

# Putting for Pleasure & Politics



A Playable  
Sculpture  
Garden

# How to Play Putting for Pleasure & Politics

## Play by the rules

1. Play in sequential order from 1—9.
2. Step carefully, these are art pieces.
3. Ensure the safety of yourself & others.
4. If your ball leaves the putting surface, replace it and add 1 penalty point.
5. You may move the ball 12 cm from any obstruction with no penalty.
6. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult at all times.
7. Question yourself constantly.

## Keep Your Score

HOLE	PAR		PLAYER 1	PLAYER 2	PLAYER 3	PLAYER 4
1	5	Spiral Galaxy				
2	7 00110111	Command Loop				
3	5	The Wall				
4	3	3 Wholes				
5	1	“Don’t Agonize, Organize!”				
6	3	Of/f Course				
7	3	DRIVE				
8	∞	Infinite Chagrin				
9	4	Waves				
TOTAL						

# Putting for Pleasure and Politics: A Playable Sculpture Garden

**Curated and produced by David Darts**

*Putting for Pleasure and Politics* is a group exhibition featuring nine artist-designed mini golf holes. This playable sculpture garden is comprised of individual artworks that each explore a contemporary social issue through the inherent absurdity of mini golf. From the refugee crisis and our failed attempts to seal off borders and build walls, to wealth disparity, global warming, and racial and gender injustice, these sculptures confront many of the complicated issues impacting our daily lives. For participants, immersing oneself in a round of mini golf provides a coherent, if slightly dis-

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turbing, sense of a contemporary world impacted and misshapen by our human desires, follies, and behaviors.

Mini golf provides the perfect platform for artistically exploring our contemporary social condition. The game of golf itself has a challenging past. It has historically been the domain of the privileged and has links to racism, classism, elitism, water depletion, and habitat destruction. The United States currently has a President, himself an avid golfer and owner of golf resorts, who believes the game should be preserved as an aspirational sport for the rich. Mini golf, while it may share a common genealogy with its parent sport, occupies a more equalitarian and carnivalesque place in history and culture. It is a game of the people, requiring limited land and little training or expensive equipment. Unlike golf, mini golf is accessible to and playable by virtually everyone. These contradictory histories offer a fertile platform for artistic exploration and social engagement.

This playable sculpture garden has been designed to be participatory and interactive. This “de-centers” romantic notions of the individual artist found in modern Western art and instead asks the audience to actively participate in the production of the artwork, rather than to only gaze at it from a safe distance. These sculptures are thus intended to serve not as precious art objects but instead as platforms for shared experiences, dialog, and reflection. The disturbing and pleasurable experiences they present are ultimately meant to enlarge our capacity to reimagine the world and our relations within it.

Putting for Pleasure and Politics begins with John Torreano’s ***Spiral Galaxy with Two Black Holes (Hole #1)*** which provides a playful and metaphorical commentary on our current historical moment. Players must navigate the course while avoiding the political black holes we seem to be perpetually circling. This hole also inspires us to consider and question our drive to colonize new planets

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while failing to properly care for the one we currently inhabit. The mini golf course continues with Craig Protzel’s ***Command Loop (Hole #2)*** which explores issues of artificial intelligence and labor, along with the methods our computerized systems use to gather and monetize personal data and manipulate human behavior. Featuring a virtual golf caddie who appears at first to be helpful, this virtual assistant attempts to perpetually engage the player in a digital feedback loop that serves to extend the golfing experience and to collect as much data about players as possible.

Players are next confronted by Wendy Bednarz’s ***The Wall (Hole #3)*** which examines national borders and our recurring attempts to erect walls, literally and figuratively, to keep others out (or in). Bednarz’s wall, like all other border fences, is imposing but ultimately flawed. This becomes apparent when players discover that completing the hole simply requires them to ignore the wall and forge a new path to the other side.

Hashel Al Lamki's **3 Wholes (Hole #4)** serves as a mini laboratory for exploring utopias, dystopias, and eutopias ("achievable" utopias). Featuring three individual golf holes which offer unique sensory experiences for players, this sculpture encourages us to consider the possibilities, pitfalls, and limitations of our current and future worlds. Jill Magi's "**Don't Agonize, Organize**" (Hole #5) meanwhile, finds inspiration in the words and actions of African-American political activist and lawyer Florence "Flo" Kennedy who fought fiercely against racial and gender-based injustice. Drawing upon the history of "quilting bees" where quilters work together to speed up the work, this mini golf hole requires the cooperation of other players in order to move the ball into the hole. This suggests that people who find themselves engaged in the same activity or who want the same thing can generally achieve more if they work together.

Laura Schneider's **Off Course (Hole #6)** highlights the dangers



of global warming and a looming future of severe water scarcity and 60 degree climates. Commenting on the environmental impact of golf courses, Schneider's sand-covered hole also encourages players to consider the implications of building and maintaining water and resource intensive golf courses in the middle of the desert.

Sandra Peters' **DRIVE (Hole #7)** presents a topsy-turvy world with no guide rails that requires

players to remain calm in order to successfully navigate it. The sculpture is elevated on stilts which makes using a golf club impossible. The only way forward is to remain level-headed, roll up one's sleeves and get the job done (guide the ball into the hole).

Jonny Farrow's **Infinite Chagrin (Hole #8)**, meanwhile, presents golf as the domain of the wealthy and powerful and recreates the frustration the average person feels when facing a world that seems increasingly to be "rigged" against them. Players soon discover that completing this hole is technically impossible as there is no actual hole. Just as the global elite already know, the key to success in this case is to cheat the system.

*Putting for Pleasure and Politics* concludes with Goffredo Pucetti's **Waves (Hole #9)** which examines the relentless influx of refugees arriving on the shores of Western European beaches. The work juxtaposes sunbathers enjoying a holiday at the beach



with those who have arrived after a dangerous journey seeking asylum and safety. Players must ignore and avoid the refugees in order to successfully complete the hole. The work challenges us to consider our core human values and contradictory responses to the refugee crisis.

# The Artists

**Hashel Al Lamki**, as Edward T. Hall said, “The relationship between man and the cultural dimension is one in which both man and his environment participate in molding each other.” I was born in UAE, where I have experienced the rapid industrial and architectural growth of Dubai and the Emirates, and the cultural complexities and dynamics that came as a result of the construction boom. In 2007 I joined a BFA program at Parsons the New School for Design. During my time in NYC, I nurtured my passions and enriched my practice through multidisciplinary collaborations. Currently, I infuse these vibrant perspectives into my practice in Abu Dhabi that focuses on social innovation, sustainability, and environmental practices. In early 2018 I co-founded BAIT 15, an artist-run studio and exhibition space located in downtown Abu Dhabi.

**Wendy Bednarz**, Associate Arts Professor and Head of Film and New Media Program, NYUAD, is

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a filmmaker and a photographer whose professional work engages multicultural narratives and has screened at venues worldwide including New York Museum of Modern Art, Montreal World Film Festival and Venice Film Festival and has garnered awards such as Cine Golden Eagle, Independent Film Award and Sundance Winfemme.

**David Darts** is an artist, designer and a faculty member in the NYU Art Department. He serves as Associate Dean of the Arts and Head of Art & Art History at NYU Abu Dhabi. Darts uses sculpture, images, and designed objects to provide spaces for critical reflection and social critique. His work has been featured in over 200 international publications, including *New Scientist*, *Le Monde*, *Ars Technica*, and *Wired Italia*. His research and writings about contemporary art, education, emerging technologies and creative citizenship have been published in a number of top scholarly journals and books.

**Jonny Farrow** is a multi-disciplinary artist working in sculpture, printmaking, and sound. His work stems from research into the liminal: from suppressed historical narratives, to popular mythologies, to the far-reaching registers of the electro-magnetic spectrum. Farrow’s work also questions the narrative of expertise, often embarking on learning a new skill set in order to disrupt viewer expectations as well as his own. He holds an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

**Jill Magi** works in text, image, and textile and is the author of *Threads*, *Torchwood*, *SLOT*, *Cadastral Map*, *LABOR*, *Pageviews/Innervisions*, the forthcoming *SPEECH*, and numerous hand-made books. In 2017 Jill blogged for the Poetry Foundation, and in 2015 she wrote for Jacket2 on “a textile poetics.” Jill has had solo exhibitions with Tashkeel in Dubai and the Project Space at New York University Abu Dhabi where she joined the faculty in 2013.

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**Sandra Peters** studied at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden. She has a BFA, MFA and PHD. Sandra was visiting professor at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA in 1999–2000 and at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts), Valencia, CA, in 2011 and 2012. She has taught at New York University Abu Dhabi since 2014.

**Craig Protzel** is a creative technologist and Assistant Professor of Interactive Media at NYU Abu Dhabi as well as the current Interactive Media Program Head. His practice focuses on designing interactive computational spaces for education, exploration, and entertainment. His work often resides at the intersection of web development, computer science, multimedia production, and storytelling. His more recent work focuses on the applications and implications of intelligent systems in the context of design and user experience.

**Goffredo Puccetti** was the first faculty member of Visual Design at NYUAD where he has designed eight courses on topics such as Cross-cultural design, Calligraphy, Type design, Branding and Wayfinding. His interests are in the interactions of visual communications with policy and decision-making processes. He is the recipient of a Wolda Award of Excellence 2017 for Logo design, and of the PSL-NYU Global Alliance Grant 2018. He collaborates with Roberto Casati (Institut Nicod, Paris) on the design watch Mangrovia-Collective.org.

**Laura Schneider** holds a Master's in Art Education (NYU, 2011) and a Master's in Fine Arts (City College, 2015). Since 2011, Schneider has taught in many spaces including prisons, public schools, and colleges. She is currently a Lecturer of Visual Arts at NYUAD. Schneider is a long-term resident artist at Invisible Dog (Brooklyn, NY) and has enjoyed showing work in fascinating places, including Berlin, Venice, Sydney, Almería, São Paulo, Sharjah, and Abu Dhabi.

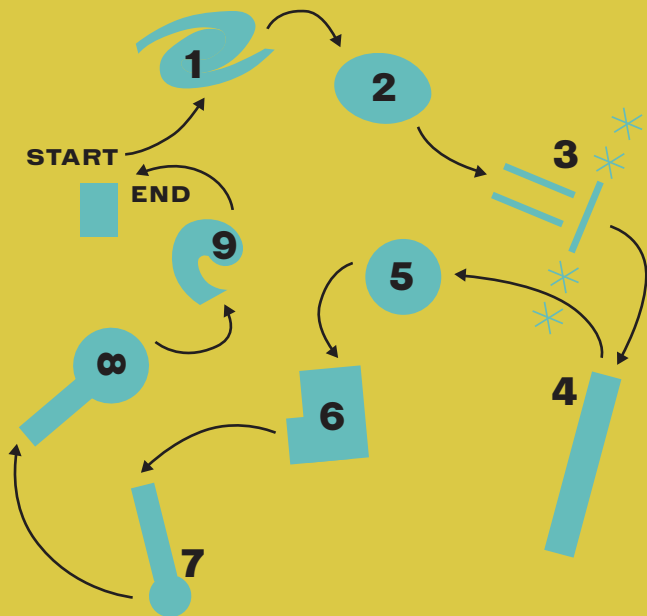
**John Torreano** has been coming to Abu Dhabi to teach Painting and Drawing classes at NYUAD since 2011. This year will culminate 27 years with NYU. He has been an active participant in the New York art community since he first moved there in 1968. Recent exhibitions at the Lesley Heller Gallery NY, NY and The Drawing Room, East Hampton, NY, continue an impressive exhibition history at Museums and Galleries throughout the world. Grants include: The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships.

### **Participating Artists**

Hashel Al Lamki, Wendy Bednarz, Jonny Farrow, Jill Magi, Sandra Peters, Craig Protzel, Goffredo Puccetti, Laura Schneider, and John Torreano

### **Design, Fabrication, and Production Support provided by**

Jon Bonner, Erin Collins, Steven Doughty, Dustin Foster, Anna Kurkova, Judi Olson, Dan Osleeb, Andrew Reidemann, Jack B. Du, and Mhairi Burton



**1. Spiral Galaxy with Two Black Holes**

John Torreano

**2. Command Loop**

Craig Protzel

**3. The Wall**

Wendy Bednarz

**4. 3 Wholes**

Hashel Al Lamki

**5. "Don't Agonize, Organize!"**

Jill Magi

**6. Of/f Course**

Laura Schneider

**7. DRIVE**

Sandra Peters in collaboration with Jon Bonner and students.

**8. Infinite Chagrin**

Jonny Farrow

**9. Waves**

Goffredo Puccetti