

# Editorial - CEEGS 2024: Reimagining Games, Art, and Performativity

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## INTRODUCTION

The Central and Eastern European Game Studies (CEEGS) 2024 conference, held from October 10 to 12 in the historic town of Nafplio, Greece, focused on the intersections of video games, art, and performance. Hosted by the Department of Performing and Digital Arts at the University of the Peloponnese, the conference welcomed an international cohort of scholars, designers, and artists to engage in critical discussions and showcase innovative research. With the overarching theme “Reimagining Games, Art, and Performativity” CEEGS 2024 provided a vibrant platform to explore the historical parallels, intersections, challenges, and tensions traditionally inherent within these three concepts. Spanning three days, the conference featured keynote addresses, paper presentations, panels, workshops, and a Doctoral Consortium. Participants examined the evolving relationship between video games and performance, engaging in discussions on themes such as the recognition of games as art forms, artistic practices embedded in gaming culture, and the performative interplay between gaming as an action and a spectacle. Presentations highlighted the role of games as platforms for personal, social, cultural, and political expressions, as well as their ability to challenge and redefine artistic conventions.

Topics ranged from game narratives, character design, and experimental game mechanics to accessibility and inclusivity within the gaming industry. The conference also provided space for discussions on ludic art, where gamified and playful elements are integrated into artistic practices, as well as radical art games that explore identity, social norms, and political engagement. Moreover, emerging technologies such as immersive experiences, game engines in contemporary art, and performative installations offered new perspectives on the artistic and cultural significance of games. By bringing together a diverse community of researchers, creators, and practitioners, CEEGS 2024 fostered interdisciplinary dialogue and encouraged innovative approaches to game studies. The event reaffirmed the importance of video games as a creative medium that redefines artistic expression and performative engagement in contemporary culture.

## KEYNOTES

Two distinguished keynote speakers anchored the conference, offering thought-provoking insights into the evolving discourse of games and art.

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Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley delivered the opening keynote titled “We Can Only Do This Together.” Through their address, they emphasized the collaborative and community-oriented potential of video games as a medium for exploring identity, memory, and activism. Their talk urged participants to rethink inclusivity and collective action as central principles for reimagining game creation, highlighting the importance of shared authorship and affective connection within game spaces.

On the second day, Jonas Kyratzes presented the keynote “Taking the Idea of Games as Art Seriously.” Drawing from his practice as an independent game developer and writer, Kyratzes offered a deeply personal and philosophical reflection on what it means to treat games not merely as entertainment or tools for propaganda, education, or politics—but as a serious art form. He emphasized that art is transformational, visionary, dialectical, and a responsibility, and argued that games deserve to be evaluated and created with that same level of artistic seriousness. Addressing both developers and critics, he called for artistic vision grounded in diverse cultural references beyond gaming, and challenged creators to pursue meaning over trend. Kyratzes encouraged critics to engage with games contextually, assuming artistic intent and demanding more from the medium. His keynote resonated with attendees by reminding them that the value of games as art lies not in universal recognition, but in their capacity to provoke, challenge, and transform.

## PANELS AND PRESENTATIONS

The academic program of CEEGS 2024 unfolded over two full days of parallel panels, structured in six thematic sessions and comprising 18 panel tracks and 65 individual presentations. Attended by over 170 participants, these sessions offered a rich exploration of contemporary research at the intersection of games, performance, art, history, identity, and politics.

### *Day 1 – October 10*

**Session 1** featured three panels: *Games and Performance I*, *Games and Art*, and *Games in Broad Social Contexts*. Discussions ranged from existential-phenomenology of gameplay (Olli Tapio Leino), to embodied VR play (Theodoropoulos et al.), and aesthetics in *Monument Valley 2* (Zsófia Orosz-Réti). Presentations on the production of *Deus Ex Machina* (Jaroslav Švelch), artistic use of trash in *Cyberpunk 2077* (Agata Zarzycka), and accessibility as art (Joanna Pigulak) framed games as expressive media. Broader social critiques addressed themes such as fear and capitalism (Rainforest Scully-Blaker), biopolitics (Michał Kłosiński), and democratic agency in ecogames (Štvrťňová & Hauer).

**Session 2** included panels on *Game Industries*, *Games and Performance II*, and *Games and Play*. Papers examined linguistic diversity in Czech studios (Houška), the Danish game industry (Juul & Hammar), paratextuality in *Child of Light* (Kliś-Brodowska), and modding cultures (Mróz). Other highlights included performances of multi-layered identity (Croasdale), permadeath streams in *The Last of Us Part II* (Domasin), and game controllers as rhapsodic tools (Majkowska et al.).

**Session 3** concluded the day with *Esports and Streaming*, *Game Spaces*, and *Folklore and Heritage*. Topics ranged from esports embodiment (Legierse; Ståhl & Friman), to ludotopias (Maj), and civil disobedience through graffiti in games (Waszkiewicz).

Other presentations included avant-garde reimaginings of chess (Prokopek), folkloric analysis of *Maid of Sker* (Ditner-Wilson), and myth in *Pokémon* (Rago).

*Day 2 – October 11*

**Session 4** opened with *Video Game History, Games and Theater*, and *Gender and Gaming*. Presentations examined action-adventure genre history (Juul), horror aesthetics in pixel games (Froń), and museum representations (Sakellariou & Papaioannou). Theater and LARP intersected in works by Kaczmarek, Rouse & Kristensen, Bowman, and Mortensen. Gender-focused papers addressed older female gamers (Krobová), streaming's cultural impact on girls (Laakso & Aurava), and identity politics in China's gaming discourse (Yan et al.).

**Session 5** explored *Roleplaying Games, Game Adaptations and Remediations*, and *Approaches to Game Design*. Topics included RPGs and conflict transformation (Hugaas & Bowman), monstrosity in *Vampire: The Masquerade* (Moyzhes), and Polish Romanticism in *Epopėja* (Mochocki). Adaptation case studies examined Greek mythology (Klęczar), Kafka (Šisler), *Alan Wake 2* (Olszamowski), and *Snufkin: Melody of Moominvalley* (Mochocka & Walczak). Design-oriented papers addressed AI retro games (Kotsiopoulos & Tryfonopoulos), co-design and inclusivity (Taino et al.), and DEI activism (Myöhänen).

**Session 6** concluded the academic program with panels on *Non-Typical Gameplay, Video Game Interpretations*, and *Advertising, Marketing, and Money*. Topics included cheesing mechanics (Van de Mosselaer), failure aesthetics in *The Invincible* (Kozyra et al.), and anti-profit design (Cohen). Discussions on identity and trauma appeared in works on *etherane's* indie games (Maletka), trans embodiment (Zingarelli), *Armored Core VI* (Trhoň), and ludic subjectivity in *Baldur's Gate III* (Vella). The closing panel addressed loot box advertising (Xiao) and monetized romance mechanics in *MeChat* (Bednorz).

The day concluded with the CEEGS Round Table, a lively forum for reflection on the state of game studies, and the election of two new at-large members for DiGRA CEE, contributing to the strategic direction of the regional network.

## **WORKSHOPS AND DOCTORAL CONSORTIUM**

The final day of the conference, October 12, was dedicated to interactive workshops and the Doctoral Consortium. The six workshops provided practical and theoretical insights into various aspects of game studies, including:

- Performing Personality in Game Characters and Digital Narratives
- From Play to Display: Reimagining Video Games Curation and Exhibition
- Video Games in STEAM and as STEAM: Learning and Innovating Through Play
- Art Games and Game-Based Art: Theoretical Frontiers and Critical Explorations
- How Applicable Is the Folk Concept for Critical Studies of Games, Play, and Game Design?
- Biopolitical Reimagining of Games: Understanding, Identifying, and Interpreting Game Biopolitics

The Doctoral Consortium provided early-career researchers with a platform to present their work and engage with senior scholars in an intimate setting, fostering mentorship and collaboration.

## **CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

All works presented at CEEGS 2024 underwent a rigorous peer-review process conducted by the Scientific Committee prior to acceptance. Following the conference, authors who presented extended abstracts were invited to complete a consent form indicating whether they agreed to have their work published. A total of 35 extended abstracts, based on author consent, will be assigned individual DOIs through the University of the Peloponnese Library and made publicly accessible on the official CEEGS 2024 website. This process ensures the visibility and accessibility of the scholarly contributions shared during the conference.

This editorial, authored by the conference chairs, accompanies the curated set of extended abstracts, offering an overview and contextual reflection on the themes, keynotes, and intellectual directions that defined the event.

## **CONCLUSION**

CEEGS 2024 marked a pivotal moment in the ongoing dialogue between video games, art, and performativity. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, the conference illuminated the transformative potential of games as a medium for creative expression and cultural engagement. As game studies continue to expand across disciplines, institutions, and communities, the conversations sparked in Nafplio point toward new research agendas and creative alliances. Whether through radical art games, performative installations, or academic critique, the conference demonstrated that video games are not only cultural products but also critical tools for shaping thought and experience. We look forward to seeing how the ideas exchanged at CEEGS 2024 will continue to resonate in future research, design, and artistic practices.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We extend our deepest gratitude to the presenters, participants, and organizing committee whose collective efforts made CEEGS 2024 a resounding success. A heartfelt thank you goes to the volunteers (more than 40 students) who dedicated their time and energy to ensure the seamless operation of the conference. Their contributions were invaluable, from assisting in event logistics to providing a welcoming environment for all attendees.

The CEEGS 2024 conference was made possible through the support of the local community in Nafplio, particularly the Municipality of Nafplio, the Center for Hellenic Studies in Greece (CHS Greece) of Harvard University, the Vasilis Papantoniou Foundation (IBP), the Museum of Childhood of IBP, and the National Gallery (Nafplio Annex). Equally significant was the support of academic institutions and research laboratories, including the Department of Communication, Media, and Culture of Panteion University through the European research project Road-STEAMer, the HHCI-VR Laboratory of the Department of Informatics and Telecommunications at the University of the Peloponnese, the international community Digital Games

Research Association (DiGRA), and the Game Developers Association of Greece, the official association of Greek digital game creators. Their collective support enriched the conference's scope and impact, enabling us to bring together diverse voices and foster meaningful dialogue within the field of game studies.