

polygon III playing instructions

han-earl park
with peter o'doherty and pedro rebele
and program notes by susan mcgregor
(edinburgh, november 1996)
(revised, den haag, december 1997)



© 1996 and 1997 *buster & friends' d'da*

polygon III (edinburgh, november 1996) (revised, den haag, december 1997)

The title *polygon III* refers to the game/interpretation described, but not necessarily to the design of the cards/score with which it is played.

outline

There are two **players** and a **dealer**. Each player plays from a set of 16 cards (including two **jokers** and an **end card**). The players 'perform' the cards, while the dealer manages the 'turning' of cards over time.

the dealer

Each set of cards (with the possible exception of the **end card**; see section below) is shuffled by the dealer at the start of, or before, the performance. The dealer then proceeds to reveal a card to each player. This turning of cards is *synchronous*: i.e. both players are passed a new card at the same time. The dealer controls the pace at which the cards are turned until a **joker** or **end card** is encountered.

the joker card

When a joker card is encountered while the dealer has control of the card turning, the dealer **passes over control to the player who received the joker**. The dealer now passes new cards **only when instructed/cued by this player**. If the same player receives the next joker, control of card turning **passes back to the dealer**. On the other hand, if the next joker appears from the **other player's** stack, control of the card turning goes to this other player.

Two simultaneous jokers may be treated in one of following ways:

- Control is passed to the dealer.
- The dealer chooses which player to be cued from.
- The dealer chooses which player to ignore :-)
- Control is passed to the dealer **unless** the **one player already had control of the card turning process**. In the latter case, control is passed to the **other player**.

Depending on the rules adopted by the performers, the dealer may have to turn another card immediately after the joker, otherwise the player receiving the joker would have nothing to play. (See interpretation guides below.)

playing the cards

Each player interprets the cards as a spatial representation of the players' relationship. Each card (or relational diagram) shows both players' locations in this concept space. This system is dynamic: **the**

player's own location is only specified relative to the other player's. In other words, for each card, **the player must move, or attempt to move, to the destination** specified in relative term to the other player.

Each player decides (perhaps privately) on the **parameters to be assigned to the vertical and the horizontal.** For example:

- vertical: complexity/simplicity
- horizontal: regularity/irregularity
- vertical: fast/slow
- horizontal: loud/quiet
- vertical: silly/serious
- horizontal: mystical/empirical

These parameters are used to **analyze the other player's position, and to determine the player's destination.**

- The player interprets the **center of each polygon** as the position of the **other player**, and the **dark area or oval**, as the **their own destination**.
- The opposite of the above: The center is taken to be the player's destination, and the dark area to be the location of the other player.

Whichever way the cards are read, the dark area or oval represents one of the player's coordinates. The graduated areas found on some cards (eg. cards 2 and 4) can be read as a **gradual movement** or **statistical tendency** towards the darker areas.

The **joker** may be taken as an invitation for open improvisation, otherwise, the cards should be immediately replaced by the dealer.

Note that the cards do not provide the **initial impulse** for the players. However, there are still ways of analyze the lack of activity by the other player.

the end card

The dealer may elect not to shuffle the **end** cards, but to present them to the players (perhaps after all the other cards have been played) to stop the performance. Alternatively, if the end cards were shuffled with the others, a player's performance can be terminated when an end card turns up. How the other player chooses to deal with that is up to the performers.

In **dealer-less performances** (with *asynchronous* card turning), the end card may be the best way to terminate a performance.

future plans

I have distributed copies of the cards to several individuals, and hopefully in the near future, will compile a set of games/interpretations authored by others.

program notes

“There is nothing to fear. The secret is to trust; trust in the polygon and the vision can be yours too.”

He closed his eyes. First he saw simply darkness but then, in the distance, he was aware of a movement. Was it in the distance though? He could not tell. It had been almost imperceptible, yet it was seductive. Like the lifting of lowered eyelids. A movement small yet... powerful, deadly. Black Widow.

He saw the movement closer now, immediate. Felt a sensation like a touch, gentle at first, a soft hand on his shoulder drawing him close. The arms started to envelop him and now he remembered the voice of his mother instructing him when he was little. He was going out to play football. She was in the kitchen making dinner. Meatloaf.

“Take care! Where are you going anyway? Who are you going with?”

He was out of the back door already.

“I’m just going out.”

“Where?” She was calling after him.

“Park.”

“Who with?”

“Peter.”

“Okay. But don’t talk to strangers.”

Her meatloaf was so good too, but his father had never appreciated it. She put in hours of hard work slaving over the stove, using her ‘special’ recipe but he always just gobbled it down and went off to the club.

“Open your mind. Let the polygon in....”

He wanted it. Wanted to understand.

“Let it infect you...”