

gameZ & ruleZ. The Mechanics of Play in Arts and Culture
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Sonia Fizek. Playing at a Distance

Abstract

Do we play video games or do video games play us? Is nonhuman play a mere paradox or the future of gaming? And what do video games have to do with quantum theory? In the keynote lecture based on her upcoming book *Playing at a Distance* (MIT Press 2022), Fizek will engage with these questions, proposing new ways to think about games and play that decenter the human player and explore a variety of play formats and practices that require surprisingly little human action. Idling in clicker games, wandering in walking simulators, automating gameplay with bots, or simply watching games rather than playing them—Fizek will argue that these seemingly marginal cases are central to understanding how we play in the digital age. Introducing the concept of distance, she will reorient the view of computer-mediated play. To “play at a distance”, as will be argued, is to delegate the immediate action to the machine and to become participants in an algorithmic spectacle. Distance has been conceptualized as a media aesthetic framework that may enable us to come to terms with the ambiguity and aesthetic diversity of play.

Bio

Sonia Fizek is a games and media scholar. She holds a professorship in Media and Game Studies at the Cologne Game Lab at Technical University of Cologne (TH Köln). Fizek is also a co-editor-in-chief of the international *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* and a principal investigator of “Greening Games”, an international project on the sustainability of video games (funded by the German Academic Exchange Service EU/DAAD). In her upcoming monograph *Playing at a Distance* (MIT Press 2022), she explores the borderlands of video game aesthetic with focus on automation, AI and posthuman forms of play.

<https://gamezandrulez.ch/>