re:visions, no. 7, Spielraum

Freie Universität Berlin, Sep 1–30, 2026
Deadline: Sep 30, 2026

Louison Jenkins | Johanna Siegler | Antonin Steinke, Editors

re:visions, a German- and English-language open access journal for art and visual culture of the 20th and 21st century specialised in publishing works by early career researchers, is accepting proposals for upcoming issue #7 “Spielraum” (May 2027).

In March 1968, in Toronto’s Ryerson Theatre, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage sat down to play chess. With each move across the brown-and-white board, electric piano notes and handbell chimes rippled through the room, felting into a dense fabric of sound. The board had been wired by sound engineer Lowell Cross, so that each move triggered and redistributed sound across the auditorium. “Reunion” staged a small but consequential confusion. Was this still a game to be won, an instrument to be played, a performance between the two men? Kings and queens, bishops and pawns continued to glide across the sixty-four squares until, eventually, Duchamp rendered his opponent checkmate.

The German ‘Spiel’, like the English ‘play’ and the French ‘jeu’, is delightfully polysemous. A single word names the unstructured improvisation of a child, the rule-bound competition of the board or computer game, the dissimulation of the stage, the surrender to chance of gambling, and even the slight give between fitted parts that German speakers call ‘Spielraum’, literally “room to play”.

That this single word should scatter into such distinct registers is itself a legacy of the European tradition that first sought to partition and classify the dimensions of play—often exemplified by the work of Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois. Elsewhere, vocabularies corresponding with “play” have, for centuries, registered as a means of creating, knowing, and traversing realities: in Sanskrit cosmology, ‘līlā’ (“divine play”, “amusement” or “the cosmic game”) places play at the origin of the world; for Zhuangzi, ‘yóu’ (often translated as “free play”) names a wandering through it; and among the Diné, the traditional string game “na’atl’o”’ proposes a way of fathoming it through kinship and kin-based knowledge.

The twenty-first-century critique of late capitalism has incorporated game logics into its diagnostics, treating them as techniques of governance (Wark 2007; Lütticken 2010; Steyerl 2017), most visibly in ‘gamification’: the spread of levels, scores, reward loops, and feedback systems through work, education, health, and politics. Art theory turns to games with parallel questions, distinguishing game art, artgames, and artists’ games (Sharp 2015), arguing that once art can no longer be measured against aesthetic autonomy alone, toys and playthings become figures for interaction in the contemporary (Ullrich 2022).

Artistic practices of the 20th and 21st centuries have mobilised play as a multivalent structure

encompassing experimentation, simulation, role-play, competition, chance, violence, and social imagination. In the museal space, exhibitions like Nielsen's "The Model" (1968) and Reichardt's "Play Orbit" (1969–70) treat playgrounds as laboratories of social imagination. Games' proximity to warfare surfaces in Joseph DeLappe and Biome Collective's "Killbox", which places the player inside a drone-strike targeting interface, collapsing screen detachment into the violence it depicts. Performance, too, enlists play as persona and speculative role-play, as in Martine Syms's "She Mad" (2015–21) and Joseph Wilk's "Killer Crips 3000" (2026). Toys become tools for re-enactment: Nina Katchadourian's Playmobil tableaux, "The Recarcassing Ceremony" (2016) and "The Sjöbloms and Båtsmans" (2026), render historical and familial violence intimate through miniature scale. Interactive game spaces carry histories of dispossession—Ricardo Miranda Zúñiga's "Vagamundo" (2002) structures the precarity of undocumented migration as gameplay, while Elizabeth LaPensée's "Thunderbird Strike" (2017) turns the platformer into a vehicle for Indigenous resistance to extractive violence. In the art market, chance operations return within the lottery logic of flipping art or NFTs: they make winning and losing a driving force of the economy and determine which artistic practices may be sustained.

Between emancipation and discipline, games and practices of play open a margin of action—a 'Spielraum'—in which rules, roles, objects, interfaces, bodies, and sensoria may be tested and rearranged.

For our seventh issue, re:visions invites graduate students and early career scholars, researchers, writers, and artists to reflect on play and games as spaces for inquiry, involvement, and friction as they stage relations, test participation, and reshape spectatorship and sensibility—while moving between freedom and capture, pleasure and constraint, world-making and control. We welcome proposals engaging with a wide range of arts and media, especially those concerned with translation and transculturation: with the ways in which artists and game designers have drawn from local cosmologies, colonial histories, activist practices, and regional knowledges, and with how games become media of protest, memory work, and representational sovereignty.

Topics of interest might include, but are by no means limited to:

• rule-, score-, and instruction-based art, from Fluxus to protocol art, generative systems, and AI-assisted practice

• chess, board games, and the long entanglement of play with strategy, conflict, and the game of war

• Situationist play practices and their afterlives

• playground exhibitions and the design of the post-work imaginary

• women*, queer, crip, and minor histories of computing, gaming, and technical play

• role, persona, avatar, and mask across performance, autofiction, and digital culture

• game engines, installation-as-interface, and navigable environments in contemporary art

• hacked games, modified software, and tactical interventions into commercial platforms

• gameplay as counter-mapping, protest, or encounter with histories of dispossession, displacement, extraction, and migration

• games, toys, and re-enactment: playable archives, dioramas, restaging, repetition, and repair

• gambling, chance, and speculation, from Dada operations to NFTs, flipping, and market volatility

• winning and losing as structures of visibility, ranking, prizes, careers, and value formation in the art world

• the gamification of labour, politics, education, health, and everyday life

Please submit an elaborated proposal for an essay, interview, or artist portrait of approximately 500 words, an image and a bibliography written in either English or German. The submitted proposals will be evaluated by our editorial team in a double-blind peer review. Contributors will be invited to write a 3,000- to 5,000-word paper if their proposals are selected. Contributions will appear in the seventh issue of re:visions, which is slated for publication in May 2027. We particularly encourage members of marginalised communities underrepresented in academic writing (including queer individuals and BIPoC) to submit contributions.

The deadline for submissions is 30 September 2026.

Please email your proposal and a short bio as a Word document to revisionsjournal.fu@gmail.com

For our submission guidelines please refer to our stylesheet.

re:visions is a German- and English-language open access journal for art and visual culture of the 20th and 21st century specialised in publishing works by early career researchers. re:visions is affiliated with the Art Historical Institute of Freie Universität Berlin and run by student volunteers.

For more information and news regarding the journal, follow our Instagram account @revisionsjournal.

https://revisionsjournal.de/Call-for-Papers-7

Reference:

CFP: re:visions, no. 7, Spielraum. In: ArtHist.net, Jul 18, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/53499>.