



Center Leo Apostel for  
transdisciplinary research  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel



VRIJE  
UNIVERSITEIT  
BRUSSEL

PERSMEDEDELING

[English text below]

## **‘Systems at Play’ 2023 A Self-Organising Symposium on Self-organisation**

*Kunst en wetenschap spelen en creëren samen  
tijdens een uniek experimenteel symposium aan de VUB.*

Wat hebben kunst en wetenschap met elkaar gemeen? Ze zijn allebei manieren om naar de wereld te kijken, om haar te begrijpen en ermee om te gaan. Ze delen een fundamentele creativiteit, nieuwsgierigheid en de handeling en metafoor van het ‘spel’. Ook al verschillen hun methoden, ze vertellen beide een verhaal en kunnen elkaar in hun zoektocht wederzijds inspireren en versterken. CLEA, het interdisciplinaire onderzoeksinstituut van de VUB, brengt daarom een internationaal gezelschap van studenten, kunstenaars en wetenschappers samen van woensdag 15 tot en met zaterdag 18 februari 2023 tijdens een experimenteel symposium dat de verbeelding wil prikkelen. Samen zullen de deelnemers de transdisciplinaire kruisbestuiving tussen kunst en wetenschap spelenderwijs ontdekken en mogelijk maken. Lezingen, spelvormen, performances en workshops zullen met elkaar verweven raken en spontaan een groter geheel doen ontstaan waarin thema’s als zelf-organisatie en doelgerichtheid vanzelf aan de oppervlakte kunnen komen (‘emergence’). ‘Systems at Play’ is dus niet zomaar het zoveelste ‘kunst en wetenschap’ symposium. Het is geen symposium *over* zelf-organisatie, maar een kans om samen een zelf-organiserend symposium over zelf-organisatie tot stand te brengen. Systems at Play vertrekt van de idee dat grassroots samenwerking tussen uiteenlopende disciplines niet alleen wenselijk, maar ook noodzakelijk is om de complexe problemen van deze tijd op een ‘out-of-the-box’ manier te leren denken en aanpakken.

### **Waar**

VUB Campus

PILAR House for Art & Science

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Building Y)

Triomflaan, (VUB Entrance 6)

1050 Brussels,  
Belgium

Google Maps [link](#)

### **Wanneer**

Op woensdag 15 februari 2023 begint het symposium om 18u. Om 18u30 zal Orion Maxted, ArtScience directeur binnen CLEA, het symposium officieel openen. U bent van harte welkom. Als u woensdag niet kan komen, zijn vrijdag en zaterdagavond ook interessante en fotogenieke momenten om eens binnen te springen.

Symposia dagen

- Woensdag 15 februari: Opening 18h - 22h. Zie **Annex** onderaan voor meer info!
- Donderdag 16 februari: 10h-22h
- Vrijdag 17 februari: 10h-22h
- Zaterdag 18 februari: 10h-22h

Programma details vindt u [hier](#)

### **Website van het symposium**

<https://clea.research.vub.be/clea-artscience-symposium-systems-at-play>

[Niet voor publicatie:]

### **Contact**

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PRESS RELEASE

## **‘Systems at Play’ 2023 A Self-Organising Symposium on Self-organisation**

*Art and science play and create together during a unique experimental symposium at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel.*

What do art and science have in common? They are both ways of looking at the world, of understanding and dealing with it. They fundamentally share creativity, curiosity and the act and metaphor of ‘play’. Even though their methods differ, they both tell a story and can mutually inspire and enhance each other in their quest. CLEA, the VUB's interdisciplinary research institute, is therefore bringing together an international group of students, artists and scientists for four days between Wednesday, February 15 and Saturday, February 18. Together, the participants will playfully discover and enable this transdisciplinary cross-pollination during the experimental symposium ‘Systems at Play’ that wants to capture the imagination. Lectures, games, performances and workshops become intertwined and will spontaneously give rise to a larger whole in which themes such as self-organisation and goal-directedness can naturally emerge. ‘Systems at Play’ is thus not just another art and science symposium. It’s not a symposium *about* self-organisation, but a chance to *create* a self-organising symposium about self-organisation together. One of the symposium's departing ideas is that grassroots collaboration between diverse disciplines is not only desirable but also necessary to learn to think and tackle the complex problems of our times in an 'out-of-the-box' manner.

### **Where**

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1050 Brussels,  
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## **When**

On Wednesday, February 15th 2023, at 6 pm, the official reception begins. At 6:30 pm, Orion Maxted, ArtScience director at CLEA, will officially open the symposium. You are cordially invited. If you can't make it on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings are also interesting and photogenic press moments to pass by.

## **Symposium times**

- Wednesday, February 15th: Opening 18h - 22h. See **Annex** below for more info!
- Thursday, February 16th: 10h-22h
- Friday, February 17th: 10h-22h
- Saturday, February 18th: 10h-22h

Programme details [here](#).

## **Website of the symposium**

<https://clea.research.vub.be/clea-arts-science-symposium-systems-at-play>

[Not to be published:]

## **Contact**

Orion Maxted (interviews)

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## **ANNEX - Wednesday evening programme**

**18h00** Opening Reception & Registration

**18h30** Introduction to the Self-Organising Symposium by Cybernetic Theatre Maker, CLEA researcher and curator **Orion Maxted**.

**18h45** Introduction to Self-Organisation by CLEA director **Francis Heylighen**

**19h00-21h30** Input Session 1:

- *rewilding* by **Dionysian Portal**
- *Signals* by **Arthur Van Balen**;
- *Lovers Dilemma* by **Charley Miller**

### ***rewilding* by Dionysian Portal**

On Wednesday evening, to have a 'good' self-organisation symposium, the collective 'Dionysian Portal' (Asher Lev, Irina Lavronović, Robert Steijn) will hold a prayers session '*invocation*' to appease the Ancient Greek vegetation gods Dionysus and his/her friend Pan. Dionysus is associated with the birth of theatre, and, therefore, with the birth of the separation between subject and object. Dionysus reminds us of our ancient history when the world was experienced as alive and formed of complex relationships, much like what contemporary systems science is now trying to tell us.

The Dionysian Portal proposes a performance emerging from our practice of becoming 'other' to ourselves and each other. What kind of natural system(s) could this performance embody? We shall recite, sing and dance ancient Greek hymns that invoke the energy of the vegetal god Dionysus - the resonating link we found in our culture for reentering and participating in the cosmic system of nature. Dionysus is characterised in mythology as the stranger, newcomer god. He/she disturbs the homeostasis of culture and brings about social uproar. He/she is understood by us as the fire, the needed element for transformation. He/she is both male and female, a force of double nature, hacking what we think to be true, invoking the epigenetic potential to rewild ourselves. Can Dionysus, the fungal god, catalyse the self-organising process of any system, promote an end goal and perhaps reveal its attractors? In any case, the Dionysian Portal wishes to participate in this symposium to feed itself and others, like how the mycelium network of a fungus connects to the roots of trees to exchange nutrients and information, teaching us about reciprocity and community in a precarious world.

### ***Signals* by Arthur van Balen ([video](#))**

*Signals* by Arthur van Balen consists of wearable inflatable light sculptures where every participant has a switch in their hand. Through the simple On-Off function in a networked participatory format, it is possible to mimic and study the emergence of complex systems. Inflatable architecture also refers to the origin story of cybernetics. The first Pneu Structures were *Radomes*, which were inflatable domes on US radar systems designed by Walter Bird

in the 2nd World War. These, in turn, inspired the visions of young radical architecture groups in the 1960s.

***Heartbreak* by Charley Miller**

Charley Miller, an urban games designer from New York, will present the participatory game *Heartbreak* based on the prisoner's dilemma in game theory. *Heartbreak* challenges players to develop a strategy (often together) that involves elements of trust and backstabbing while in the pursuit of true love and \*more importantly\* victory.