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1, 2, 3 Playtime

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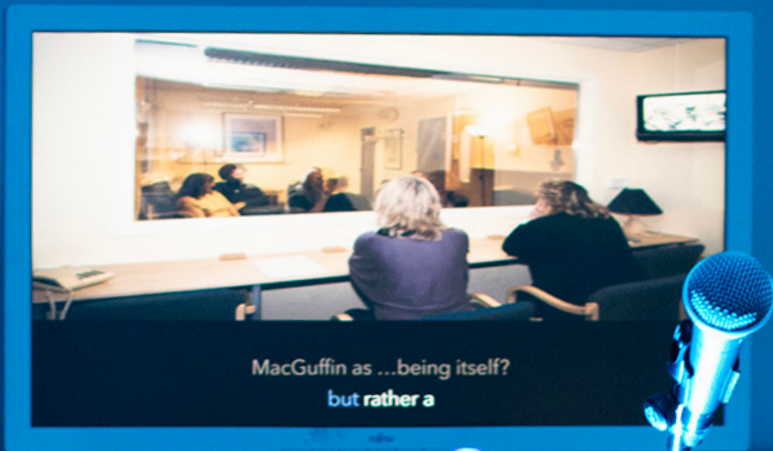
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Accelerated Hyperstition Inc. The Musical (vol. 0). Karaoke - Disc 2 of 4. Forget-me-not flowers; wish fulfilling wish fountain; déjà vu by proxy; reversed Deus Ex Machinas; always already MacGuffins; smiling Labrador retriever; blue pill amuche buche; dreams("); protocols; moisturizing cream; computer; motivational posters; karaoke machine; confetti; TV set. Installation view, Malmö Gallery Weekend 2024, IAC . Fredrik Degrér

Accelerated Hyperstition Inc. The Musical. Karaoke – Disc 2 of 4

Fredrik Degrér

A game, in the most basic sense, is the promise of entertainment. Through its inherent tools such as rules and interactivity, as well as optional ones like simulation and challenges, a game is always sustained by the realised promise of being entertained. In its own historic development of itself, a game has of course gone through multiple definitions that expand upon merely being a vehicle for entertainment, but qualities infused within entertainment such as play, fun and desire have always remained. However, living in the end times of games, as they have become their own impossibility, what remains when they are void of the very same thing that always distinguished them? A game being that of its own impossibility can, for example, be found in video games. Here, a 100 %-completed open world game, void of challenges, desire, and obstacles, is still a game. You are no longer being entertained, instead it's pure wish fulfilment. Everything that you wanted to happen has already happened. The underlying mechanics of entertainment, insofar as it works through desire production, always knew that desire's role was never to find satisfaction or succeed in its goal.¹ That's why you can always play another game of Monopoly, as you almost always quit a session before you reach the end. Wish fulfilment however, is entertainment without desire. What's interesting is that even though there's no desire, it's still engaging. TV has for a long time been sustained by wish fulfilment. In his book *Insomnia and the Aunt*, Tan Lin notes how his aunt is mesmerised by Conan O'Brien as he makes a new show

1 Žižek, Slavoj. 'Desire: Drive = Truth: Knowledge'. Accessed October 16, 2024. <https://www.lacan.com/zizekdesire.htm>. para. 7

already seem like a rerun.² In a show presenting itself as a rerun one can be content as you know that you've already enjoyed this, not in the least as both the audience and the host verifies it through their laughter.

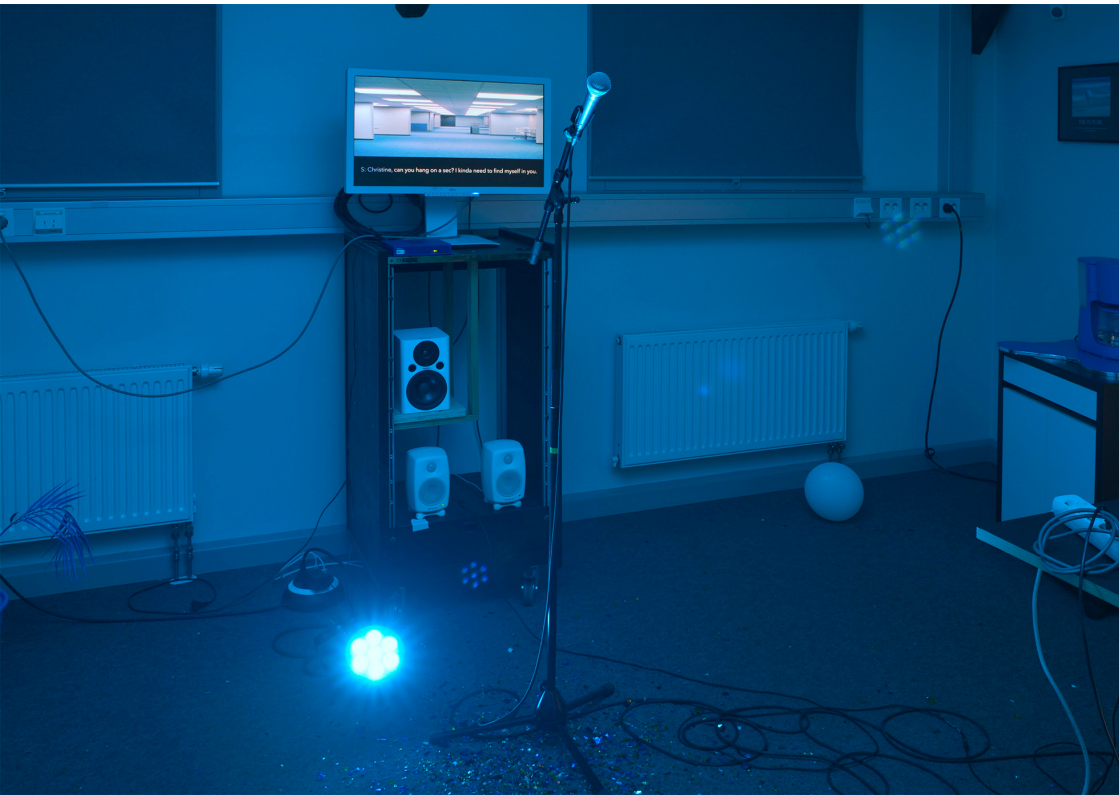
Existing in a similar state of pure wish fulfilment is *Accelerated Hyperstition Inc* ... In auto-tuning a karaoke version of a Musical, the inherent desire of karaoke is removed. In Karaoke, one desires a perfect rendition of the song in question. Of course, you know that you can never succeed in this attempt, but still you desire it. The piece however removes this desire, not only by auto-tuning the performance, but also, similarly to Conan O'Brien, using songs that you think you've already heard before through the inherent genericness of the Musical music. This in turn leads to a perfect rendition of the specific song in question.

But if wish fulfilment lacks desire what is it then replaced by? What propels it forward? With the end of history and the disappearance of ideology, marxism could still exist as a fantasy within capitalism. Could a similar fantasy exist within pure wish fulfilment? A fantasy can go beyond the real and there's no such thing as limitation. Like fan-fiction which invites the infinite after the end, wish fulfilment invokes fantasy, fiction, and the unreal in a futile attempt to gain what it never could, namely desire. Wish fulfilment is therefor the drive for desire.

In *Accelerated Hyperstition* ... the company tries to solve the impossibility of desire within wish fulfilment by commercialising a MacGuffin. However, the actual product reveals its insignificance once obtained, as the desire to obtain it is lost. They, that is to say the company, instead point toward the fictional capability of 'the future' and that if the MacGuffin would be in a state of 'becoming found', it could very well solve the incapability of wish fulfilment, of lacking desire. Like how a 100 % completed video game could wish to be 120 % completed, the 'not yet found' MacGuffin is an impossible wish to grant. In granting the wish of the video game, the 120 % automatically becomes 100 % and the MacGuffin's function of creating a desire to obtain it loses the function immediately. But is it perhaps not that important to find what propels wish fulfilment forward? – because it always fails when it obtains it. Instead of thinking about wish fulfilment's trajectory as linear, could one perhaps see it as circular?

In realising that everything that you wanted to happen has already happened, you can still pet dogs over and over again, as this is a feature that's almost mandatory in AAA games nowadays. And for *Accelerated Hyperstition* ..., am-

2 Lin, Tan. *Insomnia and the Aunt* (Chicago: Kenning Editions; Berkeley, CA: Small Press Distribution, 2011), 21.



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bient exercises like talking about the weather by the water cooler can, through songs, create a drive toward wanting to return to do it all over again.

But what struck me as interesting when later reflecting on the piece was that whereas the gaming components of the piece (that is to say everything pertaining to the Karaoke such as story, world and auto-tuning) operated as pure wish fulfilment, the material properties of the installation could still retain the mechanisms of desire production, as by default they were restricted to their physical limitations. For instance, the makeshift wish-fulfilling wish fountain never granted any wishes, but instead only produced weak coffee. The videogame *Death Stranding*³, which coincidentally featured a cameo by Conan O'Brien, was close to realising that desire could perhaps still exist if one were to place the real within the unreal, and back again. The game had product placement and when playing you could drink Monster Energy drinks. The games only mistake was to use the original drink instead of Monarch. The Monarch flavor promises to make you '*...experience your own Butterfly Effect ...*'.⁴ Of course the game could have you doing a minute, seemingly unimportant, task with far-reaching consequences through random connections. However, when you eventually exit the game and buy a Monarch Energy drink you'll never get to experience your own *Butterfly Effect* – only ever the result of one. This process doesn't revitalise desire in entertainment, but rather points toward the irrefutable exit of gaming, insofar as you have to come back to reality eventually. A Monster Energy drink, or a wish fountain, can be anything in a video game but unfortunately, or fortunately, they lose their endless capability when they return to their real selves.

3 Hideo Kojima. *Death Stranding*. Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2019. PlayStation 4.

4 Monster Energy. 'Monster Energy Monarch'. Accessed October 25, 2024. <https://www.monsterenergy.com/en-fc/>.



Accelerated Hyperstition Inc. The Musical (vol. 0). Karaoke – Disc 2 of 4, 2024. Video still. Installation detail, Malmö Gallery Weekend 2024, IAC. Fredrik Degrér