

PLAY BOOK

PLAY AT YOUR OWN RISK
AN INVITATION TO DISCOVER THE
CITY THROUGH PLAY.



THE PLAYBOOK

This Playbook is a companion, toolkit, and guide in one, and at the same time an echo of the City of Play exhibition trail. It presents selected artistic positions that could be seen in public spaces in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Duisburg, and Essen as part of the City of Play 2025. Under the motto “Play at your own risk”, the artistic positions invited city-dwellers to get active themselves, to mimic, think more broadly, and leave behind their own traces. The exhibition trail arose from the idea of not just showing art but setting it in motion. Many of the works were temporary, performative, interactive – they came to life in the moment, through connection and participation.

The Playbook documents these projects and translates them into a form with a lasting effect: Sketches, photos, instructions, questions, and little tasks invite you to continue to play – wherever you might find yourself in the urban space.

HOW DOES THE PLAYBOOK WORK?

You can see it as an exhibition catalogue, but also as a book of ideas. Each page presents one work of art and offers prompts for how you might try it out yourself, vary it, or re-think it entirely. It's not about copying, but about appropriation. About the courage to use the urban space differently – playfully, critically, creatively. Whether you're alone or with friends, children, or complete strangers:

THIS BOOK AIMS TO GET YOU OUT ON THE STREET.

This Playbook is a key to new perspectives, surprising encounters, and small shifts in everyday life. You don't need a playground, and you don't need permission. Just a little time, an open mind, and a desire to play.

READ THE INSTRUCTIONS. LOOK AROUND YOU. REACT TO THE PLACE.

Play as it tells you to, then change and combine things, and think about what else you might do. The artists behind the City of Play show you possibilities, but what you make of them is up to you. Maybe a marketplace will become a playing field, a traffic sign a basketball hoop, or a fountain a swimming pool. Maybe someone will come across your intervention. Perhaps it will be very quiet and just for you.



THREE-SIDED FOOTBALL

ASGER JORN



GYM WIN SESSION

YOLANDA DOMINGUEZ



STREET ART FOR THE PEOPLE TO PLAY

DÉMOCRATIE CRÉATIVE



SHORTES RUN IN ASIA

DEANA KOLENČIKOVA



PLAYGROUND

THE WA



LAS PRIMERAS

YOLANDA DOMINGUEZ



FOUNTAIN HACKS

THE WA



The order of the table of contents has been scrambled.
Maybe you'd like to roll the dice yourself to decide on which
page you want to start.



UN-STITCHING KARL

BRAD DOWNEY

→ HOUSE OF CARDS

→ CASTLES BENEATH CITIES



MASSIVE WORD SEARCH GAMES

AIDA GOMEZ



AD-KICK

FLORIAN RIVIERE



CORNER

MATHIEU TREMBLIN



AUTO-CREATED

BRAD DOWNEY

DISCLAIMER

Some of the artistic works presented in this Playbook incorporate actions or interventions that are subject to penalties in the public space as legal offenses, damage to property, interference with road traffic, or vandalism. At the same time, the artists' works are also an examination of the rules, boundaries, and laws of public space – and the question of how much play the city allows. Play at your own risk!

THREE-SIDED FOOTBALL

ASGER JORN

1964



With Three-Sided Football, Danish artist Asger Jorn developed a radical reinterpretation of soccer – as a response to social structures of confrontation and polarisation. Instead of two teams, in three-sided football three teams play against each other at the same time on a hexagonal pitch. The winning team is not the one that scores the most goals, but the one that concedes the fewest – a game principle that demands cooperation, tactical alliances, and strategic thinking beyond binary opposites.

Jorn's idea is based on his concept of trilectics, an extension of Marxist dialectics. Instead of the ongoing confrontation between thesis and antithesis, Jorn proposes a third, mediating force. Three-Sided Football thus becomes a playful allegory of social confrontations – and a model for thinking that goes beyond black and white, dominance, competition, and conquest.



HOW IT WORKS

1 FIND SOME PLAYERS

Three-sided football is played with three teams, and ideally with three players per team. So get your friends together or find new players to join you on the spot!

2 PREPARE THE PITCH

You need a hexagonal pitch with three goals spaced out evenly. Get yourself some chalk, tape, or rope and mark out your pitch on the asphalt, the grass, or in the schoolyard.

TIP

It doesn't have to be perfect – the main thing is that it works!

3 DIVIDE UP THE GAME PHASES

The game is played in three rounds of 20 minutes each. At the end of each phase, the teams swap goal positions.

4 WHO WINS?

The winning team is not the one that scores the most goals, but the one that concedes the least. This calls for tactics, alliances, and switching around.



GET STARTED!

Grab the ball, mark the goal, form teams – and start playing alliances, and switching around.



EQUIPMENT

ball, chalk/tape, group of players, goal markings



GYM WIN SESSION

YOLANDA DOMÍNGUEZ

CASTELLÓN, 2017

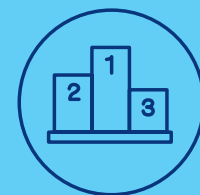


Gym Win Session by Yolanda Domínguez is a participatory artistic performance aimed at women of all ages. In a guided 30-minute “victory workout”, the participants practise physical expressions of triumph and self-confidence – poses that traditionally have a male connotation in public representation. Domínguez thus questions societal norms that tell us female bodies are supposed to embody restraint, weakness, or modesty. Gym Win encourages women to take up space, to show themselves as powerful, and to develop their own gestures of success – individually, loudly, and consciously.



HOW IT WORKS

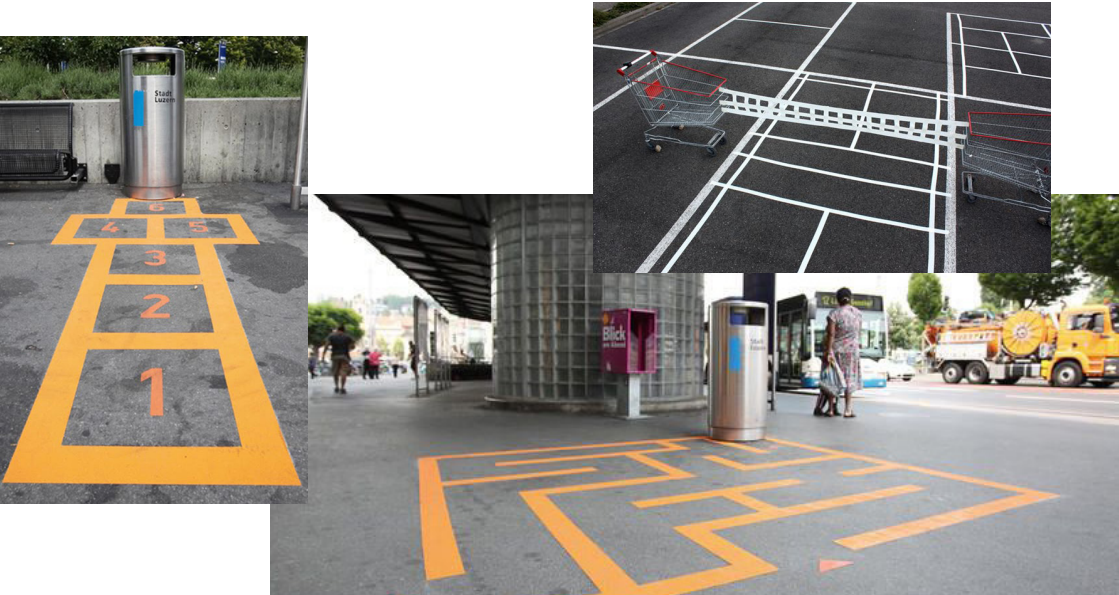
- 1 CHOOSE A VICTORY POSE**
Take a look at the pictures and choose one or more poses.
- 2 ADOPT THE POSE**
Take your place – in the market square, in front of a mirrored surface, or in the middle of the park. Adopt your victory pose. Hold it. For one minute. Or two. Or for as long as it feels good.
- 3 FEEL LIKE A WINNER**
Can you feel it? Power. Presence. Confidence. Maintain this energy as you go through your day, through the city, through the world.
- ★ EXTRA CHALLENGE**
Invent your own victory pose!
Give it a name. Show it to your friends.
Or post it under #cityofplay.



STREET ART FOR THE PEOPLE TO PLAY

DÉMOCRATIE CRÉATIVE

FRANCE, 2011



The collective Démocratie Créative uses simple means to transform urban surfaces into play spaces. In its series Street Art for the People to Play, the group uses adhesive tape to develop playgrounds and prompts for play in public spaces – and thus produces works that are spontaneous and accessible with a touch of humour. The results, for example, are a grid for playing hopscotch or a maze in front of a waste bin – places that transform everyday situations into moments of play and invite passersby to join in.

Démocratie Créative considers street art to be a tool for participation and a fresh take on the public space. Its creative actions invite city-dwellers to experience their surroundings actively, and its work urges them to question the daily routine, to utilise the urban space differently, and to conquer the city in a playful way.



HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FIND A SURFACE TO PLAY ON!**
Take a look around and find the perfect spot for your intervention.
 - 2 DESIGN THE PLAYGROUND!**
Grab a roll of clearly visible adhesive tape and design your very own play area.
 - 3 GET STARTED**
Try out your game and notice how others react to your intervention!
- ! EQUIPMENT**
adhesive tape



GAME 04/14

SHORTEST RUN IN ASIA

DEANA KOLENČIKOVA

TAIWAN, 2019



As part of an art residency program at the Pier-2 Art Center, artist Deana Kolencikova developed an absurd yet precise gesture with probably the “shortest run in Asia”.

In front of what was once Southeast Asia’s largest shopping centre, a group of eight performers ran a distance of about five meters again and again for two hours – back and forth in an endless loop. The “run” took place on a randomly discovered street pattern, an ornamental fragment of urban design that briefly became a running track.

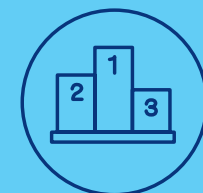
With humour and emphasis, the work reflects the frenetic pace of modern societies, the constant acceleration, the competitive pressure – and the inability to pause. The Shortest Run in Asia thus becomes symbolic of a world in which movement becomes an end in itself, while the goal has long since disappeared from view.



HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FIND A TRACK!**
Find a random pattern on the ground where the markings or floor tiles make it look like an athletics track.
- 2 DRAW THE STARTING LINE!**
Set a starting line with tape, chalk, or a traffic cone.
- 3 GET SOME RUNNERS TOGETHER!**
Whether you’re alone or in a team: the more, the merrier. So invite friends, passersby, or strangers to spontaneously run with you.
- 4 ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET, GO!**
Start running. There and back. Again and again. Two minutes or two hours – you decide. It’s not about speed, but about repetition, attention, and the question: Why are we actually doing this?
- 5 REFLECT!**
How does it feel to run in this one spot? What changes as time passes?

! EQUIPMENT
chalk/tape, other runners



PLAYGROUND

THE WA

MARSEILLE, 2011



The Wa is known for his subversive interventions in the public space. His works are a mixture of art and activism that encourages us to question urban spaces and experience them anew. He is committed to greater social justice and the ideal of a space free of domination, and he uses art as a way to disrupt and reconsider societal norms.

By repurposing everyday objects such as waste bins and street signs, he breaks away from the conventional logic of the use of public space. His temporary, often illegal interventions are an example of “urban hacking”, whereby he achieves maximum impact with minimal resources in a short space of time.

The intervention known as Playground remained in its original location for nine months, providing a humorous yet thought-provoking commentary on the use of public spaces, which are so often intended only for functional purposes. Why just throw trash in the waste bin when you can also shoot hoops?



HOW IT WORKS

- ① **FIND A BASKETBALL HOOP!**
Look for a public waste bin, preferably one that is open at the top. Find a traffic sign that makes a suitable holder and mount the waste bin underneath it (temporarily and safely, with respect for the surroundings). Take a look around: Is there enough space to shoot?
- ② **PREPARE YOUR BALL!**
Anything that flies can be a ball: something soft, a screwed-up bit of paper, a piece of trash, or an apple core.
- ③ **MARK YOUR FREE-THROW LINE!**
Take the tape and mark a free-throw line on the floor at a distance that suits you.
- ④ **AIM AND SHOOT!**
Try to get the “ball” in a high arc and into the basket!

- ! **EQUIPMENT**
adhesive tape



GAME 06/14

LAS PRIMERAS

YOLANDA DOMÍNGUEZ

MALAGA, 2017



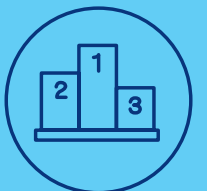
With Las Primeras, artist Yolanda Domínguez stages a collective running and performance project that reframes the concept of success so that it is not an individual goal but rather a shared one. A group of women run together through the public space, all wearing the same starting number – number 1. Regardless of the order in which they reach the finish line, they are all winners.

The action is intended as a symbol of solidarity and cohesion: If one woman wins then all women do. Domínguez uses public space as a stage to create visibility and question existing hierarchies – in sport, society, and everyday life. Las Primeras is both a feminist statement and an invitation to transform the principle of competition into cooperation.



HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FORM A TEAM!**
Find a group of fellow runners who want to make a statement together.
 - 2 PREPARE THE START NUMBERS!**
Print out the same starting number 1 for everyone and have everyone attach it to their clothing.
 - 3 PLAN YOUR RUN!**
Choose a route for the run together that you can all manage.
 - 4 RUN TOGETHER!**
Start together, stay together. It's not about speed, but about the gesture: You run as a group, not against each other.
 - 5 GET TO THE FINISH!**
Celebrate together at the finish line. Everyone is first. Everyone counts.
- ! EQUIPMENT**
sports gear, running shoes, start number 1



GAME 07/14

FOUNTAIN HACKS

**LIKEARCHITECTS &
RICARDO DOURADO**

GUIMARÃES, 2012



Fountain Hacks transforms public fountains into places for playing, bathing, and delight. Portuguese architecture studio LIKEarchitects and fashion designer Ricardo Dourado use beach loungers, garden furniture, and toys to get the people of Guimarães into the city's fountains so they can discover them from a new perspective. This turns the fountains into active bodies of water that are more than just beautiful objects to look at.

The action invites everyone to experience the city in a new way, to forge connections, and to have fun together. Fountains become stages for small happenings: dipping feet in the water, laughing, splashing around, playful encounters – all in the middle of a public space. The idea here is that cities come alive when their residents become active and use their surroundings in a playful way.



HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FIND THE RIGHT SPOT!**
Find a fountain that is suitable for your “fountain hack”.
 - 2 GATHER YOUR BATHING GEAR!**
Grab everything you need to make the bathing more fun and give the fountain a new look – beach loungers, toys, water games.
 - 3 TRANSFORM FOUNTAINS!**
Get in the water! Enjoy your city from a new perspective and watch how others react to your intervention.
- ! EQUIPMENT**
bathing gear, fountain



GAME 08/14

UN-STITCHING KARL

BRAD DOWNEY

BERLIN, 2007



Brad Downey brings humour, sensitivity, and precise gestures to his interventions in the arrangement of public space. Street furniture, traffic signs, and built-in materials are appropriated and become media for art. Recurring motifs in his work include interventions in urban ground surfaces and a playfulness with paving slabs – he extracts them, changes their arrangement, and presents them in a new way. Below, we show you three selected works that illustrate this playful interaction with the urban space.

In *Un-Stitching Karl*, the American artist lifts the paving stones out from an urban surface, stacks them up like dominoes – and then knocks them over. What appears to be a playful act turns out to be a subversive intervention: an encroachment on the familiar fabric of the city that questions norms, ownership structures, and principles of order. With formal precision and a keen sense of the absurd, he exposes the contradictions in our everyday lives and suggests new ways of seeing and acting.

In his work, Downey explores urban spaces, sacred places, contested borders, and forgotten peripheral areas – weaving new narratives into their chaotic patterns. As part of this, *Un-Stitching Karl* deliberately blurs the line between art and everyday life: a poetic moment of disruption that makes a playful partner of the city itself.



GAME 09/14

HOUSE OF CARDS

BRAD DOWNEY

BERLIN, 2008



For *House of Cards*, Brad Downey removes paving stones from the city pavement and stacks them up on the spot to form a house of cards – a structure that's delicate, unstable, and full of tension. With this simple yet powerful gesture, he transforms a functional, solid building material into a symbol of uncertainty, fragility, and potential for the unexpected.

Downey uses urban materials and everyday situations to create new meanings. His precise interventions in public spaces disrupt routines, break things apart, and open up new spaces for thought and play. *House of Cards* is not only symbolic of the fragile balance within our cities but also a silent call for a rethink – brought with humour, subtlety, and radical simplicity.



CASTLES BENEATH CITIES

BRAD DOWNEY

AMSTERDAM, 2008



In Castles Beneath Cities, Brad Downey literally lays the urban ground bare: He removes individual paving stones from a sidewalk and uses the building sand exposed underneath to build a small sandcastle. What at first glance appears to be a playful intervention turns out to be a poetic act of re-evaluation – and a precise gesture that questions our relationship to urban space, to order and transience.

Downey combines humorous vexation with penetrating social and political insight. With minimal means, he stops people in their tracks as familiar surfaces become permeable – both literally and figuratively. Castles Beneath Cities exemplifies Downey's artistic work, in which urban structures are deconstructed and translated into new, often absurd narratives. With a keen sense of materiality, form, and context, he shifts our perception – and opens up new perspectives on what we call everyday life.



HOW IT WORKS

1 FIND A SURFACE TO PLAY ON!

Look around and search for a spot where you can find loose paving stones.

TIP

Perhaps close to a tree, somewhere on the pavement, or in a forgotten corner of the city.

2 LIFT OUT THE PLAYING PIECES AND REVEAL THE PLAYING SURFACE!

Use a bit of sensitivity (and a suitable tool) to carefully lift out one or more slabs from their base.

PLEASE NOTE

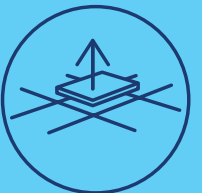
Pay attention to safety and respect the place – this intervention is poetic, not destructive.

3 PLAY!

Set up the tiles as a row of dominoes, stack them like a house of cards, or use the exposed hole as a sandpit.

! EQUIPMENT

screwdriver, crowbar, gloves



MASSIVE WORD SEARCH GAMES

AÏDA GÓMEZ

BERLIN, KÖLN, BONN, MADRID, UTRECHT, 2015 - ONGOING



Artist Aïda Gómez develops large-format Word Search Games, which she transfers to the public space. In her artistic practice, she combines elements of popular culture with everyday urban life to offer an imaginative and surprising interpretation of our city.

As part of City of Play too, her works were displayed in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Duisburg, and Essen: As oversized puzzle posters on walls and shop windows, they invited passersby to stop, search, and play.

Gómez uses this simple way of playing to highlight collective memory and the potential of shared play.



HOW IT WORKS

1 CHOOSE A THEME!

Think of a theme for your word search: words that encourage or inspire, terms from your favourite book or movie, or a topic that is currently on your mind. Anything goes – the main thing is that it gets people searching and raises a smile.

2 CHOOSE YOUR WORDS!

Collect 10 to 15 words that you would like to hide.

TIP

Use some simple and some tricky words so that it's fun for everyone.

3 CREATE YOUR WORD SEARCH!

- write out the word search on paper or cardboard
- or create one online and print it out

4 HANG IT UP IN THE URBAN SPACE!

Grab some tape or clips and hang your word search game up in a clearly visible place: on a fence, lamppost, tree, notice board, or an empty shop window. You can also mix up some paste and stick it to a wall or advertising pillar, as with the City of Play.

Be careful not to damage anything – and choose places where there is room for people to stop and try to solve the puzzle.

! EQUIPMENT

pen, glue, paper, (printer)



AD-KICK

FLORIAN RIVIÈRE



Florian Rivière transforms everyday urban infrastructures into play spaces. In the work “Ad-Kick”, he turns a billboard – otherwise a symbol of advertising and consumption – into a football goal, marking the goal area in front of it with chalk. He then places a ball in the penalty spot and invites passersby to join in.

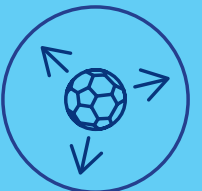
Rivière’s works subvert everyday routines, transforming bike paths into running tracks and manhole covers into targets. His interventions turn things we normally ignore into playgrounds, making them accessible, playful, and surprising. Using simple materials such as chalk, tape, and found objects, he turns the city into an urban game board.

Ad-Kick is part of Rivière’s approach of encouraging people to conquer, rediscover, and playfully shape their environment.

HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FIND THE RIGHT SPOT!**
Look for a billboard that can be used as a goal.
- 2 MARK YOUR GOAL!**
Draw a goal area on the ground with chalk.
- 3 POSITION THE BALL!**
Place the ball ready for a kick and invite others to play along.
- 4 PLAY!**
Take shots, try out different variations, or get passersby to join in.

- ! EQUIPMENT**
chalk and ball



GAME 13/14

CORNER

MATHIEU TREMBLIN

STRASBOURG, 2008



Mathieu Tremblin, co-founder of the artist duo Les Frères Ripoulain, is known for his poetic, often playful interventions in the public space. His works respond to the social, political, and architectural fabric of the city – and encourage people to engage with them actively. They are each specific to the location and involve the artist intervening in the urban space, organising tours, designing tools, or misappropriating objects or gadgets.

With Corner, Mathieu Tremblin transforms what would normally be a carelessly discarded drink can into an improvised football. A sticky film printed with a soccer pattern is stuck onto the tin – and the game can begin. The minimalist gesture gives new value to a waste product and brings spontaneity, movement, and humour to everyday urban life.



HOW IT WORKS

1 **BUY A CANNED DRINK OR FIND AN EMPTY DRINK CAN!**

Go to your favourite kiosk and buy yourself a drink in a can – a soda or a beer, it doesn't matter – or look in the recycling section of the nearest waste bin.

2 **ENJOY A REFRESHING DRINK!**

Finish your drink and keep the can!

3 **MAKE A FOOTBALL!**

Take the sticker and wrap it round your empty can.

4 **PLAY FOOTBALL!**

Throw the can on the floor and off you go. Enjoy the kickaround!

! **EQUIPMENT**

drink can, sticker



AUTO-CREATED

BRAD DOWNEY

BERLIN, 2008



In Auto-Created, Brad Downey applies humour and a keen sense for the logic of the urban space to make a plaything out of the city itself. To do so, the American artist attaches several rolls of tape close to a rotating advertising column and fixes the ends of the tape to the column. As the column continues to rotate, the tapes wind around it – slowly, rhythmically, inexorably – and thus cover it layer by layer with colourful tape.

The work is a silent choreography of material, movement, and time. Downey merely provides the impetus; the rest is left to the location, the wind, and the mechanics. Auto-Created thus becomes an experiment in control and letting go, in autonomy and process. The work is produced not by the artist's hand, but through the interplay of technology and chance, system and disruption.

At the same time, the work reveals a subtle critique of the logic of urban communication: The advertising pillar, symbol of endless advertising and information, literally wraps itself up – in its own traces, in what it sends out. What's left is a moment of standstill, a poetic kink in the flow of the city.

HOW IT WORKS

- 1 FIND A PLACE**
Look for a rotating advertising column or a similar rotating object in the city.
 - 2 ATTACH THE ROLLS OF TAPE**
Attach several rolls of tape somewhere near the column and carefully fix the ends of the tape to the column.
 - 3 ALLOW MOVEMENT**
As soon as the column rotates, the tapes start to unroll automatically and wrap around the column.
 - 4 OBSERVE**
Watch how the column changes. The object disappears under its own gesture.
- ! EQUIPMENT**
rolls of tape, cable ties



IMPRESSUM

IMPRINT

This zine is issued for the Urban Arts & Culture Program CITY OF PLAY,
on the occasion of the Rhine-Ruhr 2025 FISU World University Games.

CITY OF PLAY

May 24th - July 27th 2025
Mülheim an der Ruhr, Duisburg, Essen

www.rhineruhr2025.com
www.trans-urban.de

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PAPER

Platzhalter

