THE PLAYGROUND PROJECT

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead is pleased to announce details of the exhibition The Playground Project, opening Friday 15 July.

Until the 1980s – and in rare cases today – playgrounds were places for social experiments, risky projects, and spectacular sculptures. Architects, urban planners, artists, parents, and children were invited to leave their comfort zone and to venture into something new.

The Playground Project will bring many of these exemplary, but nowadays forgotten, initiatives, pioneering acts and adventures back with a playground in which children (and inner children) can run, hide and climb. All visitors are encouraged to play.

The playground is a by-product of the industrialised city of the twentieth-century. Even now, it continues to be both an ugly duckling and a coveted space. A focal point for ideas about education and childhood, about urban planning and public space, about architecture and art, about creativity and control, the playground has repeatedly resisted institutional and ideological appropriation and grown in its own sometimes quite anarchic ways. The coexistence of contradictory expectations, moments of temporary progress, and radical developments makes playgrounds all the more exciting.

Still, as hardly anyone sees playgrounds as part of their cultural heritage, much of their history has been forgotten or can barely be understood anymore—despite most of us having precise personal memories of this place where we met our friends, took pride in new things we dared to do, braved danger without thinking about it, and learned to confront and resolve conflict.

There have been four paradigm shifts in the development of the playground in the course of the last 150 years. First, at the beginning of the twentieth-century, social reformers took children off the street and onto the playground. Then, at the beginning of the 1930s, the idea arose that children should play with natural materials rather than playground equipment. In the 1960s, the decade of autonomy and do-it-yourself, parents, children, and neighbourhood groups began to take charge of playgrounds themselves. Finally, in the 1980s, with the end of social and political utopias, a crisis in playground design began. Today, a pioneering new
spirit is being generated by young architects and artists, collectives and activists. These designers, who often share their experiences on the internet, are creating new play spaces with efficient means.

The Playground Project is realised in cooperation with Kunsthalle Zürich


The exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue The Playground Project, edited by Gabriela Burkhalter, with contributions by Daniel Baumann, Gabriela Burkhalter, Vincent Romagny, Sreejata Roy, and Xavier de la Salle, German/English, Kunsthalle Zürich / JRP|Ringier 2016, CHF 48.

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For images and further information please contact
Craig Astley T: 0191 440 4913 E: craiga@balticmill.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England and has welcomed over 6 million visitors since opening to the public in July 2002. BALTIC presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of exhibitions and events, and is a world leader in the presentation and commissioning of contemporary visual art.

Housed in a landmark ex-industrial building, BALTIC consists of 2,600 square metres of art space, making it the UK’s largest dedicated contemporary art institution. BALTIC has gained an international reputation for its commissioning of cutting-edge temporary exhibitions. It has presented the work of over 350 artists from 53 countries in 190 exhibitions to date.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art
Gateshead Quays
South Shore Road
Gateshead
NE8 3BA UK
Tel: +44 (0) 191 478 1810

OPENING HOURS:
Daily 10.00-18.00
(excluding Tuesday)
Tuesday 10.30-18.00
ADMISSION FREE
balticmill.com