

Choose your Player. Gaming from Dice to Pixel

17.5.2024 – 27.4.2025

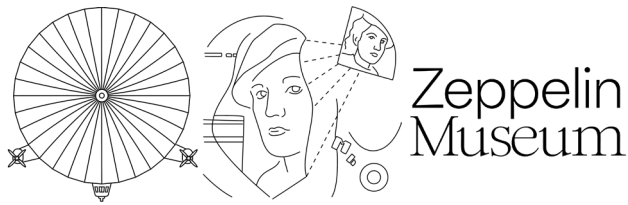
Press Preview: Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 11 am

Opening: Thursday, May 16, 2024, 6 pm, Admission free

Escapism, striving for success, exploration: why, how or within which contexts do people play, how are they played and how are protagonists portrayed in games? The exhibition *Choose your Player. Gaming from Dice to Pixel* at the Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen explores the phenomenon of games as a cultural medium for escaping the present and immersion. It explores game spaces of identity, examines how games reflect power relations between propaganda, war and resistance as well as their contribution to shaping the future and the emergence of new communities. Zeppelin games from the museum's own technology collection from the early 20th century to the present are contrasted with works by contemporary artists and gaming classics from game boards to consoles and critically categorized. In the style of role-playing games, visitors decide on one of five characters – explorer, scientist, journalist, hacker or child – which influences their tour through the exhibition. In addition to the individual solo adventure, the exhibition focuses on discourse, immersion and, of course, gaming itself.

People like to play because it's fun, to compete, to learn or to socialize with others. New technologies and media enable the development of increasingly extensive and complex game worlds. The exhibition *Choose your Player. Gaming from Dice to Pixel*, which can be seen at the Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen from May 17, 2024 to April 27, 2025, invites visitors to sharpen their view of gaming as an essential cultural technique of our time, to become active gamers or to immerse themselves in the world of gaming with the lens of their chosen role-playing character. Ranging from classic board and dice games to computer, console and VR games, the interdisciplinary exhibition examines the development of games, the images and mechanisms behind them and how they influence society, while also being influenced by it. From the early 20th century, zeppelins found their way into quartets, dice games and board games. Thematically, they were seen as a new, superior technology and were a popular motif or game character in war games during the First World War. Significant events such as the World Tour in 1929, the Atlantic crossing or the Arctic voyage in 1931 were incorporated into them. The fascination remains until today's mass media games: Airships appear in modern war and resistance scenarios such as in the first-person shooter *Battlefield 1*, in counterfactual scenarios such as *Wolfenstein* or in the role-playing game *Fallout 4*. In the serious game *Through the Darkest of Times*, players coordinate a resistance group in the Third Reich, including a mission on the airship LZ 129 Hindenburg.

Let's Plays and gaming guides accompany visitors through the exhibition, games and their mechanisms are explained, airships and scenarios are contextualized by experts from the Zeppelin department and the gaming community. In various niches, visitors can play in single or multiplayer mode on large-scale projections, on PCs, on tablets, at tables and in virtual reality, sitting, standing



and dancing. Original exhibits from the Zeppelin Collection from the early 20th century onwards go on display and can be played again as facsimiles. The immersive artistic works in the exhibition are proving that games can be art and art can become a game, offering fun, deepening themes, criticism and broadening perspectives.

Playgrounds: Hey, let's play!

Games allow you to adopt different perspectives and try out other roles. The mechanics and game principles behind them are diverse. In the case of survival, skill and patience games such as *Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy* or *Frostpunk*, they require players to have a high tolerance for frustration. In the e-sports classic *Dota 2*, reflexes and strategic skills are needed, while last year's popular hit *Baldur's Gate 3* involves true endurance with hundreds of hours of gameplay. Artist LuYang's *LuYang NetiNeti Arcade* invites you into an immersive arcade inspired by anime, science fiction, Buddhism and neuroscience. Between slot machines, dance stations and motorcycle racing simulators, visitors are immersed in imaginative game worlds. Visionary avatars, surreal deities and grotesque anime characters encourage visitors to abandon binary attributions of identity, nationality and gender and to question what it means to be human.

Power Games: Power Plays!

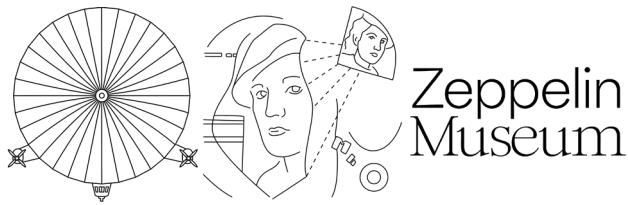
How do manager and development games portray economies and progress? How does a game like *Anno 1800* influence our image of history? How authentic are the images conveyed and what do they trigger in players? Through the perspective of gaming, social and political conflict constellations can be experienced not only theoretically but also emotionally due to the often-immersive character of games. As merchandise and mass media, games cement power relations, as they have to meet the expectations of mainstream culture in order to achieve commercial success. This dependency becomes clear when examining which characters, roles and identities are represented in games. The British-Ghanaian artist Larry Achiampong demonstrates this dynamic in his work *Mama's Bootleg Fight Club*. The Ghanaian roots are his starting point for questioning whitewashing, racist and gender-specific prejudices in the programming and representation of iconic gaming characters in computer and console games. In his series of paintings, he reinterprets problematic, highly stereotyped characters and gives them a new purpose and mission.

Expanded Horizons: Let's set Sail!

Exploration is widely spread as a motif and mechanic in gaming. It takes on a special dimension in the survival game genre, where survival in a threatening environment is the main focus. In some of these scenarios, airships offer a chance to defy the apocalypse. Afrah Shafiq's work *Where Do the Ants Go?* sheds light on the survival strategies of an ant colony affected by climate change and links them to the ecological and social challenges of our human society. Inspired by the iconic video game *Minecraft*, the Indian artist allows visitors to influence the behavior of individual ants and thus the well-being of the entire colony through their input.

New Communities: Let's build together!

Some games create their own (meta-)universes by acting as platforms for concerts, events, meeting places or as a basis for business ideas. Games can become a catalyst for new visions of the future and



alternative forms of life and society. In the controller game *Morphogenic Angels: Chapter 1 – Omoiyari* by the artist collective Keiken, it is a future in which humans have acquired transhuman abilities through organic changes. As so-called angels, they live for hundreds of years and draw on the consciousness of all species: that of ancestors, nature, aliens, animals, cells and the cosmos. Resting in a pool of balls, visitors can physically dive into the immersive game, review their adventure and slowly detach themselves from the role they have been exploring the exhibition in.

Scenography and Sustainability

As an important part of its sustainability strategy, the Zeppelin Museum has committed itself to creating climate-friendly exhibitions. The Berlin-based scenography agency *chezweitz* took on the challenge of designing a sustainable exhibition for *Choose your Player*, planning it in an immaterial and minimalist way while generating a strong spatial structure for the exhibits, artworks and games. Wall structures were realized with a maximum reduction in the use of materials as open, permeable frame architecture, the exhibition spaces were rhythmically structured with bare frames, the principle of reusing existing exhibition inventory was consistently organized and the predominantly recyclable material can be returned to the material cycle. Despite the reduction, visitors find themselves in a luminous, abstract, dense exhibition world. In the workshop-like first floor area, the interplay of metallic reflective drywall profiles, rhythmically glowing light lines and a room setting in deep midnight blue creates an immersive gamespace with intensely colored, glowing objects and playing fields. On the classic museum-like 2nd floor, on the other hand, the neon-colored, radiant room graphics are transformed into delicately floating light surfaces, which are transformed into a structural playing field by means of light-colored solid wood frames.

Solo Adventures and debatorial[®]: Choose your Adventure!

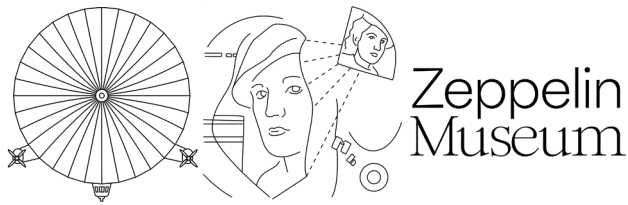
In cooperation with the pen & paper role-playing game experts from *Orkenspalter TV*, five individual solo adventures have been created to accompany the exhibition, either analog or digital, in the Zeppelin Museum's debatorial[®]. They take visitors into a steampunk world in the year 2060, where the earth's surface is barely habitable. Brave agents from the N.E.M.O. organization attempt to repair the damage with a time-travelling airship. In the style of role-playing games, visitors choose one of five characters – child, journalist, hacker, scientist or explorer – who can be individually designed at the debatorial[®] and whose selection influences their tour through the exhibition.

Since 2009, Mháire Stritter and Nico Mendrek have formed *Orkenspalter TV* and are reporting from the role-playing game, LARP and comic scene or producing and directing pen & paper adventures, most recently for the first live *Tatort* on the ARD Twitch channel.

Program accompanying the Exhibition

An escape room has been installed in the Zeppelin Museum's *ZeppLab* in cooperation with *Call of Quest*, inviting visitors to solve puzzles as a group, with family or with friends. The content is all about zeppelins – everything else is top secret!

The accompanying program also enhances the exhibition in terms of content and games. As part of the *World Game Series*, the exhibition space is used to present games from all over the world. In cooperation with municipal associations from Friedrichshafen, visitors can get to know new game



worlds and try them out together. The *OPEN HOUSE!* lecture series deals with topics such as gaming and inclusion, games as a cultural asset for dialog with the world and zeppelin games – or: how to dice your way through the air war. On various weekends, the Zeppelin Museum invites you to a pub quiz, FIFA tournament during the European Championship 2024 or a Mario Kart event with live music. There will be a LIT WALK with a reading by Tonio Schachinger and you can make your own pixel pictures with gaming characters or airships. On *World Games Day* and *World Children's Day*, there will be joint gaming, a Lego ramp workshop will take place in the city and the Zeppelin Museum will also be present at the Kulturufer in Friedrichshafen with playful content and workshops. In cooperation with the Wissenswerkstatt Friedrichshafen, game figures will be molded and computer games created with Scratch. At three *Game On!* events with Mháire from Orkenspalter TV, the pen & paper role-playing game about N.E.M.O., which was developed especially for the exhibition, will not only be instructed and played live in the museum, but also broadcasted on Twitch.

Artists: Larry Achiampong, Keiken, LuYang, Afrah Shafiq

Games (Selection): Airships – Northpole Quest, Anno 1800, A Normal Lost Phone, Battlefield 1, Celeste, Cloudage, Der Luftkrieg, Dota 2, Durch die Luft, Europa-Reise, Fallout 4, Frostpunk, Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy, Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes, Mario Kart, Portal, PowerWash Simulator, Roblox, Super Mario World, Terra Nil, Through the Darkest of Times, Unravel 2, Viewfinder, Wolfenstein, World of Warcraft, Zeppelin Attack, Zeppelin – Giants of the Sky

Curators: Claudia Emmert (Director), Jürgen Bleibler (Head of Zeppelin Department), Mara Kölmel (Head of Art Department), Felix Banzhaf (Research Associate Zeppelin Department) and Stephanie Milling (Research Associate Art Department)

With thanks to: *gamelab.berlin*, research and development platform of Humboldt-University Berlin

Zeppelin Museum: Kunst trifft Technik am Ufer des Bodensees

Das Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen macht Innovationen in Technik und Kunst multimedial erlebbar und lädt Besucher*innen zum interaktiven Dialog ein. Interdisziplinär, diskursiv, partizipativ und inklusiv widmet es sich historischen, gegenwärtigen und zukünftigen gesellschaftlichen Prozessen und Fragestellungen.

Zeppelin Museum: Art meets Technology, on the Shores of Lake Constance

The Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen offers a multimedia experience of innovations in technology and art, and invites visitors to engage in an interactive dialog. Interdisciplinary, discursive, participatory and inclusive, it is dedicated to historical, current and future social developments and debates.

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