

CALL FOR ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

CATR 2025 Conference: Interiority: Staging the Liminal

Act II (in person): June 25–28, 2025

Atlas° Hotel in Regina, Saskatchewan, and the University of Regina

Roundtable: *The Magic Circle in Participatory Performance: Play Frames for Gameful Dramaturgies*

Co-Convenors: Derek Manderson (Phd Candidate, Theatre & Performance Studies, York University) and Laurel Green (Phd Student, Theatre & Performance Studies, York University)

In game studies, the “magic circle” is a popular theoretical term (coined by Huizinga) that imagines an invisible barrier between the action of a game and reality. This topic continues to provoke debate - see [“In Defence of a Magic Circle: The Social, Mental and Cultural Boundaries of Play”](#), where Stenros unpacks the concept of the magic circle, its criticism and the numerous other metaphors that have been used to capture the zone of play or the border that surrounds it. Theatre scholars will recognize it as a play frame, not unlike theatre’s ‘proscenium,’ for its ability to change the meaning of the actions inside of it. As boundaries of play continue to shift alongside our media and the gamification of performance, new defences, skepticisms, or transformations of the magic circle might be offered from a theatrical perspective.

When read through the language and theory of games, participatory performance becomes an experientially rich site to interrogate, rehearse, and transform systems, relationships, and the roles we play in a collective ecosystem. Through invitation, audiences become active agents with the ability to shift between their roles as spectator, player, co-author, and labourer within a reciprocal network.

This roundtable investigates the intersection of games and theatre, focusing on fricative moments where the world of the game/performance and exterior life overlap. We hope to spark a necessary collective interdisciplinary inquiry into new gameful dramaturgies, and approaches to framing play.

Through participation in this roundtable, we invite members of the CATR/ACRT community to explore the following questions and provoke new ones:

- How does play inside the magic circle impact the ways in which we play together outside, and vice versa?

- When does the magic circle become blurred and perforated, or abandoned altogether?
- How do play frames invite collective displays of care?
- Can games help us negotiate new social contracts with audiences?

We will structure our Roundtable by asking panel participants to present a brief case study, research topic, or artistic response (5 mins). Afterwards, we will facilitate a larger discussion, where participation from the audience will be encouraged.

If you would like to participate in our roundtable, please **share a description (250 words or less) of your potential contribution, a bio (50 words or so), and any pertinent links.**

Send to Laurel Green at lkgreen@yorku.ca and please ensure that you are available for the *in-person* dates: June 25–28, 2025. Visit the [CATR Website for Conference Details](#).