

TIME TO PLAY

Playful Participation as an Artistic Methodology: Histories, Curatorial Practices, Museums

The third issue of the new series of *Senzacornice Journal. Studies on the Contemporary Art System*, edited by Luca Palermo, takes as its point of departure two seminal experiences centered on spontaneous and self-managed play. These are understood both as models for social and communal construction through audience engagement, and as investigations into the mutually productive relationships between human and machine, and human and object: *The Model – A Model for a Qualitative Society* (Stockholm, Moderna Museet, 1968, curated by Palle Nielsen) and *Play Orbit* (London, Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1969, curated by Jasia Reichhardt). In both cases, the curators conceived play as a voluntary activity—mediated or unmediated—capable of restoring to the participant a freedom of action that is increasingly constrained or denied within institutional contexts.

During the 1960s, these exhibitions emerged as pioneering projects in which the centrality of participation, grounded in play and ludic forms of engagement, fostered a radical rethinking of the relationship between object, artistic production, audience, and institution. This shift was later examined by scholars such as Fredric Jameson and Michel Podro, building upon the reflections initiated by Herbert Marcuse in 1954 on alienation stemming from the repetitive structures of labor and everyday life.

In recent decades, play has regained a prominent position within artistic production and within the exhibition practices of museums and galleries (as exemplified, for instance, by the work of Carsten Höller). The question that arises, therefore, concerns how and when participatory and ludic components have succeeded in carving out a space within institutional frameworks, and, simultaneously, how museums and their publics have transformed in response to economic and technological changes. Does such an approach retain its destabilizing political implications within cultural institutions, or are these implications neutralized by the institutional context? To what extent do these dimensions impact the evolving roles of curators, artists, museums, and their audiences?

While issues concerning the artwork as an aesthetic experience activated through participatory dynamics have, even recently, been the subject of scholarly inquiry, the ludic dimension of such experiences has not yet received equivalent attention. In particular, game theory has not been systematically brought into dialogue with contemporary aesthetic theory, nor with participatory approaches, in order to fully grasp its inherent social and political potential.

On the basis of these premises, artists, art historians, sociologists of art, curators, educators, and philosophers are invited to submit contributions inspired by, but not limited to, the following topics:

- historical or more recent case studies of ludic-participatory practices in museum contexts;
- the legacy of 1960s political activism in more recent examples of play in museums;
- museums and game theory;
- museums for children: histories and/or architectures;
- play as “relational aesthetics”;
- play as unlearning;
- play as a curatorial strategy.

Submissions should range between 15 and 25 pages (from a minimum of 30,000 to a maximum of 50,000 characters, including notes and spaces). Articles may be written in Italian, English, or French and must conform to the journal’s editorial guidelines. Contributions may be accompanied by up to 10 copyright-free images, audio, or video materials. The submission deadline is **November 8, 2026**.

Contributions may also be submitted for the “Fuoritema” (Off-topic) section, provided they align with the journal’s research scope and comply with its editorial and ethical standards.

Submissions in .doc format should be sent to redazione@senzacornice.org and must include:

- an abstract of up to 500 characters (including spaces);
- a brief author biography of up to 1,000 characters (including spaces);
- five keywords;
- any selected visual materials in .jpg format, at 300 dpi and with a minimum size of 10 cm per side.

The abstract, biography, and keywords must be provided both in the original language of the article and in English.

Following an initial selection process conducted by the issue editor, submissions will undergo a double-blind peer review process.

For further information: <https://www.senzacornice.org>