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# MUSEUM LUDWIG

## PRESS RELEASE

April 12–August 3, 2025

### **Francis Alÿs – Kids Take Over**

Press conference: Thursday, April 10, 2025, 11 a.m., preview starting 10 a.m.

Opening: Friday, April 11, 2025, 7 p.m.

The Museum Ludwig presents *Francis Alÿs – Kids Take Over*, a remarkable exhibition in which children are the focus. The internationally acclaimed artist Francis Alÿs has had major solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Modern in London, and numerous other museums in cities such as Houston, Shanghai, Mexico City, and Basel. His work was featured at the Venice Biennale in 2022 and in 2023 he received the Wolfgang Hahn Prize of the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig.

Thirty video works from Alÿs's ongoing series *Children's Games*, showing children from around the world at play, will be presented at the Museum Ludwig in dialogue with a group of paintings by the artist. An outreach project with local Cologne schoolchildren adds a participatory dimension to the exhibition.

For the past twenty-five years, Francis Alÿs (\*1959 in Antwerp, lives in Mexico City) has documented children's games in a diverse range of countries. His videos depict children engaged in various activities such as jump rope, rolling tires, and a snowball fight, in different climate zones, in cities and in the countryside, in the steppes or in the forest. While some of the games are familiar to us, the rules of other games only gradually become apparent.

The universality of play is witnessed in the children's concentration and anticipation, in their excitement and delight. Many of the films have a timeless quality due to the landscapes in which the children play and the analogue nature of their games. Other films are linked to a specific time, such as a game of tag played by children wearing masks during the COVID pandemic or more recent videos in which children in Ukraine integrate the war into their games. Sometimes geopolitical power structures and colonial inequalities are revealed, as in a film showing Congolese children using an old car tire to roll down a hill, which turns out to be the slag heap of a cobalt mine.

*Children's Games* attests to the creativity, resilience, and deep bond between children, whose games appear as utopian expressions of community and tradition beyond cultural and climatic differences.

Aljys has turned over part of the exhibition space to fifty children from two local elementary schools in Cologne who have collaborated on a project that forms a special part of the show. These children – from class 3b at the Gemeinschaftsgrundschule in Köln-Lindweiler and class 6a/b at the Adolph Kolping-Hauptschule in Köln-Kalk – aged between eight and thirteen, like those featured in *Children's Games*, have designed a play zone and a children's museum. They have worked on the project for over a year, choosing artworks from the Museum Ludwig's permanent collection for their own curated museum. This collaboration is an experiment by children for children, allowing them to draw on their own perspectives to engage with paintings, sculptures, and video works and to invite others to do the same.

A new film in the *Children's Games* series, made by Aljys in Cologne with the participation of the local schoolchildren, will premiere in the exhibition in June.

*Francis Aljys – Kids Take Over* is the largest outreach program the Museum Ludwig has ever undertaken. To encourage as many children as possible to visit the exhibition, over one hundred classes have been invited to visit the show. For many, it will be their first time to a museum, and their travel costs, often an obstacle for potential visitors, will be covered by the institution.

This exhibition will transform the Museum Ludwig into a place where global and local perspectives merge. It invites visitors to discover the power of art and games, appreciate the perspectives of children—the voices of the future—and, through them, experience the museum in a new way.

Curators: Rita Kersting, Santi Grunewald

The exhibition has been supported by the Landschaftsverband Rheinland (LVR) and the Gesellschaft für moderne Kunst am Museum Ludwig as well as by Russmedia, the Victor Rolff Stiftung, the Brigitte Wagner-Halswick Stiftung, the RheinEnergieStiftung Kultur, the Imhoff Stiftung, the MoBeyer Stiftung, and the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation. Additional support has been generously provided by Galerie Kilchmann.

**Social Media:**

We use the hashtag #MLxFrancisAljys in our posts about this exhibition.