

Wild Frolics. Exhibition for All is about the freedom of creation and boundless imagination; about movement, space, and time, which are equally important in play and in art. The project is a result of cooperation between the Cricoteka and the A Sztuka? Foundation. It combines artistic activities and education into a process that is an invitation to experience and creates things together, where every attempt can become the beginning of a shared story.

In the world of fun, just like in a fairy tale, the rules are slightly different from those that govern reality. Time flows in a non-linear fashion and the boundary between the real and the imagined is fluid. This conventionality is not a suspension of the rules, but a field for their renegotiation, a space where going beyond limitations becomes possible. Both in art and in play, freedom does not mean chaos. On the contrary, imagination sets up its own structures and order. Within them, one can design alternative worlds, take on various roles, and test models of cooperation and relationality. From this point of view, contemporary art and play can be tools for reclaiming agency: a space for experimentation, for acceptance of errors, and for openness to unexpected questions.

Wild Frolics. Exhibition for All is addressed to everyone who is in any way interested in art—both the people who already feel the need to create and those who, when they see contemporary art, think “No, thank you. Anyone could do that”. In *Wild Frolics*, we provocatively adopt both these perspectives and encourage testing them in practice, at the exhibition. It is a space that restores freedom, allowing people, irrespective of their age, to experience happiness, inquisitiveness, and the courage to look at the world around them.

The title of the exhibition is inspired with Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild Things Are*. The book’s main character, Max, after an altercation with his mother, is “sent to bed without his supper” and uses his imagination to escape to a world of wild monsters. The world he ends up in becomes a space of unrestricted expression and freedom. A place where the unfettered, the loud, and the excessive can resonate with no control or judgment. In the world of the wild monsters, Max experiences wild frolicking, an intensive case of being together, of movement, of noise, and of shared activities. Crucially, Max decides to go back. Even though he has full power and freedom, he starts to feel lonely and yearn for “someone who loves him most”.

The exhibition draws on this story as a metaphor for the creative process. “Wild Frolics” is a moment of experimentation, risk, loss of control, making errors, and being unsure what to do. This allows for experiencing a genuine interaction both with others and with oneself.

However, the exhibition does not stop at affirmation of the wild, but, like in the story of Max, offers pendular motion: entering chaos and consciously coming back—with new experiences, mindfulness, and a new story.

Another inspiration for the project was the “popular exhibition” organized by Tadeusz Kantor in 1963 at the Krzysztofory Gallery, often referred to as an “anti-exhibition”. The artist filled a gallery, located in a dark, brick cellar, with lots of items: drawings, sketches, theatrical costumes, newspaper clippings, photographs, and everyday objects. In his manifesto, Kantor wrote that “The lack of ‘images’ changes the viewer’s perception from analytical and contemplative into a fluid and active near-co-presence in this field of live reality. The EXHIBITION loses its previous, indifferent function of presenting and documenting and becomes an ACTIVE ENVIRONMENT that entangles the viewer in twists, turns, and traps”. This thought sets up the axis of the exhibition: a space not so much for presenting or illustrating, but for launching emotions and for experiencing things through art.

The centerpiece of this exhibition is not Kantor as a historical figure or a closed catalog of works of art, but an intangible Kantor who is present in the manner of thinking and working. He transpires through a method based on risk and experimentation, through reaching into memory, and through treating the process as a value in itself. He is present in group work with children, in mindfulness of relations, and in the way of telling a story that is not intended to conclude, but remains open and fragmented.

This intangible Kantor also transpires through the choices made with respect to the subject matter of the exhibition and the sources of inspiration. Both we and the artists we invited are interested in margins and scraps. The things that usually remain in the background or cannot be classified into a single category: transport boxes, elements of stage design, anecdotes, pieces of fabric, fragments of sounds from the archive. These elements build a story based on remnants and traces, where the creative process is revealed through the imperfect, the incomplete, and the seemingly secondary.

Just like Kantor explained in his manifesto: “I have decided to accept as artistic creation everything that comprises this dark and restless time: all these details, perhaps a little rough and not representative, often embarrassing, inane, unruly, but constituting an original, primeval matter of creation that cannot be compared to anything else. I simply showed everything that comprised the process of preparing a work of art”. We put the spotlight on

what the surrounding reality tries to invalidate or eradicate, but what in fact is a necessary element of the creative process. In *Wild Frolics*, we shift the emphasis from a spectacular effect that is ready to be enjoyed from the comfortable perspective of a viewer to being a participant and a creator of a process.

This process requires time. Time that needs to be spent on speaking, meeting others, listening to yourself or to each other. This is contrary to the logic of now, the promise of an instant, the five magic steps, or the ready solutions that the marketing language of the contemporary world is so eager to offer. Instead of quick recipes, there is lasting: slow, ineffective, and often lacking a clear purpose.

We also introduce boredom understood as a state of ineffectiveness, without an idea and without precise instructions. Here, boredom becomes a condition for giving in to dreams, but also a moment of revealing the inner world that stays invisible in everyday hustle. It is a time of waiting for an idea, where nobody guarantees that one will ever come up.

Wild Frolics move to the center a thing that previously was pushed away to the outskirts: amateur artistic work, primarily that of children. They break the little ones out from “play areas”—cramped enclaves not larger than a few square meters that are attached to spaces intended for adults, where in silence and concentration they are supposed to interact with a couple of broken crayons and a random coloring book. Instead of such a division, at Cricoteka, we propose a shared space where the child and the adult engage in a dialog in conditions that are friendly to both of them.

Simultaneous presentation of the artistic work of children and adults in a cultural institution shows the creative process as an experience accessible to everyone, irrespective of age and other possible lines of division. Creation ceases to be a privilege and becomes a shared practice, something that happens inside of each of us and among us. Nobody is “amateur” or “immature”; this is replaced with noticing, making efforts and attempts, gestures. It is not an exhibition designed for children, but an exhibition on a creative process that may be experienced by adults and children together. It is a proposal of a meeting where the hierarchy of competence is abolished and attention is shifted from the effect to being together in the process.

Kantor’s perception of an exhibition as ACTIVE SURROUNDINGS opens up a perspective for understanding space as an important element of the process of human development that is

present in a number of approaches in alternative education. Authors of systems such as the Montessori system, the Waldorf system, or the democratic system also moved away from rigid structures, hierarchy, and the distinction between the active teacher and the passive pupils. They put experience, the process, and independent activity in the center, treating the child as a participant instead of a passive observer. Both in Kantor's "anti-exhibition" and in alternative education, acting, experimenting, and a close link between creativity and everyday life are more important than the ready effect.

While working on the *Wild Frolics*, we discovered that the Reggio Emilia approach was especially close to us with its concept of physical space being the "third teacher". A well-designed environment operates like stage design: it does not impose ready solutions, but invites children to act, learn, and test things on their own. Like in Kantor's approach, space and the items existing in it are not a goal in itself—instead, they stimulate human activity, self-expression, and the creative process.

This is why *Wild Frolics* is composed of five open spaces designed by six contemporary artists. The point of departure for was a two-day workshop for children aged 6–12. Together, we tested different forms of play through art, talking about how children like to play, when the presence of adults becomes an obstacle, and what they find important in their play space. The methods of working with materials, techniques, and topics, as well as the accompanying emotions, formed a unique inventory.

We focused on the fun the children were having and the moments when their imagination stepped in: "I would like to jump into a blender filled with strawberry juice", "What is it like to dive into a bowl of cereal?", "I want to visit every place in the world", "I would like to be transported into a video game", "I want to create a real work of art", "My superpower is creating things that have not been invented yet", "I am curious about the letter A, lemons, and froth". We looked for what the children enjoyed: building, drawing, dressing up in costumes, creating things based on unobvious links. The children's questions were also important for us and so was their way of examining the boundaries of real world: testing what is possible and what can only be imagined. We also tested the reception of Tadeusz Kantor's items from Cricoteka's collection. We checked which of them the children interacted with, why they found them interesting, and what ideas emerge when they engage with items that featured in Kantor's performances.

Working with children became the heart of the project and allowed us to build the first archive that showed us where to go next. Fragments of conversations, quotes, associations, sketches, Kantor's items selected by children—all of these were guidelines at the successive stages of the project. They led us to the artists, Joanna Bronisławska, Bartek Buczek, Justyna Mazur-Kiwer, Justyna Mędrala, and the Marta Sala/Cheong Kin Man duo, who, together with us, discovered and developed the ideas stemming from children's curiosity, from fun, and from interacting with Kantor's items.

Testing was an important part of the development of *Wild Frolics*. The ideas and prototypes prepared by the artists were given to the children in order to be examined in practice. We observed which solutions stimulate curiosity and readiness to create and which connect with children's needs and imagination to a lesser extent.

For both children and the artists, Kantor's strategies turned out to be the most interesting: unlimited space for activity, verbal provocations, implicit statements, sound recordings, mystery, deformation, repetitiveness of gestures, or risk. The remnants of Kantor's world were also important: the methods of work, such as rhythmization of gestures, collective improvised creation and the category of the impossible, tangible traces in the form of pieces of fabrics and scraps of history, and objects as inspiration: the shape of the desks in *The Dead Class*, wooden movable items, suitcases, and emballage, i.e., the packaging of both things and humans. Kantor's specific items and finished works of art give way to the processes, situations, and categories enchanted in them.

Both when working with children and in Tadeusz Kantor's theater, everyday surroundings merge with surrealist imagination. The boundary between dream and reality, between fact and recollection, is blurred. This is why the space of the *Wild Frolics* exhibition becomes a living room, a place at home where free play is born amongst ordinary items, dogs, cats, and non-cats. This can have the form of a mess full of unexpected movement, like in what Bartek Buczek prepared, or a secret base made of fabrics that make it possible to play with light and shadow, which Justyna Mazur-Kiwer built. Participating in the *Wild Frolics*, you can dress up in huge clothes taken out from strange adults' wardrobes, designed and sewn by Marta Sala and Cheong Kin Man, create an improvised orchestra using the suitcases full of sounds prepared by Joanna Bronisławska, where every tone is a part of a shared composition, or

participate in Justyna Mędrala's drawing challenge and hang your work in the exhibition space. Both individual and group play is allowed. Reclusive activities and individual attempts are fine and so are extensive group play scenarios that go beyond single instructions from the artists and engage the entire space in creative fun with help from art.

Wild Frolics. Exhibition for All at the Cricoteka is an invitation, addressed to adults and children, to discover a space where art allows to say things words are inadequate for. What counts in this adventure is looking at yourself attentively, trying out different roles, and following the ideas suggested by the art of contemporary artists, your own imagination, and everyday life. At this exhibition, it is important to build relations in an atmosphere of freedom and mutual respect—including for errors, uncertainties, and different perspectives. Thanks to experimenting with colors, forms, sounds, light, and shadow, every gesture, move, and idea becomes a legitimate part of the story.

Justyna Droń
Anna Grajewska