual. The object‘s affordances function as an implicit promise of action, without any explicit invitation to interact. The experiment with non-human actors serves as a platform for dialogue on objectification, sexism, control, and power structures.











small goals BIG PAINS

Navid Javan Shojamofrad

What is the (human) cost of satisfying your curiosity?

"small goals, BIG PAINS" is a multi-stage, ludonarrative experience, exploring the concepts of responsibility, complicity and personal alignment. This hybrid narrative unfolds through two connected balls: the physical and its digital double. Any kick or force applied to the physical ball is mirrored on the digital one, while also eliciting a reaction from it, usually that of pain from being struck. Through its dual nature, the ball is transformed into a kind of compass, one that can both guide the player, while also being guided by them.





Bird Eye View

Nazanin Mehraein

From above, a bird could guide us through ruins, through fragmented traces and forgotten urban treasures.

Bird Eye View is a playable sculpture that invites visitors to navigate a bombed city from a bird's perspective.

A handmade metal bird becomes an interface for exploring aerial views of urban transformation, demolition, and construction. By touching and moving the bird, players shift their viewpoint, glide across rooftops, and zoom into overlooked details. This work is about personal memories, narrations, ficitons and hope.



Opening Scene of Citizen Kane, 1941 film by by Orson Welles, popularized the snowglobe

The glass-encased spherical diorama was falling down from the death bed of the protagonist in the opening scene of the iconic movie. The globe, the toy, the cultural impact of an obscure novelty plaything.



Contre Attaque

Noah Destrée

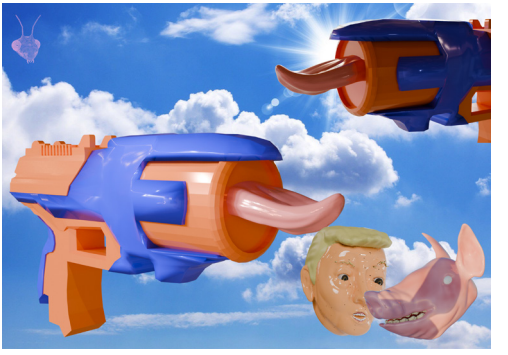
Arm the dolls

Because fascism is at our doorstep, because institutions no longer seem capable of guaranteeing our safety, and because our safety ultimately lies in our own hands, Contre-Attaque invites everyone to rise up against technocratic fascism. To stand together in adversity, to reconnect, to gather, to become aware of our collective strength, and to rise together against the crude stupidity of intolerance.

Contre-Attaque advocates for the right to fight back.

Because no one will be able to say we didn't see it coming.

Because none of us will be free until all of us are free.







Deer to my Heart

Anna Balázs

Vulnerable woodland creature looking for its place in the world.
Cost: 1 memory of home

'Deer to my Heart' is about the longing to return to a place that only exists inside a hazy memory. A place where you belong. A place that has discarded you and left you feeling alien everywhere else.



fLionrankenstein

Camilla Smolders

Oi, Where were you for the last 30 years?

Guardian Biest Saber Dinozord fell apart and now needs to be put back together on the therapy couch because his job as the most fragmented show-up of the Power Rangers is now catching up with him in retirement and he just can't handle it.

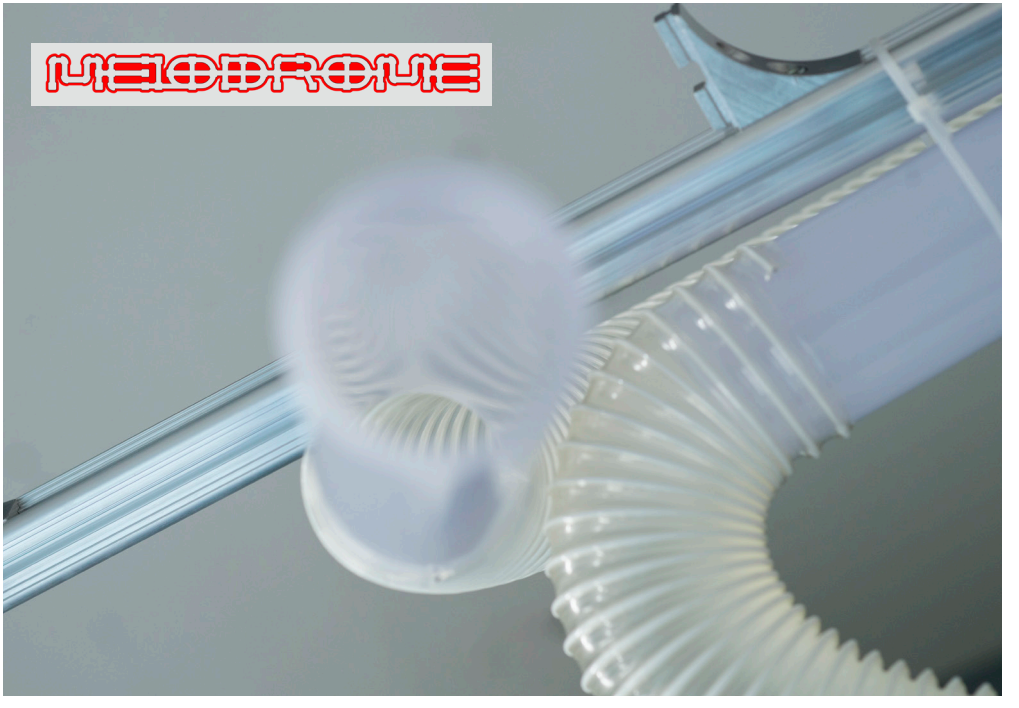


Seven 100 7 Teen 7

Babak Ahteshamipour

A cursed mysterious set of cards. Whoever dares to touch them, shall be haunted by the existential crisis of an ancient deity.

Seven 100 7 Teen 7 is an unplayable card deck inspired by the Persian epic Shahnameh, Manichaeism, and physical cosmology. Set within the corpse of a dead cyborg demon deity, it explores disability, trauma, agency, and recursive time through desolate biomechanical imagery.
Created by technocrats through rituals merging artificial intelligence with a white demon, the deity collapsed under its own contradictions and consumed itself. Before dying, it cursed the card deck so it could never truly be played or touched. Those who attempt to use the cards become haunted by existential crisis, trapped within recursive questions of creation, consent, dependency, and self-destruction.





Melodrome

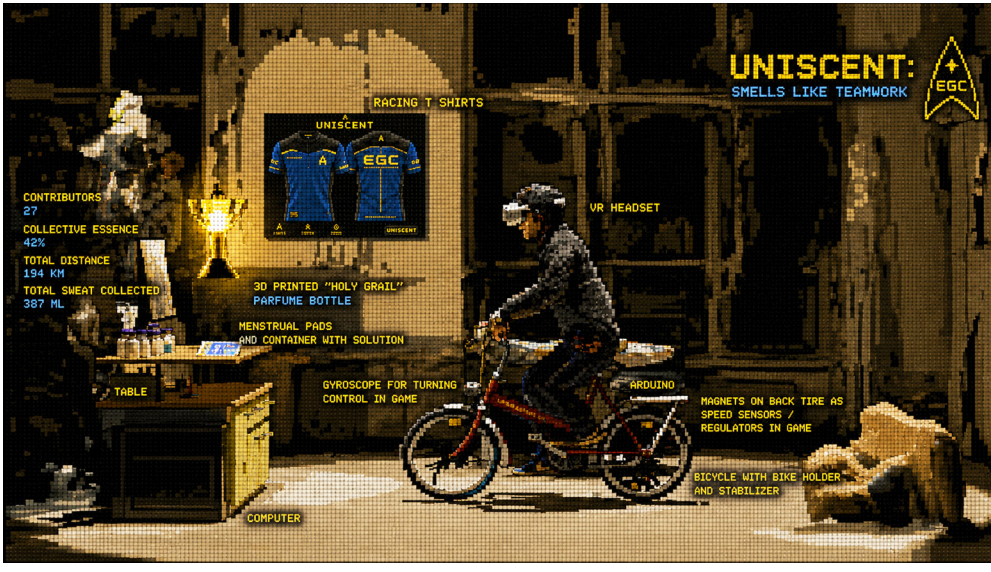
Nicolas Pakai, Leni Leutenbauer

Still not dreaming in gibberish?
What are you waiting for?

Get rid of your dictionary! Your emotions and voices are the only thing you need!
This karaoke-play-machine is the latest and hottest toy, for asking questions such as: what remains of language once the level of logic is removed? Does the machine distil that which has no place in language, since it carries no clear meaning?

When interacting with Melodrome, nothing is fixed. From meaning of words and language to your ability to sing and perform. This special plaything transforms language into gibberish and needs your vocal input to not break down.

So don't hesitate and don't stop singing!



Pressure Systems

Vitar Drinkovic

Pressure Systems is a playable presentation framework that translates three interactive installations as a shared game environment. The work explores bodily effort, discipline, and regulation. The game level is a 3D scan of the Experimental Game Cultures (EGC) studio space, the player character is a 3D scan of the artist. This establishes the environment as both a representational and autobiographical space, situating the works within the institutional context in which they are developed and presented.

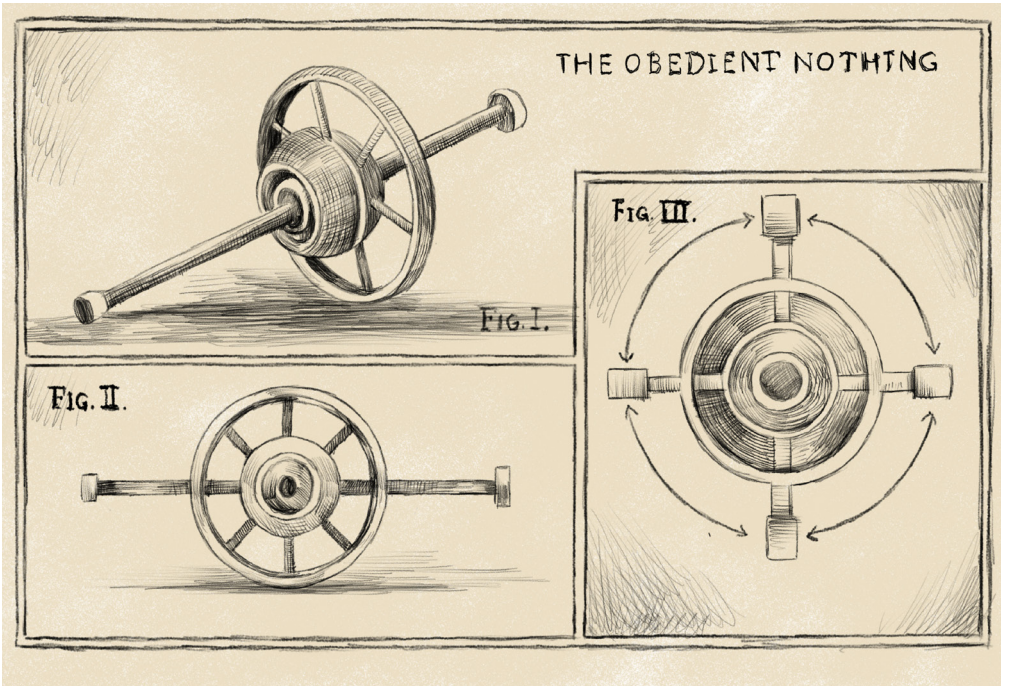
Rather than functioning as a conventional game, it operates as a navigable exhibition space in which each work is encountered as an interactive node. Movement and sound create a continuous sense of pressure even in moments without explicit interaction.

„Hang in There, World" frames physical endurance as structural support for a system that generates stress. „Uniscent" transforms individual effort into a collective material outcome through scent. „Self Regulation" externalizes the hidden internal mechanisms



of discipline by allowing voluntarily play and pay for correction, reward, or ambivalence. Each plaything of the installation addresses a different mode of psychological pressure. Within the game, these works are not simulated in full, but abstracted into spatial and conceptual representations.

The plaything installation Pressure Systems functions as both a presentation tool and an artistic inquiry, examining how game environments can operate as conceptual device and if and how interactive art can be reframed through game logic without losing its critical and material grounding.

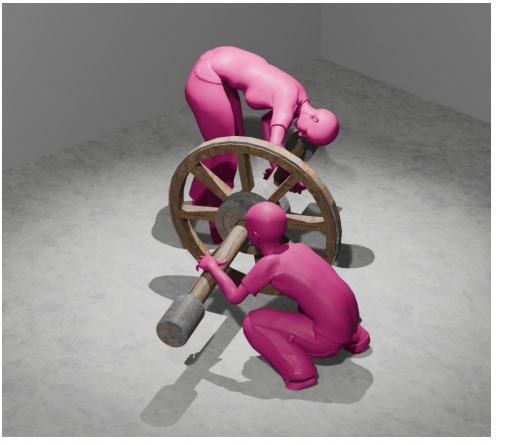


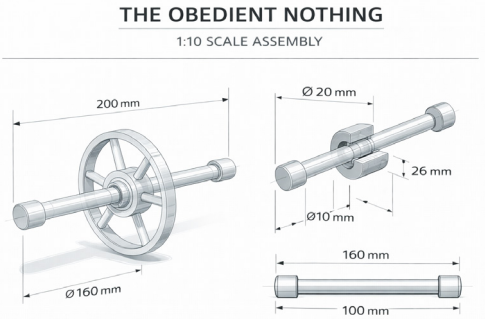
The Obedient Nothing

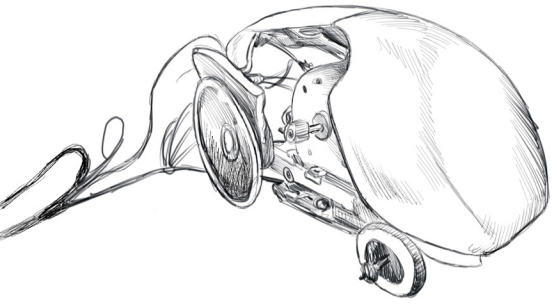
Prof. Miguel Kornfeld (Lead Archaeologist)
Michael Schitnig (Reconstruction Specialist)

Collection of the British Library
Why do people play with your thing? What makes it special? People play with The Obedient Nothing because it appears to have a purpose, yet never fully reveals one. It requires cooperation, balance, and negotiation between participants. The object seems to respond to human intention while simultaneously resisting interpretation. Every interaction produces a different outcome, making the act of play itself more important than any goal.

An archaeological toy from a forgotten civilisation. Neither tool nor ritual device, The Obedient Nothing invites players to coordinate movement without ever revealing a final objective. A machine for producing meaning through play.





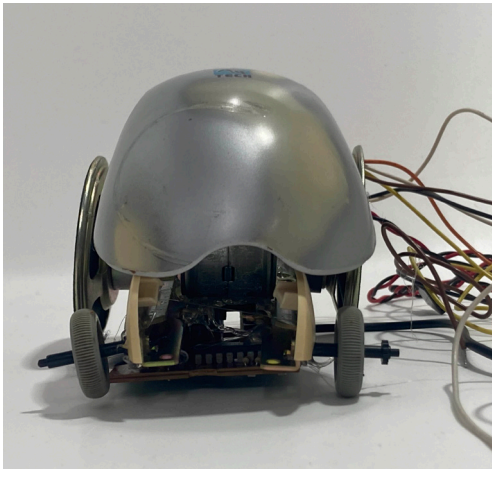


MOUSE RACER

Martin Krammer, Michael Schitnig

Discover the new Mouseracer – our first toy car series made from durable metal with an aerodynamic die-cast body.

Its bold look, lowered design, and stylish underglow lighting make it the standout model of our Cyberpunk series. Once it picks up speed, it races ahead of the others – with glowing cables trailing behind like flames.
We use sustainable materials for both product and packaging and work with leading automotive manufacturers to create toys that reflect today's modern electric vehicles. By 2026, we aim to use only recycled, recyclable, or bio-based plastics.
With every Matchbox product, you're supporting a better future.





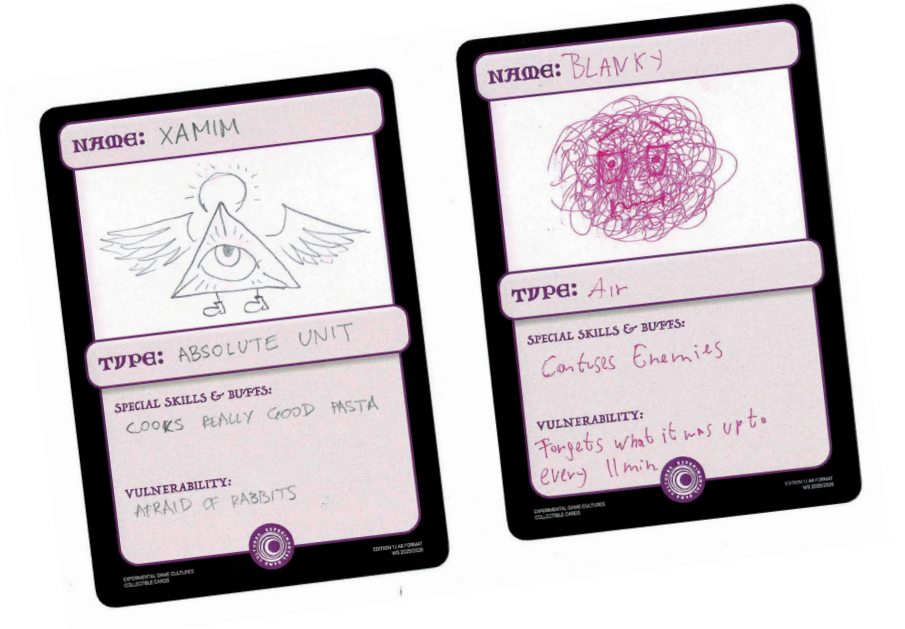
god's strongest soldier

Lea van Hall

The installation, which is a nod at the „god's strongest soldier"-meme, creates a casual and cute moment of care, towards yourself or another person as it allows you to give or receive an award for whatever achievement you would like by typing it on the keyboard, which will make it appear on the prize. Ironic or completely serious or somewhere in between. It's not that serious. But like... it is.

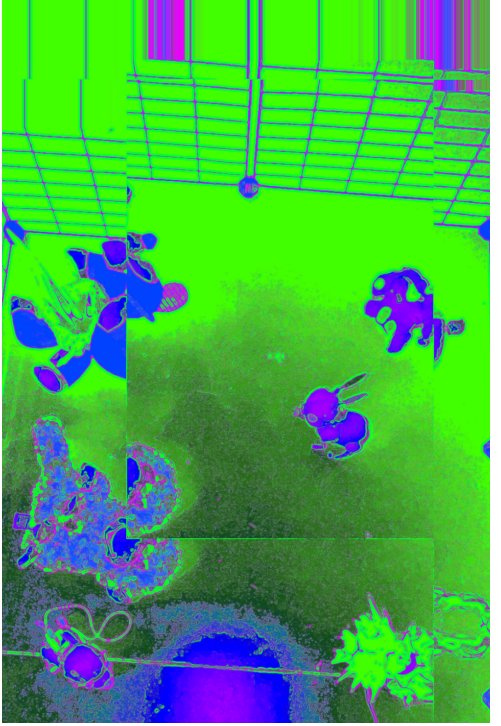


EGC Collectible Cards / Workshop and community activity
At the beginning of the WS 2025 we launched a social bonding activity and a game design exercise in one, facilitated by Maxim Shchapov. Groups of students would create their own collectible cards based on their personalities and interests, then combine them with other groups' cards, playfully interpreting what kind of a new card they would get.





3D print, swamp.lost, see page 10



UNSKINNED

Pal Klusacek, Martin Krammer
Robotic TOY Performance & Real-Time Rendering
Video Installation

Our SKIN is close to the rabbit without fur. This peeled off Rabbit became an icon, the maskotte of Experimental Game Cultures.

Toy robots transcend their human-created purpose as playthings. Within a protected playground, they become "non-human actors." By shedding their old skin, they are able to evolve and find expression through a different, extraterrestrial body. In doing so, they can house a new identity. A camera vision enables viewers to adopt the perspective of these entities and participate in their interactions. Through this lens, the interplay between the actors can be observed. The performance questions the dynamic relationship between humans and machines.

perormed at page 84 Digitalagentur | Wien

Hands-on Workshops

part of the Zentrales Künstlerisches Fach EGC

In 2025/2026 we factored in the feedback of EGC students and fused a series of practical hands-on workshops into the artistic core subject. The workshops were held by all lecturers of Experimental Game Cultures, and through this all the persons involved in the study department became a part of the mosaic of the ZKF.

In weekly sessions, always framed by an introduction seminar of the professor of the department ludic practices inpired by game and play cultures were tested and introduced. Some of the topics and contents of these sessions were „ornaments“ which adressed tools and live realtime rendering video and streaming cultures.

„Electronics without voltage!“ presented an artistic approach, the ludic mobiles and „cirque du Calder“ from the late 1950ies. The techno-materials were sculpturally reused, the source was a red loot box of one of the lecturers. „How to Tattoo an Orange“ built on the quickly coded AI supported python scripts, 3D scanning and making a 2D skin of any found object. These skins were transferred to paper and afterwards were rebuilt as threedimensional paper toys.

„Making Small Playthings“ used practices out of the miniature and table top game scene, adressed figurines made and handpainted with female nail polish by male fans and players. Similarily „Rock Paper Scissors“, the scalability dimension of a paper object being filmed, photographed and transferred into an exhibiton space was prepared.

In summa we learned a lot about practices from Game Cultures and transferrred these into the arts. It all started with the soft „felting“ of wool and dust bunnies.









Pushball, invented in the 1890s

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Lecturers & professor: Margarete Jahrmann, Louise Linsenbolz, Clara Hirschmanner, Marlene Mautner, Georg Luif Thomas Wagensommerer, Max Moswitzer, Stefan Maier, Maxim Shchapov, Thomas Brandstetter

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Contact: egc@uni-ak.ac.at

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