

PLAY18

CREATIVE GAMING FESTIVAL
NOVEMBER 1-4, 2018 | HAMBURG

INITIATIVE
Creative Gaing

Interviews with the Festival Direction

Andreas Hedrich - Executive Director

What is PLAY - Creative Gaming Festival?

The Creative Gaming Festival is about hands-on experience, experimenting, exchanging information, enjoying games, inspiration and above all a sense of community. PLAY is the platform for everyone who loves games - be it for recreation or as professionals.

Workshops, a playable exhibition, international guests, unique art events and the international Creative Gaming Award are just a few of the many program items of PLAY18. This year for the eleventh time the PLAY - Creative Gaming Festival runs from November 1st through November 4th in the heart of Hamburg.

And what is so special about the festival?

PLAY is important to demonstrate that games are part of our defining culture. Games tell stories, provide impulses and stimulate creative processes. They influence other cultural forms such as contemporary theater or the visual arts; and, they provide diverse opportunities for active participation.

Games are not aliens. They have grown out of our culture. They satisfy a basic human need to play, to try things out and to slip into other roles. And here comes the Creative Gaming Festival with a program through which you can understand what is meant by the digital games culture! Here you can get your hands around it and try it out.

PLAY is now in its 11th year, why has the festival survived so well and what's next?

PLAY is important every year and not just on the days of the festival. Only someone who tinkers with systems and thinks beyond their boundaries can effect changes. This is only possible through a worldwide, unique, multidimensional approach. In order to remain innovative and groundbreaking, each year the festival takes on a central theme, which has a high social relevance.

Here growth is not the primary objective of the festival, but the long-term anchoring of educational themes, pleasurable art and cultural debate. So PLAY18 is somewhat smaller, also due to reduced governmental funding; in spite of this, the opportunities for our attendees to engage in projects and other possibilities is growing. For example, the Hamburg Public Libraries (Bücherhallen Hamburg) just extended their cooperation within the framework of the ComputerSpielSchule Hamburg, a computer game school project.

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Interviews with the Festival Direction

Why is there less public sponsorship this year?

That is difficult to assess, but it is clear that with our program and creative ideas we cover many areas; thereby we often fall between the areas of responsibility of different public administrative authorities. They in turn engage in passing the buck; this results in reduced support for us. This year we seem to have landed directly in this “Bermuda Triangle”. However, we firmly believe that the responsible parties in the city are working to ensure that the largest festival of its kind will continue to be held in Hamburg.

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Christiane Schwinge - Artistic Direction

PLAY18's motto is "Ready Game Change - Create a New Tomorrow" - how can games change the future?

Today we are surrounded by societal, political, social and cultural upheavals. With this year's festival theme, we want to find answers to the question: How do we want to live and what roles do games play? We approach this question in a playful, discursive, performing, inter-disciplinary and integrative fashion; and last but not least with a substantial portion of fun. How can games contribute to increasing social justice? How can global issues such as climate change be experienced through games? What does it take to design games really for everyone? These are some of the central questions of this year's Creative Gaming Festival. In past years we have repeatedly demonstrated, that our attendees value the Festival not least because of the open atmosphere and the opportunity to exchange ideas with others. Based on this we will provide the same for PLAY18 and are looking forward to the discussions that will evolve outside the official program.

And how does this affect the program?

As in every year the motto is a leitmotif that permeates the festival. In the exhibition for example there will be games and installations available to be examined and played; they concern themselves on several levels with the quest for a better world and a new tomorrow. This can be reflected in the game mechanics for example by having the game controlled by more than one person where each player has a different view of what is happening so that the game's goal can only be achieved through cooperation. On the story telling level one can conceive of the most multifaceted stories and approaches; starting with socio-political themes such as racism, class discrimination, or migration through religion to themes like love, personal relationships and sexuality. With "Studio Zukunft" this year we have included something very special in the festival program, for here everyone can develop their own game of the future: game design, character design, structuring the game environment and building controllers are part of "Studio Zukunft". These capabilities show how many different ways one can be creative and come to grips with games. Also, we have developed the Speakers' Corner especially for discussions of this year's festival theme. It is an open stage upon which persons can take the floor and express and share their own issues related to games. Time slots can be booked in advance.

In addition, the festival theme will play a role in many workshops and roundtable discussions as well as during the opening session in a performance by FUNDUS THEATER, to which, however, we will reveal nothing in advance.

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Vera Marie Rodewald - Artistic Direction

What program highlights can visitors to this year's PLAY - Creative Gaming Festival expect?

This year we ask ourselves how we together can improve the world. We want to find this out with the help of games and game design tools. The great thing here is that everyone can contribute his or her own ideas about the game environments and characters of tomorrow. In the five stations of our "Studio Zukunft" participants of all ages can, during the entire festival, program and refine prototypes, game characters, controllers and stories. Together we want to develop new approaches for future games scenarios. In the Speakers' Corner all can have their say. Whether school children, game designers or teachers, everyone who wants to offer us a new view on games can submit a topic and present it on site.

Of course, the program includes tried and true classics: in our workshops games can be programmed and subjects such as religion, politics, gender issues and games will be discussed. In addition, experts will give us a behind the scene look at game design and relate information about their day-to-day activities. The various perspectives of the festival motto "Ready Game Change - Create a New Tomorrow" will be discussed.

What types of attendees do you expect?

PLAY is a festival for doers, players, visionaries and for innovative thinkers. But, PLAY is also a place for all those who are curious and who still ask, what is so fascinating about games. Teachers can become acquainted with games as a new technique to be used in the learning process. Young people can discover how to become programmers themselves. Students can come to the realization that games are not just a science unto itself. And finally, PLAY addresses people who love culture.

This year we anticipate around 8,000 visitors. Based on the distribution of previous years, there will be around 1,500 school children, 600 teachers, 1,200 students and 1,500 people from the games sector.

The festival takes place in venues that are established Hamburg cultural centers. What significance does that have for the festival?

PLAY is at home where culture becomes visible. In the Bücherhallen Hamburg (Central Public Library), the Barlach Halle K and the Hühnerposten from November 1st through November 4th PLAY is about: experimenting, discussing and developing games! This year's Creative Gaming Festival will be held at these three venues in the vicinity of the Hamburg Main Station. As always, we have selected different, unusual and surprising locations; places where games are not usually found.

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You are always talking about education; but, games are really about having fun. How do these two ideas fit together?

Games are above all an experimental space. As a player, you can slip into other roles, penetrate other worlds and move beyond the boundaries of reality. You can view things from a different side by changing your perspective and you can structure the experience space yourself. This is an important driver of the educational process. The motto of Creative Gaming is "Gaming with Games"; this means to experience how you can change, manipulate, create and further develop digital games. The role of digital games is taken into account especially in the fields of education, science, society and culture.

How is PLAY18 structured?

The festival opens with a large vernissage on Thursday evening, November 1st in Barlach Halle K and a performance in cooperation with the FUNDUS THEATER in the Hühnerposten. On Friday and Saturday (November 2nd and 3rd) workshops are conducted on game design and storytelling topics among others. On Sunday (November 4th) PLAY invites attendees to play together at the games exhibition which awaits the visitors in Barlach Halle K on all four days. In addition, there are performances, roundtable discussions and an entertaining evening program which includes the presentation of the Creative Gaming Awards.

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