

# NOW PLAY THIS

25 – 28 MARCH 2021  
PRESS RELEASE



**FREE** | Online: [www.nowplaythis.net](http://www.nowplaythis.net)

London's leading festival of experimental games **Now Play This** returns with **a new four-day virtual programme packed with interactive games, workshops, and conversations** for people of all ages to enjoy from home.

This year's edition, presented as part of **London Games Festival**, **explores the climate crisis through games and play**, inviting audiences **to creatively interrogate the ecological issues faced worldwide today**.

Players can enjoy a vast range of both individual and collaborative gameplay, created by an innovative community of makers, designers and artists, with new games becoming available each day of the festival. From taking responsibility for the fate of the planet in interactive simulations, to creating beautiful ecosystems or witnessing environmental destruction in imagined futures, *Now Play This 2021* offers a unique gaming experience, forming an exciting and timely online series, open to all ages and abilities.

### Highlights include:

- Audiences are invited to 'take flight' to the festival with a **live launch event and discussion** within games designer **Hosni Auji's Airplane Mode** simulator, offering light-hearted escapism in a time where travel is restricted, **simulating the delights and annoyances of the airline travel experience without the carbon footprint**
- **Repurpose**, a **micro-adventure that sends instructions to participants' phones, encouraging people to get outside and explore the natural surroundings beyond their home**, specially created for *Now Play This*
- **Live role-play simulation of UN climate change negotiations** in **World Climate Simulation**, where players can **see the impact of their environmental decisions with live analysis from a digital modelling tool**

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- Interactive narrative game **Villains and Heroes** challenges players to **uncover the identity of key players in climate change denial and disinformation campaigns, based on the real-life costume party hosted by multi-billionaire Robert Mercer** shortly after the election of Trump in 2016
- New interactive design game **Among Ripples** offers players the chance to **experiment with building and maintaining their own lake ecosystem**
- Fans of *Age of Empires II* can convene in the new online chatroom, **The Garden of Earthly Delights** a playful new work which allows users **to transform into different species from the animal kingdom**
- **Venice 2089** invites users to **explore a future of Venice**, which once a significant tourism destination but now almost uninhabited, is struggling with the unpredictable behaviour of tides

### FULL SCHEDULE:

**Thursday 25 March 2021 | *What Do You Need to Have Fun?***

***Now Play This opens with a spotlight on projects that help us think about the infrastructures behind the way we play.***

### ***Flying to the Festival***

**Live Play Event | 15.00 | Register for free online**

To launch *Now Play This 2021*, the team invite audiences to ‘take flight’ to the festival with a live event and discussion on what we need to have fun within Lebanese designer **Hosni Auji’s Airplane Mode** simulator. Offering light-hearted escapism in a time where travel is restricted, the game **simulates the airline travel experience**, without the carbon footprint, from your seat and the seatback in front of you, to the contents of your carry-on bag and in-flight entertainment, to the behaviours of cabin crew and other passengers.

### ***Repurpose***

**Activity | Play Anytime**

Game designers **Amy Strike** and **Tom Williams** invite the public to join them on a **meditative journey that begins within your home and leads you into the outside world**. Delivering instructions and invitations through your phone, *Repurpose* is a self-guided micro adventure questioning how we consider and use objects in our surroundings.

### ***Greener Games: One Studio’s Approach to Sustainability***

**Talk | 18.30**

*Now Play This* join London-based games studio **Space Ape** to discuss how they

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achieved their goal of becoming a carbon negative company and to share their thoughts on how we too can be more sustainable.

### ***Folk Game TikToks with Danny Hawk***

**Talk | 20.00**

New York-based independent game developer **Danny Hawk** hosts a streamed talk exploring the **emergence and explosion in popularity of folk games on the video sharing platform TikTok over** the course of the pandemic.

### ***Communal Festival Space designed by Tiz Creel + Festival Party***

**Activity | Available to access across the weekend**

**Tiz Creel**, Mexican born and London-based artist and game designer, presents a **2D-social space** for *Now Play This* 2021. Users can enjoy **communal games, live events and a festival party** all within a new digital work **inspired by the festival line-up and architecture of Somerset House**. See full schedule online for timed events in this space.

### **Friday 26 March 2021 | *You Fix the Climate!***

***Day two of the festival highlights the more than 30-year-long tradition of games that present the climate crisis as a problem for players to solve, inviting audiences to experience how it feels to be responsible for the fate of the planet.***

### ***Climate Change Games and Research – An Open Exchange***

**Workshop | 13.00 | Register for free online**

Hosted by game designer and urban geographer **Jana Wendler**, this workshop **brings together climate researchers and game designers for a frank exchange about the hopes, fears and realities of communicating scientific knowledge through games** and changing perspectives in Play.

### ***World Climate Simulation***

**Live Play Event | 15.00 | Register for free online**

Independent, not-for-profit think-tank **Climate Interactive** present **World Climate Simulation**, a **live role-play simulation of UN climate change negotiations**, where players can see the impact of their environmental decisions **with live analysis** from a digital modelling tool.

### ***Among Ripples: Shallow Waters***

**Live Event | 17.00**

Swedish development team **Eat Create Sleep** present **Among Ripples: Shallow Waters**, a **new eco-tycoon simulation** in which players work together as a **team of scientists to build, repair and maintain the delicate ecosystem of lakes and rivers** in a near future setting.

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### ***Cards Against the Climate Crisis***

#### **Live Play Event | 18.30**

Audiences are invited to join designers and activists in playing and discussing two board games, **Ecologic** and **Carbon City Zero**, both of which explore the climate crisis in different ways, from **balancing extracting minerals from the landscape whilst offsetting damages, to developing a sustainable city.**

### ***Balance of the Planet***

#### **Activity | Play Anytime**

Players are invited to experience game designer **Chris Crawford's** celebrated **environmental crisis simulator**, which was originally released for *Earth Day* 1990.

### **Saturday 27 March 2021 | *Beyond Repair***

***Challenging the notion that the climate crisis can be solved or fixed by players, Day 3 sees Now Play This go "Beyond Repair". The festival will present critical work that directly addresses the powers behind environmental destruction and imagines futures in which the damage has become irreparable.***

### ***Alternative Ecologies Jam***

#### **Community Game Jam | Anytime**

Writer and games researcher **Emilie Reed** invites audiences to engage with critical games writing and the themes of the festival through **contributing their own writing, micro-games, or calls to action about gaming's relation to economic and ecological issues.** Contributors will be invited to come together for sharing moments and reflect on everyone's submissions through dedicated sessions.

### ***The Last Survey***

#### **Activity | Play Anytime**

Artist **Nicholas O'Brien** presents **The Last Survey**, a narrative essay game in which players **take on the role of a geologist advising a Brazilian mining company** and must make critical choices to save the Earth's exhausted metal reserves or witness the consequences.

### ***Villains and Heroes***

#### **Activity | Play Anytime**

Software artist and writer **Marloes de Valk** presents an **interactive narrative game based on a real event: the costume party hosted by multi-billionaire Robert Mercer shortly after the election of Trump**, December 2016. Players must try and uncover the identity of the disguised guests – among them key players in climate change denial and disinformation campaigns, without exposing themselves as an uninvited guest.

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### ***Games about Bad Actors***

#### **Conversation | 15.00**

Artists **Nicholas O'Brien** and **Marloes de Valk** (creators of *The Last Survey* and *Villains and Heroes*) join the *Now Play This* team to discuss games that explicitly explore bad actors in terms of the climate crisis.

### ***Venice 2089***

#### **Activity | Play Anytime**

Presented by Italian development team, **Safe Place Studios**, **Venice 2089** follows disaffected teen Nova who is visiting her grandfather in a rapidly sinking Venice. Players are invited **to explore the city through the eyes of Nova, which once a significant tourism destination but now almost uninhabited**, is struggling with the unpredictable behaviour of tides.

### ***Even in Arcadia***

#### **Activity | Play Anytime**

In this experiential narrative game by **Phoebe Shalloway**, players can explore and eavesdrop on characters in a hyper-capitalist future on Earth, where corporations develop and move society to new planets, and dispose of the old planets like smartphone models.

### ***Imagining Post-Climate Crisis Worlds***

#### **Conversation | 17.00**

The creators of *Venice 2089* and *Even in Arcadia* join the *Now Play This* team to discuss games that look at a future in which it might be too late.

### **Sunday 28 March 2021 | *Ways of Relating***

***Day 4 sees Now Play This present works that give space for reflection and imagine other ways of relating to the natural world.***

### ***Summit for Intergalactic Knowledge***

#### **Live Play Event | 16.00**

Become an alien, or a slime mold, or a rock, in this playful online live action role-playing game from international artists **Alen Ksoll, Margherita Huntley and Natalia Skoczylas** which premieres at *Now Play This*. Participants **inhabit various new characters to start addressing the challenges of the anthropocentric climate crisis.**

### ***Garden of Earthly Delights***

#### **Live Play and Conversation | 17.00**

Canadian developers **SCRNPNT** return to *Now Play This* with their new online work **Garden of Earthly Delights**, a chatroom which **allows users to transform into different species from the animal kingdom of *Age of Empires II*.**

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### *Honour Water*

#### **Game and Interview | Play Anytime**

**Honour Water** is a singing game for healing water that passes on songs in Anishinaabemowin, the Anishinaabe language, presenting water teachings and singing challenges alongside art by Anishinaabe artist Elizabeth LaPensée. For *Now Play This*, players can enjoy an **exclusive interview with the creative team behind the game**.

### *Floating Point Leviathan*

#### **Game | Play Anytime**

Dutch developer **Yan Knoop** premieres **Floating Point Leviathan**, a **new game which provides players with a single implied goal to hunt a whale, however once the creature is hurt, the world too fractures around it**, challenging viewers to face consequences of the damage caused.

*Now Play This 2021 is supported by Goethe-Institut*

### **FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- *Now Play This 2021* runs from **25 –28 March 2021** online
- For more information visit: <https://nowplaythis.net/>
- Full festival schedule available via: <https://nowplaythis.net/2021-festival/>

### **ABOUT NOW PLAY THIS**

*Now Play This* is a festival of experimental game design running at Somerset House in London each Spring, showcasing interactive and playful work as part of the London Games Festival.

The festival investigates how games culture and playful art intersects with the issues of our time, exploring the often-surprising ways in which games, across all styles and genres, relate to the things that matter in the real world: the climate crisis, fragile democratic systems or the politics of love. Founded in 2015, the festival has introduced innovative and critical makers from around the globe to adventurous audiences of all ages and with many backgrounds. Over time, it has evolved to include performances, workshops, installations, walks, talks and commissions that extend across the year.

Moving forward, since 2021 with incoming festival director Sebastian Quack, *Now Play This* continues to celebrate the community, the sensitivity and the wild, pure joys of experimental game design – proving with each new inquiry: “*This is now in play*”.

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### **ABOUT GAMES LONDON**

Games London is a ground-breaking programme delivered by Film London, the capital's screen industries agency, and UK games industry trade body Ukie. The project is backed by the Mayor of London with funding worth £1.2m over three years.

The Games London programme includes a number of initiatives to make London the games capital of the world. It re-established the London Games Festival in April 2016. Other areas of activity include inbound and outbound trade missions and work connecting and supporting games development skills in London.

### **ABOUT SOMERSET HOUSE**

*London's working arts centre*

Somerset House is London's working arts centre and home to the UK's largest creative community. Built on historic foundations, we are situated in the very heart of the capital.

Dedicated to backing progress, championing openness, nurturing creativity and empowering ideas, our cultural programme is ambitious in scope. We insist on relevance, but aren't afraid of irreverence, and are as keen on entertainment as enrichment. We embrace the biggest issues of our times and are committed to oxygenating new work by emerging artists. Where else can you spend an hour ice-skating while listening to a specially commissioned sound piece by a cutting edge artist?

It is this creative tension – the way we harness our heritage, put the too-often overlooked on our central stage and use our neo-classical backdrop to showcase ground-breaking contemporary culture – that inspires our programme. Old and new, history and disruption, art and entertainment, high-tech and homemade, combined with the fact that we are home to a constantly shape-shifting working creative community: this is our point of difference. It is what we are proud of. And it is what makes the experience of visiting or working in Somerset House inspiring and energizing, urgent and exciting.

[www.somersethouse.org.uk](http://www.somersethouse.org.uk)