

**Exhibition** 30 April – 22 September 2014  
Sabatini Building, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor

# Playgrounds

## Reinventing the Square



*Sad Playground, as found by Peter Fischli on the World Wide Web, 2013*

The exhibition addresses the socializing, transgressive and political potential of play in relation to public space. Ever since the popular tradition of the carnival, it has been recognized that it is possible, even if only temporarily, to subvert, reinvent and transcend an everyday life reduced to a mere exercise in survival. The recognition of the existence of communal goods and the need for free time, in direct contradistinction to working time, are two fundamental constants of the utopian imagination throughout history. The public space, as an ambience which synthesizes the notion of communal goods, is materialized as part of the experience of citizen participation.

With nearly 300 works on display, the exhibition recounts another history of art from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. This is one in which the artwork contributes to the redefinition of public space through exploring the city as a game board, interrogating the attitude of the carnival, vindicating the right to idleness, reinventing the plaza as the site of the revolt of *homo ludens*, and discovering possibilities for a new world among discarded junk.

The show adopts the model of the ‘playground’ as an ideological interrogation of an alienated and consumerist present. After the industrial revolution and the gradual implantation of labor systems based on the capitalist principle of minimum investment for maximum gain, there emerges an indissociable identification between producer and consumer, one of whose immediate consequences is the conversion of free time into consumption time. The alienation of labor dominates modes of life and gives rise to a crisis in public spaces, threatened in their turn by economic forces. Derived from a rational and utilitarian planning of the city, the public park is instituted as a surrogate collective paradise, leading from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to great urban facilities for mass consumption and entertainment. From architecture, within the Modern Movement and its derivatives, comes the definition of the playground, endowed with new social, pedagogical and functional values while at the same time emerging as one of the key points of the modern ideology of the public.

The ideas of a “junk playground”, proposed by the Danish architect Carl Theodor Sørensen in 1935, and of an “adventure playground”, which was promoted in the United Kingdom by the landscape architect Lady Allen of Hurtwood and spread to several European cities after the Second World War, are means of retrieving and attaching significance to wastelands and bomb sites as play areas aimed at child autonomy. In the sixties, the child is vindicated as an autonomous political subject in a context dominated by the vindication of the right to the city, and coinciding with the high point of the revolt of the *homo ludens* (borrowing from the essay of the same name by Johan Huizinga) in the context of May ’68. As evidenced by the numerous processes of social activism in recent years, festive subversion and the anti-authoritarian overspilling of boundaries by the carnival become new ways of practising politics. The movements of 2011 in such scattered locations as Tahrir (Cairo), Sol (Madrid), Syntagma (Athens), and other squares, streets and neighborhoods restored the public and democratic dimension of such spaces. This temporary occupation, articulated through virtual communications networks, implied a re-appropriation of the political and experimentation with other forms of organization and communal life.

#### Education Activities

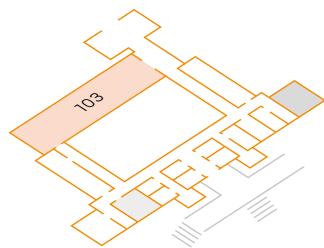
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Education program developed with the sponsorship of:



#### Sabatini Building

1<sup>st</sup> floor, room 103



#### Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

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#### Opening hours

Monday to Saturday

and bank holidays

from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays

from 10:00 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.

complete Museum visit,

from 14:15 to 7:00 p.m.

visit to Collection 1 and a temporary  
exhibition (check Website)

Closed on Tuesdays

Visitors are kindly asked

to clear the galleries

15 minutes before closing.

[www.museoreinasofia.es](http://www.museoreinasofia.es)