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# plato



## worldwide

### VILLAGE

meeples' meaning of life

Freedom in the Game

Lamberto Azzariti

Stefan Dorra

by Inka  
& Markus Brand



By the publisher of  
**7 WONDERS**  
GHOST STORIES

NICOLAS NORMANDON

# CITY OF HORROR™

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Ever since **October of 2005**, French-speaking gamers have been able to indulge in their second-favorite pastime: reading Plato, the magazine about the many and varied games that we all love.

This **FREE SAMPLE PDF** is a small sample of our work, just to give you a taste of what you could read every two months – not on a screen (how uncomfortable!), but **on real paper**...PEFC! We are very serious about being environmentally responsible!

Plato is a magazine covering gaming in all its diversity. Our intention is to talk about gaming at an international level. Obviously, we will always go into detail about the new hotness; however, we also won't hesitate to enlighten you about obscure or less-recent products. Moreover, in addition to game reviews, Plato presents a rich array of topics for you to explore in our publications.

But above all else, Plato is also about tone and look: An irreverent tone, fun and amusing, a bit quirky at times – after all, we're just talking about games here! And a colorful, relaxed look, to make for really comfortable reading.

Working behind the scenes is a diverse team of thirty people, passionate about games, whose greatest pleasure is to transport you inside the world of gaming. Designers, illustrators, publishers, distributors, retailers...all will soon have more secrets to share with you. Welcome aboard!

DIDIER DELHEZ

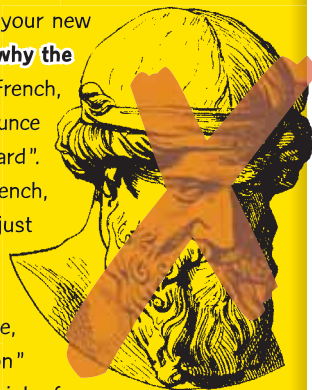
## PLATO: what is it?

Of course, you know by now that Plato is your new favorite magazine, your friend for life. **But why the name "Plato"?** It's quite simple, really: In French, we pronounce "plato" the same way we pronounce "plateau" one meaning of which is "gameboard". So, we chose the name as a trademark. In French, "plato" itself doesn't mean anything; it just sounds good.

In English, Plato is a philosopher, but that has nothing to do with our Plato magazine, because in French, that Plato is called "Platon".

When we hear the title, it makes us think of a "plateau" so it doesn't matter to us that anglophones reading Plato might be confused with Plato.

Clear as mud?:D



## A Short Explanation of the Ratings

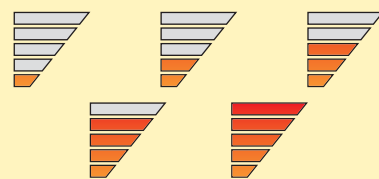
The games reviewed in these pages are scored on the following three criteria...

**First, we evaluate the interactivity**, which is to say whether the game induces a lot of dialog and interaction at the table, whether it takes the form of opinions, persuasion, or even imagination. On the left, one would find Chess; on the right, Pictionary or Diplomacy; between those extremes, The Settlers of Catan.

**Next, we determine whether the game appeals more to instinct and nerve, or to calculation.** On the left, one would find Liar's Dice; on the right, Go; between those two, Backgammon.

**Finally, we evaluate the difficulty level of the game.** On the left, one would find Dominoes; on the right, Civilization; between the two, French Tarot.

Notice that these criteria do not provide "good" or "bad" ratings, but simply an indication of how well suited the game might be to the tastes of one person or another.



A more subjective rating, depicted by a gauge, complements the positions of these three sliders, and helps you to get a quick impression: **5** = a safe bet/the columnist fell in love with it; **4** = a good game that one would want to play frequently; **3** = a pleasant game that one would want to play occasionally; **2** = a average game that one would not necessarily want to play again; **1** = a game of little interest/the columnist was disappointed.

There is no rating above 5 or below 1.

WWW.PLATO-MAGAZINE.COM

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## Self Publishing

**PITCH'N DUNK**  
 ALL-STAR PARLOR GAME

The initial two hundred copies quickly sold out in 2011; the game received almost unanimous positive feedback. This led to the logical conclusion for such an attention-grabbing small production: Pitch'n Dunk had a second print run of two hundred copies. Even if an obscure market (sports + flicking + production costs + the specific packaging = big publishing risk?) deprives this basketball simulation from wide distribution, make no mistake: Its success is quite miraculous, in a sporting genre that has rarely found a slant so satisfying. Movement by flicking is (along with self-publication) the common denominator of most of Daniel Quodbach's creations. With irrefutable clarity, he has



© IF Association

brilliantly reproduced all the tactical situations and challenges of a basketball game (ah, the concept of the shot clock!), really breathing life into the ten players and the ball. Competition is elevated well above a simple contest of skill, without detracting from how apropos this aspect of the game is. Whatever happens, you can do no wrong getting this must-have game from the dedicated website, since the decidedly inspired IF Association is kind enough to donate seven euros per copy to the charitable organization 1 Maillot pour la Vie (1 Jersey for Life).

BY SÉBASTIEN KIHM

**Designer:** Daniel Quodbach  
 & David Kalmes;  
**artist:** Fabien Boulay;  
**publisher:** IF Association;  
 2+ players from 8.

## EXPANSIONS

**TICKET TO RIDE MAP COLLECTION:  
 VOLUME 1 - TEAM ASIA  
 & LEGENDARY ASIA  
 DOUBLE DRAGON**

Ticket to Ride, from Days of Wonder, may just keep circumnavigating the world: The most recent stop – or two, depending on which side of the gameboard you use – is in Asia. The first, Legendary Asia, depicts a complete map of Asia from Turkey to Japan. It reuses a few features introduced in previous TtR releases, but it also adds something new: mountain routes. In order to claim these, you must discard one or more additional train cars, but they will also get you extra points. Perhaps in compensation for this, the links tend to be a little shorter. The second side of the gameboard, called Team Asia, focuses on India and China, and is a much more original expansion. As the name suggests, it is played in teams: Partners actually play one right after the other, keeping some cards secret from one another, and sharing others on a card holder that sits between them. The challenge is to understand your partner's intentions: which links he wants, the colors he needs, the pace at which he wants the game to run, and of course the underlying question, "Which cities does he need to connect for his tickets?" For this voyage to Asia, Ticket to Ride embarks into a new culture, a culture of collaboration, and the experience is a very good one.

LG

**An expansion for Ticket to Ride**  
**Designer:** François Valentyne  
 & Alan R. Moon  
**Artist:** Julien Delval  
**Publisher:** Days of Wonder  
 4 - 6 players from 8.

**STONE AGE: STYLE IS THE GOAL  
 YOU WANT A BEAR CLAW, BABY?**

Although Stone Age, published four years ago, seemed perfect already, now it gets an expansion. This expansion adds several components and options to the game. A fifth player can join in the fun and a currency exchange of sorts (the decorations) is introduced.



© Hans im Glück

There are also new Civilization cards and Hut tiles that integrate the decorations into the game, as well as a quarter of a gameboard that adds worker placement locations. While the addition of a layer to the gameplay (the trader area) introduces a level of complexity, the game length with five becomes a little too long. Pleasant at first, but not indispensable, this expansion includes one small bonus: The handful of tiles from the Spielbox mini expansion. The expansion does put the spotlight back onto Stone Age, and gets us playing it again. That was the goal, right? **BC**

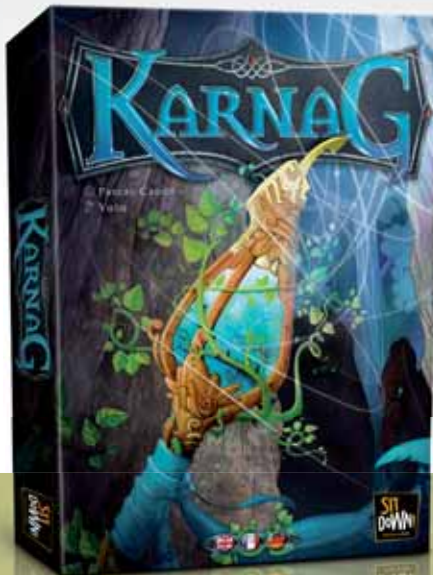
**An expansion for Stone Age**  
**Designer:** Michael Tummelhoffer  
**Artist:** Michael Menzel  
**Publisher:** Hans im Glück  
 2 - 5 players from 10.



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# Village<sup>2011</sup>

DESIGNER

Inka & Markus Brand

ARTIST

Dennis Lohausen

**W**ith Village, Gigamic strides boldly onto the scene of serious worker placement games; and Inka and Markus Brand try to break the pattern that has been established by the classics of the genre by adding concepts such as family pride, the relentless flow of time, and mortality. It takes a village to raise a child, but will this Village make you a happy citizen, or a recluse?

## THE COMPONENTS

Dennis Lohausen's idyllic scene on the box cover gives us a clever preview of the actions available to our family members throughout the game: crafts, the clergy, travel, agriculture – the basis for a typical medieval development game. The contents of the box certainly seem to confirm that suspicion: Forty-four meeples wait within, just itching to stand on Action spaces on the board. Seventy-two wooden influence cubes, which represent such abstract concepts as skill, knowledge, persuasiveness, and faith, are ready to drop into one of the two cloth bags. Four player boards (farmyards) are ready to store grain and gold coins for each player's family. Additionally, there are forty goods tiles and twenty-four customer tiles, as well as – and here's where Inka and Markus Brand start taking things in new directions – a sticker sheet, with generation numbers on them, to be affixed to the meeples. (I am not a number; I am a free man! ...or would a Logan's Run quote be more appropriate?) Generations? Hold on a minute: Aging and death were also shown in the cover art! Each player board has a time track marching around its perimeter. The board depicts two areas for the dead: both a huge chronicle for the glorious meeples, and nameless graves for the ignominious. Perhaps this isn't your mother's worker placement game, after all!

© Eggertspiele



## THE RULES

Village follows the lives of two to four families. At the beginning of the game, only the first generation (four meeples) of each family is in play. The goal of the game is to accumulate the most prestige, which your living family members can gain through professional success and your dead can secure with their legacy. The game lasts a variable number of rounds, each of which begins with setup of influence cubes in the Action spaces. The cubes are drawn at random from their green bag. The mix of cubes in the bag is determined by the setup card that corresponds to the number of players. Then, in turn, each player takes a cube of her choice, puts it in her reserve, and immediately carries out the action associated with the location where she got the cube. There are seven actions available:

- ☼ Harvesting provides grain.
- ☼ The Family action gives you a new, ready meeple from the earliest generation still available.
- ☼ Crafts generate goods. By assigning a worker to a workshop, you can produce goods for free, but it takes time. Alternatively, you can spend some cubes to buy goods.
- ☼ Travel sends a family member to discover the world, gain riches, and gain prestige.
- ☼ The market allows all players, in turn, to trade goods for prestige.

- ☼ The council chamber allows you to climb the government ladder, which of course comes with benefits.
- ☼ Finally, the church allows you to jam one of your family members into a black bag in the hope that he joins the clergy.

Most actions also have a time cost, which you record on your personal time track. Every ten time units (yes, it's just called "time"), the inevitable happens: a member of the family passes away. You must choose a victim from the earliest generation still visible on the board (i.e. not waiting in the black sack of holiness to become part of the clergy). Depending on where the meeple died, he either will be remembered in the great village chronicle (securing future victory points), or be relegated to an anonymous grave.

To give players more flexibility, a gold coin can always be used in the place of a cube. Also, even if all the cubes on an action space have been taken, it is still possible to perform that action in exchange for three same-colored cubes at the well.

Once all the cubes on action spaces have been claimed, the round ends with Mass. Four meeples emerge from the black bag, ready to join the clergy (except for any monks, who return to the bag for further studies). Wealthy families can slip a small donation into the offering in order to help their candidates "graduate" first. Of course, establishing your family's presence in the church confers a certain amount of prestige.

Rounds continue in this fashion until either the village chronicle or the anonymous graves are full. The last Mass will then be held before a final tally determines the most prestigious family of the village.

## OUR OPINION

Village can make a tepid and somewhat mixed first impression. The game delivers all the mechanisms and concepts that became mainstream when worker



# The Family's Reputation is at Stake!

placement games were in their hey-day; however, those are starting to get a little stale a decade later. The archetypal wooden cube is already sufficiently unattractive and abstract when representing metal or fabric, but it becomes impossible to suspend disbelief when those cubes, which are abstractions themselves, represent abstract concepts (skill, knowledge, persuasiveness, faith). “I shall exchange skill and knowledge for a plow.” Um, no. Two minutes into the game, you will be talking about spending “pink” and “orange”, with no regard for their thematic names. It should come as no surprise that the meeples spend their days toiling away on crafts, trading, and travel in the hopes of ending their lives at the right time to secure a handful of prestige points as they croak. We had hoped the meeples’ mortality would breathe new life into the genre, forcing us to think in new ways, but ultimately the great village chronicle in which the dearly departed come to rest is only one of five ways to gain prestige. It is just as readily available from travel, commerce, the church, and the council chamber. The noticeable effect on game play is much smaller than we had imagined. However, once we let go of our deflated hopes for a revolutionary game, we still have a game with numerous little aspects to explore, and its nuances make for a pleasant experience. Although time management is not exactly new, the way Village handles it is. Games like Thebes or Olympos essentially grant each player an equal amount of time, and the pace at which you use the time merely determines the opportunistic timing of your actions. If you burn your candle quickly, so to speak, then you sit and wait while your opponents catch up to you. In Village, time is more like another (abstract) resource that you have to

spend, and the rate at which you spend it merely dictates the rate of mortality of your meeples. Because the end of the game is triggered by the death rate, you can spend time like crazy, stacking the dead like cordwood, in order to drive the game to a quick end, or you can be parsimonious with your time, focusing on long-term strategy. So, if your family is clearly dominating the game, you may choose to fuel that quick end



of the game by focusing on actions that consume considerable time, such as crafts. Depending on the choices made in the game, it can last fewer than three full rounds, finishing in half an hour or it can stretch out longer than two hours.

The obligation to take a cube from a space before taking the corresponding action is another interesting mechanism. First, some spaces have far fewer cubes than there are players. This forces players to try to anticipate their opponents’ moves. Also, because the cubes are randomly drawn before each round, it may be the case that the cubes you need are on less appetizing actions. This leads to contemplation of a nice tradeoff: should you take that optimal

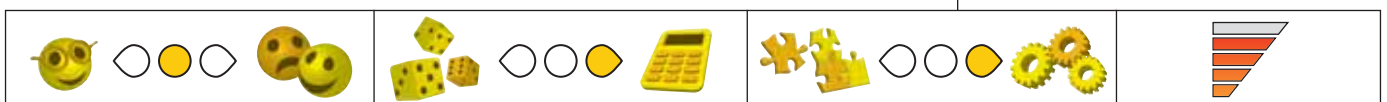
action, or that specific cube you need, at any cost, or opt for the best compromise? There are also black plague cubes which have no market value but taking one allows you to take the action it’s on “for free” – at the price of two time units. In our games, black cubes generally linger on the board until there are no other choices, but sometimes they can be taken quickly, in order to fuel the “rush” strategy mentioned above.

Part of the reason Village is generally quite a short game is that it has a rare fluidity. The rules are well written and unambiguous, which means you don’t need to keep your nose in them throughout the game. After the initial explanation, you’re ready to go: you take a cube, perform the corresponding action, done. And between your turns there are enough variables to consider, related to your opponents’ actions and the board, that there is very little downtime.

Although the player interaction is indirect and generally peaceful, the struggle for religious supremacy, dirty tricks at the market, and reducing each other’s options by picking up those last cubes on certain action spaces, can all induce real tension. Do not think that you can raise your children safe from the influence of the rest of the village.

Village ultimately is both classic and innovative. Without quite managing to steer clear of the clichés of the genre, it presents a lot of great ideas. The game play is sometimes very rhythmic, sometimes more subdued, but it always provides a pleasant experience. 🌀

**PUBLISHER** • Eggertspiele, Pegasus Spiele  
**AGE** • 12 years and up  
**GENRE** • worker placement  
**PUBLIC** • experienced players  
**PLAYING TIME** • 75 minutes  
**NUMBER OF PLAYERS** • 2 to 4



# FAMILY SPIRIT

## Meeting with the Parents of Village



BY STÉPHANE JOSEPHY

**T**he prolific Inka and Markus Brand, city folks raising two children, Emely and Lukas, recently perpetuated a family tradition by coming up with a game on their own (Mito). Working exclusively as a couple, the Brands clearly prove to us that having a sense of family is not, for them, merely a game theme...



© Inka Brand

to be published by Kosmos. Prior to that, between 1999 and 2006, we created more than a hundred board and card games, but without managing to have any of them published. Thereafter, we came up with forty-one games for seven different publishers. To name some in particular: A Castle for All Seasons, Monster Falle, Mirror Mansion, and Guatemala Café. However, it's not a full-time job for Markus; he works as an insurance broker. As for me, I have quite a busy day dealing with creating prototypes and rules drafting. During evenings and weekends, we share the whole creative process.

**PLATO** • All your games are being created as a couple. How do you distribute the roles between yourselves? In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of such a work method?

**IB** • Yes, we work exclusively as a duet, and we don't see what could be the advantages of working any other way. Of course, sometimes it's Markus who brings up the original idea, and at other times it comes from me. We try to speak together about a new game idea as soon as possible, well before a board or cards have physically seen the light of day. This way, we collect preliminary feedback which generally saves us a lot of time.

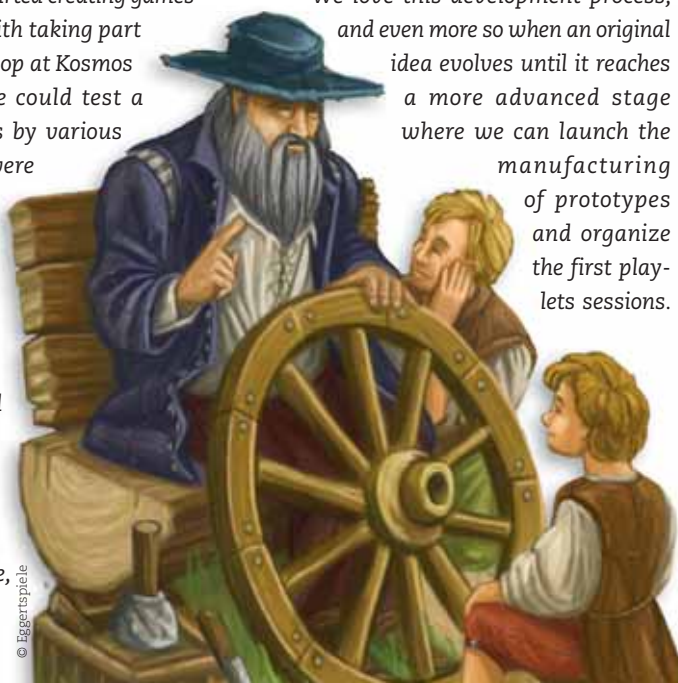
We love this development process, and even more so when an original idea evolves until it reaches a more advanced stage where we can launch the manufacturing of prototypes and organize the first play-lets sessions.

Thereafter, our discussions continue, and it's a great advantage of being able to exchange opinions during this whole phase. During our whole process, it makes it much easier to realize what must be changed, or in worst cases, to make the decision of dropping a project entirely and switch to something else.

*«That our villagers die after a laborious life, perfectly integrates itself to the game theme, which tries to stick as closely as possible to the real life of the time. There's nothing macabre in that!»*

**PLATO** • Could you start with some introduction? What was your journey through the gaming world?

**INKA BRAND** • We started creating games in 1999. It all began with taking part in a prototypes workshop at Kosmos publishing, where we could test a whole series of games by various authors before they were eventually published. It was a revelation for us. We enjoyed this experiment enormously. On our way home, we made the decision to take the plunge and develop our very own boardgame. However, it took us seven years before our first game, The Big Dinosaur Game,



© Eggertspiele

**PLATO** • Your creations seem evenly distributed between serious games of strategy, family games, and games for children. Is this because of different gaming tastes between the two of you?

**IB** • Not really. I think that we just develop the types of games we like to play. We enjoy playing with the children as much as opening family boxed-sets or more complex games. Whether playing or creating, we don't want to confine ourselves to a specific genre. We prefer following all ideas that come to mind!

**PLATO** • You work as a family, you create family games, and even your children recently became published authors! It's not so surprising then to find the family as the principal theme of Village. Was this an easily exploitable basic idea?



## A CASTLE FOR ALL SEASONS

Released for Essen 2008, A Castle for All Seasons was, until now, the most complex game published by Inka and Markus Brand. It shares with Village a medieval environment, but situates itself in its mechanisms halfway between Citadelles and Stone Age. Each player has eight characters who will take an active part in the construction of an imposing castle for the local lord. At the beginning of each turn, everyone reveals simultaneously their activated role. Depending upon each role, they grant the right to collect money, resources, or to build a portion of the castle. A final character enables him to take back all the cards that were previously played. A Castle for All Seasons requires keeping track of the possessions and intentions of one's adversaries constantly, so as to activate the right role at the right time. Without being truly original, it does manage to fulfill a fluid and effective synthesis of recipes that have made the success of many development and construction games, from Cuba to Pillars of the Earth, with which it also shares Michæl Menzel's splendid, realistic illustrations.

**IB** • Village is without any doubt our most ambitious game and its development was not without trouble. It required an enormous amount of testing that took forever. At the beginning of the project, we had in mind the idea of a small village where various families were going to live, grow, and try to reach prosperity. Initially, I had the idea of placing a church in the center of the village, and I even asked my father to make one out of wood for me to accommodate the meeples. In the end, that church was taken out of the game, but it remains one of the fundamental ideas around which Village grew.



**PLATO** • Another important concept of Village is its use of time, already seen in Thèbes or Olympos, for example. But, exploited here in a cyclic way, thereby resulting in the death of one of the characters within the family! Was this something easily acceptable from the game publisher?

**IB** • The exploitation of a "time" factor was indeed necessary to emphasize the impression of real life and evolution of the village. No matter what you do, time slips away. Whether it's to learn how to make a plough, to explore the outside world, or to lead a brilliant career in the town hall, it takes enormous time, and a way to manage a timeline effectively had to be found. Concerning the issues of the death of one's family members, we actually had a few discussions with Peter Eggert, the German publisher of Village, after some criticism came up during test sessions. But, for the majority of players, this mechanism didn't cause any problems. Village is only a game, after all, and we were eager to test something different. That our villagers die after a laborious life, perfectly integrates itself to the game theme, which tries to stick as closely as possible to the real life of the time. There's nothing macabre in that!

**PLATO** • Lastly, your next title, by Alea, will be called Saint-Malo. This is something quite intriguing to our French readers! Could you lift the veil a little on this up-coming release?

**IB** • Saint-Malo is a dice game. We tried to combine a share of chance and a share of strategy into it. The players will have erasable markers and individual wipe-off boards. They will have to draw on these all the elements gained during the course of the game, according to dice results. Progressively, they will found their own city by building certain buildings protected by ramparts which will have to be set up to protect oneself from pirates. And, to give life to their

## MIRROR MANSION

Victor, a young and adorable vampire, is in search of his paraphernalia he lost in the castle. But, as he searches, he must somehow avoid falling onto one those repulsive garlic cloves! By dusting off the super-classic Memory, and adding an optical component by using proper angle reflection situated among several mirrors, the Brand couple offered children players, in 2009, a true pearl of originality. The box of the game, pierced by tiny windows, accommodates some Object cards around its periphery, the contents of which will only be discovered by judiciously placing four mirrors. The material is terribly attractive, and the elementary principles of physics controlling this game are so innovative that Victor deserves the complete accolades of parents.



city, they'll put various specialized inhabitants there, such as soldiers, merchants or jugglers. Lighter than Village, it's a very pleasant game, made for up to five players, and with a duration that shouldn't exceed an hour.



# Eruption<sup>2011</sup>

DESIGNER

Chris James

ARTIST

Andy Kurzen &amp; Matt Plett

## Lava is Coming!

**A** volcano awakens and your village relentlessly protects itself from the glowing red flows... even at the expense of others.

### THE COMPONENTS

The publisher provides us with a set of good quality (thin yet solid) hexagonal tiles, clear illustrations and colors allowing for good readability of the game, some text which is not detrimental to non-English speakers as it uses explicit symbols, and rules shown on their website.

### THE RULES

Starting with three cards and a wall of each type, everyone completes, in turns, four steps:

- ☼ Increase the temperature of one's village by the number of lava flows in direct contact with it.
- ☼ Draw a Lava Tile and put it in play following the layout rules.
- ☼ Play cards from one's hand.
- ☼ Add a wall to the game board.

The game ends when the pile of Lava Tiles is exhausted or as soon as a village has completely burnt down. The one whose temperature is the lowest wins.

### OUR OPINION

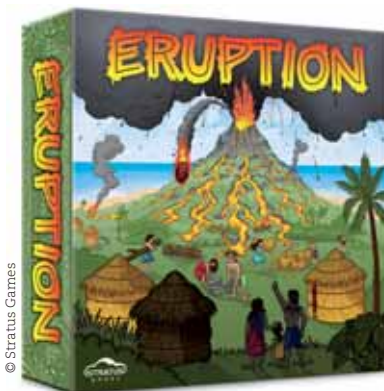
Eruption! is undoubtedly a family game. The publisher even offers rules within text boxes which are suggested to be ignored at first. These boxed rules are not advanced ones, but rather details regarding specific case resolutions. This is a quick and original way to introduce a game, presenting the players with only the basics. The text boxes can be consulted while playing (a sort of FAQ within the rules).

The game involves a lot of chance, making it all pretty chaotic. The random tile draws (whose play is mandatory whenever possible) does not always advance the lava as desired and may even turn against you.

The use of the walls can be frustrating at times. The resistance of the walls in your village that are in contact with the lava is tested at the beginning of each turn by casting two dice of different colors. After adding the wall bonus (for example: Stone gives +2) to the white die, it must beat the result of the orange lava die roll or the wall will be destroyed. You can see stone walls being destroyed on their first test but straw walls resisting endlessly.

Eight different action cards are available (for example: remove a wall in play). Present in varying quantities and of unequal powers, the cards can be traded-in for the type of wall shown or two may be discarded to play an additional tile. Obtaining cards is done when a tile is placed in contact with a village (at a ratio of one card per lava flow in contact with a village). This creates a hunt for cards and drives players into perpetual aggression.

Balance is maintained between the players throughout the game via the temperature barometer which is segmented into four parts, including three critical zones. The first player to arrive in each of these critical zones lays down an Eruption! Tile (a tile with multiple lava flows). The tile doesn't necessarily need to be linked to an existing flow. Moreover, being in a critical zone gives a bonus (cumulative



from zone to zone): place two walls per turn, draw a card, or play a supplementary tile. Therefore, to be in the "red" sometimes has its advantages.

Eruption! especially promotes good mood and atmosphere.

This is a game where cheap shots are frequent, where revenge and returning fire are commonplace. The game begins quietly enough, but temperature and pressure rise quite fast and end up in a pitched battle for extra tiles and action cards.

The game is completed by three optional rules (which can be combined): One for team play, leading to exchanges and consultations. Another for longer games, where there can be only player remaining. And finally, one that offers a choice of three visible tiles to play, which results in less randomness but more aggressiveness. ☹️



PUBLISHER • Stratus Games

AGE • 10 years and up

GENRE • connection

PUBLIC • any

PLAYING TIME • 45 minutes

NUMBER OF PLAYERS • 2 to 6





# Flash point: fire rescue <sup>2011</sup>

DESIGNER

Kevin Lanzing

ARTIST

Luis Francisco &amp; George Patsouras

## Extreme Firefighting

**F**ire at 366 Fair Street!  
Dispatch the truck! Alright  
firefighters, we need to get  
in and out quickly and cleanly in  
order to save any inhabitants –  
human or otherwise – and don't  
forget: service with a smile!

### THE COMPONENTS

Fortunately, a bunch of flammable materials doesn't always result in a fire hazard. Inside a box with a very non-Euro design – the cover looks like the poster for an action movie – you will find German-style components. Instead of the plastic figurines you might expect from the cover, there are wooden firefighter meeples and cardboard tokens to represent victims, flames, smoke, flammable materials, etc. The game board looks like it was created in some home interior design software. The cards, however, have illustrations that live up to the thrilling title. Nonetheless, neither the component quality (which is high) nor the rules (which are clear and well written) pack any disappointment.

### THE RULES

Simple, logical, and straightforward: Fire breaks out in a house with a grid floor plan laid out on a coordinate system that corresponds to a pair of dice. The dice will determine the locations of flammable materials and "hot spots" in the house, as well as the locations of the victims you will need to save. The firefighters must use action points and their unique special powers (in the

advanced game) to intervene. You can use action points to move, extinguish a fire, transport a victim, or even switch roles in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Smoldering fires rekindle and spread, increasing the danger of explosion, while you coordinate your efforts with the other players in order to rescue the victims from this dangerous environment. The fickle dice and your tactical choices will ensure that each game plays differently; resulting either in failure, due to the house collapsing or losing too many victims to the flames, or in victory, thanks to your team saving a reasonable number of victims.

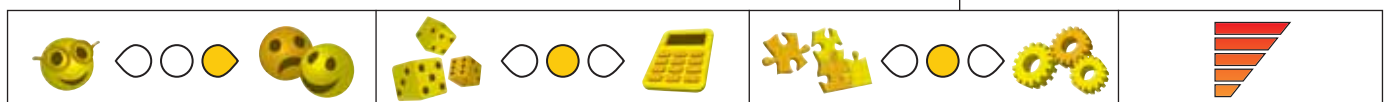
### OUR OPINION

Following in the same vein as Pandemic, with a theme close to reality – or at least TV news – FPFR gives us a sense of déjà vu, but not because the game copies from a predecessor or re-uses a popular theme. On the contrary, the atmosphere feels familiar because you will feel like you are part of a television series, complete with distinctive characters that have different strengths and psychological profiles. In fact, firefighters inescapably are a "mainstream" subject. It is a dream job for any child under the age of six, attracted as much by the fire

as by the uniform and equipment. This game ultimately captures all the elements of this familiar, impossibly challenging setting: unbearable sacrifices, dramatic twists, individuals who work well together or whose personalities clash, and overcoming all that through teamwork... which sometimes will be undermined by unsound choices or persistent bad luck. FPFR manages to offer plenty of replay value and challenges, without having a box that takes up an entire shelf. You can play the game at different difficulty levels, and you can vary the suitability of the roles for the particular game configuration. If it had different scenarios and different floor plans, this game's life would burn inexhaustibly. The interaction of roles and the players themselves will require much more finesse and precision as the difficulty of the game is increased. In fact, depending on the circumstances, some roles will be shunned altogether.

Although the game is totally accessible due to its theme, it still contains some less obvious elements, such as managing the spread of fire, explosions, etc, that might limit its spread into the traditional family game market. If a seasoned gamer, experienced with this sort of game, helps run the game, the players should get on like a house on fire; however, even with inexperienced players, the game will be a success. The atmosphere of the game, its common appeal, and the human desire to act with bravery should make this a very hot title!

**PUBLISHER** • Indie Boards and Cards  
**AGE** • 8 years and up  
**GENRE** • cooperation  
**PUBLIC** • any  
**PLAYING TIME** • 45 minutes  
**NUMBER OF PLAYERS** • 1 to 6



2019: the Arctic<sup>2011</sup>

DESIGNER

Andrzej Kurek

ARTIST

Radosław Jaszczuk

## Towards a Second Cold War?

www.sinonis.pl

**The great powers flourish their weapons, obeying submissively to the insistent councils of the oil lobbyists. The Arctic, with its Inuits, polar bears, and especially its enormous potential in terms of oil resources: It is definitely worth a little war...**

## THE COMPONENTS

Right from the opening of the box, 2019: the Arctic left us cold and icy. There are missing and badly painted, damaged pawns, including an especially immense legibility problem: The brown and black components are not easily discernible to such a point that it is imperative to modify them before use. Big problems on the surface, it will thus be necessary to dig deeper to find something positive...

## THE RULES

2019 pits four extraction companies against each other, which exert lobbying pressure on five great Arctic powers (Russia, Norway, United States, Canada, and Europe).

Over nine turns, each player will send his lobbyists towards these nations to finance the following actions: Drilling rig construction, construction of ships, fleet movement and combat, tax collection, revolt, and diplomacy.

With each sector's underground abounding in oil, gas or concretions, it is vital to set up one's platforms quickly.

Then, these resources are extracted to be sold or converted into Victory points. Except in the event of a revolt, when all sites of that country then stop producing!

Diplomats have the possibility of declaring war on another power. During this phase, their fleets can destroy

platforms located on enemy ground. The diplomats can also support the vote of a territorial law redefining the rules of control of each sector, thus destroying platforms that are changing camps.

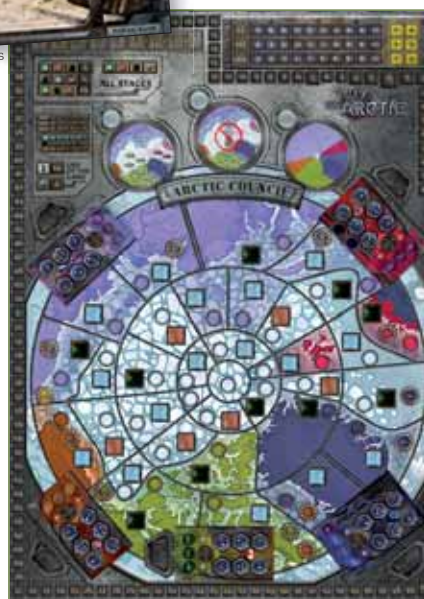
When it comes to the final end game scoring, the platforms and lobbyists assigned to the power having the North Pole will also bring a substantial number of Victory points.

## OUR OPINION

Nations belong to nobody, and are temporarily directed by player-investors. (Difficult not to see a connection with Imperial here.) However, although control of the powers is relatively stable in the game by Mac Gerdt's, 2019 allows three different players to make a move for the same power. This inevitably accentuates brutal confrontations, and aggressive actions will be numerous on all levels: Military strikes, disastrous laws enforced, and recurring revolts. However, behind this apparent chaos, hides a complex and multidimensional



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## FREEZING

*2019: the Arctic depicts a confrontation between the Arctic Council's nations. Pure science fiction? Global warming makes oil extraction conditions less strenuous, putting the Arctic, and its hundred billion potential barrels, at the center of everyone's attention. In 2007, a Russian expedition plants a symbolic flag at the North Pole, thereby fueling the angst of the other Council members. Geographical apportioning is a permanent bone of contention between the Russians and Americans. Following the ice-barrier meltdown, the opening of the "Northwest Passage" provides a maritime path connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans via the Arctic, which leads to other quarrels concerning sovereignty between Canada and the international community. In short, the Arctic is indeed an explosive powder keg of global power...*

game, supported by a rich and innovative theme. 2019 forces players to plan, anticipate, prepare for the worst, and to negotiate fragile alliances in a world where backstabbing goes without saying.

The ambiguous nature and quality of the materials are below current standards to the point of really hindering the fun of the game. But, if one manages to rise beyond these considerations, 2019 is a piece of gold for fans of raw testosterone.

PUBLISHER • Sinonis

AGE • 14 years and up

GENRE • conflict, production

PUBLIC • experienced players

PLAYING TIME • 150 minutes

NUMBER OF PLAYERS • 2 to 4





# Magnum Sal<sup>2010</sup>

DESIGNER

Marcin Krupinski &amp; Filip Mituński

ARTIST

Piotr Nowojewski

## One Game That Doesn't Need a Pinch of Salt!

**In Magnum Sal, each player is a foreman with a team of miners trying to exploit the famous Krakow in order to meet the demands of His Majesty, King Casimir the Great.**

### THE COMPONENTS

The game includes a game board depicting the town of Wieliczka and a vertical mine shaft, projecting from the "bottom" of the board, with three horizontal levels of tiles off the main shaft which contain the salt to be extracted. Cubes represent water as well as salt; the latter in different colors according to its purity. There are also thick tiles representing tools and finally there are the traditional meeples. The entire ensemble is rather aesthetically pleasing and well illustrated. The iconography is sufficiently clear to keep you from having to dash back to the rules to see what things mean – which contributes greatly to the fluidity of the game. The mine shaft with the branching levels of tiles is very eye-catching, and really helps immerse the players in the theme.

### THE RULES

Each player starts the game with five miners. The game will play out over three phases. In each one, players take turns performing two actions until the phase ends due to five of the king's demands being met. Some of the actions available to you involve the mine directly: moving a miner into the mine or extracting salt. Others involve the buildings on the surface: pumping water from the

mine, buying or selling salt at the market, buying a tool, hiring a miner, positioning yourself to fulfill royal orders in subsequent turns, or placing an assistant in a building in order to collect a coin from the bank every time anyone performs that building's action.

In order to descend into the mine, the miners must form an unbroken chain. This means that if a miner is alone in a space, that meeple can't move if there are others beyond him. Don't worry. His being stuck there isn't entirely a disadvantage because other players will have to pay him to help transport salt along the chain of miners to the surface. Your miners can also rest their fatigued bodies, weary from all that salt mining. At the end of each phase, you will retrieve your miners in preparation for the next phase. At the end of the game, you will earn bonus coins based on the number of tools you have, and then the richest player wins.

### OUR OPINION

Mechanically, Magnum Sal does not revolutionize the genre: placing workers, actions at buildings, and contracts to fulfill – all this is rather common for this type of game. It is not easy for a game to stand out in such a setting, and yet Magnum

Sal manages to do so. With only two actions per turn, the game runs smoothly and quickly. The theme is well implemented, particularly with the chain of miners that help each other extract and transport salt to the surface. Placing assistants in buildings and placing miners well in the chain can be crucial to

picking up a few extra coins from other players' actions. But above all, if you want to earn your salt in this game, you need to position yourself at the castle to fulfill royal orders. It takes two turns of waiting in order to complete an order, which you must do at the start of the third turn. As a result,

you strive to anticipate which orders you can fulfill, especially late in a phase.

The way the tiles are set up in the mine, the order in which the king's demands roll out, and the tools available each phase provide sufficient variety;

but after a few games, a seasoned gamer will notice that certain tactics are more beneficial than others. So overall, Magnum Sal could constitute an interesting transition between family games and "gamers' games".



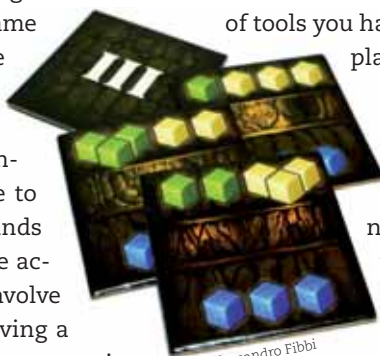
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PUBLISHER • Gry Leonardo

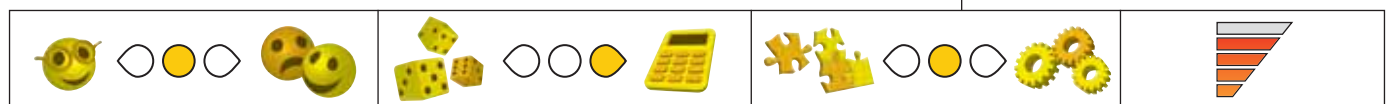
AGE • 10 years and up

GENRE • placement, worker placement

PUBLIC • any

PLAYING TIME • 90 minutes

NUMBER OF PLAYERS • 2 to 4



# DORRA ÜBER ALLES

## The Seven Comments



BY DAMIEN ANDRÉ

**If we let ourselves drift away a little from the review of the Seven Seals that follows, a whole enthralling universe appears. To return, at the time of its republication, to this game, its history, and its author indeed offers the opportunity to discover all the richness of German games, whether traditional or modern ones.**

It would not be easily conceivable in France. At the beginning of 2011, Spielbox, a German magazine concerned with the subject of games, presented on its cover what one would be hasty to regard here as a "small deck of cards": Wizard, by Ken Fisher, was then celebrating its fifteenth anniversary. We were presented the box in which it is traditionally known in Europe, the inevitable jubilee edition, as well as a new box, disguised under the name of Wizard Extreme, adorned with dubious illustrations inspired by a republication of the famous game Die sieben Siegel by Stefan Dorra, initially published in 2003. In France, Gigamic, while maintaining the change of style, gave up

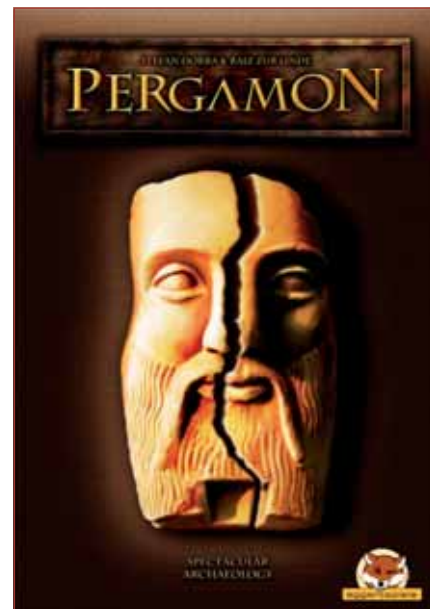


the reference to Wizard to return to the literal translation under which the game was previously known until then: The Seven Seals. The disappearance of the very beautiful, abstract, and esoteric original illustrations is regrettable. They constituted one of the rare successful attempts to reinvent playing cards without using a theme, contrary to those of Wizard which are enough of a mishap. Yet what matters is to see that Wizard and The Seven Seals stay alive. Ten or fifteen year careers – a longevity which has become rather rare in the current situation.

### A DIFFERENT CULTURE

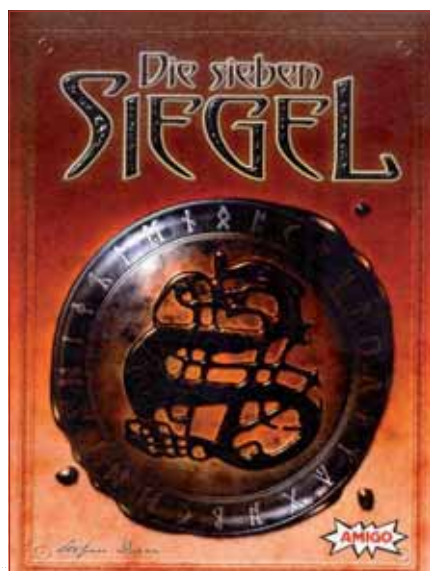
This simple observation makes it possible to gauge the level of popularity enjoyed in Germany (a country which is especially known for its contribution to boardgames) by trick-taking and folding games. The genre, which by the way is a little sneered at there, seems to be driven by some great inventiveness. Put differently, there is a market which makes this form of expression possible for authors as evidenced by the long list of games of the kind published. Stefan Dorra confirms it to us: there is, for him, in this penchant towards card decks, an

ignored specificity of the German gaming culture. A quick tab search on card games on a gaming site or a glance at the importance gained by Wizard, Tichu and others on the BrettspielWelt gaming site would be enough to be convinced. For those pondering the issue, it proves to be quite interesting to realize that, far from being a dead language, the genre continues to evolve constantly and take very original turns. Be it due to specialists like Klaus Palesh (author of the very good Sticheln and Hattrick) or to freelancers, like Friedemann Friese recently with the astonishing Stich-Meister, making specific incursions, numerous are those that take on the challenge and try innovative proposals.



### DORRA THE EXPLORER

Many of these publications are neither translated nor distributed, and, when they are, the word generally remains confidential and marginal. Within these many proposals, the name of Stefan Dorra stands out and naturally imposes itself. If we do not regard him only as a card game specialist (he is a jack-of-all-trades, as the recent Pergamon proves it) and should he not be the most





## POKER CHIPS AND PAPER BOARD

Among the number of heirs that could be seen as to be in the wake of *Die sieben Siegel*, one must count *Pala*. Published confidentially by Cambridge Games Factory, publisher of *Glory to Rome*, this game is the brainchild of Jeffrey D. Allers, an American exile in Germany previously known for his *Alea Iacta Est*. Seeming at first anecdotal and not too beautiful, with its poker chips and paper board, *Pala*, however, deserves a look at. In the small, not overly functional box, two quite different games are provided. In the first game, a quasi-replica of *Dorra*, the opponents bet on the folds they think are achievable. In the second one, a preliminary stage determines the colors that bringing negative points and those that will enable the discard of other cards. Making the right number of folds or making as few as possible – all very classic. However, making the most of its pictorial theme, it introduces a novelty instead of the traditional trumps: the possibility of combining the primary colors so that they become secondary ones. One no longer cuts but shuffles! For example, if someone opens with blue, you can see the fold switch to purple if an opponent adds a red card, conversely, if the fold is green, a combination of yellow and blue enables one to follow. The whole produces an uncertainty of the control of the fold, the colors that will constitute it, and the length of the round. These fun ideas offset us in our habits and bring a card counting system players might first see as chaotic to unfold as being a rather fine one. Entertaining and twisted, it is unfortunately poorly distributed globally. It is a pity since it definitively proves itself to have its share of the culture of card games. No wonder that, as Jeffrey D. Allers, a fairly unknown author, is also a wise gaming world columnist on various blogs.

A game by Jeffrey D. Allers, published by Cambridge Games Factory (2011) for 3-5 players aged 12 years and up.

[www.cambridgegames.com/index.php?page=games&choice=pala](http://www.cambridgegames.com/index.php?page=games&choice=pala)



and enthralling. Although often rather strange, these compete without too many problems with the classics. Among those, *Njet!*, as *Die sieben Siegel* did before it, distinguishes itself with some rare qualities: purity and obviousness. Like the others and many game proposals of the same breed, it is confronted by an interesting problem: how to distinguish itself from the legacy of the classics like that of *Tarot*, *Bridge*, and *Coinche*, which, like it or not, certainly embody some perfection? How to renew a genre that is so codified? What novelty can be offered with such narrow, reshuffled, bases without using an artificial premise? Finding new cards or getting rid of the figures is not that simple. Few successes have been seen in this field while many failures have. On the mechanical level, the importance of the preliminary phase, the existence of double trumps (a figure and/or a color), the presence of the several copies of the same card, of revolving teams, of skirting conventions of the kind, all of these are attempts to stand out. If, at first, these elements appear as innovating as they are distracting to the unfamiliar public, they will undoubtedly be more recognizable to the German players. Indeed, the influence of two traditional German games, *Skat* and *Doppelkopf* are particularly sensitive to these. A number of elements seem to descend directly from this lineage. These two card games are almost unknown outside Germany and its neighboring areas, while at the same time others, like the Italian *Scopa*, have a much broader radius. They would thus deserve their own reviews. The author has been playing them, he says, since the age of eight, like all the little German kids. When we contacted him, he said not to currently be working on any new card games, not finding anything original enough to possibly distinguish itself. While waiting for what comes next, one catches oneself dreaming that the current thrill we are witnessing in France around this sort of games (see *The Dwarf King*, *Tschak!*, the republications of *Hol's der Geier* and of *Die sieben Siegel*) could lead to a true basic tendency that would allow the unearthing of some of those hidden treasures.

prolific of his kind, he has nevertheless published, with *Die sieben Siegel* and *Njet!*, two huge successes in the genre. Besides, he admits having a particular affection for card games, traditional or modern, which he says he's been playing since childhood and continues to enjoy to this day. If *Die sieben Siegel* is a light

and pleasant variation on the principle of trick-taking (*Whist...*), *Njet!* operates at the level of a game of folds. The first version was of Soviet inspiration and rather well done, to which we owe Franz Vohwinkel. This graphic choice was unfortunately abandoned to the profit of *Matthäus Dory's* drawings when it was republished, in 2007 by *Amigo*, in the 4 in 1 box – which is the version of the game one will most probably find nowadays. This compilation of four games is a true figure of anthology of modern games of folds. *Njet!* stands close by, indeed, with the excellent *Was Sticht?* by Karl-Heinz Schmiel and *Mü* by Doris Matthäus and Franck Nestel, both of which had been published separately before.

### LEGACY AND DIFFERENTIATION

Besides, one should not be duped by the naive and childish drawings which are there, misleading and almost contradicting. We are there in the presence of technical games; demanding, long,



# FREE, AT LAST!

## Let's Talk About "Freedom in the Game"

BY OLIVIER DOYEN

**"You're cheating!"**  
**"Yes, but I have the right to. It's written right here." Linear or multidirectional; open or restricted. Games are made of rules which, themselves, reflect mechanisms or principles. These elements define an outline that delineate our actions. However, where does our freedom stop, and where does our creativity begin? Is it the game that dictates my actions or do my actions define the game? Are rules an imposed theme or a safety net? Become a revolutionary, take up arms, and let us march towards a free game!**

### A BOOKLET TO RULE THEM ALL

Any game involves rules. Be them minimalist, leaving much to the creativity, or on the contrary being very restrictive. They are the soul of a game, and without them it is impossible to achieve what it was designed for. Beyond the simple definition of a set of "instructions", the rules reflect the spirit of the game. They exhibit its mechanisms and explain the framework created and defined by the author. The rulebooks show intent. Some also leave room for flavor text that set the mood, have jokes, and sometimes even whole chapters of history and background at the whim of the author and the publishing house. It is this innocent set of pages that may dictate our gaming experience. The format of the game is defined within it, as well as our flexibility during the game. Rules and mechanisms are intertwined, and behind the scenes of a game an implacable machine is often found in which each gear has a very specific place

and each wheel rotates in a precise direction, or it can also happen that the machine is almost empty, where it falls onto ourselves to find funny shaped wheels that can be inserted in it. Do games reduce our freewill to silence, imposing its agenda, or are they able to carry us across the white line?

### CONTROLLED SKID

The assortment offered by the huge range of games covers one extreme to another. On the one hand, there are games, complex or simplistic, which divide players by an impassable wall. One where players can see that the game path is all mapped out. This type of mechanism is rarely attractive, and unless it is a trivial game in which the dice will decide our fate for us, this kind is quickly abandoned. Unavoidably, we thirst for freedom.

In an intermediate range, we find classic games with very precise rules, restricted choices, but offering a wide selection of strategies. This variety must go together with a good balance. Without it, no free will: an unbalanced game gives rise to ultimate and unstoppable strategies or choices too obvious. When only one reasonable tactic imposes itself to us, we lose the possibility of choosing.

The higher level is taken up by games involving some cooperation and/or bargaining. If the framework still consists of strict rules, then an amount of psychology has an effect, and demonstrated timidity shows up. Dialogs with other players open to a sphere of absolute freedom within the specific codes established by the rules, and allow unthinkable promises and outlandish actions to

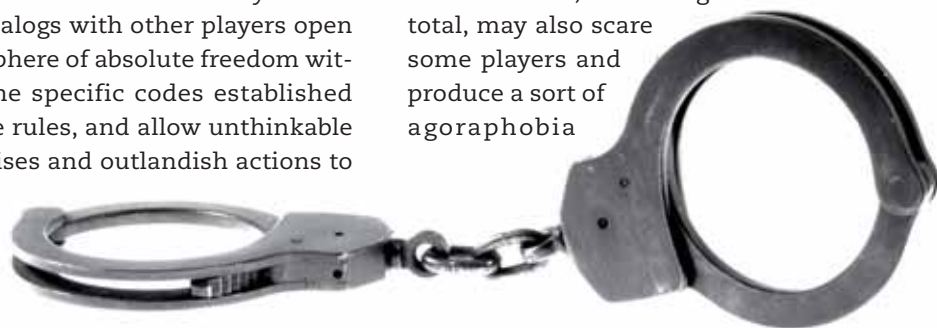
### HELL IS OTHER PEOPLE

*One definition of freedom is "the faculty of acting by one's will according to the means available without being hindered by the power of others." Therefore, when people play together, they choose as true gentlemen to "put a spoke in the wheel" of others. Overriding this principle sometimes amounts to cheating. Let it be said, a cheater is not simply disrupting the game balance, but is also undermining the freedom of the players. Everyone knows that cheating is wrong, but did you know that cheating is undercutting free will?*

be made. But the results of these remain heavily framed and without any real surprises.

A step further can be found in games that rend the material veil to focus on creativity. Whether it's Pictionary or Dixit, the rules take the form of a thread that must be kept, but that does not stop us from dancing, drawing or walking on our heads. Freedom becomes real and the door to our imagination blasts open. The result, if provided by sharp rules yet subtle and discreet, is often quite enjoyable.

Finally, on the other side of the scale are role playing games. The rules are a safety net and the only real limit is our own imagination. This freedom, becoming total, may also scare some players and produce a sort of agoraphobia





feeling that may petrify them. Role-playing games are practiced among connoisseurs, but by dropping the ballast binding us to the classic games, they become more accessible and can provide great sensations.

### DURA LEX SED LEX

Whatever the degree of freedom, a game cannot exist without rules. And even when the range of possible actions is wide, departing from the scope defined by the author often boils down to inducing a significant imbalance to the game. The most trivial sub-rules frequently come from a long period of testing during which the game was triturerated in all directions and pushed into a corner. Although some games seem to leave us with a lot of latitude, we always progress within a closed setting, and escaping the frame does not come without risk. It often happens that, with games of an above-average complexity, we end up forgetting to apply one rule or another. These failures almost inevitably affect the flow and outcome of the game. In some cases, great maneuvering freedom involves more comprehensive rules, strong or very specific to cover many scenarios created by imaginative players. It's not a fluke that role-playing games are among those with the most voluminous rules.

### TASTE THIS, IT'S HOMEMADE !

Although a rule has a definite place and a reason to be very precise, play is above all about fun. While changes may disrupt the workings of machines, it is for players to apply the rules or not, or even transform them. Whether because of the audience (a younger player, or a person less accustomed to this type of game, etc.) or to get a different playing experience, nothing prevents testing an adaption of the framework. Indeed, if our freedom and creativity in the game is set in advance, our creativity outside of the game is virtually

unlimited ; the choice is ours to distort or adjust that frame. There are also some games, wargames with miniatures for instance, that are so vast that the rules textually require managing unforeseen cases with 'house' rules established between the players who are supposed to behave like true gentlemen. Finally, if the rules are the soul of the game, its substance is its body. Diverting the substance to create new systems (for educational purposes for example), is to give new life to the game. If the rules and substance form a whole, to turn a part away does not destroy it. From this perspective, a playful purpose opens a door into the infinity of our imagination.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF PROPRIETY

Whether inside or outside of games, the dimension of freedom is ubiquitous. A game to which we return, is a game which every avenue has yet to be explored. Whether it's multiple strategies or the ability to overcome physical barriers to express our own creativity, a good game not only has a solid framework that will provide the necessary cues for players not to feel lost, but will also give them the ability to adapt among these signs without feeling directed. Similarly, a game that opens up possibilities,

## FREE ABSTRACTION

*Creativity can also come from tactical prowess. Inventing a new strategy comes down to speaking your imagination within the confines of very strict rules. Thus, the game of chess dates, at least, from the tenth century. If a game as old as this one still has not died out, it's because behind the simple cartesian surface, the rules hide a multitude of strategies. The chessboard has only sixty-four squares, yet despite this limited and immutable number, the wealth of moves and combinations is almost infinite. In contrast, some contemporary games that offer enormous amounts of actions are so poorly thought out and unbalanced that the most optimal choices impose an overly obvious strategy to the players who end up becoming mere spectators of the game.*

thanks to some rich material that generously allow players to divert it, will get a second life. Admiration for an author is in the principles founded in the use of his rules ; the compliance for players is to appreciate the author's intelligence and enabling free will towards change. So, don't let yourselves be captives ; play!



# FUN HOUSE

## A Reading of A Theory of Fun for Game Design



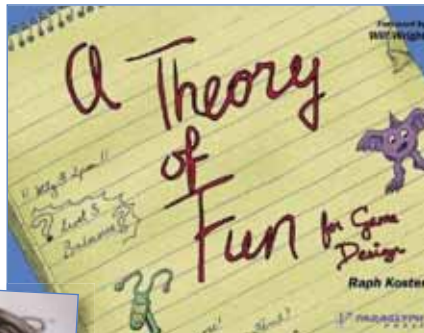
BY DAMIEN ANDRÉ

**A**voiding both the reef of university language and the didacticism of how-to manuals for budding “game designers”. Raph Koster offers us here a vivifying essay on game creation.

Out of the bullpen, he surprises us by proposing a very well adapted form to his subject : an Italian-style book, which has more in common with a sketchbook than a finished work. On the cover, the illustration shows what could very well be the notes of an author at work : his many questions, his notes, his scribbles. Inside, like in a school exercise book, the same structure continues : on each page, based on the text, a humorous drawing is found. While they don't always hit the mark, they nevertheless leave the pleasant feeling of a thought forming, of someone drawing in the margins. This makes reading easier, more so since the language used, once past a few technical terms, is quite simple.

### AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT

The author of the preface points it out rather quickly : linking, in the same sentence “theory” and “fun” has something a bit antinomic and ambitious. Taking as a starting point the observation of his children playing tic-tac-toe, the author puts himself in the spotlight, in his drawings as in his text, and weaves his web around a few concepts. Firstly, “fun”, of course, the vector which allows the subject, even though it might not be as explored in depth as in other books, to remain interesting, but also the nature of the game and the possible ambitions of the creator. Very quickly, he comes to the etymology (Fonne/Fonn, Gaelic



and old English words meaning both madness and pleasure), while omitting the borrowing, cited by others, from Scandinavian (“a flighty, vain person”). The notion of “source of pleasure” is quickly circumscribed. The author associates to it, in addition to esthetic pleasure, physical and chemical stimuli. Further in, he speaks of “fun” as a space somewhere between boredom and anguish. This, with the recurrent use of terms such as “task”, “patterns”, “skill”, puts him in a highly neurological approach to the subject. While he expounds, in the end, on the possibilities of a game to reach the status of art, he nonetheless does not neglect these less romantic undertones. Pleasure comes from learning, which have to do with reflexes. We all try to be the dominant male of the pack, etc. From that point of view, as he states “the fate of games is to become boring, not to be fun” and struggling against that state of fact is a battle which is lost in advance. Whether they are too complex or too easy, they will be resolved and abandoned.

### A THEORY BEING CONSTRUCTED

Not the least of the qualities of this work is to allow us to not agree with him, to make us feel like talking about his positions, for example on the place of narration in relation with mathematics. Upon finishing this highly

interesting book, we realize two things. The first is the capacity of Anglo-Saxons to claim new disciplines and attempt to rethink them in a pragmatic manner, never entirely disconnected from economic efficiency. A Theory of Fun for Game Design thus adds a new contribution, quite valuable, to the long list of books published on the subject. The second would be, as with each new release, the feeling of a form of discipline being built, which, in parallel to the evolution of the status of gaming, still leaves large areas to explore and discover.

### JACK OF ALL TRADES

Raph Koster mainly works in the video game industry (he led the Star Wars Galaxies project, among others). However, as his book implied, he is far from confining himself to that sole discipline. Folk-influenced music, drawing, writing : he introduces his various spheres of interest on his site. Like the visual artist, the singer isn't really memorable, even though he uses a rather enjoyable and breezy guitar music to sing to. However, many articles, some of which were used as a basis for A Theory of Fun, offer on his blog, active since 1998, an extremely dense conceptual fodder, rich of some two-thousand-five-hundred published messages. While his book was aimed towards vulgarizing, he allows himself to speak here as a specialist. A certain dryness, in form as well as matter, means that it's harder to get into things; but the potential audience is quite likely not the same.

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