



The Anatomy of Games

Materialist Investigations
into the Dark Arts of
Game Design

Fr., 09.05.2025
10:00-18:00

Die Angewandte
Vordere Zollamtstr. 7
FLUX 1

www.ludology.uni-ak.ac.at

Karl Marx observed: *The anatomy of humans is key to the anatomy of apes.*

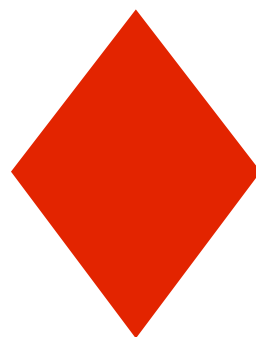
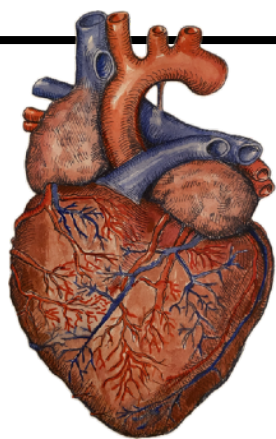
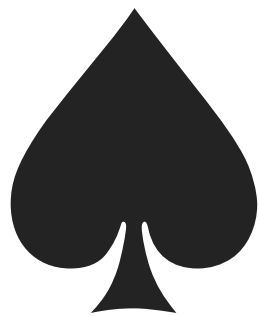
Similarly, by examining the material traces of contemporary playful performances, we uncover epistemic connections and cultural patterns that go beyond the surface-level *family similarities* (Ludwig Wittgenstein) of games—whether they are perceived as stories, products, art, or simply childish activities.

We aim to pin down how exactly *culture is originally played* (Johan Huizinga). By paying attention to both the frivolous and the serious, games open a window into contemporary ways of communicating knowledge.

Current trends in pre-packaging playful experiences via media systems, crowd funded board games or designing escape rooms give us the materialist clues to understand their predecessors in different cultural contexts.

We will dive into the media history of toys, boards, books, cards, and interfaces, tracing how these artifacts imply knowledge and generate information through simulation.

This approach provides both a critique of contemporary game design and a speculative foundation for rethinking ludology as a discipline in its own right within the current context of popular new materialism.



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GAME DESIGN IN TERMS OF CULTURAL TECHNIQUES

10:00

Opening:
Margarete Jahrmann

Introduction: The Dark Arts of Game Design
by picks from the Cabinet of Curiosities of
Francine Boon
Konstantin Mitgutsch
Klemens Franz
Simon Huber

11:15

coffee

11:45

Open Workshop:
Card Game Design as Research Practice

13:15

lunch

14:00

Open Workshop:
Cyclical Conditions of Creativity

15:15

coffee

16:00

Panel Discussion:
Books, Boxes and the City: Matters of Ludology

18:00

closing

Hosted by EXPERIMENTAL GAME CULTURES
as part of the research project

LUDOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

funded by the INTRA programme of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

@ Die Angewandte (FLUX1)

Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7, 1030 Wien, 3.OG

The Anatomy of Games is a public workshop — a playful laboratory for inter- and transdisciplinary research practices.

Scholars and game designers alike trace the outlines of a potential Ludology: a consistent scientific practice evolving around games and play — not yet as a fixed field, but as a shifting, experimental practice.

It tackles the three central notions:

Ludology?

How does a consistent science of play and games look like?

Ludification?

How does play ossify? How is it turned into games and ultimately culture?

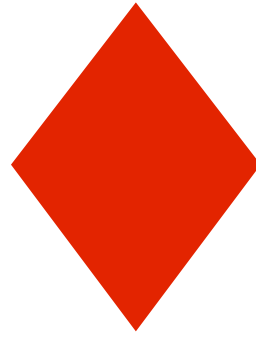
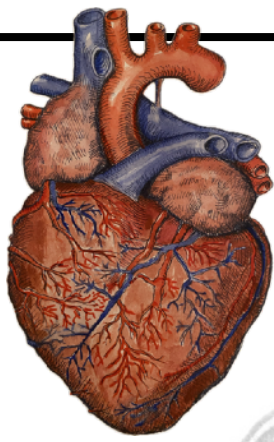
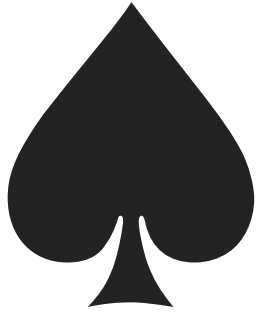
Lucidity?

How do we apply Game Design knowledge to create a better life for all?

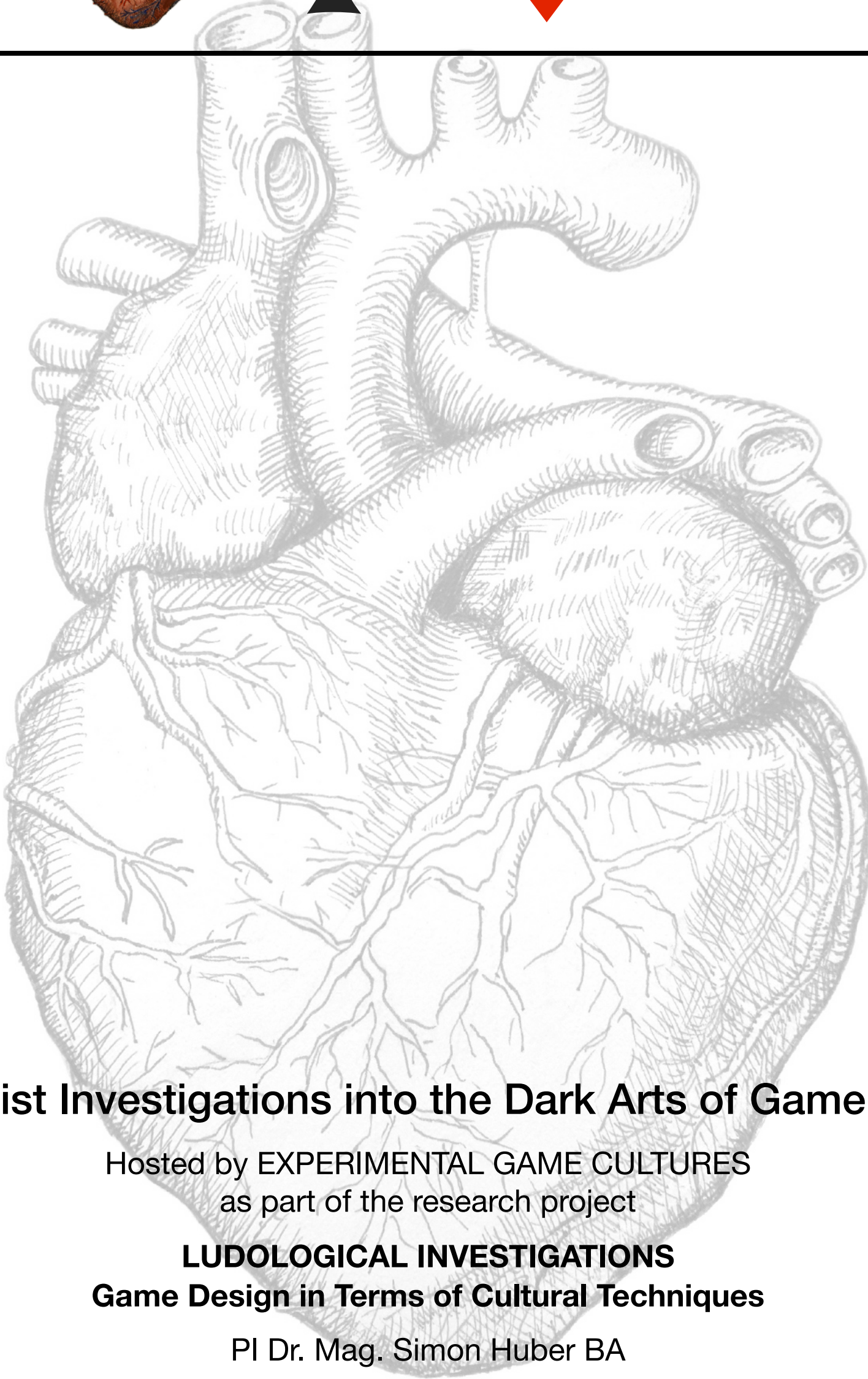
Over the course of one day, we will...

- ◆ **Test an interdisciplinary approach** to uncover how tacit knowledge is processed through the act of play — in a pre-discursive space.
- ◆ **Co-create a deck of cards**, treating game design itself as a form of research, placed at the intersection of art and science — tactile, poetic, and open-ended.
- ◆ **Engage with the male and female cycles** as a rhythmic foundation for collective creativity and playful exchange — moving beyond flow as cognitive metaphor.
- ◆ **Discuss the promises and challenges of Ludology** within the contemporary academic landscape — as well as its potential for intentionally shaping urban spaces to strengthen the public sphere; the social fabric of the infra-ordinary.

This workshop has been unconferenced. Come by, make it your own!



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LUDOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
Game Design in Terms of Cultural Techniques

PI Dr. Mag. Simon Huber BA

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