

Francis Alÿs

Location: Hotel Hoheneck, Gemeinschaftssaal [common room]

As we grow older, we lose much of our childlike naivety. The more we assert ourselves in the adult world, the less we use our imagination, which as children allowed us to create entire worlds from the simplest of means. We no longer build sandcastles on the beach and imagine life inside them. We also no longer lay out entire cities on the floor with our mother's button collection or wander through the woods with our friends like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island.

Since 1999, the artist Francis Alÿs has been creating video works that show children playing all over the world. In his series *Children's Games*, we meet children and teenagers who are full of fun and enjoy their games. Using the simplest of materials such as chairs, coins, plastic bottles or car tires, they create cheerful worlds and demonstrate their talent for improvisation. The most extensive and spectacular presentation of this series to date took place at the 2022 Venice Biennale: in the Belgian Pavilion, visitors could immerse themselves in the joy and laughter of children—and almost inevitably asked themselves what their own improvisation skills are like.

The socio-political dimension of this series is far-reaching: on the one hand, we see that children's games build a bridge between all cultures, and on the other hand, a visionary dimension is revealed here. For what would our world look like if we used our imaginations to shape the future together in peace?

A video from the *Children's Games* series was also made in Engelberg during the pandemic; it shows children playing in the snow and can be seen along with three other films in the common room of the Hotel Hoheneck. (ds)

Born in Antwerp, Belgium, in 1959, Francis Alÿs lives and works in Mexico City. Trained as an architect and urbanist, he moved to Mexico in 1986 to work with local NGOs. Alÿs has been working as a visual artist since 1990. His artistic practice ranges from painting and drawing to video and photography. He has had important solo exhibitions at

Fragmentos, Bogotá, Colombia (2020), Tai Kwun, Hong Kong, China (2020), Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2018), Art Museum, Arizona, USA (2017), Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA (2011), and Tate Modern, London, Great Britain (2010), among others.

All *Children's Games* can be found on the artist's website:

francisalys.com/category/childrens-games/