

# RULES OF PLAY

For many of us, games remind us of childhood. From classic board games like Trouble and computer games like Prince of Persia, to the latest edition of the Polish-made hit "The Witcher" – every child has played games of some kind. Each game stirs up emotions. When tossing a die, advancing a pawn, or moving a mouse or cursor, we fervently hope to reach the next level, gain an advantage of a few spaces, avoid being eaten by a monster, or navigate an obstacle. We become mentally engrossed and very much want to win.

Traditional board games and computer games teach us some more general rules, like how to behave while playing and also afterwards, like how to win and also how to lose. Our elders taught us not to make too much of a show out of our elation after winning, and also not to throw the cards, splash a mug of coffee at the monitor, or send a tennis racket flying after losing. Such advice proves useful. When one loses, it prompts the recurring thought: "it's not about whether you win or lose, but how you play the game" (although it may often seem like cold comfort).

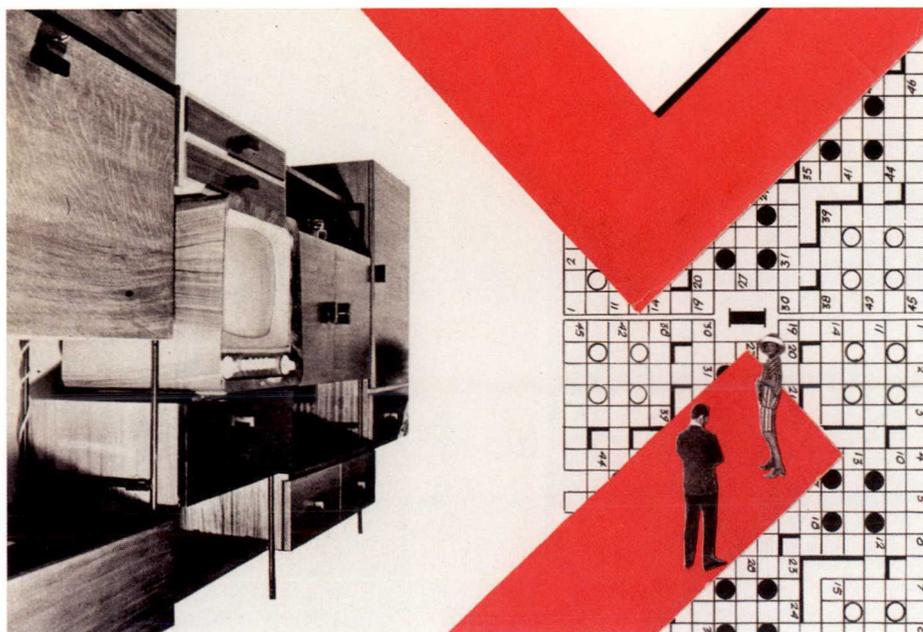
In fact there is always a winner: whether it is a contender on the athletic matt, a team on one side of the field, or one of a number of research teams studying the same issue that publishes the fastest. A certain Polish wrestler gave an interesting example in a recent interview: his coach always said after a fight that a win is not important, that only a loss teaches us something – forcing us to think about what we did wrong, about which move was a misstep, ill-considered, belated.

Team sports take things to another level. After a volleyball match, for instance, members of both teams have to step forward to shake one another's hands. It makes no difference if this expresses congratulation to the winners, or simply gratitude for the chance to play. The latter is sometimes authentic. It entails a promise: we will not seek any kind of revenge, apart from the next match.

Abiding by the rules of the game can have a redeeming effect.

## Tomasz Szerszeń – collage in the series "You. Me. Things." (2012).

The project is a kind of visual archaeology of the 1960s, an attempt at reconstructing the world of the emerging consumptionism in communist-era Poland. "You" is a young woman or young man. "Me" is a young man or young woman. The "things" comprise the world that they dreamed of – the things that describe and define them, that give them joy and surround them, that allow them to dream, but also take those dreams away.



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