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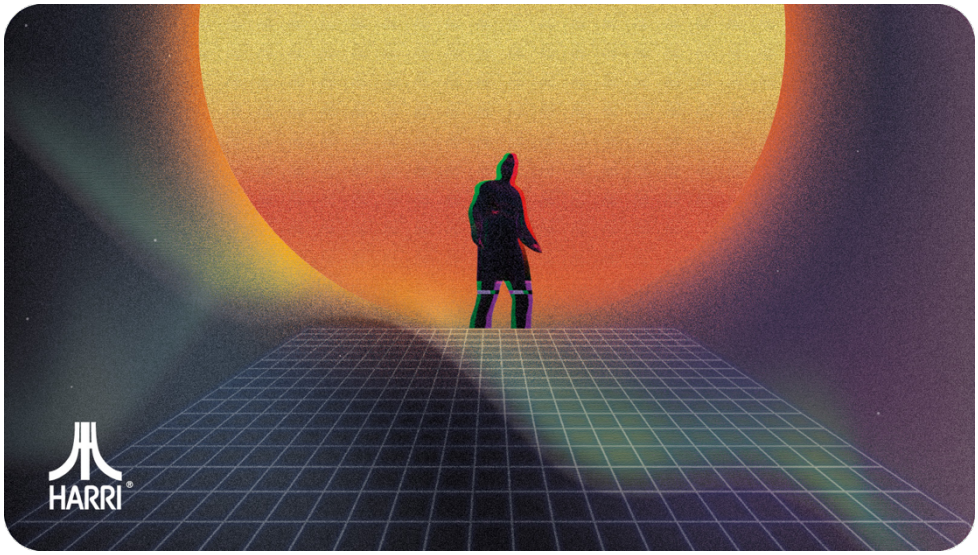
THESIS

Adventures in Live Art Game Research

Towards a Theory of Definition

HAROLD HEJAZI



LIVE ART AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES

ABSTRACT

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Adventures of Harriharri – Episode II, Creator & Performer: Harold Hejazi, Composer & Sound Designer: Eliel Tammiharju (KEliel), Participating Developers: Mikael Jaakkola (magu), Rolands Tīss, 25.9.2021, Cultural House Martinus, Vantaa.

The artistic section is produced by the Theatre Academy. ☒

The final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes ☒ No ☐	The abstract of the final project can be published online. This permission is granted for an unlimited duration.	Yes ☒ No ☐

Drawing from major game studies theorists and performance scholars, this thesis seeks to merge these worlds and combine lexicons of Live Art and ludology. First, this thesis provides an account of my engagement with the definitions of key terms "Live Art" and "game" and then briefly summarises the arc of my research surrounding my focal question: "What is a Live Art Game?" Second, through engaging with the notion of Live Art as "a strategy for inclusion," I excavate Greg Costikyan's work on the concept of a game in order to analyse my video game performance *Adventures of Harriharri – Episode II* (*AoHH – Ep. 2*). In doing so, I illustrate the relationship between the fields of games and Live Art, with the goal of establishing a language for discussing and understanding games within the practice of Live Art. Third, I explore the metagames of inclusivity and diversity surrounding *AoHH – Ep.2* in order to demonstrate how Live Art Games can operate both as a practice-based research method and a critical pedagogical tool. In the final chapter, I examine the 3D body of my video game avatar Harriharri as a site of experimentation, freedom, and becoming.

In conclusion, I propose my own definition of a Live Art Game and propose avenues for future research in the realm of Live Art Game design. This thesis is intended as a beginner's guide for the Live Artist interested in expanding their practice into games or for the game developer seeking to draw from the affordances of performance.

ENTER KEYWORDS HERE

game, metagame, live art, diversity, inclusion, social marginalisation, pedagogy, practice-based research, Finnish racial politics, body without organs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION: THE QUEST TO MAKE A LIVE ART GAME BEGINS! BUT WAIT … WHAT IS LIVE ART?

Previous to moving to Finland in September 2017, I centred my practice on creating games and participatory performances in collaboration with the educational departments of museums and art galleries. I entered the Theatre Academy's Live Art and Performance Studies (LAPS) master's programme with plans to further develop this museum practice. However, as I've experienced time and time again in Finland, not everything goes like in Strömsö.[1]

My research adventure began when I encountered *PLAYING UP: A Live Art Game for Kids and Adults* at Tate Modern during a sojourn in London in February 2018. Amidst the various museum offerings in London at the time, the description for *PLAYING UP* seemed most relevant to my museum project – particularly because it encouraged unconventional behaviour, such as inviting participants to stage protests in the gallery spaces. However, the game ended up being quite a disappointment. It consisted of a deck of playing cards, each card featuring a historical performance piece, and a daunting invitation to recreate it. This wasn't quite the engaging and inspiring museum experience I was hoping for. (*Tate* 13 December 2019)

I should acknowledge that I played alone during this initial experience and, for that reason, missed out on the core intergenerational element of the game, as "*PLAYING UP* is meant to be played by children and adults together" (Peters 2016, 3). I somehow overlooked this important detail within the title and dismissed the game as "unengaging." Fortunately for me, this error of hasty judgement inspired my entire thesis project and greatly evolved my artistic practice, for I declared (internally), right then and there, that I could make a far superior live art game! (*PLAYING UP* 18 February 2018)

While the task of creating a great "live art game" seemed simple enough, I first sought to clarify my understanding of the key terms "live art" and "game." I soon realised that I didn't exactly know what "live art" was. It seemed vital to the project that I begin by forming a strong grasp on the subject. So, I scoured through books, articles, and web pages for a comprehensible definition of live art. However, wherever I looked, I was met with confusion: cryptic definitions, contrasting opinions, and puzzling abstractions.

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[1] *Strömsö.* A Finnish pop culture reference, *Ei mennyt niin kuin Strömsössä* (It didn't go like in Strömsö), which refers to a Finnish-Swedish lifestyle TV show, *Strömsö,* where everything is dreamy and middle-class perfect.

Usually, the term was written in lowercase, but sometimes it was mysteriously written with capital letters. I understood that it was "live," but beyond that no explanation made sense. It certainly wasn't performance art – I knew that much – even though the two are often used interchangeably or muddled into the same sentence. I had reached a difficult level in my quest. The unified and accessible definition of live art I was after didn't exist.

The oldest definition I encountered, which refers to "the resistance of 'Live Art' to being pinned down by explanation" (Kaye 1994, 1), prevails today as the most popular definition, appearing in many similar iterations such as "the definition of Live Art has to be its resistance to definition" (Sofaer 2022, 3:25). Saying it can't be defined seemed like a bit of a cop out to me and didn't exactly help clarify anything for my project to design a live art game. Meanwhile, at live art events, discussions, and courses hosted as part of the LAPS master's programme, I always felt as if there was an elephant in the room: no one seemed to know for sure what live art is or have a comprehensive view of its multifaceted history and nature.

You, the reader, might very well be asking: "Why, though, are you so obsessed with live art? Why not write about performance games more generally?" The answer is simple: because this work is for a master's in "Live Art and Performance Studies," and it is important to me that I walk away from the institution with some sense of what that means.

Yet, as the years of my studies flew by, I remained puzzled. Eventually, I turned to the head of the LAPS programme, Professor Tero Nauha, in March of 2020 and asked if the department had a definition for live art. He first avoided the question and then later admitted that there was not one. But he agreed that there should be and said he'd get back to me. At this point, the mystery intensified, for not even the academic programme, which would supposedly be awarding me a master's in the subject, had a clear explanation for me.

Meanwhile, the more definitions and explanations of live art I read, the more confused and disillusioned I became. At moments, I began to wonder whether live art itself even existed or whether it was just a conspiracy, another artistic-academic horoscope designed to lead artists aimlessly towards nothingness: an aimless and unsustainable career in the arts. I began to realise why the LAPS department had avoided publishing an established definition of this contested and convoluted term.

However, through all these years (2018–2022), despite being ashamed of my failure to crack the code, I engrossed myself in a vigorous fervour of rapid prototyping[2] live art games and performing them as practice-based research. In fact, for extended periods, I stopped doing book research altogether and dedicated myself to the making of performances which combined recognisable elements of both "game" and "live art." Through this practice-as-research effort, I made a series of games, the most notable being: a conversation game titled *Conversational Karaoke* (2018), a larp[3] titled *Dear _____, Please Imagine my Birthday* (2019), a card game titled *Animating Love* (2019), a tabletop roleplaying game titled *New Stories of Finnish Art* (2019), an online game show titled *To Tell the Goof* (2020), and a video game titled *Adventures of Harriharri – Episode I* (2020). In each of these prototypes, my process included taking a preformed mode of gaming (e.g., a card game or larp) and then trying to make a live performance out of it. Meanwhile, I was constantly questioning if the prototype qualified as a "live art game."

Despite the personal advances I felt I was making in the pioneering field of game performance,[4] there remained an inevitable challenge: my practice alone was not enough. I'd also one day need to provide a written thesis in order to satisfy the degree requirements and be endowed with the honourable master's credential that the academy so eagerly wished to bestow upon me. Out of desperation, I decided I must approach Tero Nauha with the definition question once again.

My subsequent approach was strategically choreographed to occur almost precisely two years after our initial live art discussion and to cunningly coincide with the grand LAPS anniversary exhibition, celebrating 20 years of live art education and research in Finland, titled *The Posture of Impermanence* (2022). The time was ripe to pose the definition question again, for if there was ever a time to present a comprehensible definition of live art, it would have to be during this grand moment of ceremonial pedagogical glorification.

After much deliberation, and after diligently searching the English articles in the exhibition publication for any trace of a definition, my plan of attack was to carefully

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[2] *Hitchhiker's Guide to Rapid Prototypes!* 2017. Rapid prototyping is a term introduced to me in a game design course at Aalto University during the autumn of 2019. It refers to a quickly made prototype in which the foremost objective is to achieve a needed behaviour or interaction in a player-participant.

[3] Nordic Larp 24 January 2019. A larp is a live action roleplaying game. While there are many different styles of larp, the larp mentioned above was a chamber larp in the style of Nordic Larp, a term for shared larp traditions in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland.

[4] Haapa 2021. The term "game performance" was introduced to me in the spring of 2019 by artistic researcher Samee Haapa. They define the term in their Finnish article "MIKÄ ON PELIESITYS?"

craft an email and swiftly fire it into his inbox at a most tactical juncture – right in the heart of the exhibition. I had Nauha in a corner.

His response hit me first as another disappointment. But upon further reflection, I found what he said to be liberating. He told me, simply, "to define it yourself as a student finishing on your written thesis," further instructing that "it is only you who can define it for yourself" (Nauha 20 December 2021).

With this blessing of permission, I rose to my feet in silent acquiescence and realised what I should have done several years earlier, what could have saved me several thousand euros in tuition fees and several hundred Google searches of "What is live art?" It was as if pure light had pierced through the dense clouds of self-doubt and a crystallisation of my own truths and beliefs, my sterling loyalty to art elitism and imperialism, had begun to take place. That is, I was ready to redeclare my allegiance to Her Majesty, surrender myself to the colonial powers that be, and unite with the United Kingdom's Live Art Development Agency (LADA) definition of the elusive turn of phrase: "Live Art is a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020). Or, as it is put more succinctly by British live art practitioners and devotees of LADA, "Live Art: A strategy for inclusion" (Chatzichristodoulou 2020, 1).

Aligning with this definition could be decoded merely as a survival strategy, a desperate attempt to portray credibility as a person of colour striving to build an arts career in a field where the majority of those in seats of power are white.[5] Also, considering that their LinkedIn profile headline proclaims that they are "the world's leading organisation for Live Art" (Live Art Development Agency 2 June 2022), I'm left with little doubt to now skip the ontological and epistemological debate and faithfully devote and restrict my research to the safe harbour of their Live Art ideology (with proud capitalization[6]) in this writing henceforth.

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[5] O'Neill 2020. This article, "A Crisis of Whiteness in Canada's Art Museums," by Sean O'Neill investigates the racial demographics at Canada's four largest art museums and finds that the top leadership is all white. While this data is purely based in a Canadian context and justifying this claim globally goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I strongly suspect this depressing trend pervades Western countries and certainly Finland.

[6] LADA staff 16 June 2022. When I asked the Live Art Development Agency about why they chose to write "Live Art" in capitals, they responded: "Framing Live Art as a proper noun for us affords it a sense of specificity, and frames it as a sector of its own with its own networks, infrastructures, and relationships. In addition, it allows it to exist as an expansive field, similar to 'Fine Art,' that encompasses different mediums and styles."

What is a game?

Now onto the definition of the term "game," another paradoxical, loaded, and nebulous term. In fact, this term has been studied and disputed for far longer and with even greater intensity than "Live Art" has. Rest assured, there are countless articles, chapters, and even entire books packed with highfalutin jargon dedicated to rigorous analysis and development of the term. But seeking a worthy definition of game to join forces with Live Art, while not jeopardising its objective as a "strategy for inclusion," proved to be an arduous matchmaking effort, despite the abundance of scholarly materials on the subject.

Before I reveal my favourite definition of game, the definition that I found to be the most inclusive of various gaming modes and genres, I will expound upon some of the more notably exclusive definitions I encountered, all of which I have rejected.

What could be worshipped as one of the game design bibles, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* by Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, provides one such definition: "A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 80). While the "quantifiable outcome" could align with Live Art's aspiration for "inclusion," performance practitioners would be outraged if grave matters of dissidence and conceptual problematisation expressed through their works were reduced in definition to an "artificial conflict."

The term "artificial" in Salen and Zimmerman's definition refers to a "boundary from so-called 'real life' in both time and space," and "conflict" refers to "a contest of powers" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 80). This wording certainly wouldn't bode well with the politically engaged Live Artist who fancies performance/intervention in public space and might be looking to create site-specific games. Used in combination, these terms, "artificial" and "conflict," seem to exclude the "pervasive" and "serious" game genres which are critical to the project of Live Art.

The genre of "pervasive games extend[s] the gaming experience out into the real world – be it on city streets, in the remote wilderness, or a living room" (Benford et al. 2005, 54), which accounts for a diverse territory and exploratory terrain of performance spaces. A serious game is one that is created "with the intention to entertain and to achieve at least one additional goal (e.g., learning or health)" (Dörner et al. 2016, 3). While this definition of serious games refers to "digital games" in particular, I'd like to extend it to encompass a wider genre of serious games (e.g., serious larps, serious

tabletop games). The additional goals inherent in serious games surpass the boundaries of "artificial conflict," and have the potential to explore the type of transgressive and dissident themes and questions tackled in the diverse field of Live Art.

My point here is that Live Art Games can be pervasive and serious, but they shouldn't be limited to these qualifiers because the objective of Live Art is to "make space for experimental processes [and] experiential practices […] that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020).

Another customarily referenced text in the field of game theory and design is *Homo Ludens,* originally published in 1938, by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga. While the book's subject matter is more concerned with the concept of "play" than that of "game," Huizinga's writings have still been interpreted as definitions for games (Juul 2005, 30; Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 75). The definition for what Huizinga refers to as "play," but is seemingly interpreted interchangeably with "game," is that of "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly" (Huizinga 1949, 13). This direct reference to being "outside ordinary life" may not sit well with performers who have drawn inspiration from the work of Michel de Certeau and *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), such as performance artist Bobby Baker whose "numerous site-specific works […] unearth and articulate the nuances and experiences of everyday life. Baker mines the inner-life, object relations and micro-worlds of activities such as cooking, shopping and parenting, often in the very sites in which those experiences take place" (Heathfield 2004, 10). Also, Huizinga's reference to the "not serious" in play and games immediately poses a similar threat of exclusivity as the Salen and Zimmerman definition above, and for that reason, I will not concern myself with expounding the definition any further and will continue forth.

The American philosopher David Kelley defines the concept of "game" in his logic-oriented critical thinking text *The Art of Reasoning* as "a form of recreation constituted by a set of rules that specify an object to be attained and the permissible means of attaining it" (Kelley 2013, 40). While I agree that a game requires a "set of rules" and an "object to be attained," I immediately feel obliged to dismiss this definition for its utterance of the word "recreation."

Alarm sirens would signal on full blast if Live Artists making games were suddenly restricted to the realm of pleasure, leisure, and fun associated with the field of "recreation." Heaven forbid the thought of performance resembling entertainment! No

offence to performance artists reading this, but in my experience, it has almost always seemed obligatory that Live Art (mostly performance art) be overly serious, painfully boring, and unengaging for audiences, shockingly, even when it's in the form of a game. I have always interpreted this characteristic as a debilitating force upon Live Art's potential to "challenge the status quo and initiate meaningful social change," especially if the aim is to reach and include wider audiences beyond the typical Live Art crowd (*Live Art Development Agency* 21 July 2022).

Out of desperation, I now turn to Richard Schechner and our holy grail, the book of books for performance studies students: *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (2020). In Schechner's chapter on play, there is a section titled "Play and games," where he differentiates between the two, offering a game definition of some form: "Games are a highly structured kind of playing. Games are rule-bound, have definite outcomes, engage players who are clearly marked (sometimes wearing uniforms), and occur in designated places ranging from stadiums and boxing rings to golf courses and card tables" (Schechner 2020, 169). To be honest, he already lost me at "definite outcome," for there are a variety of games that are played without the slightest clue of the final outcome or of preconceived win/loss states. For example, tabletop roleplaying games (RPGs) such as Dungeons & Dragons are at times played over an undetermined, if not endless, number of sessions known as infinity campaigns,[7] and since their narrative is at times shaped through collaborative storytelling, player choices may shape the eventual outcome of the game.

Equally problematic is Schechner's notion that games "engage players who are clearly marked […] and occur in designated places." This fails to account for a plethora of gaming modes, including augmented-reality games – such as *Pokémon GO,* which provides a seemingly limitless global playing area, empowering plain-clothed players to "explore real locations and search far and wide for Pokémon" (*Pokémon* 4 July 2022). Even though much of the game is limited to the mobile device screen, the augmented space surrounding it is seemingly unlimited.

Nor, does Schechner's definition consider the varying formulations of Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) which disrupt the notion of a confined playing area as they "take the substance of everyday life and weave it into narratives that layer additional meaning,

[7] Pettersson 21 July 2022. The term infinity campaign was introduced to me by Finnish novelist, larp and RPG game designer, Juhana Pettersson. According to Pettersson, an infinity campaign "lasts dozens of sessions and of course, in reality the infinity campaign also always ends, because we're human, but some last literally for over a decade."

depth, and interaction upon the real world" (Chatfield & Martin 2006, 6). These games can draw a thin line between the game world and everyday environments and interlace the physical and digital worlds through "the use of multiple forms of media such as e-mail, websites, text/voice messaging, live events, and similar strategies for content delivery" (Barlow 2006, 15). These ARGs could take place anywhere, physically or virtually, and at any time, as it is their intention to resist any sense of a demarcated playing space in order "to preserve the alternative reality setting" (Barlow 2006,15). It seems Schechner's thinking about games is analogue-centred, as the examples he provides – "golf," "blackjack," "baseball," "football," and "tennis" – exclude digital games (Schechner 2020, 169).

Furthermore, Schechner's mention of "wearing uniforms" and "designated places ranging from stadiums and boxing rings to golf courses" sounds more like a description of sports rather than that of the vast field of games, gaming modes, and game genres. I won't dive too deep into distinguishing between "sports" and "games" here, as it goes beyond the scope of this project. However, I will acknowledge that a sport is, of course, a mode of gaming and sports often carry with them an element of audience composition, ritual, and spectacle which is relevant to the practice of Live Art. In fact, British artist Richard DeDomenici, who has made a variety of games and sports within the context of Live Art, such as *The Swivelympics*[8] (2018), once told me the difference between games and sports for him: "the difference hinges on how much physical activity is required" (DeDomenici, 25 January 2022). This simple distinction seems intriguingly accurate and is apt for this discussion.

Schechner continues in his "Play and games" section by emphasising his distinction of game on the importance of rules, stating that "rules define the game to such a degree that one might argue that the rules are the game. A player is in play only insofar as the player follows the rules" (Schechner 2020, 169). While I agree with the notion that for a game to be a game, it needs a structure and a set of rules, the initial statements of his explanation, referred to above, render his definition too problematic and exclusive to work with any further.

Instead of coming up with my own definition like Salen and Zimmerman did, which in their own words was produced by "cobbling together elements from the previous

[8] *Swivelympics* 29.8.2018. I met Richard DeDomenici in September 2018 when I was on a minor research mission to *ANTI - Contemporary Art Festival*, as the festival theme that year was "Play and games." There I got to play *The Swivelympics* which was being facilitated by DeDomenici in the streets of Kuopio as part of the festival programme. My top score was 8.75, meaning 8.75 rotations on the swivel chair in one self-propelled push.

definitions and whittling away the unnecessary bits" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 80), I feel that what's needed is a widely accepted and established definition of game from the field of game theory and design. Since it is my intention to properly bridge the fields of Live Art and games and not merely appropriate games for the art world, this project must display earnest game credibility and conviction in order to win the hearts and earn the respect of gamers and gaming communities. Similarly, for paideic and ludic locutions to safely and securely enter into Live Art lexicons, I'll need to forge a comprehensible and accessible bridge for Live Art theorists and practitioners. What's needed at this phase on the journey towards a "Live Art Game" is a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of what a game is – one with an expansive and inclusive definition that will suit the fluid and diverse field of Live Art. For these reasons, I decided to extend my licence as an artist (not an academic) and just pick one.

If you came to this thesis eager to peruse a riveting selection of game definitions, then I recommend you check out Jesper Juul's book *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* (2005).[9] But for now, I'll skip the long-winded narrative, spare you the sarcasm, and get right down to stating the most comprehensible and inclusive definition I encountered along my Live Art research adventure: a game is "an interactive structure of endogenous meaning that requires players to struggle toward a goal" (Costikyan 2002, 24).

This definition, from Greg Costikyan's article *I Have No Words & I Must Design: Toward a Critical Vocabulary for Games,* was initially presented to me in the autumn of 2019 in a game design class taught by Aalto University's Lecturer of Game Design, Miikka Junnila. During the 2019–2020 academic year, I departed from the halls of the Theatre Academy and embarked on a special research mission to participate as a visiting student through the flexible study right (JOO) in Aalto University's Game Design and Production minor programme. Then, like a character sprite[10] in a video game, I vanished again in the winter of 2020, this time from the halls of Aalto's Väre building, and spawned at Kallio Stage.[11]

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[9] Juul 2005, 30. *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds* compares and contrasts various game definitions, including several listed above and many more.

[10] Wirtz 17 June 2022. In a *Game Designing* web article by Bryan Wirtz: "A character sprite is a simple 2D video game graphic included as part of a broader environment. For example, the characters in *Final Fantasy VI, The Legend of Zelda*, *Pokémon Red*, and *Castlevania* are all sprites."

[11] Aalto University 4 June 2022. Kallio Stage was a customisable performance/theatre space located in the Kallio district of Helsinki and operated by both Aalto University and the Theatre Academy until July 1, 2021. It has now been renamed to Kalliosali by its new occupants.

This new research path positioned me to hear Junnila's Greg Costikyan game definition lecture once again in February 2020, when he was a visiting lecturer in another minor programme I was enrolled in called Games and Virtual Reality in Performing Arts.[12] Then, just for fun (research joy), I attended Junnila's same go-to game definition lecture for a third time in March 2022, when I heard he would come speak at a Theatre Academy course titled *From Game to Performance*. In each of these lectures, Junnila mirrored the writing structure of Costikyan's article by breaking down each word in the definition – "interactive," "structure," "endogenous meaning," "struggle," and "goal" – into easily comprehensible chunks.

Eventually, I grew weary of the trending presence of the word "game" in the art world and began to mistrust its popular usage. As with the term "Live Art," it was evident that game was another term carelessly tossed about without knowledge of its diverse conceptual frameworks or traditions. I even began to question whether *PLAYING UP,* the very Live Art Game which inspired my project, could be classified as a game. Perhaps the intimidating invitation to perform provided some struggle, but it was certainly lacking structure. The player picks a card and performs its instructions, then what? Repeat? The instruction booklet doesn't clarify beyond stating that "after the instruction is completed this card is put aside and another card is selected by the next player" (Peters 2016, 5). Does it provide players with explicit goals to struggle toward? I fear not. If it must bear the title of game, I suppose it could be classified as a sandbox.[13]

Over time, this pedagogical method employed by both Costikyan and Junnila had a profound effect on me, and I have slowly come to truly believe in and adopt both their definition and their method of discourse. For this reason, I will embrace the rhetorical tradition of systematically dissecting Costikyan's definition in an attempt to justify for you how the artistic component of my thesis, *Adventures of Harriharri – Episode II,* qualifies as a game. But before that, perhaps a bit of back story on the project is in order.

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[12] A game-related minor programme created in collaboration with Aalto University and Theatre Academy.

[13] According to Unity's online glossary of *Game development terms*, a sandbox is a game that allows players to build their playable world around them. According to Jesper Juul's *Dictionary of Video Game Theory* (2005), the online companion to his book *Half-Real*, a sandbox is a "game (or game mode) that lets the player experiment with its mechanics, regardless of the game's goal, if any."

The first promotional image ever released for *Adventures of Harriharri – Episode I*. Image: Harold Hejazi, M Wingren.

Project Background & Vision

This video game performance chronicles the life and times of Harriharri living in Helsinki. Harriharri is a newcomer to Finland who arrives with high hopes of being warmly welcomed into the culture and making new friends. Despite his sincere efforts, he faces continuous obstacles in pursuit of integrating into Finnish society. In order to conquer the most challenging levels of the game, Harriharri must battle bureaucracies and systemic forces of social exclusion. Join Harriharri on this Hip Hop fantasy adventure!

Shortly after moving to East Helsinki, I witnessed an anti-Muslim demonstration in my neighbourhood, which is populated predominantly by immigrants. This disturbing

experience altered the trajectory of my work as an artist. I began to focus my work on themes surrounding race, marginalisation, and contemporary multiculturalism in Helsinki.

Recently, this trajectory inspired me to create *Adventures of Harriharri* (*AoHH*), a video game performed in Hip Hop, which premiered at Ateneum Museum as part of the UrbanApa X Ateneum Arts Festival in 2020. Through the form of a third-person action RPG, this game tells the story of Harriharri – whose persona is semi-autobiographical – and the obstacles he faces in pursuit of fitting into Finnish society.

The performance took place in Ateneum's theatre, where the digital game was projected on a screen and resembled a YouTube Let's Play with a picture-in-picture video capture of myself playing the game live. New Media scholar René Glas's article titled "Vicarious play: Engaging the viewer in Let's Play videos" provides the following description of Let's Play (LP) videos: "LP videos feature captured play sessions of digital games with added, often humorous commentary by the player(s) through audio or a picture-in-picture frame showing the video's creator(s) whilst playing the game" (Glas 2015, 81).

From behind the stage, I played the game and narrated Harriharri's story of trying to fit into Finnish society through live-freestyle rap. In creating a PC game purely for the purpose of live performance and by utilising the Let's Play format as a theatrical medium, I sought to push the medium of games/gameplay into the realm of theatre and performance. The game brings together game design technologies and Hip Hop methodologies to produce a virtual environment composed of remixed digital materials, 3D assets, and beats. The conceptual framework stays true to the traditions of Hip Hop by serving as a vehicle for subverting the norms of mainstream culture and by challenging social marginalisation.

My initial intention for creating this game was to see myself represented in a society which has little representation of people of colour. I wanted to take a light-hearted, playful approach to exploring serious themes such as racial alienation, diversity, and inclusion in order to make the process more accessible and less intimidating. Through experiencing the game live, the audience is able to immerse themselves in the character's journey and the lived-experience of a newcomer to Finland.

The first episode was created almost entirely by myself, with programming assistance from Theatre Academy instructor Jokke Heikkilä and some last-minute environment

design from a classmate, Topias Toppinen. Through the experience of creating the first episode, I discovered that video game development is an absurdly labour-intensive undertaking. It was a miracle that I managed to pull it off in time for the performance date. So, when I was contacted by Vantaa Art Museum Artsi and the second episode was commissioned as part of their *Reciprocities* (2021) exhibition, I had to come up with a new approach. I landed on the strategy of designating the performance as the artistic component of my thesis project. In doing so, I was able to benefit from the combined production abilities of both the Theatre Academy and Vantaa Art Museum Artsi.

In order to avoid the chaotic burden of having to do everything myself again, I pooled production resources from the participating institutions and moved the project towards something between a theatre working group and an indie games studio. My combined production budgets were used to employ the help of game developers Rolands Tīss and Mikael Jaakkola (magu). While the boundaries of all the roles were fluid, with team members stepping in where needed, Rolands mainly held the role of 3D artist and magu held the role of programmer. Since it was an MA thesis project, I was also able to recruit Theatre Academy sound design student Eliel Tammiharju (KEliel) to be our sound designer and music composer in exchange for study credits. While my experience with the first episode provided me basic skills to dabble in and contribute to all the realms of video game development listed above, I predominantly maintained the roles of game designer, narrative designer, project manager, and, of course, performer. Jokke Heikkilä was involved again, this time in the capacity of thesis supervisor. He overlooked the process and provided assistance in putting out fires, averting crises, and debugging along the way. *AoHH – Ep. 2* premiered in Vantaa at Cultural House Martinus in the autumn of 2021.

Synopsis: *Adventures of Harriharri*: UrbanApa X Ateneum (Episode I)

Duration: 20:21
Venue: UrbanApa X Ateneum Festival, Ateneum Museum, Helsinki, Finland
Premiere Date: August 22, 2020

The first episode introduces my video game avatar Harriharri (Harri is my name in Finnish) along with a series of video game environments that represent various places in Finland. Harriharri is a newcomer to Finland who arrives with high hopes of being welcomed into the culture.

Scene 1: Harriharri introduces himself to the audience and showcases the physical abilities of his digital body and the capabilities of his third-person character controller: running, walking, jumping, rolling, and crouching.

Scene 2: The story of Harriharri begins on a highway in a wintery Finnish countryside scene. His attempt to connect with locals is unsuccessful, so Harriharri feels he must upgrade his fashion with local trends in order to fit in.

Scene 3: Harriharri transports via spirit reindeer to an in-real-life (IRL) shopping mall in Eastern Helsinki called Itis, which is predominantly used by immigrants. There he visits a Marimekko store, which he knows to be an admired and iconic Finnish clothing brand. Harriharri wants to increase his social status by purchasing Marimekko clothing but quickly realises he can't afford it. He explores the mall in hopes of finding opportunities for employment and stumbles into an Internet Store which is advertising an Open Call for Arts Grants. He enters the Internet Store.

Scene 4: Harriharri plays an online grant application mini-game where he must collect coins representing actual Finnish arts grants IRL. At the end of the scene, he goes to a PC to check his grant results and receives rejection after rejection. In a fit of rage, Harriharri runs through the walls of the internet and leaps down a black hole of negativity and rejection.

Scene 5: Harriharri lands back at Itis mall and is comforted by the multicultural environment. He visits a store called Tokmanni, which has a reputation in IRL Finland for being a place where many low-income/immigrant groups shop. There he discovers Harrimekko, an affordable alternative to Marimekko. The clothing gives him hope that he might be able to one day integrate into Finnish society. Harriharri receives an

invitation to perform in UrbanApa X Ateneum, an arts festival taking place at the Finnish National Gallery, Ateneum.

Final Scene: Harriharri makes his debut performance and finally finds a sense of belonging amongst a diverse Finnish community. At this point in the performance, the performer Harriharri reveals himself to the theatre audience.

Synopsis: *Adventures of Harriharri*: Persu (Episode II)

Duration: 56:50
Venue: Vantaa Art Museum Artsi – Reciprocities Exhibition, Cultural House Martinus, Vantaa, Finland
Premiere Date: September 25, 2021

The second episode picks up after Episode I. It expands upon the Harriharri virtual universe by integrating new video game environments which represent places in Finland. It also introduces new characters such as the Harjus fish spirit guide and Harriharri's archnemesis, Lord Jussi Halla-aho, the leader of the extreme right-wing party in Finland, who strongly opposes immigration and multiculturalism.

The episode begins with an intro animation sequence reminiscent of an American TV series intro in an attempt to further exemplify the performance's cinematic presentation and inherent fusion of Finnish and American cultures. This intro creates a sense of mystery and evokes the confused feelings of alienation and isolation associated with being an outsider in a new country.

Scene 1: Harriharri is leisurely exploring a typical Helsinki street but then suddenly realises he must take advantage of late-night grocery sales.

Scene 2: Harriharri enters an Alepa grocery store and must complete a timed "Alepa Alennus" mini-game where he collects all the discounted food items before they are bought by other shoppers. He notices a magazine rack which only depicts images of white power and beauty.

Scene 3: Back on the Helsinki street, Harriharri confronts everyday racism embedded in questions about his origins. A woman repeatedly asks him, "Where do you come from? ... No, where are you really from?" Harriharri stumbles across an anti-immigration protest and experiences discrimination from Lord Jussi Halla-aho.

Scene 4: Harriharri transits via metro train to Itis Shopping Centre, where he notices an advertisement by the typical Finnish electronic store Gigantti offering a free iPhone with an Elisa phone subscription.

Scene 5: Harriharri enters a futuristic Gigantti store and gets a phone with voice-activated Siiri, who speaks with a humorous Finnish accent. He asks questions about Finnish culture and politics and Harriharri becomes dismayed when Siiri explains that Lord Jussi Halla-aho's extreme right-wing party is the most popular party in Finland. She offers to open up a portal to the Vantaa River (Vantaanjoki) so Harriharri can relax and connect with nature.

Scene 6: Harriharri has a mystical encounter while fishing in a Finnish river meadow landscape representing the Vantaa River. He composes Hip Hop beats by interacting with trees and meets an omniscient Harjus, an arctic grayling also known as the Harri-fish. The Harjus explains the "true Finnish nature" to Harriharri.

Scene 7: Harriharri wakes up in the Vantaa River environment. He assumes that he fainted and questions whether he hallucinated a talking fish. He realises he should head to Vantaa city to get some grounding food, perhaps potatoes, a staple of Finnish cuisine.

Scene 8: While in Vantaa, Harriharri grudgingly applies for a Kone Foundation grant and then fails to order French fries in Finnish (*yksi ranskalaiset*) because the shopkeeper cannot understand his accent. Then, in an act of trauma release, Harriharri breaks out into a reggae song titled "Ranskalaiset," which is a cover of Peter Tosh's "Legalize it." The lyrics are displayed on the screen and the audience is invited to sing the lyrics karaoke style. The song spreads a message of inclusivity and diversity, explaining how people from all around the world eat potatoes, and even though we might all have different names for them, potatoes are a common ground for all of us, despite our differences. Harriharri imagines potatoes falling from the sky for everyone to enjoy. He receives a text message from the Kone Foundation notifying him that he was selected for a large grant of 60,000 euros. It feels like an anticlimactic accomplishment, and Harriharri is uncertain as to how to proceed, so he runs directly to the typical Finnish liquor store Alko.

Scene 9: Back at the Vantaa River environment, Harriharri enjoys *pussikalja*, which is a Finnish term for a plastic bag filled with beers. He is again visited by the Harjus fish, who congratulates him on the grant and offers another spiritual message. The Harjus

fish tells Harriharri that “the North is calling.” Harriharri realises that he must accept his destiny and go to the Kone headquarters to claim his grant and begin his work promoting inclusion and diversity in Finland.

Scene 10: Through the first-person perspective, Harriharri takes a long elevator ride to the highest floor of the Kone Headquarters and symbolically to higher levels of societal prestige and recognition in Finland. While on the elevator, a tacky synth version of Jean Sibelius’s “Finlandia, Op. 26,” a historic symbol of Finnish nationalism and identity, plays from the elevator speakers.

Scene 11: In a sci-fi–inspired Kone Foundation laboratory environment, Harriharri speaks with a futuristic Kone AI voice who confirms Harriharri’s identity and willingness to agree to the terms of the granting contract. Harriharri agrees, and the voice narrates the process of artistic-cultural upgrading and body-modification that Harriharri must undergo as part of the granting system. In the end, the announcer explains that the upgrade to character version 2.0 is now complete.

Scene 12: This is the epic reveal of the new Harriharri 2.0 character model, which has been upgraded through Kone technology. He wears an outfit loaded with iconic Finnish cultural symbols, such as a Kone Foundation *tuulipuku* (windbreaker), a Harrimekko skirt and traditional Finnish *lapikkaat* (boots). The outfit is white and blue to represent the Finnish flag, and Harriharri remarks on how, with Kone’s recognition, he is finally white and doesn’t need to be a victim of systemic racism any longer – now he can enjoy the benefits and powers of white privilege.

Scene 13: Back on the typical Helsinki street, Harriharri mounts the spirit reindeer and asks Siiri to open up a portal for him to the Finnish National Parliament building.

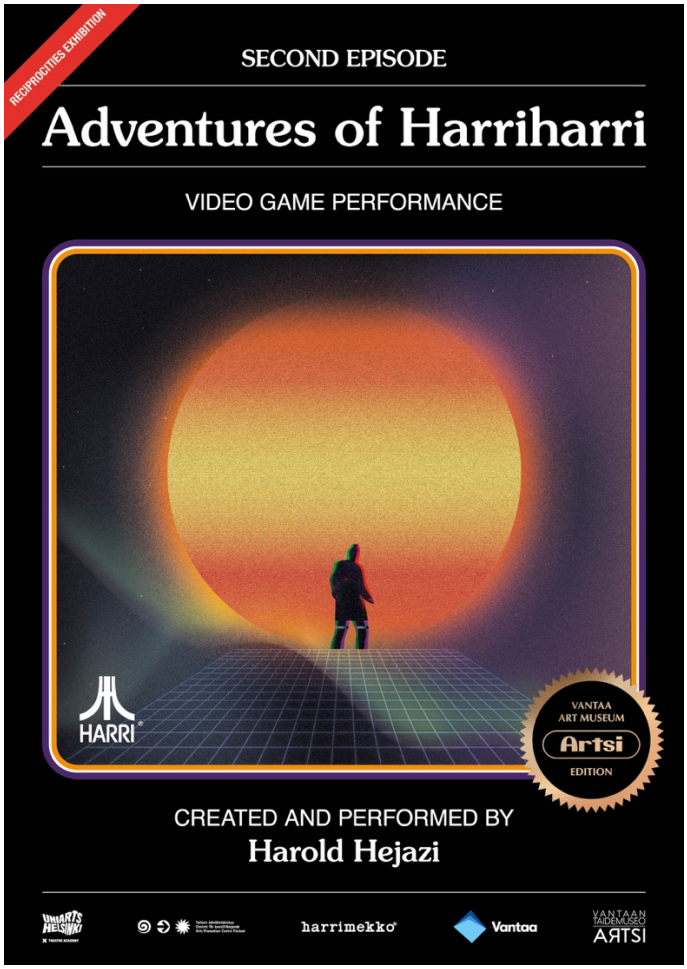
Scene 14: This scene takes place in a sci-fi–inspired Finnish forest night scene with cosmic dimensions filling the night sky. Harriharri rides the spirit reindeer over a land bridge across the Baltic Sea and up the stairs to the Finnish parliament.

Scene 15: Inside the Finnish parliament, Harriharri challenges his archnemesis, Lord Jussi Halla-aho, to a freestyle rap battle. The two rivals battle it out, exchanging sociopolitical slurs and critiquing each other’s politics and social status in Finland. Harriharri argues that he can be Finnish despite his origins, and Lord Jussi Halla-aho argues for a pure Finnish identity. In the end, Harriharri makes a comment about how he is so Finnish that he eats *silakkapihvit*, a traditional way of preparing Baltic herring.

This comment shocks Lord Jussi Halla-aho and forces him to rethink his politics and naïve conception of immigrants. This forges a common ground and sense of shared humanity between them. Lord Jussi Halla-aho asks Harriharri if he would show him how to catch Baltic herring. Harriharri agrees and gestures to Lord Jussi to follow him outdoors.

Final Scene: At the top of the steps to the Finnish parliament, Harriharri and Lord Jussi Halla-aho marvel at the stars and see the northern lights dancing in the sky. The Harjus fish calls out to Harriharri, which further impresses Lord Jussi Halla-aho. A friendship begins to emerge between the rivals. Lord Jussi Halla-aho tells Harriharri that he is an *uuden sukupolven suomalainen* (a new generation Finn) and says that he is proud of his newly realised concept of expanded Finnishness – an understanding that is not dependent upon the colour of one's skin. Harriharri begins to imagine a more diverse and inclusive Finland of the future. The episode ends when Lord Jussi Halla-aho invites Harriharri to come to his *mökki* (Finnish summer cottage), which in Finland is an invitation only extended to close friends.

LEVEL 1: COSTIKYAN'S GAME DEFINITION VS HARRIHARRI



Adventures of Harriharri – Episode II promo poster. Design: Ilona Puska, Concept: Harold Hejazi.

In Greg Costikyan's article "I Have No Words & I Must Design: Toward a Critical Vocabulary for Games," he writes: "To understand games, to talk about them intelligently, and to design better ones, we need to understand what a game is" (Costikyan 2002, 10).

This section mimics the structure of his article and dissects his definition of a game: "An interactive structure of endogenous meaning that requires players to struggle toward a goal" (Costikyan 2002, 24). I will break down each component of his definition (interactive, structure, endogenous meaning, struggle, goal) and relate it to *AoHH – Ep. 2*.

Costikyan argues that his "functional" definition of games "provides some insight into what we need to do to create compelling games" (Costikyan 2002, 26). Through my excavation of the structure and nuance of Costikyan's concept of a game, I illustrate the

relationship between the world of games and Live Art. In doing so, I attempt to uncover its affordances and operationalise his definition towards the creation and design of compelling Live Art Game performances.

Even though *AoHH* is a Live Art performance, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the qualities of *AoHH* that qualify it as a game. To begin, it should be noted that when I refer to a multiplayer audience, I am referring to the audience as players of the game. When I refer to the designer, the player, and the performer, I am referring to myself in each of these distinct roles. Admittedly, throughout *AoHH*, I never fully inhabit one or the other, and this merging of subject slots – the nebulous ambiguity of these terms in *AoHH* – represents difficulties for the application of Costikyan's framework.

Nevertheless, I hope to illustrate its flexibility and usefulness for thinking about Live Art Games. One invention I employ to address this issue is what I refer to as the player-performer, which emphasises the fact that *AoHH* is both a game that I play and a performance that I perform. Lastly, before we continue, I would also like to note that my understanding of gameplay as performance aligns with performance scholar Marleena Huuhka, who argues:

> Like performance, gameplay is seen here as an action that cannot be repeated as exactly the same. [...] The same goes for the nonhumans in the mix: the console might explode, the game freeze or get glitchy, or the power might go out. All these examples show how gameplay is live and tied to the moment. This liveness connects with the genre of live media performance: we could argue that all gameplay is emergent action happening within the programmed frame of the game in the interaction between the non-human game elements and the human(s) playing it. (Huuhka 2021, 17)

Interactive

Drawing from Chris Crawford's 1982 book *The Art of Computer Game Design,* Costikyan adopts a distinction between games and puzzles. He explains, as per Crawford's distinction, that puzzles "present the 'player' with a logic structure to be solved with the assistance of clues," while games "change state in response to player actions" (Costikyan 2002, 10). He provides a "crossword" as an example of a puzzle, as something static "to be solved with the assistance of clues" (Costikyan 2002, 10).

According to Costikyan, "a puzzle is static. A game is interactive" (Costikyan 2002, 11). He then describes the interactive elements within the classic board game

Monopoly, in which your decision to buy property or not changes the game state. In the beginning of *AoHH – Ep. 2*, the player begins in a seemingly open-world virtual environment representing an urban street in Helsinki. Immediately, the player is faced with various options for spatial interaction, such as to move the 3D character, via the third-person controller, left, right, forwards, or backwards. The player is free to explore the environment in any direction they wish or to enter the storefronts such as a UFF second-hand shop or an Alko liquor store. For example, the player considers entering the UFF second-hand shop but then decides to travel up the street to visit an Alepa grocery store. The player enters the grocery store, which teleports Harriharri into a new environment: the Alepa grocery store where the game state changes. Suddenly, the player is no longer free to explore but must complete a timed "Alepa Alennus" mini-game where the objective is to collect all the discounted food items before they are bought by other shoppers.

AoHH is in essence an improvised storytelling game, where the player can traverse various virtual spaces and explore environments embedded with narrative-building prompts. These prompts lead the player into different directions, altering the state of the game. Thus, *AoHH* is interactive at its core. The environments in the game are designed with the player's history in mind and are derived from the player's memories, thoughts, and lived-experiences. For example, the environmental features (e.g., Yliopiston Apteekki, R-Kioski) and the non-player characters (NPCs) (based on individuals the character has encountered in the past) serve as sites of interaction for the player to engage in acts of storytelling, reflection, and the generation of meaning. In this way, the game takes an autoethnographic approach to improvised storytelling.

In addition to Harriharri's interaction with the game environment, *AoHH* has another layer of interaction by virtue of its theatre-derived presentation structure. When thinking about *AoHH – Ep. 2* as a performance, we could consider the audience-performer dialogue taking place as an element of performance interaction. For example, in the beginning of the game, the performer welcomes the audience with a call and response warm-up to prepare the audience for embracing vocal participation. The performer announces, "When I say Harri, y'all say Harri!"

In the first episode, a level of performer-audience engagement was maintained throughout the entire performance. In the second episode, the level of connection was significantly decreased due to the space's infrastructure: a greater physical separation and larger sound barriers between the audience and performer. Varying levels of audience engagement play a role in how the state of the performance changes, whether

it evokes a sense of community amongst the audience, or whether it fuels greater confidence and panache in the player-performer. Moreover, the audience reactions have an effect on the storytelling, as the player-performer learns to understand which kinds of tones, jokes, or storylines are rewarded by the audience. In *AoHH*, the interaction that changes the state of the game happens both between the game and the player and between the audience and the player-performer.

A Live Art performance may be interactive, although it isn't compulsory like it is with games. A performer may invite varying levels of audience-interaction and an audience may also choose to interact with the performer. However, there is no set degree of interactivity required of a Live Art performance, as the LADA website states: "Live Art always explores the possibilities of the live event and the ways we can experience it" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020). Since it is a live medium, it is subject to spontaneous audience intervention or improvised modes of interaction on behalf of the performer.

In designing the modes of interaction in a Live Art Game, the designer should consider whether they possess the ability to meaningfully "change state in response to player actions" (Costikyan 2002, 10) and how this makes an impact on the wider game. In doing so, the act of participation becomes more engaging and immersive because players are made aware that each action influences the outcome of the game. Does, for example, selecting a card, merely lead to a momentary performative action, or does it have an impact on the wider game state as a whole? Perhaps a performance has some means to encourage participation, but there may not be a system that enables the interaction to have a lasting effect.

When audiences are invited to actively steer a performance's development, they engage in not only the consumption of a performance but also in the production of the experience. A multiplayer-audience member may then ponder the notion that through these game experiences (and everything we do), culture is something that we are actively producing through the way we co-create it, and thus, perceive it. In this way, Live Art Games can foster audience participation and enhance agencies in new ways. The design of new participatory performance platforms that explore methods of connecting with and participating in Live Art may enable wider audiences to participate, thus improving its capacity for accessibility and inclusivity.

Goals

Costikyan goes on to argue how "interaction has no game value *in itself*. Interaction must have a purpose" (Costikyan 2002, 11). He writes that "what makes a *thing* into a *game* is the need to make decisions" (Costikyan 2002, 11) and how, at every point in a game, the player "responds in a fashion calculated to help him achieve his objectives" (Costikyan 2002, 12).

The wider narrative goal within *AoHH* is for Harriharri to integrate into Finnish society. This is to participate in and learn about the culture, establish meaningful employment, and find a social-communal sense of belonging. The goal for the player is to roleplay as Harriharri and improvise stories surrounding the theme of Harriharri's integration into Finnish society. Meanwhile, the player is also tasked with the objective of completing every level in order to satisfy the narrative sequence and complete the game.

Everything the player does is embedded with the intention of achieving the goal of Harriharri's integration into Finnish society. There are various decisions to be made surrounding which routes to travel, what features of the environment to interact with, and which NPCs to engage with in conversation. Costikyan writes:

> At every point, he or she considers the game state. That might be what he sees on the screen. […] He considers his objectives […] he considers his opposition, the forces he must struggle against. He tries to decide on the best course of action. And he responds as best he can to achieve his objectives – his goals. (Costikyan 2002, 12)

An example of a game state in *AoHH – Ep. 2* where the player responds in favour of goal achievement comes in scene 3 after the "Alepa Alennus" mini-game and back on the streets of Helsinki. There, the player is accosted by a Finnish NPC asking rudely, "Where do you come from?" While it is a difficult encounter, as she repeatedly questions his racial origins, the player still politely entertains the conversation in hopes of Harriharri forging a connection with the local. The player must always roleplay an earnest effort in these social interactions with NPCs in order to maintain his portrayal of Harriharri as a persevering newcomer who always tries to make a great impression. A strategy to achieve this narrative goal is to talk to all NPCs in order to convey a sense of Harriharri's hopes that anyone could potentially be a friend and ally.

Following this instance of everyday racism, the player approaches an anti-immigration protest. Despite being in a controversial space, the player remains in the situation and

uses the opportunity to improvise Harriharri's first encounter with Finland's nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiments. The purpose is to roleplay Harriharri's attempt to grapple with and understand some of the lesser-known realities surrounding Finnish cultural politics. The player even goes so far as to approach the leader of the protest, Lord Jussi Halla-aho, to introduce himself and ask questions about the protest in an attempt to understand what the protest is about. Each step the player makes is towards integration into Finnish society, for, as Costikyan writes, "the basic transaction we make with games is to agree to behave as if achieving victory is important, to let the objective guide our behavior in the game" (Costikyan 2002, 12).

According to Costikyan, "some games do not have *explicit* goals" (Costikyan 2002, 12). Drawing from a speech he heard "some years ago" in which Will Right the creator of *SimCity* explains the concept of a "software toy," Costikyan recounts his understanding of *SimCity* being designed as a "software toy" that "creates a world that the player may manipulate, but unlike most games, it provides no explicit goal" (Costikyan 2002, 12). Mirroring Right's speech, Costikyan uses a ball as a metaphor for software toys:

> It offers many interesting behaviors, which you may explore. You can bounce it, twirl it, throw it, dribble it. And, if you wish, you may use it in a game: soccer, or basketball, or whatever. But the game is not intrinsic in the toy; it is a set of player-defined objectives *overlaid* on the toy. (Costikyan 2002, 12)

When thinking about *AoHH – Ep. 2* as a performance, my performer-defined objectives overlaid on the game involve engaging audiences in a light-hearted and entertaining way while also addressing issues of representation, diversity, inclusion, and racial biases. The wider social aims of this performance are explained in further detail in the upcoming chapter "The Harriharri Metagames."

Live Art performances often have various goals embedded into their conceptual frameworks. The goals may be explicit such as in durational performances, which take place for extended periods and draw "attention to the effects of endurance, such as exhaustion and euphoria" (Allain & Harvie 2014, 221). An example of a durational performance is Linda Montana and Tehching Hsieh's performance titled *Art/Life One Year Performance 1983–84* (also known as *Rope Piece*), where the artists "tied themselves together with a 2.5m rope in New York for a year" (Allain & Harvie 2014, 221). The artists signed a statement which read: "We will stay together for one year and never be alone. We will be in the same room at the same time, when we are inside. We will be tied together at waist with an 8 foot rope. We will never touch each other during

the year" (*Tehching Hsieh* 24 July 2022). This statement outlines the performance's objective goals. Meanwhile, the implicit goals may be to comment on commitment, attachment, or artistic collaboration. Or the goal could be conceived by a spectator as the intention of one person representing Art, and the other representing Life, and how in trying to stay together for a year, the rope (and relationship) becomes frayed, demonstrating the difficulties of an elegant relationship between art and life.

The implicit goals in Live Art works range in style and form and include, for example, raising awareness about a societal issue and provoking a discussion or new thinking. These goals may be thought about by the performer in advance, or they may emerge through the performative act. Some performers may reject the notion of their work containing any implicit or explicit goal or objective. Some may even wish to intentionally mislead and confuse an audience, or some performers may intend for audiences to derive their own meaning from the experience. I argue that there is always a performer-defined goal overlaid on a performance, even if that goal is to have no objective or plan and merely to explore/improvise. Or, as Huuhka writes, "performances do generally have goals: to perform, to express, to make money, to be seen" (Huuhka 2021, 17).

Perhaps applying Costikyan's conception of goals in games to Live Art would increase a performance's level of audience engagement. Costikyan uses the example of roleplaying games to illustrate the importance of goals in games. When playing such games, he admits: "There are times when I've been bored" (Costikyan 2002, 14). This sounds very familiar to me. There are many times when I have felt bored in a performance crowd (actually, most of the time I feel this way). He writes: "The game is failing me. In the case of an RPG, it's failing me because my gamemaster isn't being a good gamemaster at that moment. A good gamemaster will sense when his players are getting bored, and give them something to do" (Costikyan 2002, 14). This statement could be applied to the field of Live Art Games – a good performer will sense when his audience members are getting bored and give them something to do. This becomes easier to accomplish and facilitate when a Live Art Game is designed with "an adequate diversity of goals" (Costikyan 2002, 14). Although predetermined goals are not mandatory, say in the case of a sandbox Live Art Game, performances can "allow for a diversity of goals, allowing players to pick and choose among them, to find one that appeals" (Costikyan 2002, 14). Following Costikyan's findings, a critical assessment of goals in the design of Live Art Games could be effective for increasing audience engagement and participation.

While I acknowledge my bias towards favouring pedagogical objectives, I believe designing Live Art Games with explicit goals (i.e., explaining the goals to an audience beforehand) supports audiences in their attempt to understand a performance's intended meaning. This in turn makes the games more accessible and more inclusive to wider audiences. In *AoHH*, the goal of integration is made clear to the audience members in the description of the performance. The description explains that Harriharri "faces continuous obstacles in pursuit of integrating into Finnish society. In order to conquer the most challenging levels of the game, Harriharri must battle bureaucracies and systemic forces of social exclusion" (Hejazi 2021). As Costikyan writes: "Indeed, when players begin to feel they don't have a goal worth striving for, they begin to get restless" (Costikyan 2002, 14). This consideration could ease some of the tension in a Live Art performance crowd, which, in my experience, is often fraught with restlessness.

Struggle

Costikyan advocates for the element of struggle in games, as he writes that "life is the struggle for survival and growth. There is no end to strife, not this side of the grave. A game without struggle is a game that's dead" (Costikyan 2002, 17). Therefore, the struggle is the force which brings a game to life. He explains: "Whatever goals you set players in a game, you must make them work to achieve their goals" (Costikyan 2002, 16). According to Costikyan, there are various ways to elicit an experience of struggle in players, an obvious form being "competition," as he writes: "In a two-player, head-to-head game, your opponent is the opposition, your struggle against him; the game is direct competition" (Costikyan 2002, 15). However, he also argues that "competition isn't the only way to create struggle" (Costikyan 2002, 15). To illustrate the various possible forms of struggle in games, he provides an analogy to fiction:

> The ur-story, the Standard Model Narrative, works like this: Our protagonist has a goal. He faces obstacles A, B, C, and D. He struggles with each in turn, growing as a person as he does. Ultimately, he overcomes the last and greatest obstacle and brings about some satisfying resolution. (Costikyan 2002, 15)

He then lists potential obstacles the protagonist may endure: "A good villain makes for a first rate obstacle. The forces of nature, cantankerous mothers-in-law, crashing hard-drives, and the protagonist's own feelings of inadequacy can make for good obstacles, too. Just so in games" (Costikyan 2002, 15).

Harriharri attempts to order *ranskalaiset* (French fries). Image: Harold Hejazi.

The protagonist in the *AoHH* narrative is certainly no stranger to struggle and adversity. He is a person-of-colour (POC) newcomer in a white-dominated foreign country. He doesn't have any friends and feels excluded from the social culture. He is unable to speak the local language, which makes attaining meaningful employment or accomplishing minor everyday tasks very challenging. An example of his struggle manifesting in his everyday life is evident in scene 8, when the protagonist is unable to order French fries in Finnish because the shopkeeper cannot understand his accent and despite his multiple attempts, eventually gives up. Another example is in the way Harriharri traverses the world alone, without any companionship. He walks through vacant environments searching for a friend but remains alone. He is seemingly invisible on the streets, perceived as yet another unwanted immigrant. The other individuals (NPCs) look down upon him and discriminate and alienate him. Despite his sincere efforts, the protagonist faces continuous obstacles in pursuit of integrating into society.

Costikyan points to other modes of struggle through examples found in the tabletop RPG Dungeons & Dragons: "Part of the struggle lies in the opposition posed by monsters and NPCs; part of it in exploration of the world and the story; part of it in traps or puzzles posed in the game's physical world, or in social difficulties posed in the game's social realm" (Costikyan 2002, 15). As explained in the above section on goals, the player is also tasked with the objective of completing every level in order to satisfy the narrative sequence and complete the game. The player must navigate Harriharri to certain scene teleportation trigger zones so as to achieve the full narrative arc and provide the audience with a complete picture of the story.

While there aren't any in-game obstacles such as monsters or zombies (excluding Lord Jussi Halla-aho depicted as Nosferatu) preventing the player from reaching these trigger zones, there are various technical complications and hindrances. *AoHH – Ep. 2* is a video game developed by students with limited budgets and on a limited timeframe, which means there was little to no time for playtesting and debugging. There is always a pretty high likelihood that a trigger won't work, Harriharri will get stuck between 3D models or fall off a plane, an unforeseen bug will appear, or the game will freeze and the entire game will need to restart.

Huuhka argues "that errors, glitches, and bugs in video games – and other virtual environments – are demonstrations of nonhuman agency" and refers to them as "nonhuman performers" in a gameplay performance (Huuhka 2021, 21). These are, as Huuhka describes, "small moments of the game being broken, out of control, small moments of nonhuman control" (Huuhka 2021, 21). Part of the struggle in *AoHH* is in playing through the uncertainty that something will break or that the nonhuman performers will intervene in my performance before reaching the final scene and completing the game. However, this underlying fear gives the game an edge and genuine sense of struggle, for it isn't purely based on the protagonist's narrative struggles, it's also hard-coded, or should I say haphazardly and unpredictably coded, into the video game.

The height of the struggle in *AoHH – Ep. 2*, from a perspective of both performance and gameplay, comes in the final level (scene 16), when the protagonist must battle the final boss. The altercation is a full-fledged freestyle rap battle with Lord Jussi Halla-aho inside the Parliament of Finland. The two rivals exchange sociopolitical slurs and critique each other's politics and social status in Finland. Harriharri argues that he can be Finnish despite his origins and Lord Jussi Halla-aho argues for a pure Finnish identity.

A rap battle between Harriharri and Lord Jussi Halla-aho in the Parliament of Finland. Image: Harold Hejazi.

Due to the video game's programming limitations, it lacked a system for reciting Halla-aho's raps in a progressional manner (i.e., one line at a time). Instead, all of his dialogue is played on a pre-recorded single backing track with pre-timed spaces for the performer to deliver exact rap responses. This required the performer to memorise the delivery and cadence of every punchline, in an attempt to mirror the flow of an organic rap battle. If one line were to fail, then the response line by Halla-aho wouldn't follow in the intended logical order. For example, when Harriharri raps, "And as much as you'd like to believe it Jussi, I'm not collecting Kela money," Jussi responds immediately, "Haha, yes, that's because you can't!" If that first line were missed or forgotten, Halla-aho's follow-up line wouldn't make sense. This tightly constrained performance system, with little-to-no margin for error, induced an authentic experience of struggle and desperation to complete the scene adequately. The performer had to work hard, and I believe this presence of struggle was felt by the audience. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the various roles I play often merge, in this instance the struggles of the player and player-performer fuse: as Harriharri struggles to find common ground with Lord Jussi Halla-aho, I am put on the spot to deliver perfectly timed lines.

Costikyan writes about how "roleplaying games don't need direct player opposition; they have plenty of other obstacles for players to struggle with," and if there isn't sufficient struggle, he argues that "the gamemaster isn't doing his job – since he has so much control over events in the game, he ought to be *ensuring* that it is a struggle, that

his players are enjoying the game" (Costikyan 2002, 16). From the perspective of the game as a performance, if there wasn't an element of struggle, or displays of effort on the player-performers behalf, the audience wouldn't be sufficiently captivated by the performance, nor would they be moved by Harriharri's trials and tribulations explored in the narrative. As Costikyan writes "putting other obstacles in the game can increase its richness and emotional appeal" (Costikyan 2002, 16).

Costikyan further explains the need for a balanced level of struggle in games when he writes:

> Computer and console game developers are constantly grappling with the notion of struggle; they know that if the game is too hard, players will find it frustrating. Contrariwise, if it is too easy, they will find it dull. Developers take considerable care – and spend quite a lot of time testing – to try to ensure that the game is reasonably balanced. (Costikyan 2002, 16)

I believe this principle of "balanced struggle" is relevant to the field of Live Art performance. In my opinion, it is frustrating if all we experience is a performer's struggle, such as if they were just smashing bottles on themselves for the entirety of a piece, and yet it is too dull if all we experience is a performer's ease, such as them simply sleeping for an entire performance duration. These examples may seem sarcastic and extreme, but they are based on actual performances I've encountered (I somehow failed to make notes of their titles or the artist's names).

Costikyan's following statement about games could be applied to the design of Live Art Games: "[We want them] to challenge us. We want to work at them. They aren't any fun if they're too simple, too easy, if we zip through them and get to the endscreen without being challenged" (Costikyan 2002, 17). A Live Art Game is likely to be the most captivating if it has a balance of both struggle and ease and if the game "make[s] [players and multiplayer audiences] work to achieve their goals" (Costikyan 2002, 16).

Setting members of a multiplayer audience against each other is one way to create struggle in a Live Art Game, but as Costikyan explains, "putting other obstacles in the game can increase its richness and emotional appeal" (Costikyan 2002, 16). This can be achieved through performative interventions (changing the rules or the goals of the game), altering narrative elements (plot twists), modifying games mechanics[14]

[14] Sicart 2008. Game studies scholar Miguel Sicart defines game mechanics as "methods invoked by agents for interacting with the game world."

(intensifying or detracting modes of interaction), or whatever obstacles may be required to keep a multiplayer audience actively engaged through a balanced design of struggle and ease. Another way to create struggle is through the metagame and narrative aspects of a game (discussed at length in the following chapter). This aspect of struggle is central to *AoHH* as the audience as players are confronted with challenging aspects of their society.

Structure

In order to explain the element of structure in games, Costikyan distinguishes between childhood "let's pretend" games and tabletop RPGs, which are both centred on players taking a "role of a single character in an imaginary world" (Costikyan 2002, 18). He writes:

> The main difference is that 'let's pretend' has minimal structure. It doesn't have complicated tables, algorithms, magic rules, or character advancement; it doesn't have an impartial gamemaster; and the plot, to the degree there is one, is invented on the spur of the moment. (Costikyan 2002, 18)

He argues that even "let's pretend" games require some structure and explains that "when 'let's pretend' breaks down, it's usually because the kids can't agree on a proposed rule. ('Bang bang, you're dead.' 'No, I'm not! Who says? Why am I dead?')" (Costikyan 2002, 18). The need for rules is here established as a primary element of what makes something a game, as he writes: "We all have to think we're playing the same thing, working by the same rules, within the same structure" (Costikyan 2002, 18).

Costikyan also distinguishes between the structure in board games and electronic games. In board games, the structure is largely based on "the literal rules, although aspects may be contained in the topology of the board, information printed on pieces or cards or other components, etc. The structure is therefore directly perceivable by the player" (Costikyan 2002, 19). In contrast, the structure in electronic games is largely

> invisible to the user. […] The 'rules' are incorporated in the software; a player gains understanding of them through experience, by playing the game, and may well remain in ignorance of their specific details, instead gaining a 'gut,' intuitive understanding of their operation. (Costikyan 2002, 19)

AoHH is a game structured to enhance improvised storytelling surrounding Harriharri's integration into Finnish society. It is composed of a series of levels, each taking place in their own unique environments and containing various modes of interaction. For example, in the Vantaanjoki (Vantaa River) environment, it is possible to compose Hip Hop beats by interacting with trees, the Helsinki environment has NPCs to interact with, the Vantaa environment has a Kone Foundation grant application task to complete, and so on. These sites of interaction within each level serve as prompts to facilitate improvised storytelling. While there is much to explore in each environment, the goal for the player is to continue telling the story of Harriharri's integration in Finland.

Meanwhile, each environment has an invisible cube programmed with a scene teleportation script. These teleportation trigger zones establish a wider narrative structure in the improvised storytelling game. When the player collides with the surface of the cube, it activates the loading of the next scene. Other select environmental features (e.g., store fronts, buildings, terrain) are programmed with an invisible mesh collider so that the character cannot enter them or go beyond certain boundaries. While there are various pathways and possible interactions to explore within each environment, there is ultimately only one way in and one way out. This limitation establishes a topographic narrative structure determining where the player can go and therefore how the wider narrative is to proceed. In this way, the "rules" of the game are "incorporated in the software" (Costikyan 2002, 19). The player is tasked with the objective of completing every level in order to satisfy the narrative sequence and complete the game. They could make it easy for themselves by running directly from trigger zone to zone, reaching the final level and beating the game, but this would be analogous to completing a video game with a cheat code. In order to win the game, the player-performer must also pursue the storytelling objectives surrounding Harriharri's integration into Finland and in doing so provide the audience with an understandable and engaging story.

As Costikyan writes, "by combining these 'rule mechanics,' you build a structure. You build a conceptual framework that defines the working of the game – and guides the players' behavior within the game" (Costikyan 2002, 19). In *AoHH*, much of the player-performer's behaviour involves exploring each environment and telling as many stories about the space as possible. The player-performer navigates from one teleportation area to another, moving the story forward in the most engaging and meaningful way possible.

However, Costikyan draws a distinction between literary narrative structure, such as in a linear novel, and game structure when he writes: “The structure of the story, however, creates a single, unchanging narrative that the reader cannot alter. Narrative structure is one dimensional, because you can follow only a single path through a story” (Costikyan 2002, 20).

While *AoHH* ends with a predetermined narrative conclusion, there are multiple alternative paths to move through each environment, allowing the narrative to take different shapes along the way. Costikyan continues by stating that “game structure has to do with the means by which a game shapes player behavior. But a game *shapes* player behavior; it does not determine it” (Costikyan 2002, 20). The structure in *AoHH* shapes the players behaviour in that it provides inspiration, opportunities, and prompts for storytelling behaviours. It also provides Hip Hop beats and musical backdrops for freestyle rapping and singing. Yet, rather than determining a firm trajectory, it fosters a structure for improvisation.

As Costikyan writes, “a good game provides considerable *freedom* for the player to experiment with alternate strategies and approaches; a game structure is multi-dimensional, because it allows players to take many possible paths through the ‘game space’” (Costikyan 2002, 20). Perhaps *AoHH* could be improved if the player had more flexibility regarding which environment they could move to next within the narrative sequence, affording the player more freedom in their improvised storytelling development.

Nevertheless, *AoHH – Ep. 2* isn’t as rigid as a normative narrative structure. For example, when the player leaves the anti-immigration protest (scene 3), there are a range of things they could do. They could go back to the Alepa grocery store for more food, visit the R-Kioski or UFF second-hand shop before eventually visiting the teleportation trigger zone. If it were to be played again, it would likely be played in a different manner of moving and storytelling through the game space, ultimately exploring new narrative events and points of interest, unlike a standard novel (excluding interactive novels) which can only be read linearly.

As a video game performance, *AoHH* is restricted by its structure in that it must achieve its predetermined ending in order to provide a full narrative experience for the audience. There is flexibility in the way through which the player can move through the game, but this does take away the potential for surprising narrative discoveries within the conclusion. Ideally, *AoHH* would have multiple endings dependent on the player’s

actions taken during the game, similar to how some games in the *Final Fantasy* video game series have multiple endings. Structure in Live Art performance may also have to do with the literal rules for the audience, such as to not touch the performer. Or a performance may have a plan such as in Allan Kaprow's happenings, which were based on instructions for participants outlined in a score.

Advocating for structure in Live Art feels a bit contradictory when its resistance to structures is one of its core characteristics – i.e., its resistance to hegemonic societal structures such as structures of tradition, class, gender, and race. Again, Live Art is "a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020). I suspect a Live Artist would be likely to take extreme measures for the sake of emancipating their art from mandatory structures or the indoctrination of rigid structural confines.

Nevertheless, I do believe that Live Art Games require structure, for as Costikyan writes: "We all have to think we're playing the same thing, working by the same rules, within the same structure" (Costikyan 2002, 18). If there isn't any structure, things are likely to break down and a multiplayer audience is likely to be uncertain as to how they can engage in the game, leaving them feeling insecure. If the intention is to truly engage your audience, then the element of structure, which can be addressed by providing clear instructions, rules, and outlining the modes of interaction, can be highly empowering. However, the ideal structure shouldn't be too strict insofar as making players unable to freely explore the game space.

A relatively open, "multi-dimensional" game structure allows for the greater possibility of a Live Art Game to foster the exploration of alternative possibilities instead of engaging with only one narrative. This fosters the opportunity for deeper experience/ promotion of inclusion, and multiplayer audiences may then get to experience multiple structures and viewpoints.

Endogenous Meaning

Costikyan's fifth and the last component of a game is endogenous meaning. He argues that "a game's structure *creates its own meanings.* The meaning grows out of the structure; it is caused by the structure; it is endogenous to the structure" (Costikyan 2002, 22). He uses the example of Monopoly money and how "when you're playing *Monopoly*, *Monopoly* money has value," while otherwise it possesses "no meaning in the real world" (Costikyan 2002, 22). He explains how within the playing of the game, it is "the determinant of success or failure. *Monopoly* money has meaning endogenous to the game of *Monopoly* – meaning that is vitally important to its players" (Costikyan 2002, 22).

But what is endogenous to the improvised storytelling structure of *AoHH*? What is it that determines the player's success or failure? As mentioned before, the goal of the game is for Harriharri to integrate into Finnish society or to otherwise reach a state of inclusion. The encounters and events that occur, some of which are seemingly purposeless and mundane, take the player either one step closer to or one step further from the goal. Just like Monopoly money, the protagonist's experience of inclusion (or the amount of inclusion thereof) fluctuates throughout the game and is the determinant of the player's success. When Harriharri, for example, encounters a stranger who asks him racist questions, the character's sense of inclusion incurs a setback, in that his sense of inclusion in virtual Finland deteriorates. Yet, when he discovers an *onki* (fishing pole) and finds a new access point into Finnish culture, his level of inclusion rises, bringing him closer to his goal. Harriharri's sense of inclusion is endogenous to the game of *AoHH*.

Harriharri tests out his newly discovered *onki* (fishing pole) on the Vantaanjoki. Image: Harold Hejazi.

So, are the notions of inclusion generated through *AoHH* only meaningful within the context of *AoHH* or do they hold meaning in the real world? Do the notions of inclusion in *AoHH* possess real-world value? According to Costikyan, "games are fantasy" (Costikyan 2002, 22). Even though some games may replicate events from real life, he argues that they recontextualise "that reality to establish [their] own, endogenous, meanings," which he refers to as "non-fiction game[s]" (Costikyan 2002, 24).

Similarly, Costikyan argues that the stock market is not a game, even though it possesses most of the components of game, including interaction ("if you trade a stock, you affect the price"), struggle (it's "not easy to out-perform the S&P 500"), a goal based on making money, and a structure based on law (Costikyan 2002, 22). He argues that since "shares have real world value" and that "the stock market is a mechanism for making trading easier; it is not the creator of meaning for the shares traded through the market," the "meaning is not endogenous," and thus, the stock market is not a game (Costikyan 2002, 22).

Here is where my work diverges with Costikyan. Similar to how I reject David Kelley's definition of a game for being confined to recreation, I do not prescribe to Costikyan's bracketing of meaning between fantasy and the real world. My own work draws energy from and thrives on the relationship between the endogenous meaning of a game and the meaning of its real-world origins. Monopoly money and the game is interesting to me in so far that it comments on social competition and the endless desire to accumulate.

AoHH is based on my own lived-experience and attempts to simulate my own experience. It has fantasy elements like talking fish, but it also has non-fiction game elements like representations of Finnish politicians and examples of everyday racism which derive from my own experience.

Watching the character struggle in racist situations allows the predominantly white Finnish audience to experience, in a way, the effects and reality of everyday racism and how certain social encounters might be experienced and have different meanings for different people. Perhaps it may induce a critical examination of what it means to be born with white privilege.

In this sense, the game produces meaning surrounding inclusion in the real-word Finland. The meaning of inclusion for Harriharri is endogenous to the game of *AoHH*, but the meaning isn't necessarily endogenous for the wider white-Finnish audience.

The requirement for a game to produce endogenous meaning doesn't seem to be very compatible with the project of Live Art, as it may infringe on Live Art's potential to "challenge the status quo and initiate meaningful social change" (*Live Art Development Agency* 21 July 2022). This may be where Live Art Games must diverge from Costikyan's definition in order to enable the possibility for them to go beyond fantasy and exist in the realm of real-life situations and possess real-life meaning.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that building an understanding and awareness of what makes a game a game can help Live Artists design more compelling and engaging Live Art Games. A study of the multifaceted nature of games should be the first step for the Live Artist interested in combining games and performance.

Costikyan writes: "To understand games, to talk about them intelligently, and to design better ones, we need to understand what a game is" (Costikyan 2002, 10). I have explained that *AoHH* is an interactive structure for improvised storytelling where the meaning of inclusion is endogenous to the game's structure and where I, the player, struggle towards Harriharri's goal of integrating into the society of virtual Finland.

However, as a Live Art performance, it also possesses goals such as engaging with social issues (e.g., popularly held racial biases, the rise of extreme right-wing politics) and promoting inclusion through critical pedagogical experiences with audiences. These pedagogical goals are explained as part of the metagames surrounding *AoHH* explained in the following chapter.

While working with Costikyan's concept of game may be a helpful starting point for some Live Artists, it is merely one way to approach the act of Live Art Game design. Costikyan's game conceptualisation served my purposes, as it is an expansive definition, inclusive of various modes of gaming, one that could suit the fluid and diverse field of Live Art and one that suits my chosen approach to Live Art as a strategy for inclusion.

I believe it is up to the Live Artist to acquire their own comprehensive view of games' multifaceted history and nature and select a definition which best suits their own conceptualisation of Live Art. The essential point is that when conceptualising a Live Art performance as a game, artists should do their due diligence by understanding what a game is first.

LEVEL 2: THE HARRIHARRI METAGAMES

A screening of *AoHH – Ep. 1* at Video Art Festival Turku (VAFT) 2022. Image: Milla Kangasjärvi.

Strategy for Inclusion

To remind you of the ideology to which I have pledged my allegiance, I will restate it here: "Live Art is a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020). Or, in fewer words, "Live Art: A strategy for inclusion" (Chatzichristodoulou 2020, 1). But how are these terms "strategy" and "inclusion" understood and brought into play within the context of Live Art Games?

For a supersonic specification of "strategy," I turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* which, under selection 5.b, defines the word as "a plan, scheme, or course of action designed to achieve a particular objective, esp. a long-term or overall aim" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 6 July 2022). This definition resonates with Costikyan's conceptualisation of a game as "an interactive structure of endogenous meaning that requires players to struggle toward a goal" (Costikyan 2002, 24). So, it is clear that a "strategy" is the means or "course of action" taken to achieve the goal or "particular objective," but what remains in question is what that goal, "inclusion," means in this context.

According to director, author, and advocate of inclusion in the arts Stephanie Barton Farcas, inclusion is "the involvement of *all* marginalized groups. All colors, races, religions, nationalities, ages, genders, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning, intersex and asexual), disabled and women" (Barton Farcas 2017, 12). In general, this aligns with my personal credo; however, within the context of *AoHH*, inclusion is centred on addressing matters of marginalisation regarding race, nationality, and social belonging.

I also refer to inclusion in terms of the involvement of new forms, diverse styles, and modes of creativity which comprise the Hip Hop arts. Author and director Daniel Banks explains that

> Hip Hop Theater is 'avant-garde' – it creates new forms that work against the mainstream or dominant forms of theater and that utilize and advance technology in the process. Yet while Hip Hop Theater's resistance is against mainstream theatrical forms, Hip Hop reflects popular culture, making Hip Hop Theater unique as both avant-garde and 'popular.' (Banks 2011, 17)

Of course, it isn't mandatory that all Live Art Games draw inspiration from Hip Hop; I'm simply establishing that my own practice and theory of Live Art and inclusion do.

The Land of Exclusion

In Finland, people seem to not quite understand how to make an outsider feel welcome. Out of all the white-dominated countries I've lived in (Canada, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland), never before have I stayed in a place as unwelcoming, socially exclusive, and isolating as Finland. Before moving here, I considered myself an extroverted person. Despite my numerous attempts to forge a community, Finland forced me into isolation. I remember being shocked in my first year in Finland by the experience of encountering barely any enthusiasm from locals to welcome a newcomer from the other side of the globe. Instead, I was met with a sense of indifference and very little invitation to share in cultural customs, landscapes, sights, and attractions. Certainly, there is a stigma against those who arrive intent on sharing in the wealth of their social welfare system, but as a tuition-paying student, I was immune to those particular prejudices.

Overall, let's just say that, in my experience, there wasn't much of a welcoming party. Upon hearing that I was a fresh newcomer, Finns were puzzled more than anything else, and they interrogated me about why on earth I came to Finland of all places. I quickly

realised that when it came to matters of integration and feeling included in this society, I would have to fend for myself. So, I gripped onto my naïve Canadian optimism, threw a variety of theme parties with free beer (supposedly the key to a Finn's heart), and hoped that, in one or two years, my situation would improve. It did not.

Living, or should I say lingering here over the past five years, I've rarely been personally invited to a social gathering or traditional celebration (e.g., Vappu or Juhannus) – unless, and here's the big caveat, I'm romantically involved with the person. As a well-seasoned, jaded expatriate, I've concluded that the average Finn simply does not feel as though inclusion is their responsibility. It's as if having the sense and spirit of inclusion is hard-coded out of their sociocultural makeup. In a highly regulated conformist society where people would rarely allow for any divergence from their given job description, few consider taking on the task of fostering inclusivity. Perhaps they imagine that this responsibility falls under the mandate of some designated governmental department that is highly qualified to provide inclusion services.

As you can gather from my blatant and aggressive pessimism, it's been a difficult road on the quest for a sense of belonging, like I've been stuck in *Minecraft* hardcore mode. It's just that I've grown bitter after all my desperate attempts to fit into white-Finnish society and forge a sense of community. I acknowledge my supreme arrogance though – how, as a North American settler, I am imposing the sociocultural norms and expectations of my Canadian cultural disposition upon a small innocent Nordic country. I'll also admit that some newcomers might disagree with my general sentiment and recount a more cheerful tale of their Finnish experience. Nevertheless, I've had countless conversations with foreigners from around the world who have had similar experiences as my own. In fact, I'd say the most common pastime shared in the safe company of foreigners (especially POC) is to rant about such Finnish troubles and misgivings.

An analysis of Finnish social culture, such as through the way it prizes quietness and solitude and how that might contribute to these unwelcoming experiences, goes way beyond the scope of this thesis. The claims and critique described above are intentionally non-substantiated with references as they are based on my own personal experience.

However, since I am currently larping as an academic, perhaps I should bolster my claims with a few pertinent studies. Take, for example, Akhlaq Ahmad's research study which investigated immigrant job applicants in the Finnish labour market and found that

"applicants of immigrant origin receive significantly fewer invitations for a job interview than the native candidate, even if they possess identical language proficiency, education and vocational diplomas" (Ahmad 2020, 826). Or I could even draw from the lengthy 162-page report based on Cupore's research project aimed at reviewing the status of foreign-born arts and culture professionals in Finland. It showed that, in 2018, out of the three main arts granting organisations, only 4.4% from Taike, 15% from Kone Foundation, and 3% from the Finnish Cultural Foundation went to "immigrant artists," out of their respective total annual amounts of awarded grants (Cupore 2020, 68–69).

But proving that systemic forces of social exclusion exist in Finland, or citing evidence of ethnic discrimination, or even relating various academic studies to my woes described above are not the intentions for this section. The purpose of this personal account of my Finnish social life is to situate some of the inspirations for the design of *AoHH*. Furthermore, I will argue that there are benefits of art-making in such a culture, as these environments can provide a fertile ground for experimenting with new forms of inclusion. In fact, the lands are rife with potential for an exercise in the field of Live Art: A strategy for inclusion – truly an ideal environment for the development and design of Live Art Games.

Metagames for Inclusion

A central motivation for me to create *AoHH* was to provide an engaging and accessible social critique of Finnish society. My philosophy of art is unapologetically committed to providing critical pedagogical experiences, instances that stimulate both social and personal reflection and conversations. In the case of *AoHH*, this includes exploring and engaging with racial politics in Finland, addressing issues of representation, diversity, inclusion, and racial biases. I see gaming as a speculative space. It is the construction of imaginative worlds, realms of possibility that allow us to engage with ideas that might be otherwise difficult to face in everyday life.

Another way I see metagames and my Live Art practice is as practice-based research – which is succinctly defined by Candy and Edmonds as "an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge, partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice" (Candy & Edmonds 2018, 63). This framing recognises how Live Art allows me and those engaged in game performance to ask questions and gather data about our social lives. In the case of *AoHH*, these questions largely circle the arena of race and marginalisation.

Meanwhile, the goal of the gameplay in *AoHH* is simply for Harriharri to integrate into Finnish society. Everything Harriharri does, every level he completes, is intended towards achieving that goal. In his efforts to do so, Harriharri confronts popularly held racial biases and the rise of extreme right-wing politics. As this game narrative unfolds, other games are being played outside of the performance's allotted duration, beyond the virtual environment's spatial limits set by the video game, and even beyond the physical theatre space where it is being performed. These are the *AoHH* metagames, where the goals and aspirations of both Harold Hejazi and Harriharri collide and combine.

The term "metagame" has various meanings and interpretations within different gaming contexts. Salen and Zimmerman describe it broadly as follows: "The Latin root 'meta' means between, with, after, behind, over, or about. Thus metagame means 'the game beyond the game' and refers to the aspects of game play that derive not from the rules of the game, but from interplay with surrounding contexts" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 481). In this sense, metagames have some similarity to Costikyan's conception of goals, which I explored in the previous section. I play multiple metagames beyond *AoHH*; one that aligns with Harriharri's goal, as I strive to be included and recognised in the local Finnish arts scene for making socially engaged Live Art Games.

The rich terrain of "metagame activities" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 483) generated through *AoHH* isn't restricted to physical replications and re-enactments of the video game's mini-games. Salen and Zimmerman argue that "metagaming refers to the relationship between the game and outside elements, including everything from player attitudes and play styles to social reputations and social contexts in which the game is played" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 481).

Richard Garfield, the creator of the collectible card game Magic: The Gathering, defines a metagame as "how a game interfaces outside of itself" (Garfield 2000, 16). Garfield provides a framework that divides the concept of the metagame into four categories: "what a player brings to the game," "what a player takes away from a game," "what happens between games," and "what happens during a game other than the game itself" (Garfield 2000, 16). In what follows, I draw upon Garfield's framework and the work of Salen and Zimmerman to explore the "meta" of inclusivity in *AoHH.* Because *AoHH* is designed as a game performance and there is no assumed continuity in audience members, I do not address "what happens between games." In select categories, I explore the experience of the audience and, in doing so, consider them as active players in the metagame. When referring to the audience as players, I use the term multiplayer audience.

What a Player Brings to a Game

As Garfield writes, “players always bring a set of resources to a game, sometimes physical and sometimes mental,” (Garfield 2000, 16), or, put more broadly, “sometimes in tangible form and sometimes not” (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 482). Examples of the mental resources you might bring to a game are the “study of certain openings in chess [or the] knowledge of your opponents in backgammon,” and an example of a physical resource is “rackets to a tennis match” (Garfield 2000, 16). For example, while I occupy the dual roles of game designer and player, the intangible and mental resources I bring to the game include but are not limited to my experiences and memories of my own experience in Finland, my delusional or idealistic Canadian dream of inclusivity, and my own research into Finnish cultural politics.

Harriharri collects discount food items in the “Alepa Alennus” mini-game. Image: Harold Hejazi.

Elements of my own experiences and memories are ubiquitous in the game. For example, in the beginning of the second episode, Harriharri enters an Alepa grocery store and must complete a timed “Alepa Alennus” mini-game where he collects all the discounted food items before they are bought by other shoppers. This scene was inspired by my own financial necessity to shop at grocery stores in Finland within a specific time frame (21:00–closing) in order to take advantage of discounted food prices offered at these hours. I was playing the “Alepa Alennus” game long before I ever played *AoHH,* so the mini-game derives from my own experience, which stems from my class position in society as a poor Canadian student. This enriched and informed version of the Alepa experience is a metagame in the sense that it is derived from the video game’s “interplay with surrounding contexts” (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 481).

It is the rendering of an act of economic desperation into an interactive gaming experience.

What a multiplayer audience member brings to this game is their distance or proximity to this experience – their socioeconomic positionality. This is the determinative window through which a multiplayer-audience member either resonates with the experience or, instead, is taken alongside into the experience of the other (myself) – a process I will address below through a concept René Glas calls "vicarious play." This feature of the metagame is integral to *AoHH*'s design – the Finnish social and political culture which animates the multiplayer audience is also the cultural terrain of the game itself.

For example, after Harriharri completes the "Alepa Alennus" mini-game, he returns to the streets of Helsinki, where he confronts everyday racism embedded in questions about his origins. A woman repeatedly asks him, "Where do you come from? ... No, where are you really from?" This social interaction was based on the countless times I've encountered this same line of questioning from strangers in Helsinki.

Following this conversation, Harriharri stumbles across an anti-immigration protest, a re-enactment of an anti-Muslim protest I witnessed in 2017 (detailed in the "Project Background & Vision"). The background score for this scene is derived from archival sound recordings I made at the original event. During the protest, Harriharri approaches Lord Jussi Halla-aho, who is a character based on a right-wing politician in contemporary Finland known for making racist comments in parliament. The inclusion of this character came out of research into extreme right-wing politics and xenophobia in contemporary Finland. Again, here the metagame involves and engages the social and political positionality that a multiplayer audience brings to the game – in this case, the affective charge of Finnish racial politics. In this sense, as I sarcastically pointed out in the introduction to this section, a key material or substance of the metagame of inclusivity is the sum of the social, economic, and political worldview of the audience members. As Boluk and LeMieux argue, "the metagame is not just how games interface with life: it is the environment within which games 'live' in the first place" (Boluk & LeMieux 2017, 14).

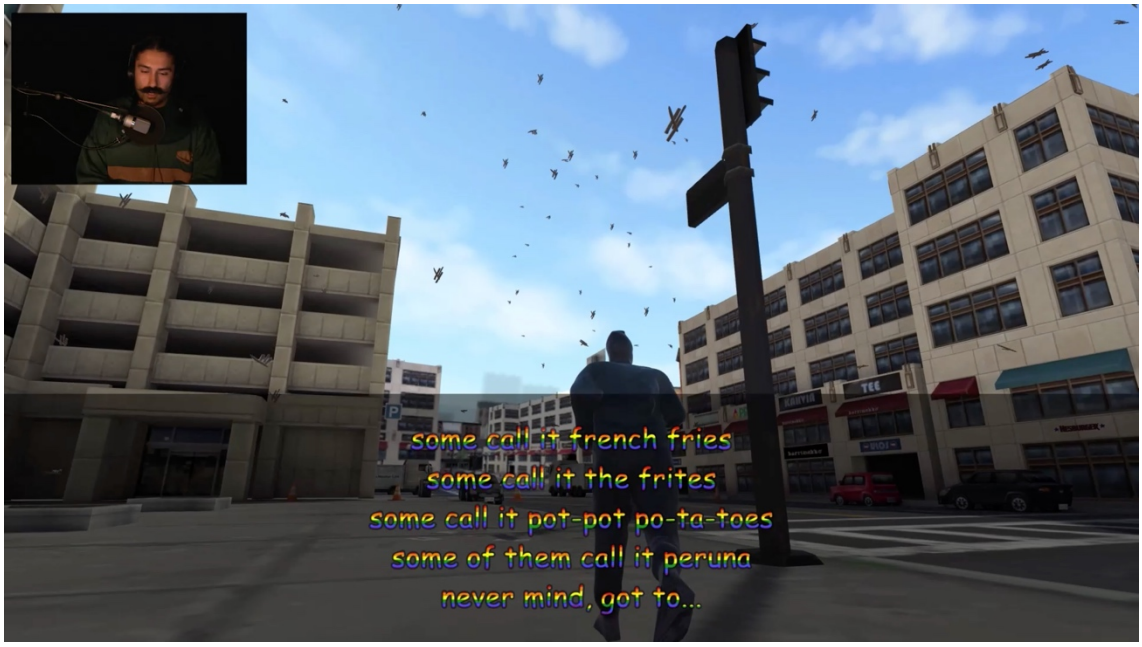
Harriharri encounters an anti-immigration protest in Helsinki. Image: Harold Hejazi.

What Happens During a Game Other Than the Game Itself

This metagame category refers to "the influence of real life on a game in play" and includes "social factors such as competition and camaraderie, or the physical environment of play such as good lighting or a noisy atmosphere" (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 483). In the context of *AoHH,* this is the response from the live theatre audience, which has a powerful impact on the experience of playing and performing, in turn influencing "what a player takes away from a game."

I designed the metagame here in order to amplify the social-communal element of the game, which in turn disrupts the Finnish social norms of being quiet and reserved. Yelling, hooting, and hollering are allowed and encouraged in the video game performance format, which is intended to aid in dismantling norms surrounding the "consumption" of contemporary theatre.

In the beginning of the game, the performer welcomes the audience with a call and response warm-up to prepare the audience for embracing vocal participation. The call, "When I say Harri, y'all say Harri," offers not only an entertaining theatrical experience but also aims to provide the social component of the art experience through call and response, a common technique in Hip Hop performance. Call and response evokes the feelings of community and participation typical of a Hip Hop concert.



Harriharri sings a song titled "Ranskalaiset" and invites the audience to join in. Image: Harold Hejazi.

In scene 8, Harriharri fails in his attempt to order French fries in Finnish (*yksi ranskalaiset*) because the shopkeeper cannot understand his accent. Then, in an act of defiance, Harriharri breaks out into a reggae song titled "Ranskalaiset," which is a cover of Peter Tosh's "Legalize It." This includes an invitation to join the performer in singing along with Harriharri, karaoke-style, during the "Ranskalaiset" song, with lyrics overlaying the game visuals. The song spreads a message of inclusivity and diversity, explaining how people from all around the world eat potatoes, and even though we might all have different names for them, potatoes are a common ground for all of us despite our differences. Whether an audience dares to engage or participate in support of Harriharri is at the crux of the sociopolitical metagame here and makes a significant impact on the game performance overall. However, every audience is different, and, as Garfield writes, "there are some people who make any game fun to play – that is a quality of the metagame those people are generating, not the game itself" (Garfield 2000, 20).

Through experiencing the game live, the audience is able to immerse themselves in the character's journey and the lived-experience of a newcomer to Finland. An approach I have found helpful in trying to think through the audience experience of *AoHH* is found in René Glas's article "Vicarious play: Engaging the viewer in Let's Play videos." Glas argues that Let's Play (LP) videos allow the presence of LP creators to be felt by the viewer, and that the reactions and game play of the LP creator evoke a sense of participation – what he calls vicarious play (Glas 2015, 82).

Glas illustrates how, through this unique new media form, a viewer observes and is made aware of both "the event creation and presentation of a game" (Glas 2015, 83). In this sense, through engaging with the game, the viewer is invited into the process of the event creation and the subjectivity of the player-performer. Glas writes:

> We see a game world and the actions in it, but we also see a player in a frame looking at –and controlling –the action in the main frame. As such, we see a game unfold as well as a player doing the unfolding in his or her own specific way while commenting on the process to the viewer. (Glas 2015, 84)

In *AoHH* performances, just like in LP videos, the reactions of the player are a part of the amusement for the audience. Identification with the player-performer's often rambunctious reactions can create a feeling of participation (Glas 2015, 83–84). In keeping with how Garfield comments on the fun or joy of play being generated through the sociality of the players and not the game itself, Glas argues that the felt presence of LP creators and the presentation of LP videos engage the viewer.

In *AoHH*, my presence and experience are observable not only in the autoethnographic narrative of the game and its customised 3D world, but also in my role as a player-performer who offers the audience a vicarious experience of game immersion. The narrative events in the game are based on my lived-experiences, which hold significant emotional weight. For example, in *AoHH – Ep. 1,* scene 4, Harriharri plays an online grant application mini-game. At the end of the scene, he goes to a PC to check his grant results and receives rejection after rejection. In a fit of rage, Harriharri runs through the walls of the internet and leaps down a black hole of negativity and rejection. This reflects my years of rejected grant application attempts in Finland. The audience gets to experience this both through my over-exaggerated reaction and the customised digital environment. Glas's work on LP creator "play practices" (Glas 2015, 84) highlights how "the way LP creators play and react to games might just say something about their imagined ideal *player* (rather than spectator). The success of the LP phenomenon seems to suggest that the play practices on display in these videos carry meaning to their audiences" (Glas, 2015, 84).

The black hole environment consists of a dark platform where the player can process the negative grant results and deep sense of rejection and inner turmoil. The platform is dark so as to represent the feeling of being lost, and a glitch effect is employed to emphasise the character's sense of mental instability in this moment. Once the player is overcome with rage, they can descend down the black hole, which is illuminated with

bright reds and pinks, to represent the violent emotions associated with a heart-wrenching inner downward spiral. Meanwhile, the player is depicted in the picture-in-picture (PiP) frame, expressing emotion through facial expressions and body language as the narrative unfolds.

Glas's concept of vicarious play draws from the work of Allison McMahan, who uses the homunculus as an analogy to refer to early films that "play rather explicitly with the question 'who is behind the camera?', i.e. who is in control of what we see" (McMahan 2006, 293). The homunculus is the one whose perspective we see the narrative playout through. Therefore, the homunculus in *AoHH* becomes Harold Hejazi.

Glas writes:

> For the viewer of an LP video, the LP creator becomes the homunculus in a form reminiscent of early film as discussed by McMahan. But rather than having the homunculus facilitate diegetic immersion through non-diegetic engagement, here it triggers what one could call ludic immersion through non-ludic engagement. (Glas 2015, 84)

Similarly, my homunculus-like presence in the Let's Play format of *AoHH* provides the audience an experience of "ludic immersion and non-ludic engagement [that] offers [the audience] an experience of vicarious play" (Glas 2015, 84). Meanwhile, since LPs are based on playing premade games and "simply [show] a game being played, with the goal to inform or entertain the viewer via the added commentary," (Glas 2015, 82) *AoHH* goes beyond the confines of the LP format as a PC game created with the sole intention of being inhabited by live performance with a customised 3D world and an improvised storytelling narrative structure, and thus also incorporates diegetic immersion. Vicarious play is an entry into the intended metagames of *AoHH*, as the audience is witness to the lived-experience of the designer as it unfolds in the gameplay.

What a Player Takes Away from a Game

In elaborating upon Garfield's work, Salen and Zimmerman argue:

> [Players] take things away from a game unrelated to the stakes, such as the experience of the game itself. A player's experience might serve to validate or contradict their beliefs about an opponent or about the game as a whole, thereby influencing future games. *Crafting play experience into a tale, a player can also take away the story of the game.* (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 482)

The broader goals of *AoHH* rests upon this component of a game. Through experiencing the game live, the audience is immersed in my experience and the lived-experience of a newcomer to Finland. This brings the central metagame of *AoHH* into sharp focus: to promote discussion, reflection, and engagement surrounding inclusivity. As Harriharri struggles to make his way in Finnish society, the multiplayer audience is invited to contemplate and engage with problematic components of their society – instances of everyday racism, racist positions of right-wing politicians, and the socioeconomic exclusions of white supremacy. What I think of as the affect of the game itself – its playful, humorous, and invitational tone and sociality or Hip Hop theatrics – coolly invites the audience to think about challenging issues. Applied to *AoHH*, when Salen and Zimmerman state that "a player's experience might serve to validate or contradict their beliefs about an opponent or about the game as a whole," the opponent is the other, and the game itself is social life. As outlined above, the efficacy and aptness of the stimulus to reflect on one's positionality plays an integral role in the success or failure of what a player takes away from a Live Art Game.

As Harriharri longs to integrate into Finnish society, the audience is drawn into a reflection upon something often taken for granted: a sense of belonging and the socioeconomic and political components and structure of belonging. *AoHH* in this sense ascribes to a social practice model of art-making: art-making and consumption as social critique and pedagogy.

The question I pursue in the metagoals of the design process is first and foremost: What can this game do in a pedagogical and social sense? In my view, a Live Art Game like *AoHH* has the qualities of public forum and can therefore ask open-ended questions such as "What is integration?" "What is belonging?" "What does inclusivity look like?" In my presentation and analysis of the metagames of *AoHH*, I have sought to illustrate how Live Art Games can open up areas for personal and social reflection, how they can function to stimulate critical thought and discussion, and how they can create new forms of connection and social engagement.

As I outlined above via the work of René Glas, the design of Live Art Games such as *AoHH* elicits a unique form of spectator engagement that is amenable to the metagames I have described. A multiplayer-audience is invited to see their social landscape through the eyes of an outsider and to experience the isolation of social exclusion. They are invited into a speculative space and the active construction of an imaginative world. Furthermore, as I mentioned above, I see Live Art Games as a space to ask questions

and gather data about our social lives. In the case of *AoHH*, the audience is also invited into this process – a process that I naïvely imagine as continuing beyond the performance, in household conversations and society at large, where a "game interfaces outside of itself" (Garfield 2000, 16).

As Garfield writes, "metagames tend to have application or meaning beyond the game itself; often, they seep into real life" (Garfield 1995, 87). Ever since playing *AoHH,* my social life has changed insofar as I have been treated with more appreciation, recognition, and interest as a newly "seen" contributing member of the arts community. The metagame activities surrounding my "social reputations and social contexts" have given rise to a newly acquired sense of recognition in my local arts and academic communities (Salen & Zimmerman 2004, 481).

Not long after the success of *AoHH*, I began to experience Helsinki in a new way, as an accepted member of the arts scene and society. I had seemingly acquired artistic legitimacy. Suddenly, I was recognised by people who didn't recognise me before, both teachers and artists. Individuals I'd never spoken to before now suddenly knew my name and approached me to say congratulations. It was as if the metagame had provided me with a Super Mushroom, the kind that "[causes] Small Mario to turn into his Super form, allowing him to smash through bricks and take an extra hit from enemies" (*MarioWiki* 10 July 2022). I think that there's still room here for critique though, because this project concludes with the raising of an unsettling question: Is only a "successful" minority able to be seen and included?

LEVEL 3: BODY WITHOUT ORGANS

Failed photogrammetry captures taken during the creation of Harriharri. Image: Judit Vikman, Harold Hejazi.

Harriharri could not be regarded as both a video game character and a performance artist without an exploration of what his body can mean and do. My understanding of Harriharri aligns with Adrian Heathfield's binary conception of the performing body. Heathfield writes:

> The performing body is often presented as a site of contestation between two opposing dynamics: as a passive recipient of inscription by social institutions, cultural discourses, ideologies and orders of power, and as an active agent through which identity may be tested, re-articulated and re-made. (Heathfield 2004, 12)

The virtual body of Harriharri is both a "passive recipient" of socially inflicted desires (pursuit of wealth, belonging, integration, friendship) and an "active agent" in

expanding notions of Finnishness through playful participation in the culture. Throughout *AoHH*, participants witness the trials and tribulations of Harriharri, a POC living in an exclusionary society and in search of belonging. It is a game of becoming that, by virtue of existing on the digital plane, allows for new horizons of possibility.

The body of Harriharri is created through the photographic procedure of 3D model creation known as photogrammetry, which involves taking multiple overlapping photographs to collect a data set to be able to "measure the subject of the image" (Rahaman 2021, 28). In essence, Harriharri is an image. In Stelarc's essay "Prosthetic, Fractal & Phantom Flesh – Alternate Anatomical Architectures," he writes:

> Bodies and machines are ponderous. They have to operate in gravity, with weight and friction. Images operate at the speed of light, performing smoothly and seamlessly. Bodies are ephemeral, images are immortal. Avatars have no organs. (Stelarc 2017, 159–160)

The virtual corporeal body of Harriharri is also a body of my experience. He is the amalgamation of my memories, dreams, insecurities, thoughts, experiences, and most importantly, my imagination. In this sense, the virtuality of Harriharri allows me to transcend my corporeal body, and the body of my experience. To borrow from Stelarc's avataric phraseology, Harriharri is my "second skin," imbued with my own "phantom flesh," an "alternate anatomical architecture." Stelarc has a rich history of performing within the online virtual world *Second Life*, exemplified by his 2009 work titled *Avatars Have No Organs*. When asked in an interview about his exploration into *Second Life* as an interactive, virtual world, Stelarc responded that "Second Life for me is a kind of second skin, in other words the avatar becomes an alternate mode of interface with people in other places" (Stelarc cited in Tofts 2014, 16). Similarly, Harriharri is an apparatus of engagement – a new mode of connection that interlaces the physical, the digital, and the imaginative. It is what Stelarc may define as my "alternate anatomical architecture." In Stelarc's essay "The Cadaver, the Comatose, and the Chimera: Avatars Have No Organs," he states:

> The body becomes an extended operational system of alternate architectures having to perform with mixed realities. The body performs, beyond the boundaries of its skin and beyond the local space that it inhabits. What's important is no longer the body's identity but rather its interface. (Stelarc 2013, 326)

The story and identity, expressed through my own (Harold Hejazi's) body, are enlarged when told through the Harriharri interface. Nevertheless, Harriharri is still implanted with my "phantom flesh." Stelarc's concept of "phantom flesh" has a similar meaning to "second skin,", but in my understanding, extends to include the spirit and ethos inherent to an entity. He explains that the concept of "phantom flesh" refers not exclusively "to the second skin of second-life avatars in the metaverse but also to the auras of remote others" (Stelarc 2013, 327).

As an image, Harriharri achieves an alternate subjectivity, one in which the pursuit of his dreams are emancipated from the difficult confrontations of my own (Harold Hejazi's) day-to-day lived-experience. In playing the game, the performer plays Harriharri as he playfully reorients his experience to life in Finland. Stelarc's conception of the image as immortal – as avatars that "have no organs" – clearly draws inspiration from what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as the "body without organs" (BwO). BwO is an ambiguous concept that takes on many different meanings, even within the body of Deleuze and Guattari's work.

The impulse to welcome complexity and refrain from categorical reduction is what affords the BwO its special ability to theorise avenues outside and away from imposed psychological and social constructs. For these reasons, a comprehensive account of the concept exceeds the capacity of this thesis. Instead, I will operationalise a more functionalist definition of BwO in order to explore the possibilities and limitations of *AoHH* as an intervention in subjectivity. Here I propose that *AoHH*, the game itself, can be approached as a BwO – a site for the realisation and/or exploration of new ways of being.

Harriharri is an English-speaking Canadian and Middle Easterner. When transplanted to Finland, these identities become the organs of exclusion that set the game in motion. Harriharri experiences alienation as he attempts to befriend locals and stumbles across an anti-immigration protest. While walking the streets of Helsinki, he confronts everyday racism embedded in questions about his origins. A woman repeatedly asks him, "Where do you come from? ... No, where are you really from?" As a Canadian, Harriharri grapples with language barriers and a lack of cultural competency.

As Harriharri explores this new cultural terrain, the game itself deconstructs Finnishness through playing with the tropes and issues of Finnish society. In searching for new clothing, Harriharri discovers Harrimekko, a remix of an iconic (and expensive) Finnish clothing brand, Marimekko. Harrimekko is a satirical offshoot for immigrants, only

available at the cheap store Tokmanni. In the end, Harriharri comes to befriend an alt-right politician, Jussi Halla-aho. Their shared love of fishing and the outdoors ("Finnish culture") ironically challenges Halla-aho's conception of immigrants.

To play with the character Harriharri is to imagine, or to virtualise, a more liberatory life, to push against the walls of socially hierarchical/marginalised ways of being (the confines of Canadian/Middle Eastern identities, Finnish social cultures, politics, and bureaucracy, etc.). In my understanding, the BwO is about freedom. The concept was adopted by Deleuze and Guattari from Antonin Artaud's radio play *To Have Done with the Judgment of God* (1947):

> When you will have made him a body without organs,
> then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
> and restored him to his true freedom. (Artaud 1988, 571)

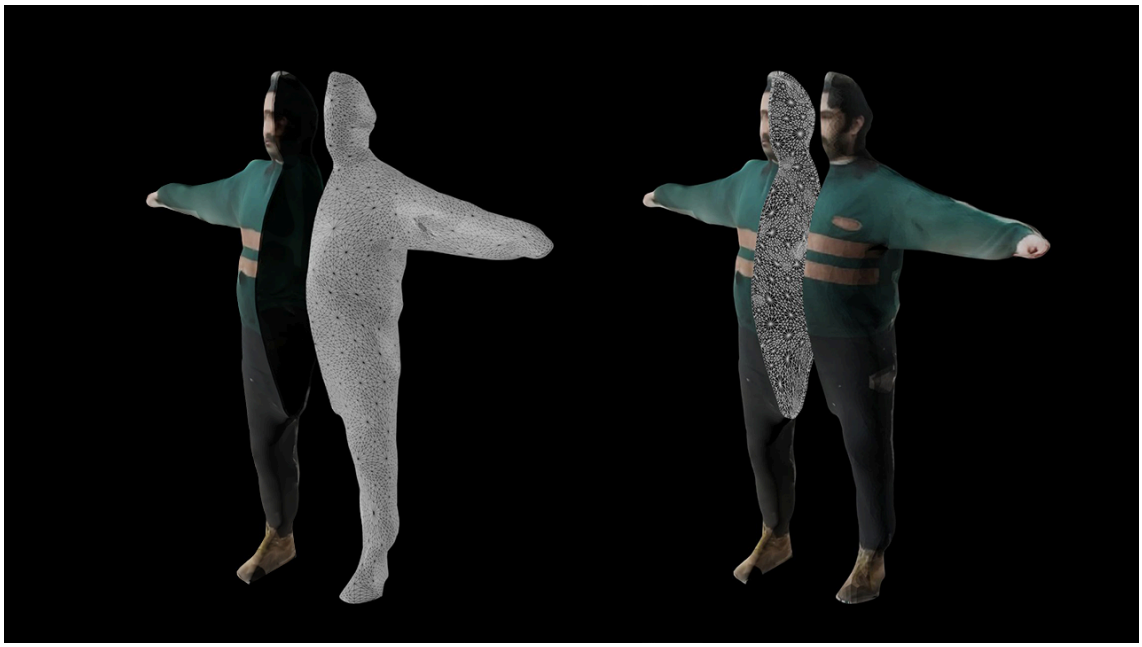
Being Harriharri is about no longer doing what I can, but leaving my organs behind and becoming another – and therefore attaining "true freedom." Harriharri gets to know himself and becomes many things: *Kanadalainen mies* (Canadian man), Middle Easterner, brown man, *onkimies* (fisherman), artist, rapper, naturalist, art grantee, outsider, animal communicator, drunk, loner, gamer, loser, winner, etc. However, the roles are never fixed or static, they are "in Brownian motion, in the form of molecular multiplicities" (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 34). Harriharri is a body of experimenting entities. In their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari state:

> We come to the gradual realization that the BwO is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism. The BwO is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism. (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 184)

The BwO is defined through its resistance and rejection to normative structures. It opposes existing structural coding, or the "organization of the organs." On the surface level, Harriharri seeks to achieve the objectives set out by society: friendship, affirmation, respect as an artist, belonging. And yet, the potentials of his body transcend this. It enables a metamorphosis of Finnishness: a reimagining of Finnish culture, a dismantling of Finnish social norms, a rewrite of modes of engagement with Finnish culture, etc. Harriharri doesn't just connect with Finnish nature, he composes Hip Hop beats with the trees. He doesn't just buy discount food from the grocery store, he engineers it into a mini-game. He has Hip Hop battles with right-wing politician Jussi

Halla-aho and brings about personal revelations. Thus, the game series is a site[15] of possibility and/or an exploration of new ways of being and doing.

The BwO is not deprived, it's free with potential. It's in a constant state of experimentation, of becoming. This is not limited to the content or narrative of the game but also in its form as a performative modality. Thus, it is encountering multiplicities: experimenting with various Live Art/game forms, notions of Finnishness, of becoming Finnish, or a new form of being a Finn.



The anatomised body of Harriharri, revealing his digital skin, mesh body, and internal void. Image: Rolands Tīss.

Harriharri's body is composed of what Stelarc would call a "digital skin" or bitmap image (texture) which wraps over the 14,404 vertices, 28,800 edges, 14,400 faces, and 28,800 triangles of his unoptimised 3D mesh (Stelarc 2013, 330). He is free from bodily hindrance and has the capacity to do whatever he wants. He can sprint, crouch, roll, and jump with endless stamina and endurance. He can ride a reindeer or teleport instantaneously to any virtual location through portals initialised through the Siiri app on his iPhone. He is free to create his own identity, because he can determine how he can locomote and interact within the world. The 3D avatar is unencumbered by the norms of sociopolitical status in Finnish society. He sheds Hejazi's socially inflicted diminished self-esteem. The crude photogrammetry scan of my body, then, is in fact an attempt to liberate the body from the inevitable burden of automatic reactions (social pressures, etc.). It is a different manner of confronting society.

[15] Heathfield 2004, 12. Site is referred to here as per Adrian Heathfield's description of the body above.

While Harriharri's body codes as a BwO, an imperfect pixelated blob, unregulated by the norms of the ideal body, neither in the virtual or the non-virtual sense (e.g., the Greek body), the game falls short as a BwO in and of itself, since Harriharri is still seeking to achieve the goals set out by society. As my second skin, he is programmed by my own socially dictated desires (financial income, social affirmation, respect, recognition, validation, etc.). If he were truly a BwO on his own, he would reject it all.

An in-process screenshot taken during the creation of Harriharri 2.0. Image: Harold Hejazi.

As a game character, Harriharri has an infinite health supply. In fact, his character controller is set to "immortal," meaning no matter what happens in the game (e.g., he drops from a cliff or drowns in a river), Harriharri cannot die. However, it is not his body which grants him immortality but the *AoHH* as a video game with vast programming abilities within the wider imaginative universe of Harriharri. Harriharri can even leave his pixelated blob body and assume a racially augmented, higher-resolution, superior-statured anatomy. This metamorphosis occurs near the end of the second episode when Harriharri initializes his Kone Foundation granting period and receives an elite character model "Harriharri 2.0," which has lightened Caucasian skin, a more desirable body shape, a more impressive physical stature (suggesting higher social positioning), and a hyper-Finnish costume themed on the colours of the Finnish flag and laden with cultural symbols, including traditional *lapikkaat* (boots), a *tuulipuku*

(windbreaker) jacket, and a *unikko* (poppy) print skirt. The game itself allows me to defy or transcend the coding of the every day. In this sense, the video game is programmed in resistance to hierarchy and is set in continuous opposition to structures of power. Here, the BwO is the freedom of experimentation that liberates the human and disrupts the structural confines/determination of a society.

In his own work engaging the concept of a BwO, philosopher Finn Janning states that Deleuze and Guattari "deny the idea of following a purpose, an objective, or a master plan. Our body language and posture are often socialized by the norms and conventions of society" (Janning 2021, 58). My conception of a BwO is congruent with Janning when he argues that the question "How do you make yourself a body without organs?" is an ethical one. He asks: "How can we freely become whatever, instead of imprisoning ourselves by following predefined norms of how we should, ought, or must live (or remember our past)?" (Janning 2021, 57).

FINAL BOSS

You have struggled through this thesis and finally achieved the goal of making it to the final level. Here's the part where I provide my own hermetic definition of a Live Art Game: "A cultural strategy in the form of an interactive structure that requires players to struggle toward a goal of inclusion."

Do you like it? It's my own cobbled-together definition, clearly sampled from past theorists and remixed in the classic Harriharri style.

Next, I should probably commence the traditional closing ceremony: a discussion of potential avenues for future research into the development of Live Art Game design, imagining marvellous realms where further work and study could contribute to establishing the formal elements and principles of Live Art Game design.

Alternatively, I could point out how more research could be done in exploring how *AoHH* has worked as a means to engineer my own sense of belonging in Finland. Or perhaps more study could be conducted on the potential of the video game space/metaverse to open up a space of reflection on the immigrant experience that encompasses the cultural geography of Finland. I could go into detail about how the game world and its limitations could serve as a metaphor for structural racism for the player and the great pedagogical affordances this approach to video games possesses.

But instead of listing a bunch of research topics and projects I'll probably never act upon, at this phase in the adventure, perhaps I should be questioning my obsessive desire to define things. This particular way of thinking is rooted in a very Western framework. To what degree does the desire to define close doors and limit imagination and possibility? What is lost in the pursuit of stringent definitions?

At this final level, I can see the boss has cast a blinding spell on me. I am blinded by whiteness.

In this thesis, full of sources dominated by white theorists and authors, conducted by a master's student seeking approval from unanimously white supervisors and examiners and on a quest for validation from an academy dominated by white administrators and instructors and in search of acceptance and belonging in a society dominated by white people, naïvely striving towards accreditation to supposedly enter the academic fields of game studies and/or performance studies (both dominated by white academics) or to establish a promising career in the art world (whose top leadership is mostly white), in

the wider world, where white supremacy runs rampant, this final level is looking terrifyingly white.

It seems the battle with the final boss isn't just against Western academic elitism but is also against the wider forces of white supremacy, which I am inevitably indoctrinated into. Perhaps future practice-based research should be geared towards dismantling white supremacy and mustering the courage to challenge the true big boss.

But before my audacity melts into complacency, while I'm still feeling heroic from nearly finishing my thesis, perhaps more critical reflection should be done on my behalf.

The theoretical frameworks and definitions explored in this thesis are only worth thinking about insofar as they create something new and allow me to reflect on possibilities in a critical sense. The academic practice of putting things into a box goes against the very core intention of Live Art as "a cultural strategy to make space for experimental processes, experiential practices, and the bodies and identities that might otherwise be excluded from traditional contexts" (*Live Art Development Agency* 24 March 2020). Perhaps this explains Live Art's "resistance [...] to being pinned down by explanation" (Kaye 1994, 1), its effort to stay consistently vague is part and parcel of its radical potential.

I return now to where it all started, *PLAYING UP: A Live Art Game for Kids and Adults.*

Perhaps *PLAYING UP* isn't a Live Art Game by my own hermetic definition, as it lacks some of Costikyan's key components such as structure and goals, but does that really matter? The key point is that "*PLAYING UP* is meant to be played by children and adults together" (Peters 2016, 3). It seeks to include children's voices – voices that are usually left out of discourse in general and certainly left out of discussions surrounding Live Art. Based on what I remember from that day at Tate Modern, it succeeded in that, as kids definitely held the spotlight in the museum that day. Their joyfully empowered voices filled the halls.

The fact that it's a game to be played with children and adults, its malleability, or open ball-like (Costikyan) characteristic of possibility, is what makes it Live Art. As the instruction booklet writes, "Live Art is about adventures and experiences and about playing with things you would not usually get to play with" (Peters, 2).

For me, it was an adventure into games and about playing with Finnish culture and society and the formation of my own Finnish identity, something I didn't really ever have access to before.

I will end with a quote by Marcel Duchamp, who was an avid chess player, and therefore, a gamer. He said: "Everything in life is art. If I call it art, it's art; or if I hang it in a museum, it's art." So, before you consider yourself victorious in the subject of this thesis, know this: a Live Art Game is anything a Live Artist says is a game.

MA GAME OVER

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