

# barbican

For immediate release

## [Francis Alÿs](#)

Barbican Art Gallery

27 June – 1 September 2024

Media View: Wednesday 26 June, 10am – 1pm

*\*please note the adjusted opening date of 27 June 2024*



Francis Alÿs, 2023, Barbican, London © Louise Yeowart / Barbican Art Gallery

This summer, the Barbican will present a major new exhibition by internationally renowned, Mexico-based artist **Francis Alÿs** (b. 1959, Antwerp, Belgium), his largest institutional solo exhibition in the UK for almost 15 years. Conceived as a welcoming space for all children to visit, it will transform the brutalist architecture of the Barbican Art Gallery into a cinematic playground of children's games.

Celebrating the breadth and importance of the artist's work, the exhibition will reveal new perspectives on his prolific career alongside works specially commissioned for the Barbican. Developed in close collaboration with the artist, it will stage the UK premiere of his critically acclaimed series *Children's Games* (1999-present), newly expanded since the Belgian Pavilion at the 2022 Venice Biennale. Visitors will be immersed in a multi-screen film installation reflecting on the spontaneous, self-organised nature of children at play.

For the past two decades Alÿs has travelled to over 15 countries around the world to document children at play; from 'musical chairs' in Mexico, to 'leapfrog' in Iraq, to 'jump rope' in Hong Kong, and 'wolf and lamb' in Afghanistan. Standing as a testament to the universality of play and ingenuity even in politically charged environments, this archive of games grows in significance with each new film. The ever-expanding project is a record of lived experiences of play and social interactions which are in decline due to rapid urbanisation, the omnipresence of cars, the erosion of communities and the use of social media and digital entertainment.

**Shanay Jhaveri, Head of Visual Arts at the Barbican, said:** “*We are thrilled to be staging this major exhibition exploring the fascinating, interdisciplinary work of Francis Alÿs, and delighted that the artist is creating this presentation specifically for the Barbican. Celebrating the universal joy of children at play, we look forward to Alÿs’ ludic sensibility working its way through the wider Centre, reflecting the Barbican’s own commitment to fostering a joyful and inclusive environment.*”

With a career spanning four decades, Alÿs has forged a unique and radical practice ranging from painting and drawing to film and animation. Trained as an architect and urbanist in Tournai, Belgium and Venice, Italy, Alÿs moved to Mexico City in 1986. The rapidly shifting urban context and the consequent changes to social dynamics in the late 1980s inspired him to become a visual artist, developing his early public interventions. Works like *Paradox of Praxis 1 (Sometimes Making Something Leads to Nothing)*, 1997, wherein Alÿs pushed a large block of melting ice through the streets of Mexico City for nine hours, quickly established him as a leading artist of his generation.

Working in collaboration with local communities around the world, his engagement with cross-cultural contexts from Latin America to North Africa and the Middle East operates beyond dominant, Western-centric narratives. What emerges is a lifelong exploration of art as a vehicle for witnessing social and political change.

Major solo exhibitions include (selection): Wiels, Brussels (2023); MUAC, Mexico City (2023); The Belgian Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2022); Fragmentos, Bogota (2020); Tai Kwun, Hong Kong (2020); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2018); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2017); Secession, Vienna (2016); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2015); Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo (2013); Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art (2013); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2011); Tate Modern, London (2010) and Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2003). Recent major international group exhibitions include (selection): Shanghai Biennial (2018); Iraqi Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale (2017); dOCUMENTA(13), Kassel (2012).

He was awarded the Wolfgang Hahn Prize (2023); Whitechapel Gallery Art Icon (2020); EYE Art & Film Prize, EYE Filmmuseum, Amsterdam (2018); BACA-laureate Prize (2010); Vincent Award (2008) and the Blue Orange Prize (2004).

*This exhibition has received generous support from the Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust.*

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

### **Press Information**

For further information, images, or to arrange interviews, please contact:

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### **Barbican press team**

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### **Press images**

Please get in touch for high-res images.

### **Barbican Press Room**

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communication team's contact details are listed on our website at <https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room/>

### **Press Tickets**

All press tickets need to be booked 48 hours in advance by contacting a member of the Barbican's Visual Arts Press team at [visualartspress@barbican.org.uk](mailto:visualartspress@barbican.org.uk). Our inbox is monitored Monday to Friday, 10am-6pm. Please let us know if you have any access requirements. We look forward to welcoming you to the Barbican.

### **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Barbican Art Gallery, Silk Street, London, EC2Y 8DS  
[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

### **Tickets**

Tickets will go on sale in 2024.

### **Opening Hours**

Saturday – Wednesday 10am - 6pm (last entry 5pm)

Thursday – Friday 10am - 8pm (last entry 7pm)

Bank holidays: Please check the website as opening times vary.

### **Barbican Art Gallery**

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

### **About the Barbican**

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [the BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Britten Sinfonia](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [Human Rights Watch Film Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Entertainment](#).

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