

# NAIVE

Concept: what we aim for

A two-player freeform larp by Axelle Cazeneuve

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## Game documents

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## Core concept

A person volunteers for a program to train an android's AI. During their first session, the android asks the volunteer about sex. In this game, the android's candidness serves to question the player's perception of sexuality: it is a journey through representations of sex, desire, and the human.

Although it is mainly a dialogue, sex might be performed. *Ars amandi* would then be used as a mechanic.

## Approach to sexuality

Sex is the simplest thing. It is natural, innate, and self-evident - or so we're told. In practice, however, humans don't have an instinct for how to perform sex, nor do they have immediate access to open sexual performances as they grow up. Contrary to most animal species, human sexuality is woven with fantasies, power relations, and taboos. It is an intricate social phenomenon, for which we soon form representations - preconceptions, images, or opinions of any kind - that evolve from our early childhood into old age, changing, slightly or drastically, with every experience of sexuality. The religious background we may have, the stories we read or watch, conversations with friends or family, global health policies, erotic or

pornographic content, public discourses, news, scientific or medical statements, etc. can all constitute experiences of *what sex is* and alter the individual's vision and their relation to sex.

We are used to hearing moral and hygienic statements about sex: what is good, bad, unhealthy or virtuous. But if, for instance, some conservative discourses can be oddly specific about what sex is *not* supposed to be, there is hardly a positive statement to make up for the lack of guidelines to sexuality. Is “penis in vagina” sex? Is oral sex sex? Is masturbation sex? Is it sex if there’s no-one else? What makes a sex partner? Is online sex sex? Does sex necessarily involve the anogenital area? What kind of pleasure does sex provide? Those questions are not commonly asked, and even less frequently answered. As we talk, and largely as we think, sexuality is addressed as self-evident: we *know* what sex is, right? Our concerns are elsewhere: are we doing it right? Should we have it or not? What do we really want, and how can we - or should we - get it? Is it okay to desire certain things or people?

By providing the volunteer player with a neutral interface devoid of any preconceptions (the android), this game means to work against the feeling of evidence associated with sexuality and to dive into the volunteer player’s implicits and prejudices through the alibi provided by the character.

The hypothesis at the core of this game is that there is no such thing as sex - or rather, that consensus is impossible. We live in a time when the status quo and the very limits or definition of humanity are constantly challenged: sex is no exception. Instead of trying to set limits to what sexuality is or should be - always counting, measuring, labeling -, we should take this opportunity to increase the range of possibilities, to explore and expand our horizons of experience and understanding.

It starts with interrogating our beliefs... And continues with sharing them. That is why *Naive* encourages participants to upload recordings of their sessions on the free platform archive.org. In doing so, the game provides the other players, and eventually, any person curious enough to listen, with a collection of more or less naive, more or less sincere, but always singular and rich, representations of sexuality.

Public discourses around sex are dominated by moral, legal, or medical judgements: let’s help make it a little more than that.

## Game style and structure

*Naive* is a short, introspective freeform role-playing game for two players with no game master. It is expected to last around two hours, including a few workshops and a debriefing. No costumes or props are needed. A device on which to play a piece of music used as a transition in and out of game is needed. Optional material includes a recording device, in case the participants would be willing to upload their session on the dedicated platform.

## Workshops

The volunteer character is built through a hot seat, monitored by the android player: it helps establishing a succinct identity for the character, but mostly focuses on which state of mind they are in at the beginning of the game. A workshop, monitored by the volunteer player, is designed to help the android player act and talk the most neutrally as possible: it also **aims** at creating a feeling of “uncanny valley”, a feeling of uneasiness that occurs when a robot look disturbingly like a human, for the volunteer player to interact with the android player. The game design also encourages both participants to share their feelings and expectations prior to the game, as part of the intention to foster respectful discussions about sexuality.

## Mechanics

Two safewords are provided: one to stop the game (*Cut*), one to cancel the android’s last question (*Cancel*). The latter is a mean to offer the volunteer player a diegetic way to opt out of an uncomfortable situation. *Ars amandi*, a method originally designed by Eliot Wieslander, are **detail**ed and suggested as a metatechnique for simulating a sexual or sensual encounter.

## The **AI** protocol

A word cloud is provided based on actual game sessions (developed through beta-testing, and later by implementing elements from recordings uploaded on the platform) to help direct the android’s questions. The protocol is by no means binding: it is merely here to provide guidelines or ideas to help the android player. It **aims** to favor associations of idea and support a **naive** approach, to try to cancel out the android player’s own preconceptions.

The android’s goal is to learn what sexuality is to human beings: ultimately, its assimilation of human features could lead it to question whether it can, itself, have sex. This questioning broadens the perspective of the game, diving into the perceived limits of the notion of humanity.

## The Mosaic

The [Internet Archive](#) is used to allow those who played it to upload the recordings of their sessions. The **aim** is to create a virtual library on which diverse visions about sexuality can be found, in the form of a myriad of subjective conceptions. It contributes to sex education and a positive approach to sexuality by deconstructing **prevailing** discourses.

## About the author

I am a queer French larp designer and anthropology researcher. Other works as the author include:

- ★ *[Childfree](#)*, a freeform larp about voluntary termination of pregnancy which aims to empower people by helping them realize how norms shape the way we think and feel;
- ★ *[The Intimacy Workshop](#)*, a larp and real-life workshop designed to advocate for sex-positivity and consent culture;
- ★ *[Presence](#)*, a two-player larp about long-distance relationships.