

Let's Play event

In the Same Bot

A chatbot game by the multidisciplinary collective Lion & Unicorn consisting of Pekka Airaxin, Liza Dorrer, Karina Golubenko, Mariia Kachalova, Anton Kalgaev, Maria Kosareva and Ivan Kuryachiy in collaboration with game designers Daria Nasonova and Dmitry Vesnin

The chatbot, which in its layout is modeled after instant messaging service Telegram, simulates the creation of an exhibition at a pavilion at the Venice Biennale through interactions with the many people, institutions and circumstances circling around cultural institutions.

What follows is a brief text by the collective Lion & Unicorn, in which they explain the game in their own words.

Stuck at home and feeling lonely? Didn't make it to the Venice Biennale this year? Well, we are "in the same bot".

"In the same bot" is the only way to experience the biennale in 2020. What looks like a messenger is actually an immersive simulation that provides you an experience of the bureaucratic roller coaster also known as the Venice Biennale. The game is a set of mini-quests that each gives you an opportunity to look at the process from different perspectives - through the eyes of a commissioner, a curator, and an intern. The result of each quest is a final statement: a "horoscope" that you receive at the end which reflects your moral and institutional choices.

So, you can be:

- A commissioner responsible for choosing a theme for the pavilion. Should the pavilion take a stance on the climate crisis or tell the story of your country's architectural heritage? Should you take the ministry's opinion into account or your sponsor's? What are the consequences? Do you even care?

- An invited curator. “We absolutely adore all your ideas, but there’s no budget left, sorry!” Will your oligarkh friends save you this time? Or maybe it’s time to explore crowdfunding? The Ministry and the art world both have their eyes on you. Good luck!
- An intern who books everyone’s flights, gathers all the materials last minute, and is the one to blame if anything goes wrong. If you survive, will you get a perfect recommendation letter or even a job offer? Or maybe all you get this time are a headache and sleepless nights? Let’s find out!

The choices you make and the way you respond to everyday issues can change the final outcome of the project beyond recognition. “In the same bot” exposes the internal mechanisms of big cultural events like the Biennale, and reveals their limitations and possibilities, urging for a more meaningful and open model of organizing such institutions.

This release of the chatbot is an update that follows after an ‘omega-version’ of the game launched in May 2020. You can now download the app for your iPhone, choose from a set of dynamic mini-quests and binge-chat it like a Netflix series. Stay in shape for the next biennale.

The Let’s Play event with Brendan McGetrick refers to an initial version of the chatbot that was released by Lion & Unicorn in May 2020.

Brendan McGetrick is an independent writer, curator, and designer. In 2014, he co-curated Fair Enough in the Russian pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale, together with Anton Kalgaev and Dasha Paramonova. Since 2015, he has served as the director of Global Grad Show, the world’s largest exhibition of graduate design and technology. From 2002-2006 he was head writer at the research and design studio AMO.