

Press Release

Imaginary Friends

17 March – 2 July 2023

A project curated by Martina Millà and Patrick Ronse

The Fundació Joan Miró presents *Imaginary Friends*, an exhibition that offers an accessible and fun introduction to contemporary art

This project, curated by Martina Millà and Patrick Ronse, invites audiences of every age, and especially children, to engage in a spontaneous and uninhibited way with the world of the very latest art.

***Imaginary Friends* takes as its starting point the belief that contemporary art can be an accessible experience and art centres places for joy and fun. Accordingly, artists approach the public with a sense of fellow feeling, as friends who can stimulate the imagination.**

Paola Pivi, Kasper Bosmans, Polly Apfelbaum, Meschac Gaba, Afra Eisma, Pipilotti Rist, Martin Creed, Erwin Wurm and Jeppe Hein present nine installations that invite visitors to engage in a dialogue with them and, in many instances, encourage their collaborative participation. Many of these works are being shown for the first time in a Spanish museum.

The project is complemented by an extensive outreach and social programme of activities with something suitable for everyone, with a special emphasis on families and young people, exemplified by a catalogue in the form of a children's book based on a story by Claudia González Caparrós illustrated by Milimbo.

Barcelona, 15 March 2023. Having an imaginary friend is a psychological phenomenon in which a child forms a friendship with a person, character or animal – or a blend of all three – that does not exist in the real world. Through their interaction with their invented friend, children learn about themselves and the world as they play and explore the vast territory of their imagination and their creativity.

Imaginary Friends is the title of an exhibition intended to give children insights into contemporary art in a lively and fun way while at the same time appealing to the playful spirit of visitors of any age. The exhibition curators Martina Millà, a Belgian art center belonging to the cities of Kortrijk and Waregem, invite children of every age to connect with a group of artists and representative works and, through them, to develop their own understanding of art and the power of the imagination.

The starting point for the Fundació Joan Miró's exhibition project for this spring is the belief that contemporary art can be a personal experience, artists can be regarded as friends who widen our horizons and, as a result, the museum can become a place for imagination, friendship, social interaction, creativity and joy.

Paola Pivi, Kasper Bosmans, Polly Apfelbaum, Meschac Gaba, Afra Eisma, Pipilotti Rist, Martin Creed, Erwin Wurm and Jeppe Hein present nine installations, some of them classics, others newly created, many of which are being shown for the first time in a Spanish museum. Some of the works – displayed in the exhibition rooms of the Fundació Joan Miró and in other spots around the museum – are interactive and invite the public to gain a new awareness of the role they play as visitors, and of their active mediation in the museum space. The selection of works covers a broad generational and cultural spectrum, while reflecting the contemporary concerns of artists who share a common interest, which is to involve the public in their practices by making them part of the work and even co-creators of some of the pieces. As one of the exhibition curators puts it: 'Is there any better way to familiarise yourself with the art of our times than feeling yourself a part of it?'

Imaginary Friends aims to facilitate this connection between the public and artworks. Millà and Ronse's intention in this project is 'to stimulate the mind and the senses, to encourage access to imaginative dimensions, to generate sensuality, to break down stereotypes and limiting prejudices, and to create positive energies'. They add: 'The true magic of the artworks in this exhibition resides in the way they interact with visitors to the Fundació Joan Miró'.

The imaginary friends in this exhibition will stay with visitors keen for this to happen outside the exhibition rooms thanks to the catalogue of the show, a book suitable for everyone based on an original story by the author Claudia González Caparrós, designed and illustrated by Milimbo. The publication that accompanies *Imaginary Friends* invites readers of every age to ask themselves questions and to give free rein to their imagination in relation to each of the installations on display. For its part, the outreach and social programme associated with *Imaginary Friends* includes activities intended to encourage participants to feel a part of the artistic experience and to facilitate close and playful contact with contemporary art for all visitors, with a special emphasis on young people and families. The planned events include a family day for art and literature in May, as well as new seasons of concerts and film screenings for youngsters, and art labs with something for everyone.

Curators



Patrick Ronse and Martina Millà in the exhibition rooms of *Imaginary Friends*
Photo: Davide Camesasca
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Patrick Ronse (1962) is the artistic director and co-ordinator of Be-Part, Platform for contemporary art (Belgium). He studied art history and archaeology at Ghent University and worked from 1990 to 1999 as communications manager at Mu.ZEE (museum for modern and contemporary art in Ostend) and the Municipal Museums of Bruges. From 1999 to 2002, he was part of the communication team of Bruges 2002, European Capital of Culture. Ronse was responsible for the founding of Be-Part in 2004 and is still the driving force behind the platform, which operates in both Kortrijk and Waregem. Be-Part is known as a contemporary arts centre that offers opportunities to young artists in particular and is fully committed to new productions.

Over the years, Ronse has curated various contemporary art exhibitions and co-ordinated the publication of more than thirty artist's books. For Be-Part he curated solo exhibitions with Navid Nuur, Rinus Van de Velde, Caroline Achaintre, Dirk Zoete, Sarah Westphal, Pieter Vermeersch, Charif Benhelima and Polly Apfelbaum, among many others. In 2015, he was co-curator of Beaufort and in 2018 and 2021 he curated the first (PLAY) and the second (Paradise) editions of the Triennial in Kortrijk together with Hilde Teerlinck. From 2014 to 2021, he was a member of the Art Committee of the Flemish Parliament.

Martina Millà (Barcelona, 1965)

Martina Millà has been Head of Exhibitions at the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona since 2019. Prior to this, she was in charge of programming and projects at the foundation from 2007. For the foundation, she curates temporary exhibitions of modern and contemporary art and co-ordinates the Joan Miró Prize and the Espai 13 programme, the longest-running project for producing and displaying emerging art in Spain.

Millà also curates photography exhibitions based on the Joaquim Gomis Fonds, the photographic archive of the first president of the Fundació Joan Miró, held in the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya in Sant Cugat. These exhibitions, held in the foyer of the Fundació Joan Miró, alternate with others by photographers who, like Gomis in his day, do not dedicate themselves professionally or exclusively to photography. The most recent exhibitions Millà has presented as a curator are *Paul Klee and the Secrets of Nature*, produced in collaboration with the Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern; *Bimbo*, by Nora Baylach; and *Illusions and Illusionism* by Gomis, held in the foundation's foyer. In addition to co-curating *Imaginary Friends* with Patrick Ronse, she is currently co-ordinating the new season of Espai 13, *Fixations per Minute*, curated by the Yaby collective.

After graduating in art history from the University of Barcelona, Millà obtained an MA from the Institute of Fine Arts (NYU) and completed a PhD in the history of modern art and architecture at Emory University, Atlanta (USA).

Images and digitised dossier available for the press in our [virtual press room](#) and using the link [bit.ly/Amics imaginaris](https://bit.ly/Amics_imaginaris).

Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona. Communication and Press Office
press@fmirobcn.org (34) 934 439 070