

conference

Play for adults

On freedom practices in culture

16—17.11.2026

Open call, call, call!

An open call to artists, animators, performers, educators, and researchers

A call for program proposals for the *Play for adults. On freedom practices in culture* conference organized by the Cricoteka Center for Documenting the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Kraków, the Małopolska Region Institute of Culture in Kraków, and the A Sztuka? Foundation. The conference will be held on 16 and 17 November 2026 at the Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor Cricoteka in Kraków.

A conference. On what and why?

The idea to organize the conference stems from the experiences related to the *Wild Frolics* exhibition created by the Cricoteka and the A Sztuka? Foundation. Observing the adults who visited the exhibition and their reactions to the opportunity to play led to the questions which we now want to explore in-depth. Why do we find it so difficult to play? What do we need to have the space to play again and the social acceptance for it? How can artists and creative practices help us in this respect? And, finally, what can cultural institutions do to make it possible for us to reclaim this space?

Even though play is a childhood domain, we still need it long after we stopped being children.

It provides access to the experiences that adulthood pushes to the margin: liberty, freedom of choice, imagination, spontaneity, uncertainty, readiness to take a risk, and being a world where there is no need for constant measurement, assessment, and results. Perhaps this is why play can trigger such deep feelings, comparable to those we look for in art.

What, then, happens when play starts to miss from the lives of adults, especially those who work with children and the youth in the area of culture? Can you create with young people a world based on creativity, happiness, freedom, and empowerment if you yourself do not have the courage to go beyond the logic of productivity, control, and foreseeable outcomes?

Maybe it is worth having a look at what we have lost in culture by confusing play with entertainment.

Entertainment is an invitation to consume ready experiences, play encourages you to co-create those experiences. This difference concerns not only the form, but also the role we have envisaged for those who our program is addressed to.

Play needs time, but also space. It needs rules, but also an opportunity to break them. Sometimes, it needs inspiration and an invitation. Today, perhaps, what is needed most is defense: arguments that doing something without a specific purpose, a measurable outcome, or a guarantee of success does make sense.

That kind of space is offered by art. Art is one of the areas of liberty, freedom, and experimentation.

It allows you to enter a symbolic reality, to cross boundaries, to experience without knowing the result, to look for hidden meanings, and to explore imagination.

Who do we invite and why?

We would like to hear from artists, performers, and persons working in research, cultural animation, developmental psychology, anthropology, andragogy, and education offered in community centers, museums, and libraries. We are looking for intercricoeating and original practices, ideas, tools, experiments, practical models, tested solutions, and new ways of thinking related to the topic of adults playing, which can be presented in various forms, such as a workshop, a show, a presentation, or a panel. We are not looking for success stories only; we also want to use these stories to map challenges, intricacies, and potential obstacles and openly talk about the mental, managerial, and political changes that are necessary to make it possible to reclaim the lost space for play in the adult world.

The purpose of the call is to find projects or practices that meet the following criteria:

- ▶ they are (or could be) addressed to adults;
- ▶ their point of departure is play, understood as a voluntary and unrestricted form of activity, resulting from the need for freedom and allowing for going beyond the everyday; they are not intended to achieve a specific purpose or a material gain; the value is the experience itself: a meeting, a relationship, an exchange, the pleasure of acting, and the possibility of one's presence in the world in a manner different from what happens on a daily basis;
- ▶ they open a space for spontaneousness, ingeniousness, risk-taking, and co-creation;
- ▶ they create a situation where, for just a moment, different rules apply and it is possible to enter an alternative reality;
- ▶ they are a way of experiencing, experimenting, and getting into relations; at the same time, they leave space for imagination, freedom to act, and the unexpected.

Form of cooperation

The ideas collected through the open call will be used to develop the conference program. After an analysis, we will pick the ones to include in the event. The remuneration for a workshop, a show, a presentation, or a panel will be PLN 2,000. The organizers will provide the invited authors with accommodation and transport.

How to apply

- ▶ We are collecting proposals through the following form: [\[LINK\]](#)
- ▶ The idea may have any form: a workshop, an artistic gesture, a performance, a presentation, an activity, or discussion.
- ▶ The application should contain:
 - a brief and precise description of the project/idea
 - the anticipated number of participants
 - technical, spatial, and materials-related needs
- ▶ Deadline for submitting applications: 27 September 2026.
- ▶ Announcement of results: 2 October 2026.

Q&A

When will the event take place?

The conference will be held on 16 and 17 November 2026 at the Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor cricoteca in Kraków. The exact dates of individual activities will be agreed with the authors of the proposals selected for the program.

What are the evaluation and implementation criteria?

We appreciate initiatives that are authentic, interesting, and inspiring, at the same time being in line with the theme and the assumptions of the conference. We are especially interested in proposals that:

- ▶ treat play as a space for freedom, experimentation, and co-creation, and not just a form of entertainment;
- ▶ invite adults to act, experience, and get into relations with others;
- ▶ leave space for spontaneousness, imagination, and unpredictability;
- ▶ are based on an original perspective or practice;
- ▶ can inspire other persons who work in culture, education, or cultural animation;
- ▶ allow for investigating the difficulties, restrictions, and conditions that affect the possibility of play.

When selecting the winning proposals, we will consider their nature and the related organizational needs. Some activities may be carried out only at a specific time of the day or may require for the space to be pre-arranged. At the stage of preparing the program, we will agree on the schedule and the details of the activity.

Will the authors of the winning proposals receive a remuneration?

Yes. For the implementation of a winning proposal (a workshop, a show, a presentation, a panel, or another format), its author will receive a remuneration of PLN 2,000 gross. Details concerning the settlement and the payment of the remuneration will be agreed individually with the persons or entities whose proposals are accepted. If an activity is carried out by two persons, the remuneration will cover the project as a whole and will be split between them.

Can I submit my proposal together with another person or organization?

Yes, you can prepare your proposal together with another person, group, or organization. Not all of the activities have to be presented on your own. In your proposal, describe who will be involved in your activity and what the role of individual persons or entities will be. The remuneration remains unchanged—it is PLN 2,000, irrespective of how many persons or institutions prepare the proposal.

What support will be provided with respect to my activity?

The authors of the winning proposals will receive organizational support from the conference team. Together, we will agree on the details concerning the schedule, the space, the technical needs, and the course of the activity. If your activity requires special technical conditions or materials, additional equipment, assistance from third parties, or other resources, describe them in detail in your application. This will allow us to assess the possibility of implementation and to prepare accordingly.

Will accommodation and transport be provided?

Yes. We will remunerate the authors of the winning proposals, also reimbursing them for the cost of travel to Kraków. The organizers will also cover the cost of one night of accommodation in Kraków.

What space will I have available?

The space will be adapted to the nature of the activity. Depending on the proposal, it could be a closed exhibition hall, a space for a small-scale presentation, an open space, a staircase, or a large auditorium.

We do not want to restrict the formula to a single type of space. If the location is a major element of your idea, tell us about it in your proposal. If you have special requirements concerning space, e.g. with respect to floors, blackouts, silence, access to water, the option to be outside, or a specific configuration of participants, make sure to describe them in the form.

What number of participants should I expect?

We do not assume a fixed, predetermined number of participants. We hope for a variety of formats. It could be a small activity for several people, a workshop for a dozen people or so, an activity open to a larger group, or an artistic gesture that does not require for a maximum number of people to be specified. If the number of participants does affect the nature of the activity or its safety, comfort, or feasibility, be sure to mention that in your application.

Will the costs of the materials for the activity be financed? On what terms?

The basic materials and organizational needs will be individually agreed with the authors of the winning proposals. We do not assume that all of the materials will be automatically financed, so it is particularly important that the needs related to the implementation of the proposal are described already at the stage of the application. If the activity can be implemented only through specific materials or equipment, please make a clear note of it. This will allow us to take those needs into account when making decisions with respect to the program.

Does my activity have to have the form of a workshop?

No. A workshop is just one of the possible formats. We will also consider proposals of shows, presentations, performative activities, experiments, collective practices, panels, artistic gestures, and other original forms that allow for examining the topic of adult play. The conference is open to proposals from the borderline between art, education, animation of culture, research, performance, developmental psychology, anthropology, and other areas, as long as they refer to the topic of adult play.

Should my project be one that has already been carried out somewhere else?

No. You can propose both a tried and tested practice that you have been implementing for years and a new idea, an experiment, or a proposal developed specifically for this conference. If you have already done your activity elsewhere, you can describe your experiences, conclusions, and challenges. If it is a new idea, tell us what you would like to verify, test, or open through the activity.

Do you have more questions?

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