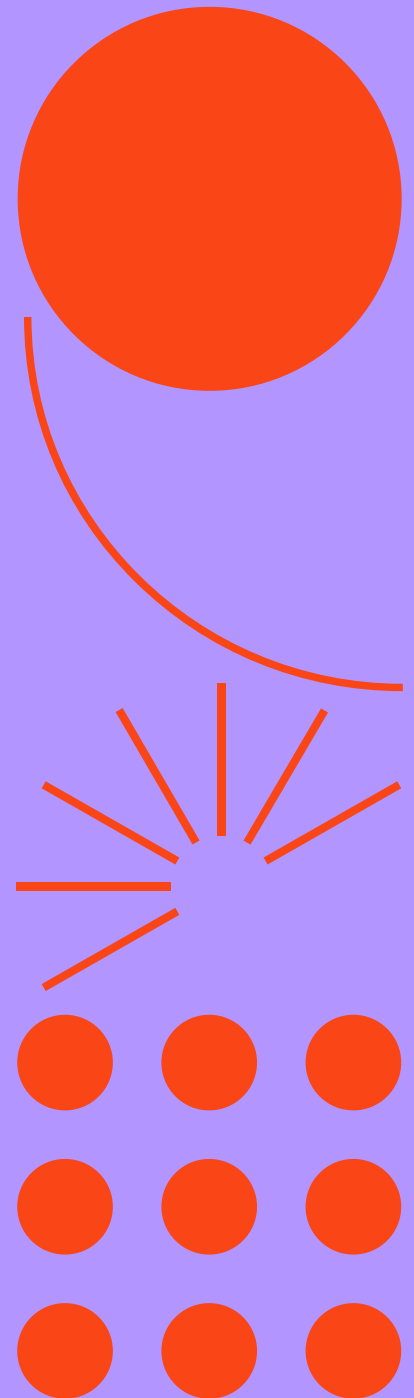


Play Provocations

What play can do for a city



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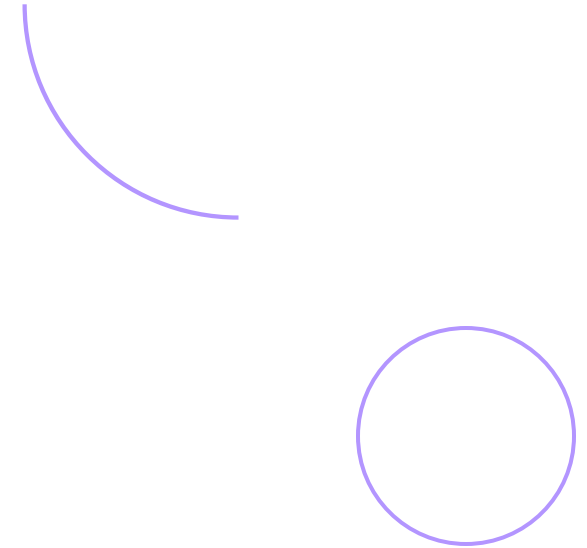
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“... When [adults] are at play, they tend to feel healthier, safer, almost like they might have when they were kids, and maybe even better. And even though they are fully conscious adults and even though they can’t ignore the danger, the consequences, the very real lack of safety that is threatening their entire health forever, they can choose to be at play. And they can reclaim for a moment their health, their well-being, the energy they might have had in their youth—simply by playing again.”

— BERNARD DE KOVEN WITH HOLLY GRAMAZIO,
THE INFINITE PLAYGROUND: A PLAYER’S GUIDE
TO IMAGINATION

A State of Play For the City

Hello dear reader,

If you've picked this up to read, you've likely already formed an opinion about what it means to play. As observers or participants, we often associate play with the wildness and abandon of children, perhaps evoking shrieking, swinging, climbing, sliding, jumping, chasing, hiding, or impromptu silliness. This beautiful pandemonium is incredibly effective for shaping life skills (for adults too). Play is self-directed learning in action—inspiring freedom and building up negotiation prowess while boosting mental and physical health.

As we acknowledge play's critical role in shaping childhood, and its possibilities to enhance our adulthoods, the need to make our cities more play-friendly becomes more evident—the concept of play can and should be more expansive. Play has a magic power to energize a wide audience, create new habits, and prompt conversations between people of different ages and abilities, stimulating collaboration, tying new knots in the social fabric, and creating community cohesion.

What follows is an exploration of how to expand the definition of play, both who it is for and what it can do.

Playing in Public

As a public space operator and programmer, The Bentway has witnessed the importance of play first-hand and set out to explore its history in the city in order to inform its future.

Early on in 2020, we had scheduled an ambitious summer season of artist projects, play experiments and community workshops, titled *Playing in Public*. As we rolled further into the year, plans changed. 2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic and a pause for Bentway programming. We looked ahead to 2021 and took stock. We saw the city suffer much loss and observed the strain that physical distancing, online learning, social isolation, and new barriers to recreation put on our communities. In turn, this produced new urgency and new questions about play's role in our collective urban recovery.

We saw play emerge as a timely vehicle for healing. Play feels more relevant than ever.

Why play?

We believe:

Play improves health and well-being.

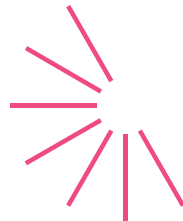
Play allows participants the freedom to take risks and experiment.

Play enables communities to connect and explore.

Play can address visible and invisible barriers to access.

Play enables people to shape and model their environments.

Play can be a new form of community consultation.



Why now?

We wonder:

What does community recovery look like, through play?

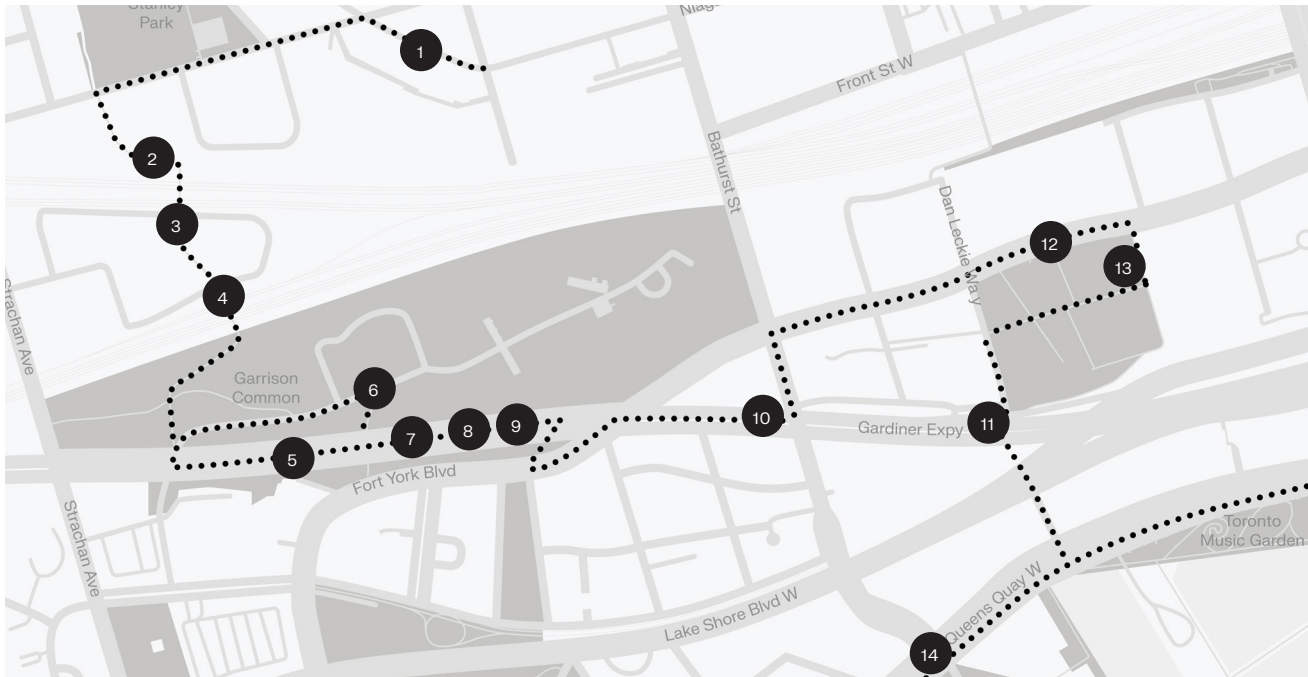
How has the nature of play changed in a mid/post-COVID city?

How can we play again, together?

Playing in Public

The 2021 *Playing in Public* season extended from The Bentway to beyond, stitching the surrounding neighbourhoods and reaching into local squares, parks, trails, and sidewalks with the aim of meeting Torontonians in their own backyards and addressing the unique conditions and needs of local communities.

We presented 16 artist projects that explored different facets of play on and around The Bentway site. This “Play Precinct” offered a series of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and participatory programs including installations, connective and roaming projects, and pop-up events—becoming an urban laboratory for new and future models of play in the city.



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Play Provocations

As we built our season of Play, we partnered with Montreal-based studio Daily tous les jours, both to contribute via their creative practice as commissioned artists and to deploy their wealth of experience in integrating impact studies, toolkits, and assessments into their work. Together, we took this opportunity to reflect and learn.

We call this endeavor *Play Provocations*. Our aim is to create long-term insights (for The Bentway, for Toronto, and for cities everywhere) that will not only inform the future growth of the public realm locally, but suggest discoveries and take-aways that can inform the work of others 'playing' in this space.

This document is divided into two parts.

1. In *Planning for Play*, we reveal the considerations behind our plans.
2. In *Understanding Play & Its Impact*, we share insights from our season of play and considerations for the future.

The resulting set of provocations, much like the season itself, aims to embody the values of play and is for you to explore, challenge, test, and enjoy.

We interviewed artists about their approach
We tracked usage patterns, flow, and attendance
We observed behaviours (from active players to more passive onlookers)
We conducted surveys and interviewed youth, adults, and seniors
We created an experimental ice breaker, <i>The Emotion Wheel</i> , to tap into feelings and sentiments

Who is this for?
City planners and governments
Public space operators
Public space animators
Artists
Curators
Designers
Architects
Developers
Scholars
Policy makers
Friends of public space
You!

1. Planning for

Collaboration	Catharsis	Disruption	Exploration	Fun	Joy	Curiosity
Surprise	Senses	Reflection	Conversation	Nostalgia	Dance	Delight
Destination	Glee	Fantasy	Freedom	Gathering	Gratitude	Memories
Scavenger	Hunt	Transformation	Rediscovery	Relationships		
Meditation	Physical	Inspiration	Inclusion	Healing		

Play

This compilation of answers was provided by *Playing in Public* artists, when asked “what are the 5 words to describe your artwork?” Collectively, these are the hopes of how we wanted people to feel.

Just another day at *The Bentway*...

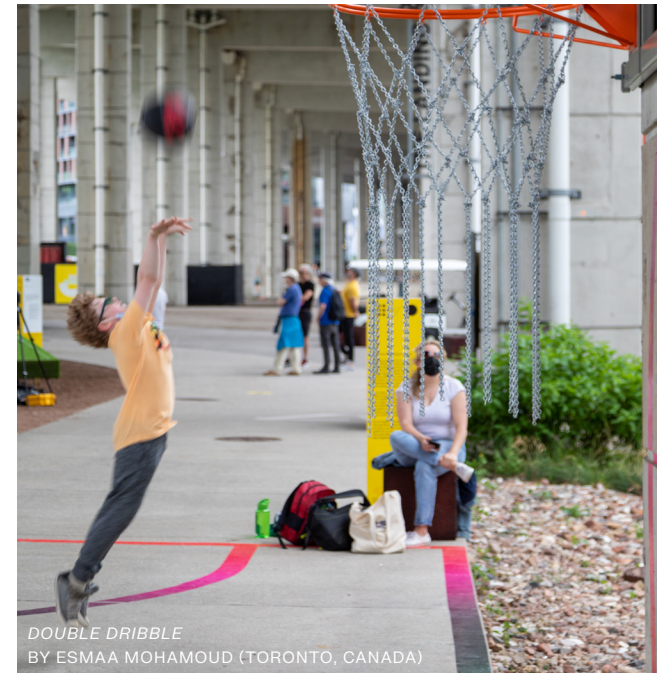


PLAY PUBLIC
BY THOMAS MAILAENDER (PARIS, FRANCE)
AND ÈRIK KESSELS (AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS),
CO-COMMISSIONED WITH THE SCOTIABANK CONTACT
PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL

Where you are free
to climb, slide, jump, fall...



BIG RED
BY ASSEMBLE (LONDON, UK)



DOUBLE DRIBBLE
BY ESMAA MOHAMOUD (TORONTO, CANADA)

1. Planning for Play

Invent the rules



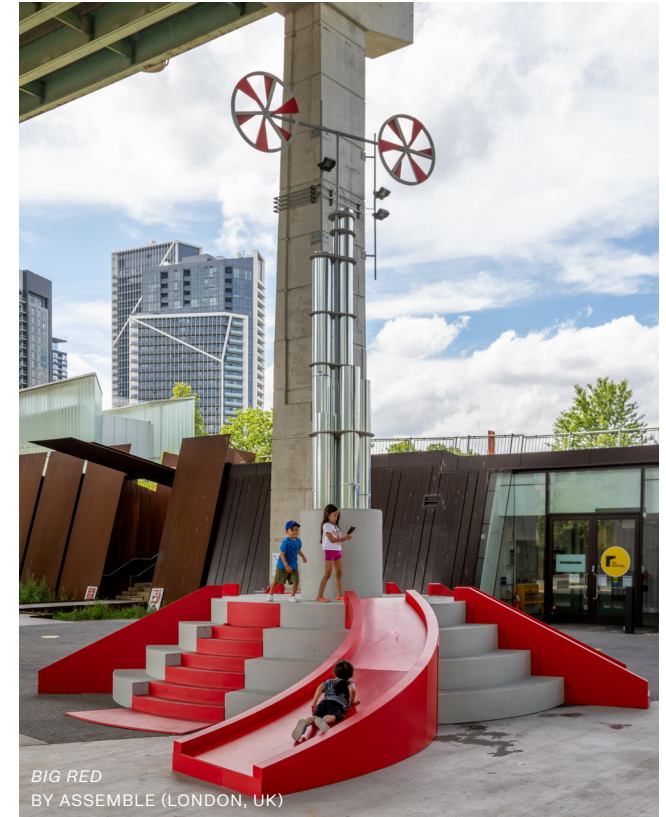
DOUBLE DRIBBLE
BY ESMAA MOHAMOUD (TORONTO, CANADA)

DOUBLE DRIBBLE

A surrealist basketball court questions the accessibility of play, featuring 28 hoops of varying sizes/heights and wildly dysfunctional courtliness running up to the highway above. In this impossible game, how will you write your own rules for play?

“Without rules, play is democratized, offering entry points for all people to participate.”

— ESMAA MOHAMOUD



BIG RED
BY ASSEMBLE (LONDON, UK)

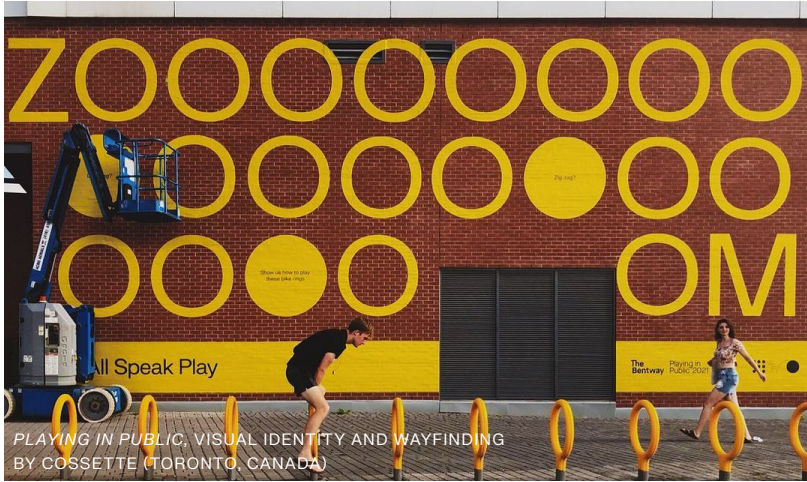
BIG RED

Inspired by an unrealized drawing by Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi, a soaring red play sculpture suggests boundless childhood imagination. Step up; slide down. Hang out and dream in the spaces between.

“The aim is to provide totally open play between diverse age ranges and children doing things you wouldn’t think of as play.”

— JANE HALL, ASSEMBLE

Alone or with others.



PLAYING IN PUBLIC, VISUAL IDENTITY AND WAYFINDING

An interactive route that guides visitors through the neighbourhood and offers opportunities to “play the city” with interventions on local sidewalks, bridges, bike rings, and building facades.

“We want people to pause, get different perspectives—jumping, walking, and exploring in different ways.”

— CHELITO RUBIO, COSSETTE



JAX

A reimagining of one of the world’s oldest games, Jacks, as a trio of large-scale sculptures brightened by the colours of the 2SLGBTQIA+ flag. A waterfront beacon that indicates all players are welcome.

“With the pandemic, just walking outside, taking literal circles around the block, I wanted to create a joyful disruption into our daily lives.”

— PIERRE POUSSIN

1. Planning for Play

Ambiguous shapes are your open invitation to use in unconventional ways. Take risks.



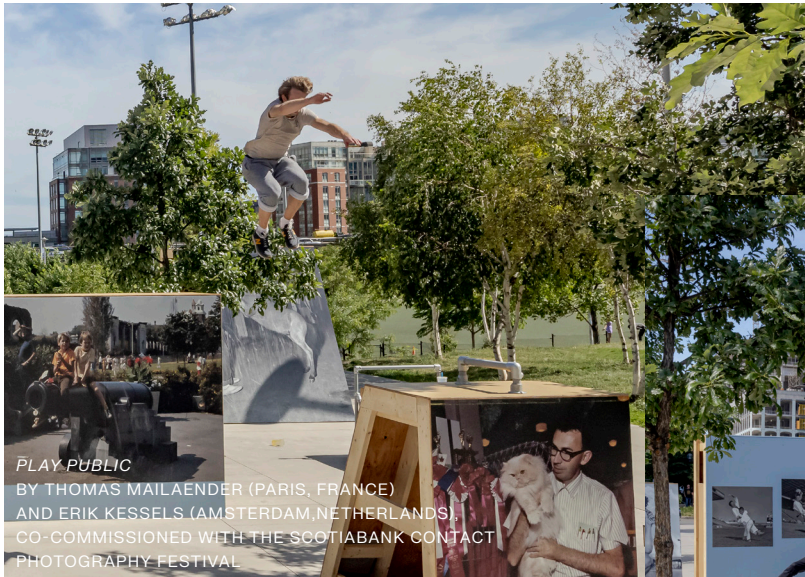
DREAM STREET
BY THE STREET SOCIETY (PARIS, FRANCE)
CO-PRESENTED BY TAS

DREAM STREET

This utopian mural was co-created with youth from Paris and Toronto, inviting visitors to experience the ideal city from a child's vantage point. A perfect backdrop to learn, make believe, and record stories.

“People can use the mural as a backdrop for activities and open-ended play, they can come to make movies with it!”

— ALICE CABARET, THE STREET SOCIETY



PLAY PUBLIC
BY THOMAS MAILAENDER (PARIS, FRANCE)
AND ERIK KESSELS (AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS)
CO-COMMISSIONED WITH THE SCOTIABANK CONTACT
PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL

PLAY PUBLIC

Compulsive collectors draw from the photographic archives of the Canadian National Exhibition to activate a constructed urban playscape, recalling memories of past “summers of play” in the city’s iconic fairgrounds.



And imagine stories.

One time it’s a ship,
another time it’s a forest,
or a building...

Sometimes our phones allow us to play with the city...



TINY GAMES
 BY HAND EYE SOCIETY (TORONTO, CANADA).
 FEATURING WORK BY KRIS PIOTROWSKI, DROEN,
 ALIISON COLE, ALICIA PAYNE, KAELAN DOYLE MY-
 ERS COUGH AND DIANA ANDREA GUZMAN VALENCIA

TINY GAMES
 Six interactive games along the Play Path that are quick and easy to play, requiring no specialized equipment.

“The games are engaging with the spaces in terms of thinking about them in a playful way.”

— DAVID FONO



MIDSUMMER MIX VOL. 1
 BY NELSON WU (TORONTO, CANADA) AND
 BIOSPHERE (TORONTO, CANADA),
 CO-PRESENTED WITH THE WATERFRONT BIA

MIDSUMMER MIX VOL. 1
 A series of street banners depicts everyday icons and architectures of Toronto’s waterfront as various levels of a hyper-local video game, complete with an 8-bit inspired soundtrack accessible by QR code.



NIL:NIL BY STUDIO F-MINUS (TORONTO, CANADA)

NIL:NIL
 An endless soccer game plays out on larger-than-life devices. The first monument to the era of COVID-19; a portrait of play in pandemic times.

“I want to see people smiling, laughing, and spark conversation about the role of physical vs virtual play. I hope there’s a shared moment of laughter and dark humor—even with strangers.”

— MITCHELL CHAN, STUDIO F-MINUS

and sometimes our phones play with us.

1. Planning for Play

Walking is an invitation to collaborate with others to make music.



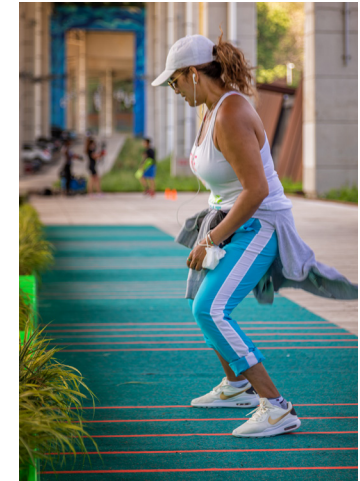
WALK WALK DANCE
BY DAILY TOUS LES JOURS (MONTREAL, CANADA),
HOSTED BY FORT YORK NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

WALK WALK DANCE

A series of contactless music-making lines demonstrates how participation and interaction can create new spaces for play even amidst COVID-19 protocols. It's simple: step, jump, roll, or dance. Because every city needs a dance strategy.

“We want to transform the act of walking into a musical exercise between strangers.”

— MELISSA MONGIAT & MOUNA ANDRAOS, DAILY TOUS LES JOURS



Run, dance, roll, forget about it all for a minute.

Go, go chasing happy clouds...



HAPPY CLOUDS
BY STUART SEMPLE (DORSET, UK),
CO-PRESENTED WITH THE WATERFRONT BIA

HAPPY CLOUDS

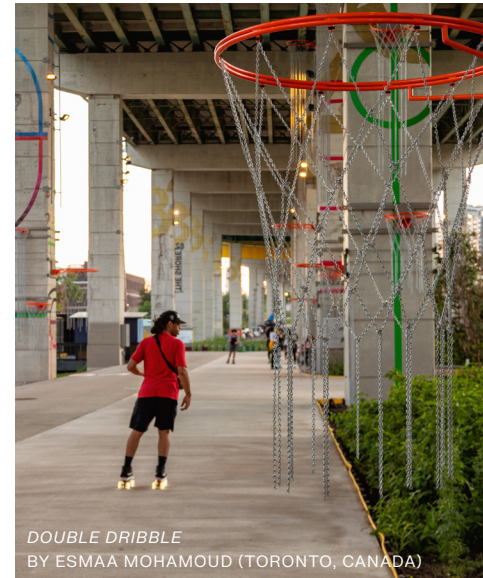
A pop-up deployment of environmentally-friendly happy faced clouds, reminding us how spontaneous acts of play can help us through our toughest times.



1. Planning for Play



PLAY PUBLIC
BY THOMAS MAILAENDER (PARIS, FRANCE) AND ERIK KESSELS (AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS),
CO-COMMISSIONED WITH THE SCOTIABANK CONTACT PHOTOGRAPHY FESTIVAL



DOUBLE DRIBBLE
BY ESMAA MOHAMOUD (TORONTO, CANADA)

Or just hang out.

Ecosystem of Play

It takes an ecosystem to induce a state of play in a neighbourhood. Each *Playing in Public* project played a distinct role. While some elicited more direct physical play, others sparked conversations, and allowed participants to think or look at their surroundings in new ways. They stimulated different senses, presenting themselves in various shapes and scales. Some became beacons for the neighbourhood, others were hidden gems or connectors between sites. The rich and diverse experiences attracted a wide audience of different ages and abilities and prompted them to loosen up, express themselves, together or alone.

“The whole time felt like play.”

— AN ADULT INTERVIEWED AT THE BENTWAY

The artworks’ distribution along The Bentway site and beyond enabled the very large footprint of the ‘Play Precinct’ to act as a neighbourhood-sized invitation to the City: Come and play with us!

We noticed that once a small group started to actively play, others began to congregate and join the playful mindset, even if those newcomers were not participating in any traditional definition of “play”. The range of players and smiling onlookers created a contagious air of engagement.

So what did we learn? When conceiving spaces for play, it’s both the planned and spontaneous components that make true magic happen. Play is not a singular object or experience—it is at its best when considered as a broader ecosystem.

Fun to do	Fun to watch
High physical play offer	Conversation starter
Landmark	Site connector
Hidden gem to discover	Surprise that finds you
Collaborative play	Individual play
Risky thing	Safe thing
Immersive	Pop-up
Open-ended	Linear
Social connector	Introspection enabler

Complementary Set of Parts

The artworks were developed as prototypes that subverted the urban experience using strategies inspired by different aspects of play. When we review the ecosystem as a set of complementary parts, distinct approaches emerge.

Our takeaways:

	<h3>Revisit typical playground furniture</h3>	<h3>Subvert urban infrastructures</h3>	<h3>Question existing rules</h3>
	<p>How can we open up play infrastructure for all? Get inspired by typical playground equipment and recontextualize it to reach a wider audience.</p>	<p>Most urban infrastructure feels untouchable and remains overlooked. However, because these assets are often ubiquitous (and public!), they're effective canvases to open up possibilities of how we play in the city.</p>	<p>Altering our common understanding of a sport or a game's objectives and rules can open up new avenues of accessibility. Who writes the rules, and how can we re-write them together?</p>
<h3>Create brain games, too</h3>	<h3>Meet people where they are</h3>	<h3>Stay around for a while</h3>	<h3>Use phones as connectors</h3>
<p>Not everything has to be high physical play. What games can be brought to public space that stimulate conversations amongst passersby?</p>	<p>Ephemeral interventions create special moments that can temporarily extend the reach of more traditional programming. They can happen anytime, anywhere in the neighborhood, and beyond.</p>	<p>When interventions stay long enough for people to discover on their own, come back, create routines, it creates a sense of community and shared ownership around the piece.</p>	<p>When aiming for people to physically interact, phones often keep us absorbed in separate digital lives. If phone games are designed to interact with the physical world, they reconnect to city life through a new lens.</p>

Play Considerations

What are the barriers to participation?

What instructions are required?

Are the rules of the game prescribed or open-ended?

Can more than one person play at a time?

How is it encouraging collaboration between participants?

Can people help or teach each other?

How imaginative are people when playing?

How visible is the work, and from where?

Can it serve as a landmark or a meeting point?

How does it transform its location?

What kind of a spectacle are participants creating for non-participants?

Is it staying around long enough for people to feel a sense of ownership?

How is it encouraging conversations?

Does it inspire a sense of possibility?



2. Understanding Play and Its Impact

Peaceful

Chill

Cool

Great

Amazing

Whimsical

Friendly

Pleasant

Fun

Nice

Happy

Quiet

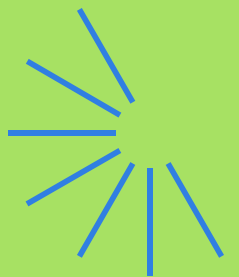
Tiring

Chaotic!

Freedom

Connected

Revitalised



This compilation of answers was provided by visitors when asked "what are the 5 words to describe your experience here?" Collectively, these words describe how the 2021 season made people feel.

The Label of Play

The first question asked when evaluating the impact of play in public space is often very basic: “Did you play?” The answer, as it turns out, is complex.

For *Playing in Public*, 88% of people interviewed and 53% of people surveyed answered YES when asked if they played. However, what caught our attention was the people who replied NO. Of all those who said they did not play, they nonetheless reported playful behaviors and shared anecdotes hinting that they had fun. Some said, “*We hung out, relaxed, skate-boarded*”, “*We’ve been coming back for more than one hour each time looking at everything*”.

“‘So, did you play?’ We asked. ‘No,’ they answered, as they were blowing bubbles with their gift from the interview station.”

— BENTWAY HOST

It’s easy to associate the word play with wasted time. When “playing around” isn’t considered productive, adults often assume they should not do it. As we age, we seem to be less and less comfortable with the label of play. In fact, we tend to disassociate our actions or feelings from play, even if that’s exactly what we are doing.

Play can indeed be covert, even to those playing; people play to different degrees and in different ways. For these reasons, we need a wider vocabulary. Like poets and even scientists, we need to sharpen our senses and lexicon to carefully describe the act in ways that a larger demographic can relate to, and in doing so, open up more possibilities for play in our daily lives.

Considerations

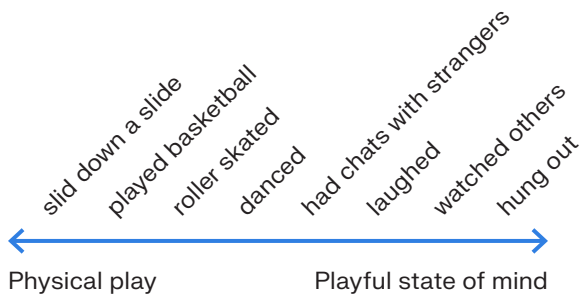
As you observe your environment, what clues can you see that people are having fun? By writing those behaviours down and keeping a log, you can start to come up with your own site-specific definition of play.

When creating new experiences, use your new vocabulary to be specific with invitations. You can invite people to playful experiences they more fully relate to.



Lost in Play

So, how do people play? People reported doing things that ranged from physical play to engaging a playful state of mind—actively watching people playing or engaging in conversations with people they knew, or didn't know. Most people who reported having “so much fun that they lost track of time” were often not physically engaging with the artwork.



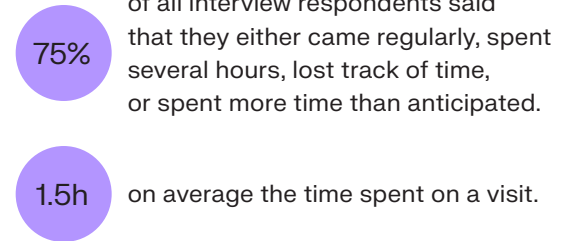
Many experts will describe the ultimate experience of play as reaching a state of *flow*¹, a positive mental state when you are lost in the moment, so focused that the world around you disappears and you feel like you can achieve anything. When playing together, that sense of achievement becomes a state of mutual empowerment. What's happening? Together you're testing boundaries, experimenting, failing, being vulnerable, building trust—all in the safe space of play.

The feeling of having lost track of time, spending more time than anticipated and repeated visits, are indicators of being in flow. From our observations of the *Playing in Public* season, we saw this phenomenon play out time and time again across multiple ages and backgrounds. In other words, everyone involved in play can get lost in a productive state of flow.

¹ TERM COINED BY PSYCHOLOGIST MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, NOTABLY IN HIS BOOK *FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE*, PUBLISHED IN 1990.

Getting lost in play means we're really playing

How often do you visit?
How long did you stay?



Considerations

Offer different flavours of play: slow play, quick play, collaborative play, a playful state of mind.

Make it okay to linger, even if you're not playing.



People Mix

“I might be too old to play (or maybe not...)”

— SENIOR VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

“The best parts were really nice discussions with people we don’t know.”

— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

“It was relaxed. Nobody bugs you.”

— TEEN VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

Play encourages informal connections between a mix of demographics and creates ties between people of different abilities. Play can help to create environments where teens are comfortable and report feeling accepted; where kids teach skills to adults.

During the *Playing in Public* season, seniors mainly self-reported as “not playing”. At the same time, seniors were proportionately the largest group of active watchers AND those who reported having the most conversations with strangers. Conversations between people who don’t know each other is an indicator of trust and vibrancy in the public realm.

Play encourages informal connections

Did your experience spark any conversations today? Was it with people you knew?



of people surveyed reported the artworks 21% provoked conversations with someone they didn’t know.

Considerations

Make it a comfortable place to stay, not just play.

Offer ways multiple people can engage together, collaborate, or simply socialize along with play.



Shared Backyard

“I spoke with a man who brought his kids to play every day for over two hours on their way back from school. He explained he had met 14 other parents and formed a Facebook group whose kids now play together.”

— BENTWAY HOST

“We met people who taught us new roller skate moves.”

— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

Our shared play infrastructures are some of the most familiar structures in our community, where memories are formed, friends are made, and lessons are learned. In some cases they help public space to feel as an extension of neighbouring living rooms or emerge as a prime locations for special rites of passages. We mark time against these structures and spaces.

Play can prompt a new sense of belonging in public space and, for some, a radical form of public space ownership. A strong sense of emotional attachment and personal investment often extends from well integrated play infrastructure. What would the city look like if it was built on such emotional attachment?

We feel like we belong when we...

Use the space freely

Use the space for a long time

Come back

Organise to use the space together frequently (whether it be to simply gather after school or attend a fitness class)

Organise to use the space for special occasions (birthday parties, bar mitzvahs, baby showers, engagement parties)



Shared Backyard

Where informal connections are made

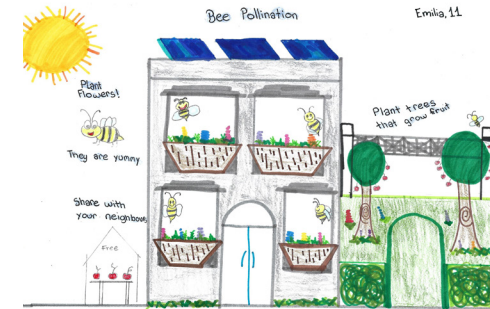
The success of play is ultimately less about the structures that support it and more about the invitations created, the opportunities to gather and have a conversation that wouldn't happen otherwise. People enjoy connecting with strangers in a playful urban context. All those we spoke to over the course of the *Playing in Public* season reported participating in spontaneous conversations, meeting new people, and talking with people they did not know. Play opens up impromptu social interactions, new spaces for contact, and for relationships.

“As many play theorists have argued, we often make connections through play that we don't make as easily otherwise. These acts then can be seen as evidence of our recognition that play facilitates connections and opens up new spaces for contact and for relationships.”

— ALISON STENNING (SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHER), THINKING ABOUT PLAY, NEIGHBOURS, AND STREETS IN A PANDEMIC, APRIL, 2020

Where agency is shared

Play provides a way for people to model agency, and have a voice in the world around them. It allows people to test out ideas and behaviours with each other. It builds trust. This can happen in the process and from the outcome. Who is at the table when we design public spaces? Who is missing?



“TAKING CARE OF THE YOUNGEST”
BY EMILIA—AGE 11

During the process of creating *Dream Street*, decision-making was driven by play and participation. The image above is from a workshop asking youth to submit drawings of their ideal street or cityscape, which were then incorporated as elements of a playable mural project by The Street Society.

Shared Happiness

Creating a state of play for the city clearly has a positive impact on well-being. Our observations confirm how important it is to plan for multiple age groups and to think of a play model for communities at large. We are all human beings who have real, big, valid emotions that build up over time. When we play, we get to let those emotions unfurl. Physical play offers a release for stress and anxiety. For those who are not physically engaging in play, the silliness of the opportunities also works as a release. Watching other people having fun makes people feel good. Simply the sound of people playing and laughing positively affects people's outlook.

Size matters too. It works well to have a very large footprint dedicated to play. When the area of intervention appears truly integrated into the urban experience as an established offer, people recognise it as a safe space to loosen up and feel good together.

By having moments of communal connection and release through play, people can rejoin the city with a fresh, positive perspective that ripples through the wider community.

“The freedom of use and people laughing was the best part.”

— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

“It was very pleasant, I feel peaceful.”


— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

“It's whimsical, we feel connected and revitalized.”

— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY

Play improves our mood

Did your experience have an effect on your mood or outlook today?

 88% of survey respondents reported positive emotions from their experience at *Playing in Public*.

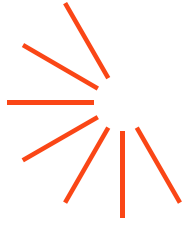
Considerations

Offering a variety of ways to play increases the variety of ways to improve mental health.

Normalising play is normalising happiness.



Shared Happiness



About Empathy

Summer 2021 was an intense time for all of us. Many visitors opened up to the Bentway staff, and the fact that people were so willing to open up to strangers was very telling of the need for emotional release.

Our social research comprised a special experiment to break the ice with participants: The Emotion Wheel was a pop-up station inviting people to label how they felt by placing a sticker on a word diagram.

The conversations we had with the community and information we gathered in this document would not have been possible without having the Emotion Wheel exercise. It was about listening in a playful way, that met people where they were, both physically and emotionally. The wheel became a feature of the site, communicating a sense of care while eliciting surprisingly frank and moving conversations.

A woman told our team, “You often don’t know how you’re feeling until somebody asks you to name it. The Emotion Wheel exercise is really important. And now I’ve named it, I don’t have to hang on to it anymore. It’s such an important invitation, to just be honest with myself.”

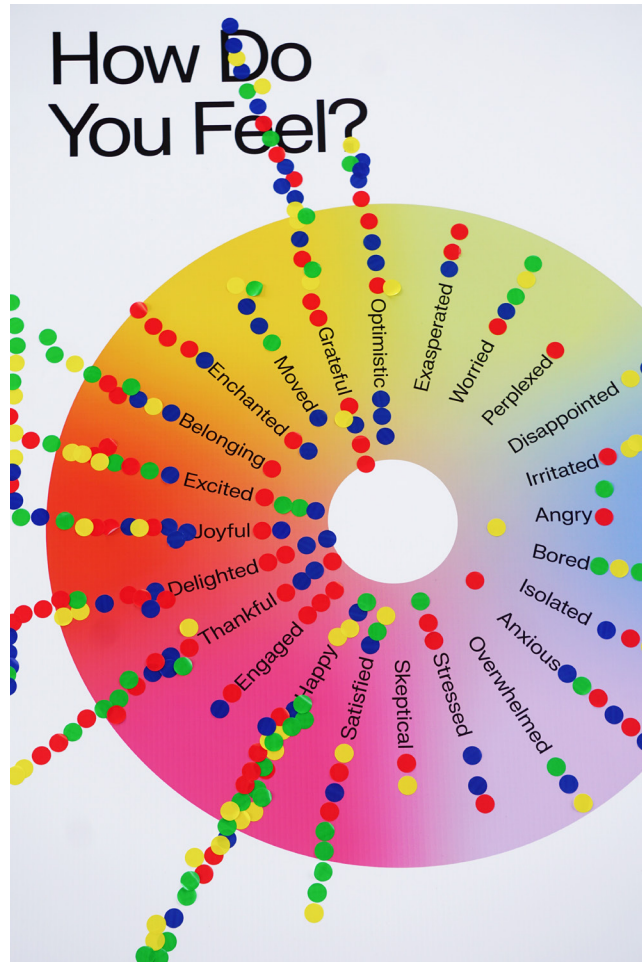
Listening to people’s backstories, it was clear that their sticker on the Emotion Wheel was not just reflective of the experience that they were having on-site. Just creating an opportunity for people to vocalize these emotions and make them concrete was of great value. They felt listened to, heard, and perhaps because of this indicated feeling more positive and optimistic.

“How nice of you to check in on how I’m feeling.”

— ADULT VISITOR AT THE BENTWAY



Shared Happiness



Happy	43
Grateful	28
Excited	23
Joyful	18
Optimistic	14
Anxious	13
Belonging	11
Delighted	22
Thankful	22
Satisfied	12
Enchanted	7
Engaged	5
Stressed	6
Worried	5
Moved	5
Overwhelmed	3
Isolated	3
Bored	3
Exasperated	3
Skeptical	2
Angry	1

Believe in (and plan for) Play

The *Playing in Public* season of prototypes, field research, and experimentations reaffirmed our belief that play doesn't only belong in playgrounds and on sports fields.

Planners, residents, and practitioners alike can creatively use existing city resources in new ways to provide opportunities for play—all types of play, for all ages and abilities to mix. Play is the secret ingredient of a city that is happy, collaborative, accessible, and challenging too.

Through play, space is created to take risks, build community, strengthen mental and physical health, lose oneself and find oneself.

Let's imagine neighbourhoods where people open up and lean in to interact, where positive informal connections build up a sense of belonging. Adults will surprise you in their capacity to play. Laughs and goofy moves will make everyone smile, strangers will engage in conversation. For a moment, the impossible will seem possible.

As you explore and invest in your own city—make sure we can climb on something. Put a slide on it. Let's make music and dance. The state of play is achievable, for all cities, everywhere. Please stay in touch and let us know what you create.

play.thebentway.ca
hello@thebentway.ca

Play Provocations Cheat Sheet

- Build a wider vocabulary for play.
- Design for all levels of engagement, from physical play to a playful state of mind.
- Question and re-write rules.
- Offer invitation over instruction.
- Recognize that play can be covert, even to those engaging in play.
- Mix the ages. Don't give up on teens.
- Invite kids to the decision table, give them a voice in imagining their city.
- Allow risk-taking.
- Stimulate all the senses.
- Think about modes of collaboration.
- Play with phones and don't play with phones. Make sure you question phones.
- Play with scale of interventions; create landmarks; hide gems.
- Play with city infrastructure. Everything is a canvas for play.
- Go where people are.
- Embolden play with strangers.
- Encourage conversations.
- Encourage looking at the world differently.



Authors

The Bentway

The Bentway works to ignite the urban imagination, using the city as site, subject, and canvas.

Anchored under Toronto's Gardiner Expressway and guiding its complex future, The Bentway is a growing public space, and much more.

The Bentway is a new type of civic organization: a not-for-profit, powered by vital partnerships with the City of Toronto, residents, supporters, artists, city-builders, and dreamers. The Bentway is a catalyst rooted in experimentation, leading a creative movement to re-imagine the opportunities of urban spaces.

Phase 1 of The Bentway opened in 2018 and is already a vital public space, backyard park, cultural platform, connector for the western Waterfront corridor and a demonstration of what is possible.

www.thebentway.ca

Daily tous les jours

Daily tous les jours is an art and design studio based in Montreal. Since 2010, Daily leads an emergent field of practice combining technology, storytelling, performance and placemaking. Their work has been presented in more than 40 cities around the world, creating context for vibrant social connections, building more resilient cities.

On a mission to reinvent living together for the 21st century, Daily earned numerous international recognitions, including the UNESCO Creative Cities Design Award for Young Talents, Winner of the Knight Cities Challenge for Civic Innovation, and a Fast Company Innovation by Design Award.

www.dailytouslesjours.com

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Project Partners:

Big Red

by Assemble (London, UK)

Double Dribble

by Esmaa Mohamoud (Toronto, Canada)

Dream Street

by The Street Society (Paris, France),
co-presented by TAS

Happy Clouds

by Stuart Semple (Dorset, UK),
co-presented with the Waterfront BIA

Jax

by Pierre Poussin (Toronto, Canada),
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Midsummer Mix Vol. 1

by Nelson Wu (Toronto, Canada) and
biosphere (Toronto, Canada),
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Nil:Nil

by Studio F Minus (Toronto, Canada)

Play Public

by Thomas Mailaender (Paris, France) and
Erik Kessels (Amsterdam, Netherlands),
co-commissioned with the Scotiabank
CONTACT Photography Festival

Playing in Public, visual identity

and wayfinding

by Cossette (Toronto, Canada)

Walk Walk Dance

by Daily tous les jours (Montreal,
Canada), hosted by Fort York National
Historic Site

Tiny Games

by Hand Eye Society (Toronto, Canada),
featuring work by Kris Piotrowski,
Droqen, Allison Cole, Alicia Payne, Kaelan
Doyle Myerscough and Diana Andrea
Guzman Valencia

Never Stop Playing

by Britta B. (Toronto, Canada)

Parkour and Play in the City

by Dan Iaboni (Toronto, Canada)

Youth Perspectives on Play

by Urban Minds (Toronto, Canada)

Artist in Residence, Bekah Brown

(Toronto, Canada) The Bentway
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