

# **NEW VOICES IN ART**

A chamberlarp by Edland, Falch & Rognli

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## Introduction

«New Voices in Art» is a chamberlarp concept, for 10–25 players. It is set in the world of contemporary art, but art in itself is not the actual theme of the game. Rather, art and the social scene that accompanies it is used to explore themes of ambition, social pretence, our desire to be creative individuals, and of everyone being alone with their innermost thoughts.

The game plays out like a party where people mostly don't know each other beforehand, chatting, flirting, discussing art, networking and mostly having a good time. The players will be playing a version of themselves in an alternate reality, in which they are artists on the verge of a major breakthrough.

Reading this, you are presumably considering or already planning to organise a game of *New Voices in Art*. When designing this game, we had some very clear priorities. We wanted to make a larp where players simply could show up and participate, and which also took little effort to organise. We wanted to make a game that could be written down and published on the net, and then picked up and played by someone who haven't attended a prior run of the game.

*New Voices in Art* has certain features designed to accomplish these goals. A handout folder is provided for a highly structured briefing phase, and this text will cover most of the preparations you are required to make.

In the following you will find a section on preparations, this lists the practical stuff you will need to organise before the game. After this you will find a section on the pre game briefing you will need to hold. Following this comes a section on playing the game, which also includes certain optional concepts which may be included. Lastly, you will find ready to print materials for the briefing phase of the game.

We wish you the best of luck with the game! Should you have feedback, questions, praise or criticism, we will be happy to hear from you at [newvoicesinart@gmail.com](mailto:newvoicesinart@gmail.com).

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## Preparations

As the game is set in a gallery, the organizers need to find a location which can look the part. A room with white walls and no or few windows will probably work best. The works of arts in the exhibition is the most essential part of the scenography. You need as many or more pieces of art as there are participants playing artists. The game was originally designed for 11 participants but this can be changed as you see fit. The important thing is that there cannot be more artists than there are works of art (See page 5 for a version with more players than works of art). Don't be overly concerned about whether these pieces of art are "real art" or not. The important thing is that they fulfil their function as scenography during the game. Try picking objects that are different both in size, content and format. Remember forms of art like videos, performances and installations. Make up a title for each piece, and assign it a number. If you're lucky you can cooperate with an actual art gallery, which might save you the trouble of setting up an exhibition yourself. Another possibility is having the players bring a piece each, and setting up the exhibition together just before playing the game.

The recommended duration for this larp is approximately two hours. The organizers should also schedule some time for creating the characters and briefing the participants before the game starts and for debriefing and discussion after the end of the game. There needs to be a signal for when the game is ending. In the original runs of the game, one of the pieces was an installation that projected random, imperative sentences on the wall. To signal the end of the game, we had it project "Quit Larp". It's a good idea to make the signal unobtrusive, blending into the game reality, but at the same time very clear to avoid misunderstandings. Another option is to agree on a specific time to stop playing.

You also need to provide each participant with a glass and a pen. There should be wine available. Some or all of the wine can be substituted with beverages which doesn't contain alcohol. Since it's a party there should also be some music which fits the setting. This could be a play list on a MP3-player or a bunch of CDs that the participants are free to play as they like during the game.

Preparations check-list:

- ✓ Location.
- ✓ Recruiting players.
- ✓ Art, with titles and numbers, set up as for an exhibition.
- ✓ Music.
- ✓ Drinks.
- ✓ Glasses and pens.
- ✓ Printing folders and notes.
- ✓ Deciding on an appropriate signal for game end.

## Starting the game

At the end of this document you will find a four-page A5-format folder to print out and hand to your players. You will need to be familiar with the contents, so that you can help sort out any misunderstandings. The folder contains most of the information needed for the pre game briefing phase. In it the players are given specific instructions to follow through a process of making a character and relating to their piece of art. When the game area is ready, and the players have arrived, you welcome them and hand out pens and folders.

Your role in the briefing will be to hand out notes during the process, be at hand to answer questions, and to make sure that there are no lingering misunderstandings once the briefing is completed.

Reading the folder, the players will be instructed to fill out a questionnaire as themselves, and then raise their hand. Whenever someone raises their hand, give them a randomly drawn note with a statement on how their character feels about their piece. Which piece that actually is will be decided later. Here are the statements used for the original production (Ready-to-cut-out versions can be found on page 6):

- “I’m satisfied, but a lot of the other pieces here are very good...”
- “My piece might not be extraordinary, but compared to many of the other works, I’m happy with it.”
- “Of all the pieces I sent to the committee, why did they choose this one?”
- “I really deserve this.”
- “Finally my work was accepted. I don’t know if I could have handled another rejection.”
- “I knew this was special from the day I had the idea.”
- “I feel a bit uncomfortable showing something this personal to strangers.”
- “I thought it was good when I handed it in, but now I’m not so sure any more.”
- “This is the best I’ve ever done.”
- “Is it a bit cliché?”
- “Working on this piece has been very rewarding, but is it really art?”

Having received a statement, the players will have another go at filling out the questionnaire. Nobody should feel obliged to show their answers to anyone else. After a while, they will start to stand up. At this point, you should make sure everyone understands the rules of the game, answering any questions that the participants might have. Also make sure that everyone remembers the signal for game end.

The organizers should in advance have given each work of art a number and a title. Each participants should now randomly draw one of the pieces of art. This is the work of art which the character has made. Each participant walks over to their work of art to get a chance to study and get a feel for it. The game will then be ready to begin.

Game start check-list:

- ✓ Welcome, introduction, hand out folders.
- ✓ Watch for raised hands, hand out notes.
- ✓ Go through the rules, make sure everyone is on the same page.
- ✓ Randomly assign art pieces.

## Playing the game

The game starts for each participant when he/she feels ready. When a person picks up a glass he is in the game and can be interacted with by the other participants. Everyone should carry their glass at all times. During the game everyone can tap someone else's glass with a pen or similar object. The player whose glass has been tapped will then have to *speaking their mind*. This means they have to express their character's thoughts aloud as an in-character monologue. The monologues are part of the game but not heard by the characters. You might think of it as voice-over. The speaking player signals the end of the speech by drinking from the glass, and then returns to normal play. It is not permitted to tap one's own glass.

The game ends with a signal agreed on before the start of the game. Everyone doesn't have to stop playing at once, but within the next few minutes the participants should finish off their last scene. A participant leaves the game by putting aside the glass. This player should then no longer be interacted with. When everyone has set down their glasses the larp is over.

### *The role of the organizers during the game*

There should be little or no reason for the participants to have to consult the organizers as such during the course of the game. There are several things you could do, and if you are more than one organizer you could also do different things:

- Play the game like a regular participant.
- Play an employee in the gallery. The work could be things like serving beverages or making sure that a work of art is running smoothly.
- Be part of a work of art.

### *Other options*

#### 1) Hangarounds

You can double the number of participants by adding "hangarounds". Hangarounds are characters who do not have a piece of art in the exhibition. They are part of "the art crowd" and happen to be present at this party. The character creation process for hangarounds are as follows: Just like the participants playing artist the participants playing hangarounds start by reading through the folder answering the questions as themselves. They then draw a piece of paper containing a statement about what their motivation is for being at the party. Here are some examples of what these could be (also on page 7):

- "I plan to buy the piece of art I like the best."
- "I wasn't invited to the party I *really* wanted to go to, so I ended up here in stead."

- “I’m going to write an article about this exhibition.”
- “I really want to become a part of this crowd.”
- “I recently moved to this city – I’m here to get to know some interesting people.”
- “I want to have sex with someone tonight.”
- “I simply couldn’t wait for the exhibition to open, so I showed up for this party.”
- “I want to party hard tonight, because there’s something else I want to forget.”
- “I’m here to get inspiration for my own work.”
- “I really need something exciting to happen in my life.”
- “I want to get up to date on what’s happening in the art scene right now.”
- “I’m just here to flirt and have fun.”

Finally the participants should look at the folder once again and fill out the questionnaire as the character they want to play.

## 2) The Award

One element which can be added to the game is a vote among the artist on which piece of art in the exhibition is the best one. The players should be informed in advance that sending and receiving text messages will be part of the game but not exactly what will happen. Everyone should be instructed to bring their mobile phones and the organizers need to register the phone numbers. During the game one of the organizers should send a text message to everyone playing an artist informing them about the vote. Here is an example of how this message could be phrased:

“As part of “New Voices in Art” there will be a vote held among the artists themselves on the best work of art. The winner will have their work included in a prestigious exhibition in New York. Send a reply with the number of the piece you want to give your vote to by *[30 minutes before the end of the game]*.  
The Gallery Manager.”

After the votes have been collected a new text message should be sent to the winner of the vote. Having a vote as part of the game gives extra element for the players to include in their game and form opinions about. They will ask themselves questions like: “Which piece do I think is the best? Should I vote on my own piece? Should I ignore the vote entirely because I’m against this sort of thing?”

## Statements for artist characters:

I'm satisfied, but a lot of the other pieces here are very good...

My piece might not be extraordinary, but compared to many of the other works, I'm happy with it.

Of all the pieces I sent to the committee, why did they choose this one?

I really deserve this.

Finally my work was accepted. I don't know if I could have handled another rejection.

I knew this was special from the day I had the idea.

I feel a bit uncomfortable showing something this personal to strangers.

I thought it was good when I handed it in, but now I'm not so sure any more.

This is the best I've ever done.

Is it a bit cliché?

Working on this piece has been very rewarding, but is it really art?

## Motivations for hangaround characters:

"I wasn't invited to the party I *really* wanted to go to, so I ended up here in stead.

I'm going to write an article about this exhibition.

I plan to buy the piece of art I like the best.

I really want to become a part of this crowd.

I recently moved to this city – I'm here to get to know some interesting people.

I want to have sex with someone tonight.

I simply couldn't wait for the exhibition to open, so I showed up for this party.

I want to party hard tonight, because there's something else I want to forget.

I'm here to get inspiration for my own work.

I really need something exiting to happen in my life.

I'm just here to flirt and have fun.

I want to get up to date on what's happening in the art scene right now.



	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am happy with my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a creative person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I experience mood swings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am a complex person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like being on my own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am who I wish to be.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am highly ambitious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am often misunderstood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a loving and warm person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I contribute to society.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I need to express myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I care a lot about what others think of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After having answered as yourself, please raise your hand. The organisers will give you a note with a sentence describing your feelings for the piece you have made. Read this sentence to yourself, and keep it in mind when you go through the statements once more. On this second time through, try to use the statements as a tool for developing areas of difference and resemblance between your everyday self and your persona for the evening, placing marks in the grey boxes. Having finished this, please stand up. Keep quiet. You will each receive a number corresponding to one of the pieces of the exhibition. Find your piece and get to know it. When you feel ready to start playing, go get a drink. All players who are carrying drinks are in-game. After the signal for game end is given, you leave play when you feel ready for it by putting your glass back where you found it.

**NEW VOICES  
IN ART**

## You are the New Voices in Art!

This is a larp about ambition, ambivalence and about feeling alone in the world. We will be using contemporary art to symbolise our yearning for success and fulfilment as creative individuals, and explore themes related to that through play.

### Your character

You will be playing an alternate version of yourself. The extent of the differences between your regular self and the larp version is largely up to you, but there are certain rules:

*You are an aspiring contemporary artist.*

*You are not personally familiar with any of the other participants, as you may be in real life.*

*You have never even heard of larp.*

Apart from that, you are free to make this version of yourself as alike or different from your everyday self as you see fit.

### Scene and scenography

The scene of the larp is an informal party for the participating artists in the prestigious exhibition «New Voices in Art», on the evening before the opening day. The scenography consists of eleven pieces of art, and one of these will be assigned randomly to each participant. You will also be given a random sentence describing your feelings about your piece. Before play begins you will be given time to look at your piece, so that you might figure out why you have made it, and why you feel the way you do about it.

### Speaking your mind

During the larp, everyone will carry glasses for drinks at all times. If you wish to you may tap someone else's glass lightly, with a pen or

similar object, and they will then have to *speak their mind*. This means they have to express their characters thoughts aloud for a time, as an in-character monologue. The length of it is mainly up to the speaking player, but short and to the point is to be preferred over long and winding. These speeches **are** a part of the game, but are **not** heard by the characters. The speaking player signals the end of the speech by drinking from the glass, and then returns to normal play. As a player you may use what you learn when someone speaks their mind to guide further interaction with that character, but you must keep it within plausible coincidences. However, you are not obliged to act upon what you learn, nor to listening all the way through the speech. It is not permitted to tap ones own glass, no matter how interesting a monologue one has in mind.

### The other rules

This larp employs the usually familiar rules **brake** and **cut**. Should you find yourself in a play situation you feel is headed in a direction you are not comfortable with, you simply say «**brake**» clearly to those you are playing with. This tells them that play shouldn't be taken any further in that direction. If play for some reason has become so uncomfortable or offensive that you wish it to stop you can say «**cut**» loudly and clearly, and walk away. If someone calls a «**cut**», everyone will stop playing at once – no exceptions.

### Making yourself different

As an aid to developing your larp persona, we would like you to consider the statements on the next page, and rate how well you feel they apply to your everyday self. Go through them one at a time, and put marks in the appropriate black boxes. Don't worry about anyone reading it afterwards. This is merely a tool for you to use in developing a persona, and has no other purpose.