

FREE PLAY AND RADICAL UTOPIA AT ARKEN

The Danish artist **Palle Nielsen** is reinterpreting his legendary playground, *The Model*, first installed at Stockholm's Moderna Museet in 1968. Now, in ARKEN's biggest gallery, children can jump in foam pits, paint the playground and each other, dress up, play recorded music and much more.

The Model: Palle Nielsen
9 February – 7 December 2014

In 1968, the then 26-year-old Danish artist Palle Nielsen transformed Moderna Museet in Stockholm into a giant adventure playground. This was hardly an everyday occurrence at a national art museum in 1968. The exhibition sent a shockwave through the art world and attracted massive media coverage. *The Model* was a huge success. Tens of thousands of children flocked to the museum over three hectic weeks. For the next many years Nielsen stayed out of the media spotlight, and out of the Danish art world, but in the last decade there has been growing international awareness of the artist and his radical, original work from 1968. The artist has now reinterpreted the work in ARKEN's big Art Axis.

'It's only an exhibition to those who don't play'

Palle Nielsen made his original playground in collaboration with the Swedish activist group Aktion Samtal (Action Dialogue) in a time when children and children's rights were just becoming a hot political topic. *The Model – Model for a Qualitative Society* was at once a pioneering social experiment, a critique of the art museum as institution and an Actionist artwork. The playground included a large wooden structure that children climbed in and jumped from, built on and painted – entirely without adult interference. They dressed up in old theatrical costumes, listened to loud music and exercised their creativity with brushes, hammer and saw or just their bare hands.

A lot has changed since 1968, including children's place and importance in society, technology's impact on everyday life, the values we associate with a good childhood and the freedom we give children to explore. *The Model* is not a historical recreation of the 1968 exhibition, it is a space for today's kids. What hasn't changed is Nielsen's conviction that children's freedom and creativity can show the way to a better society. About the ARKEN exhibition, Nielsen says:

"I want us to stop for a moment, with our digital devices in our hands, and think about what we really want for our children's future. Unleash the joy of children, their imagination and creativity – that will make them free, social and curious children."

International attention

In recent years, the international art world has opened its eyes to Nielsen's *The Model* and its relevance then and now. Although he dropped out of the Copenhagen art

scene in the 1970s, Nielsen is an international name today because of *The Model*. Documentary material from the original playground has been exhibited numerous times in recent years, including at MACBA in Barcelona, MoMA in New York and, currently, at Tate Liverpool.

The exhibition *The Model: Palle Nielsen* runs from 9 February to 7 December 2014.

The exhibition was made possible by a generous grant of DKK 3.29 million (EUR 441,000) from Nordea-fonden.

About Palle Nielsen

Palle Nielsen (born 1942) lives and works on Falster, south of Copenhagen. As a student at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen from 1963-67, he was headed for a promising career as a painter, but he chose to go in a different direction. In 1967, as artistic consultant to the Municipality of Høje Gladsaxe, he built a big, creative playground, *Alsikemarken*. In 1968-69, he executed a number of playground actions in the cramped back alleys of Copenhagen's working-class Nørrebro neighbourhood before realizing *The Model* at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. From 1969-71 he was a research fellow at the Royal Academy's School of Architecture in Copenhagen. Nielsen later taught education, design and creativity and has done major assignments, including for Hvidovre Hospital and the Institute for the Blind in Hellerup.

Information about *The Model* at ARKEN

- Age group: children aged 3-12
- Reduced admission of DKK 50 to visit *The Model* only
- Maximum capacity: 80 children in *The Model* at one time
- *The Model* is staffed by "play hosts"
- Every Wednesday from 17:00-19:00, grownups also get to jump, climb and paint in *The Model*

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