

Performing the Mundane: Theatrical Dimensions of Everyday Life in "The Sims 4"

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The Sims franchise has long captivated players with its simulation of everyday life, offering a canvas for creativity and storytelling (Heliö 2005; Rak 2015; Price 2014; Kline 2019). In recent years, *The Sims 4* has emerged as not only a game but also a stage for theatrical and performative expressions. This paper seeks to explore the intersection of performance and gaming through the lens of *The Sims 4*, examining how players engage with the seemingly mundane experience of the gameplay to create theatrical performances, ranging from player created machinima, virtual theater productions, to scripted role-playing scenarios.

Drawing on the rich tradition of performance art and ludic expression, this study explores the diverse ways in which *The Sims 4* becomes a platform for artistic experimentation and narrative exploration. It will draw on examples from the director Celine Song's adaptation of Anton Chekhov's play "The Seagull" on *The Sims 4* to the myriad short plays and dramas set in the virtual world of *The Sims 4* circulating on platforms like YouTube and Red (also known as *Xiaohongshu*, one of the most popular social media platforms in China), highlighting the game as both a stage and a tool for artistic and theatrical expression.

This study will build upon existing discussions surrounding digital, virtual, and game performance (Dixon 2007; Fernández-Vara 2009; Leino 2017) to explore the performative nature of gameplay and the creation of virtual worlds as theatrical spaces. In addition, the discussion of ordinary life (Gardiner 2000; Highmore 2002, 2011; Storey 2014) and everyday participation (Ebrey 2016) in cultural theory will also be engaged to analyze how everyday activities and mundane experiences are transformed into theatrical performances and narrative explorations within *The Sims 4*, foregrounding the performativity of the ordinary and the mundane in shaping the gameplay experience of life simulation games.

Through focused case studies and theoretical analysis, this paper aims to shed light on the performative potential of *The Sims 4* as a medium for identity exploration and creative expression. By examining the theatrical and performative dimensions of *The Sims 4* as an everyday life simulation, this study contributes to our understanding of how games can serve as dynamic platforms for artistic innovation and cultural critique.

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