

## Article

# Empowering Children and Revitalising Architecture through Participatory Art: The *What Animal Is It?* Project by Iza Rutkowska

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**Abstract:** This article explores how a holistic combination of three components, society, art, and architecture, can contribute to the successful revitalisation of derelict buildings and, at the same time, improve the well-being of the users of reclaimed spaces. The author uses a case study of a playground designed by the artist Iza Rutkowska in cooperation with children in a specific location at the Intermediae Matadero centre in Madrid. The centre is located in a revitalised warehouse in the complex of former municipal slaughterhouses, built at the beginning of the 20th century. The analysis of Iza Rutkowska's work is conducted against the background of broader analyses of the elements of the triad and the conditions required for them to enter into dialogue with each other. Their synergic combination is one of the factors that can have a positive impact on the regeneration of even such alien spaces as former industrial buildings. The users' creative activities fill space with new meanings and turn it into a place perceived as good. At the same time, the effects go beyond the walls of the redeveloped buildings, positively influencing the well-being of the users and creating social relationships.

**Keywords:** architecture; art; society; children's participation; participatory art; regeneration of architecture; social value; Iza Rutkowska; Matadero Madrid



**Citation:** Szustakiewicz, Iwona. 2023. Empowering Children and Revitalising Architecture through Participatory Art: The *What Animal Is It?* Project by Iza Rutkowska. *Arts* 12: 107. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12030107>

Academic Editor: Cesar Cornejo

Received: 29 January 2023

Revised: 14 April 2023

Accepted: 23 May 2023

Published: 25 May 2023



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## 1. Introduction

With climate change and dwindling natural resources, the role of the regeneration of buildings and degraded areas is increasing. The objectives of revitalisation are usually to overcome a socio-economic crisis in an area and to change its 'bad image'. From the sustainable development perspective, revitalisation usually refers to the transformation of degraded areas in three areas: economic development (new jobs, for example), social development (prevention of social pathologies), and infrastructural and spatial development (preservation of cultural heritage through the repair, modernisation, and conservation of historic buildings and public spaces and improvement in the natural environment) (Strzelecka 2011). Bringing derelict, dilapidated sites back to life requires concerted action at many levels and the participation of many actors. There is no doubt that skilful work on material substance, modernisation, and conservation are some of the necessary activities. However, they do not guarantee success without considering the social factor—both the physical needs of future users and their psychological well-being.

This article is an attempt to explore how a holistic combination of three components, society, art, and architecture, can contribute to the success of revitalisation. A case study of the work by Iza Rutkowska, who designs playgrounds with the involvement of children as their future users, is the starting point for the analysis. The playgrounds are built not outside as usual but in specific buildings, and it is the shape of the buildings that influences the final form of the playground. The project has been implemented at the Intermediae Matadero art centre in Madrid, located in one of the buildings of a former slaughterhouse erected at the beginning of the 20th century. In the analysed case, the artistic activity not

only contributed to the introduction of a new function to the revitalised building and shaped the space in line with the expectations of future users but also created a set of new meanings. Participatory art became one of the revitalisation tools.

In the first part, the article analyses what makes it possible for society in general and children in particular and participatory art and restored architecture to start a dialogue with one other. What approach and conditions allow each component of the triad to develop its potential and open up to the other components? And what does this combination mean for each of the components of the triad? Then, against this theoretical background, the article presents Iza Rutkowska's project and explores how it connects the different components of the triad and contributes to the revitalisation of abandoned buildings.

## 2. Component 1—Society: Children's Participation

Society is the first component of the triad. In this case, the activity involved children—an extremely vulnerable part of society, yet still not always given the attention it deserves. It was not until the 19th century that psychologists and educators observed that appropriate care and support promote children's psychosocial success in the future. Few of them justified these opinions with the importance and value of the child as a person—as a human being. The social gain and benefits that this type of treatment of children brings to society, particularly in the form of the social order and social discipline shaped by universal education, were mentioned more often though. A child was perceived mostly as an individual who is 'not ready' to participate in society, i.e., is not mature enough for social participation. As a consequence, the obedience, submission, docility, and discipline of children were the most popular pedagogical values (Jarosz 2019). The 20th century inherited these views. Against their backdrop, the ideas of a few presented themselves uniquely: John Dewey, an American philosopher, one of the authors of pragmatism, and an educator, maintained that the active participation of children in school life is their preparation for participation in democratic processes on a national scale (Dewey 1923), while the Polish educator Janusz Korczak, pioneer of children's rights activities, argued that 'there are no children, there are people' (Korczak 1928a) and 'a child—already a resident, a citizen, a human being already. Not at some time in the future—already' (Korczak 1928b, Jarosz 2019). Children should be able to express themselves, their needs, and their opinions and decide their own fate.

The need to protect children from various types of harm and abuse and help and ensure proper conditions for their development was indicated in the Declarations of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and 1959 (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2021a). However, calls for the recognition of children as full participants in public life were not heard in the scientific discourse and public debate until the late 1980s. In 1989, member countries of the United Nations organisation signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The signing of this document was initiated by the Polish party, motivated by the legacy of Janusz Korczak. Article 12 of the Convention states that 'States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child' (Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989). The authors of the General Comments to the Convention described the provision above as the right to participation. They described it as a process that, among other things, involves the establishment of dialogue and mutual respect between children and adults, sharing information with them, adults creating opportunities for children to express their opinions, and ensuring children's right to be heard (Committee on the Right of the Child ONZ 2009; Janik 2016).

The concept of children's agency became a paradigm in childhood studies. Alison James and Allan Prout pointed out that children need to be perceived as active in the construction and charting of their own social worlds, influencing others and the societies in which they live. They argued that children are not just passive objects of the social impact of structures and processes (James and Prout 2015). Early research on children's

agency was both scientific and activist: it documented, proved, and valued children's subjectivity. Children's agency was perceived as finite; stable; and based on independence, distinctiveness, and a purely childlike perspective, different from that of adults. Over time, sociologists have recognised the problematic nature of this approach. Nick Lee postulated the recognition that both children and adults are not finite entities, as they are in a constant process of becoming, in mutual interdependence and interpenetration. In the postmodern reality, which is complex, casual, emergent, and based on a multiplicity of meanings and identities, the relational model of causality, i.e., causality resulting from the interaction of people and the mutual interaction of people and their environment, has worked better. According to this model, individuals not only influence reality but are also formed by that reality's material and social elements (Brzozowska-Brywczyńska 2021b).

Children's participation is important for them and the environment they live in. Children gain an opportunity to express their opinions, exert influence, and make decisions, thus changing their environment and adapting it to their needs. They learn to cooperate and gain knowledge of how social mechanisms work, self-confidence, and a sense of empowerment. Adults gain a lot too. Not only do they gain knowledge of children's perceptions of the world directly from children and learn to respect them but they also gain a new, often far-from-standard perspective in approaching the problems they need to solve. This is often conducted in a pleasurable way in shared play (West Berkshire Partnership 2010; Save the Children 2010; Janik 2016).

### 3. Component 2—Art: Participatory Art as a Tool to Shape the Environment

The artist in participatory art is less of an individual creator of detached objects and more of a collaborator and producer of situations, relinquishing some or all authorial control over the process of creating an art project to its participants. The artist is no longer a demiurge, single-handedly creating new beings and senses. The artist's work is a quest to recreate social relationships through collective meaning-making (Bishop 2015).

The inclusion of the public in the creative process can be accompanied by activist concepts aimed at social change. The late 1960s saw the birth of the idea of community art in Britain. From the very beginning, community art focused on the creation process more than on its end product and its essence. It was understood as art created by members of a specific community, usually located within its physical boundaries, reflecting the interests, problems, and needs—physical, mental, or artistic—of a group of people who brought it into existence (Kubinowski 2019). Owen Kelly defines it as an approach rather than a specific form of action. It is an approach that encourages both artists and local residents in their various communities to use appropriate forms of art as the means of communication and expression while at the same time proposing the use of art to bring about social and environmental change and influence social policy. Activities are often addressed to marginalised or excluded communities living in a specific location. The work method involves initiating situations in which groups and individuals may have their say. Meetings, working together, discussions, and the formulation of goals lead to a short-term effect, i.e., the creation of a work (a concert, performance, or exhibition), and a long-term effect, i.e., the strengthening of local identity. Such empowerment is the fundamental goal of community arts. The end product or the work of art results from the group's potential. It is not defined a priori by the artist but rather born out of a process of searching for means of expression appropriate to a particular group (Kelly 1984).

American artist Suzanne Lacy describes an artist working in the field of participatory art as an 'activist artist'. An activist artist undertakes the creation of new meanings and symbols in consensual cooperation with audiences and selected social groups. Such creativity requires the application of new skills and tools, such as the ability to collaborate, attract a specific audience, and choose a site that is meaningful to the public, as well as interdisciplinarity and the ability to explain activities to artistic people who are not prepared to receive art. Grand Kester, who uses the term 'dialogic aesthetics', points to an artist's attitude based on empathy, openness, listening, readiness to accept dependence,

and interpersonal sensitivity (Urwanowicz-Rojecka 2015; Wołodźko 2020). Without such an attitude, change cannot gain acceptance from those it is intended to serve.

#### 4. Component 3—Architecture: Revitalisation of Architecture through Art

In the analysed case, the action was carried out in a former industrial complex. Industrial facilities are usually closed to the general public (except to the people who work there). They are shaped differently than the sites of everyday activities. They are interesting but alien. From the 1970s onwards, industrial heritage gradually began to be covered by the same conservation guidelines as other historic buildings. Such sites were first mentioned in the Burra Charter on Sites of Cultural Interest adopted by the Australian National Committee ICOMOS in 1979 (Burra Charter 1979). Thirty years later, in 2008, the ICOMOS General Assembly ratified the Charter on Cultural Routes, recognising the value of industrial and technical heritage as an important component of cultural routes (Quebec Charter 2008). The issue of industrial heritage conservation is expressed most clearly in the Joint ICOMOS–TICCIH Principles for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage Sites, Structures, Areas, and Landscapes adopted on 28 November 2011 at the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly in Paris, also called the Dublin Principles. Point 10 reads, ‘New uses should respect significant material, components and patterns of circulation and activity’, while point 11 reads, ‘Wherever possible, physical interventions should be reversible, and respect the age value and significant traces or marks’ (Dublin Principles 2011).

In contemporary theory and practice, the revitalisation of historic architecture is interdisciplinary and involves a wide variety of activities. It does not focus solely on the conservation of the material substance, nor is it limited only to the reconstruction or modernisation of buildings in order to bring objects that have lost their original function back into circulation. The social factors of revitalisation and public participation as an essential tool for the process (which often determines its final success) are extremely important (Wilczkiewicz and Wilkosz-Mamcarzyk 2015). Engaged participation allows new values and meanings to be added to the adapted objects, creating a new kind of social value. Initiators and directors of actions involving the public in the revitalisation process can include local authorities, institutions, and associations focused on the protection of the architectural heritage or on improving living conditions in the city, local activists, or artists.

Art is used in many ways in the process of revitalising architectural heritage or larger areas. It is common to introduce a museum function or, more broadly, an exhibition function to abandoned buildings. Post-industrial sites, which are usually extensive, are particularly suitable for such purposes. The London Tate Modern Museum, located in a former power plant, is a good example. Its opening not only saved the material substance but also helped regenerate the entire district by intensifying the inflow of tourists and attracting new investments. The so-called Bilbao effect was at play even though no new iconic buildings on the scale of the Centre Pompidou appeared in the area. However, in this and similar facilities, the public primarily plays the role of spectators or consumers of art. It is also not uncommon for processes to take place that run counter to the interests of local communities that, if only because of rising rental prices, are pushed out of the regenerated area.

Abandoned buildings also often become the seats of ‘creative clusters’, which are clusters of more or less diverse cultural institutions and individual artists—‘places that bring together: a community of creative people who share an interest in novelty but not necessarily in the same subject; a catalysing place where people, relationships, ideas, and talents can spark each other; an environment that offers diversity, stimuli, and freedom of expression; and finally, a thick, open and ever-changing network of inter-personal exchanges that nurture individual’s uniqueness and identity’ (De Propris and Hypponen 2007). Creative clusters can open up to society and ensure that cultural products are experienced or even co-created by outsiders, but this is not a necessary condition. What is more, creative clusters rarely exist on their own; they are more often combined with other functions (e.g., business or educational ones).

Revitalisation is also possible through participatory art. This is a different practice than the increasingly popular use of social consultations in the urban planning process. Involving users in artistic activities taking place in regenerated buildings changes both the material shape, meaning, and identity of the space. One cannot disagree with Aila Vahtrapuu, who argues that artists play a key role in the process of regenerating urban spaces not so much as decorators but as constructors of meaning, interpreters of urban life for what is most immediate and concrete, and orchestrators of multidimensional spaces. They can generate relationships between the space of architecture or a city and social space (Vahtrapuu 2021).

## 5. Method

The article was written as part of the author's research on participatory art, conducted for the purposes of teaching classes with students of the Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology. The research takes into account both theoretical foundations and concrete artistic activities. The starting point was a study of the literature on the subject. The author also relied on information provided to her directly by Iza Rutkowska in the form of a written interview and the opinions of project participants collected by the artist. Reports on the project's realisation from the artist's website (Rutkowska 2018) were used, as well as information and comments posted on websites—here, in particular, interviews with Iza Rutkowska conducted for Polish Radio Programme 2 (Siwek 2018) and Radio Kapitał (Borysiewicz 2021)—and information about the project on the website of the Matadero Centre (Matadero Madrid-Programs 2018). Comments posted on Matadero's social media (Facebook 2018, Instagram 2018) and tourist media (Tripadvisor 2019) proved to be an interesting complement, showing the public reception of both this particular work and the revitalised complex.

## 6. *What Animal Is It?* Project by Iza Rutkowska

### 6.1. *Space*

Matadero was a vast complex of former city slaughterhouses and animal markets in Madrid. The author of the project was an architect of the Madrid City Council, Luis Bellido y González. The buildings were constructed on the outskirts of the city, on former Arganzuela pastures not far from the Manzanares River and the railway track. The construction started in 1911. The architect looked for a modern model for the facility with such a function, which is why a study visit to Europe preceded the design work. A rational functional arrangement and modern technological solutions were the architect's priorities; therefore, he used steel and concrete in addition to bricks. However, he did not give up on giving the project a historicist costume in the form of a neo-Mudejar style and traditional materials in the form of bricks, local Piedra Berroqueña granite, and ceramic tiles. The choice resulted from general European trends seeking a national style (de la Vega Zamora et al. 2005) (Figure 1). Striking a balance between discreet references to the past and the functionality and simplicity characteristics of industrial buildings has made the Matadero into a place that is characteristic and not indifferent while also simple and adaptable enough for the complex to be able to become the scene of a variety of artistic activities in the future (González Juárez 2019).

The Matadero complex served its original function until 1996, although its existence had been under threat since the late 1960s. The City Council began the development of a green zone in the neighbourhood next to the Manzanares River, and in the second phase of work, the Parque de la Arganzuela area was to include the site of the demolished slaughterhouse. However, the local community called for the complex to be used for cultural and social purposes. At the same time, new ideas for preserving the architectural and urban heritage of Spain have created a favourable climate for the defence of municipal buildings and their use for new purposes. This is what made it possible to protect the Matadero, starting from the least 'technical' administration building and expanding the protected area with time. The General Plan for the Development of the City of Madrid was drawn up in 1997,

and the former City Slaughterhouse was included in the Catalogue of Protected Buildings. In 2002, approval was given for the implementation of a special plan for the intervention and architectural and urban–environmental adaptation of the area, drawn up under the supervision of architect Sara de la Mata Medrano, which strengthened legal protection and guided further actions. The complex was thoroughly surveyed and documented by the Servicio Histórico del Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid COAM (Historical Service of the Official Association of Architects of Madrid) in 2004. The analysis of the general condition of the site demonstrated that the 1990s intervention in the former barn building was gentle, non-aggressive to the typology, and largely restored its architectural features. The same approach was continued in the 2000s. The adaptation of warehouse 17 c for the needs of the Intermediae centre provided the minimum intervention. Partially destroyed elements and traces of work carried out during the adaptation were also very radically preserved and revealed (Aullón 2011). The conservation work was guided by the idea of dialogue between old and new and the idea of a process, and it was driven by its future function as a centre of art, treated as a process (Aullón 2011). The Matadero was not subjected to intervention as an object–building but rather as a living space in a never-ending process of transformation (González Juárez 2019).



**Figure 1.** The main drive of the Matadero complex, ca. 1916. Source: Biblioteca Digital Memoriade-madrid, Inv. 1676.

The buildings were gradually opened up to residents and adapted to new functions. Some of these functions were cultural according to the residents' expectations, expressed more than twenty years earlier. Former cattle sheds were transformed by Antonio Fernández Alba and José Luis Castillo Puche into the seat of the Spanish National Ballet and the National Dance Company (de la Vega Zamora et al. 2005). With time, new cultural institutions and organisations occupied and adapted these abandoned buildings according to their needs. Matadero Madrid—the Centre for Contemporary Creation managed by the Madrid City Council's Department of Culture and Sports—was established in 2006. Some of its components include Medialab, a community laboratory that acts as a meeting place for the production of open cultural projects; Cineteca, which promotes the development of new audio-visual forms; and the Intermediae art centre. The centre's very broad programme includes a variety of artistic, experimental, socially engaged, and participatory activities, including activities whose purpose is to imagine different forms of inhabiting the environment. Thanks to such activities, Matadero has become a city of art, and art became the tool used to regenerate former industrial architecture (González Juárez 2019; Matadero).

## 6.2. The Work

The *What Animal Is It?* project by Iza Rutkowska involves the creation of playgrounds in cooperation with children in a specific location, i.e., a specific building, which is a fact

relevant to the subject of this article. The starting point for the project consists of the analysis of plans and technical drawings of the playground combined with a walk through the building (Figures 2 and 3). During the walk, the artist explains to the project participants which part of the plan they are in. The children get to know the building and its layout, learn to translate an abstract visual representation into a specific space, and get to know its dimensions and specific features. They overcome the strangeness of the space and create its mental image. That image is the starting point for the creation of architectural mock-ups. Encouraged by the artist, the children fill the plans with the products of their own associations and imagination: they draw or glue animals from plasticine and coloured paper and assign the function of a playground to them (Figure 4). Things are also discussed with the participants at this stage; children talk about what an animal should look like, what its behaviour should be, and how they can play with or in it. After that, the artist collects the children's works and creates a design of the playground animal on their basis, considering those aspects that appear most often and those that particularly move and inspire her. The final design is also created on the basis of the building plans, and the artist, like the children before her, draws it into the contours of the building. When the playground is ready, the artist invites the children once again to join her in giving the animal a personality. Therefore, the effect of the design work is site-specific because the final effect depends on the shape of the space in which it is created. At the same time, the space is strongly characterised by the co-authors of the work: its future users, children, and the artist. The participatory design method transforms the space in the perception of the project participants into a place that they define as good.



**Figure 2.** Building layout analysis. Source: <http://izarutkowska.com/en/what-animal-is-it/> accessed on 26 December 2022). Reproduced with permission.

The project was fully implemented in the Intermediae Matadero art centre in November 2018 as part of the Models for a City that Includes Children programme. The programme also included activities beyond the former slaughterhouse's walls. Animators from the Matadero centre worked with children in different neighbourhoods of the city. They created a map of places that the children liked. This was a form of research into what qualities urban spaces should have in order to be accepted by the youngest users. And those children from the various neighbourhoods who took part in creating the map were later invited to Iza Rutkowska's workshop. The only criterion was age—children aged 6 to 12 were invited, and the order of applications was decisive. Those involved in the project (as noted on the Matadero website) were Cloe Mañas Velasco, María Sofía Bilotta, Lara Bilotta, David Lobera Vicente, Paula Osado de Juan, Samuel Osado de Juan, Samuel Reyes Aranzola, Dalila Gavilán, Nicolás Briceño Rodríguez, Julia Domínguez López, Jimena Rubio López, Jimena Basarrate Samaniego, Alejandra Basarrate Samaniego, Darío Sanz Pérez, Jorge Acedo García, Alba Fernández González, Lucía Fernández González, Ana Luisa Nulman

Montes de Oca, Vega Ortiz Lorenzo, Darío Paulo Casado Aznar, Noa Arman, Emie Stoch, Elias Stoch, Ada Castellanos Baena, Héctor Nuñez Moreno, and Pablo Bengoechea Sánchez (Matadero Madrid-Programs 2018).



**Figure 3.** The walk. Source: <http://izarutkowska.com/en/what-animal-is-it/> accessed on 26 December 2022). Reproduced with permission.



**Figure 4.** Creation of mock-ups. Source: <http://izarutkowska.com/en/what-animal-is-it/> accessed on 26 December 2022). Reproduced with permission.

The result of the design work performed with the children at Matadero was a 45-metre-long snake (and perhaps also a crocodile) in various shades of green. Both the idea of the playground taking the form of a snake and its colour scheme were taken directly from several children's works. The snake consisted of a hundred soft, inflatable wheels that could be combined to form a tunnel or used separately; it was also equipped with cushions that could be put together to form an animal head with eyes and a tongue (Figure 5). The modular system also allowed users to create a different animal should they wish to do so when playing (Figure 6). Soft cushions allowed for numerous child-safe activities. Iza Rutkowska's previous experience made her in favour of using this technique. In 2015, she used inflatable cushions to make a hedgehog in the Everyone's Backyard project (Rutkowska 2018). At the workshop that followed, the artist conferred with the children on a name for the snake and the rules for playing with it, reflected on its personality, and considered the possibilities of using the playground beyond the Matadero centre (Rutkowska 2018). The playground was opened up to the general public so they could rearrange it once the project was completed according to their expectations. These arrangements were always adapted to the framework of the space in which the project was



realised. The artist planned to distribute the parts of the snake to the neighbourhoods from which the co-authors came after the project was completed, but this was not possible; the playground was so heavily used that the components were unusable.



**Figure 5.** The project implemented. Source: <http://izarutkowska.com/en/what-animal-is-it/> (accessed on 26 December 2022). Reproduced with permission.



**Figure 6.** The project in use. Source: <http://izarutkowska.com/en/what-animal-is-it/> (accessed on 26 December 2022). Reproduced with permission.

Iza Rutkowska's project was perfectly in line with the objectives pursued by *Intermediae*, which identifies its areas of activity as childhood, civic engagement in culture, cultural mediation, and the right to the city, among others. The project had research objectives. It was observed by specialists and was supposed to be the starting point for further activities related to the transformation of urban spaces for the needs of children (Rutkowska 2018). Therefore, even though the implementation was temporal, it offered an opportunity to introduce permanent changes in the residential environment as a result of the observations.

## 7. Critical Analysis of the Work in Light of Theoretical Assumptions

The working method adopted by Iza Rutkowska was doubly dialogical. Firstly, it assumed a dialogue between the adult artist and the children and the children among themselves. The children who participated in the project were given the opportunity to express their needs and expectations regarding the space intended for their future activities. The respect with which the artist listened to their opinions, evident in the available video reports (Rutkowska 2018), fostered trust and open communication. Such an action is in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The project also

involved shared arrangements by the children concerning the completed playground, which supported the development of their social skills.

Secondly, the project enabled a dialogue between the children—the future users of the space—and the architecture. It was an interesting idea to introduce the plans of the building into the project as a tool to help the children become better acquainted with the place where they were to propose an intervention and help them visualise their imaginations. It was good, however, that the artist continued with plans. The children also had the opportunity to get to know the real space—the scale, the initial aura created by the building materials used, the colours, and the light. In this way, the artist inscribed her actions in the relational model of causality present in contemporary theory. The third element of the triad acted as a catalyst for dialogue. Using the mediating possibilities of art contributed to the success of the project. Most of the children were eager to engage in creative activities. Skilfully conducted, interesting workshops foster sustained attention. At the same time, artistic activities are a good way of exploring the feelings, needs, and expectations of children who are not always able to express them verbally. In Iza Rutkowska's work, the children were *de facto* co-authors of the project. Following the principles of participatory art, the artist did not impose her vision of the playground on the children. She only created a framework for the artistic expression of future users and incorporated their visions into the final design. However, because of their diversity, she could not reflect them all. The use of a participatory model of playground design resulted in the children immediately identifying with the result, even if they suggested other animals at the mock-up stage. The artist remembers that some of them maintained that the snake had the same eyes as them. Others claimed that the playground looked exactly as they hoped it would even though they initially designed, for example, a cat with a blue tunnel tail.

It also turned out that including the fruits of children's imagination in the design meant that other children accepted it. The playground was popular, filling the walls of the former slaughterhouse with numerous new users and receiving positive feedback (as reflected, among other things, in comments on social media). This activity and others like it have resulted in the abandoned building complex not being demolished but once again serving the people of Madrid and visitors. The centre is indicated as an important cultural institution and one of the city's tourist attractions, as well as an extremely child-friendly place.

A separate question is whether the completed design could be transferred to another location, even though its form was derived from a specific space. The modular form of the playground, which allows for any modification of the layout, and the endless creativity of the children, for whom anything can become everything, depending on the play scenario, demand an affirmative answer, with one reservation, however. As with all works created in a site-specific spirit, this would already be a completely different design.

## 8. Conclusions

This study showed that the working method adopted by Iza Rutkowska, which combined elements of the triad—society, architecture, and art—contributed to the effective revitalisation of the abandoned complex of the former Matadero slaughterhouse in Madrid, not as a mere activity, but as one of the activities of the *Intermediae* centre, which are part of the institution's mission. The artistic activity, whose starting point was the architectural shape, fit well in its space. At the same time, the participatory model of designing the work not only created a child-friendly place but, above all, increased the participants' sense of agency and satisfaction with the results. Their social competencies were strengthened, as were, probably to some extent, their awareness of the mechanisms of civil society. Thus, this part of the triad was the biggest beneficiary. In particular, the implemented project was part of a broader research work, the results of which contributed to a better understanding of the needs of children in urban spaces by adults. The final result attracted new users, made them curious, and opened them up to further *Intermediae* Matadero projects. This was one of the factors that led to the centre now being perceived as attractive by the city's

residents and tourists. This perception of the place provides hope that historic buildings will continue to last for the benefit of the public.

The author of this article is aware that the above analysis abstracts the elements of the triad from a maze of other conditions of an economic, political, legal, and organisational nature, without which, the revitalisation process cannot take place. Revitalisation is a multi-threaded process that lasts a long time and requires the involvement of many actors. It is a difficult process in which the pursuit of financial or image success can overshadow the needs of the local community. The introduction of an artistic factor, with its sensitivity and openness, helps minimise such risks and humanise activities. The artistic creation promotes the definition of issues and the expression of needs, which can be used in the design process on par with more commonly used survey tools. It changes residents' perceptions of where they live and facilitates subsequent identification with the outcome of the activities on a material level. It encourages overcoming strangeness and imbuing spaces with new meanings. At the same time, it produces results that go beyond the walls of the redeveloped buildings. It increases the confidence of participants and influences their sense of agency and self-assurance. It also creates or establishes social bonds, the ability to cooperate, and conflict resolution skills. All these factors contribute to the well-being of the users of reclaimed spaces; therefore, there is no doubt that any action that combines art, architecture, and society deserves institutional and financial support.

**Funding:** This research was funded by the Faculty of Architecture, Warsaw University of Technology, grant number 504/04187/1010/44.000000.

**Data Availability Statement:** No additional data is available due to copyright restrictions.

**Acknowledgments:** The author is grateful to Iza Rutkowska for the information provided and permission to use the photos for this article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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