

FREE PLAY ARTISTS

Cory Arcangel • Patrick Bernier & Olive Martin • Ruth Catlow • Mary Flanagan • Futurefarmers • Ryan Gander • Jeanne van Heeswijk & Rolf Engelen • Allan McCollum & Matt Mullican • Paul Noble • Pedro Reyes • Jason Rohrer • David Shrigley • Erik Svedäng • Yoko Ono

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

No vital periods ever began from a theory. What's first is a game, a struggle, a journey.

—Guy Debord

Seeking the initial moment described by Debord, *Free Play* brings together works by an international array of artists modeled on games and play. All of the works on view are functioning games, which you are free to play. Whether the works derive from the playground, the video arcade, the casino, or the rec room, in reinventing games, the artists in *Free Play* aim to create experiences that reflect on social, political and cultural realities. Collectively the works in *Free Play* explore interactivity, an expansive topic in both current art and exhibition-making notable for the migration of participatory and live art forms into the heretofore foreign territory of the gallery or museum. Every work in this exhibition is intended to be handled and played.

Artistic processes tied to game playing have historically attracted artists of the avant-garde, most famously the chess master and legendary artist Marcel Duchamp. His every creative move had his chess partner in mind: you, the viewer. Games were intrinsic to the work of the World War I-addled Surrealists and Dadaists—the inventors of the exquisite corpse drawing game and automatic drawing—who used such games to free the artistic imagination, and upend bourgeois values. In the 1960s and 1970s, the countercultural and anti-war Fluxus group along with the New Games Foundation took on capitalism and corporate culture through games promoting cooperative, non-competitive play. The latter sponsored massive public games in city parks, while the former was

known for its portable "game boxes" containing playful pieces that were easily mailed to Fluxus's global happenings. Moving away from the classical chess period of kings, queens, and knights, the works in this exhibition do not represent strategies of antiquity, but rather strategies of decision-making, political awareness, and open-mindedness around contemporary issues.

Melissa E. Feldman, FREE PLAY Curator

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ABOUT THE CURATOR

Melissa E. Feldman is a Seattle-based independent curator and writer, and is a frequent contributor to *Art in America*, *Frieze*, and *Aperture*, among other publications. Her recent exhibitions include *Dance Rehearsal: Karen Kilimnik's World of Ballet and Theatre* (2012), organized by the Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, which travelled to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, *Afterglow: Rethinking California Light and Space Art* (2010), Wiegand Gallery, Notre Dame de Namur University Art Gallery, Belmont, CA, and the Hearst Art Gallery at St. Mary's College, Walnut Creek, CA, and *Sampler: Textiles at Creative Growth* (2007) at Creative Growth Art Center, Oakland. Feldman has taught at the California College of Art, the San Francisco Art Institute, and Goldsmith's College, London, and is credited with organizing the first monographic exhibitions in America for Kilimnik, Martin Kippenberger, and Hiroshi Sugimoto in the early 1990s as a curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia.