

Klára Cserne:

# Rituals, Games and Festivities in Transitory Spaces

DOKTORAL DISSERTATION

Supervisors:

Ágnes Kapitány DSc Professor emerita

and Gábor Kapitány DSc Private university lecturer

Moholy–Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest

Doctoral School

Design Theory PhD program

2023

# THESES

1. Reflecting on the widespread expansion of digital work and entertainment and the isolating effects of the COVID epidemic, we are looking for ways to reconnect with personal physical, spatial and social environments.
2. Our research relies on the legacy of Hungarian neoavantgarde performance art as our playful ancestors. We are aiming to develop a liberating and widely accessible game-method informed by the experience of ‚wounded collective identity’ and embedded in local tradition.
3. A possible new function for performative and theatrical practices outside artistic institutions: a widely accessible, learnable and developable toolkit for autonomous agency.
4. Pervasive and immersive game-systems are design objects that create fictional spaces and stories that create links between dreams, imagination and reality. Such encounters between fiction and reality generate a sense of uncertainty.
5. Our observation is that non-institutionalised ‚underground’ performing artists in Hungary, through their multiple peripheral positions, have developed a particular mode of survival that draws on this very sense of uncertainty as a creative resource.
6. We are building a model of community action, grounded in art theory and history, that makes the experience of uncertainty bearable, then interesting, and finally (hopefully) an enjoyable, liberating experience.
7. We are writing theory informed by our feminine and motherly experiences. Reader-response criticism is the fundamental characteristic of our approach to historical material.
8. The intertwined jelly-like vibrancy of the Hungarian neoavantgarde will become accessible to a naive observer via the religious and spiritual nature of the period under review.
9. In the Hungarian neoavantgarde scene, the role of artists of Jewish origin is particularly interesting. The Holocaust-survivor identity-deficit produces experiences of absence, secrecy and emptiness.
10. This experience of void provoked innovation and the creation of new rituals to replace broken traditions. We look at the heritage of state socialism not as anomaly, but as an important historical link to our present.
11. Neoavantgarde performances we might interpret as rites of passage. Rites of becoming autonomous agents - in an era whose political program is the infantilisation of an entire population, keeping them incapacitated and vulnerable.

12. Traditional rites of passage follow a cyclical, multi-step path. It disconnects, transforms and then reconnects the subject with the the society from which it has departed. The neoavantgarde liberation rites could only get as far as the first step of detachment from the existing system. Thus the artists found themselves in a semi-permanent, detached, liminoid space. Our endeavour is to continue the neoavantgarde rites of detachment in creating our own rituals of reconnection.
13. Let’s complete the circle! Let us bring back this freedom-seeking art practice into everyday domestic life. The means of doing this will be a format common in contemporary leisure culture: the card game.
14. The game is called: **KŐ-KŐ-KŐ**.  
Summary of the game-structure:  
In everyday life, our actions are determined by cause and effect.  
The **KŐ-KŐ-KŐ** cards replace these causal relations.  
Finally, we insert new, invented causes in place of the cards, thus creating a narrative that connects the realm of everyday life with fiction.
15. We distributed our game widely and collected feedback from players. Reports indicate that they have experienced significant physical and mental changes under the influence of the game. They compare their experiences to the effects of various drugs, community rituals, creative experiences and fictional situations.
16. We interpret the experience of „safe uncertainty” created by the **KŐ-KŐ-KŐ** as facilitating the establishment of personal trust between participants.

