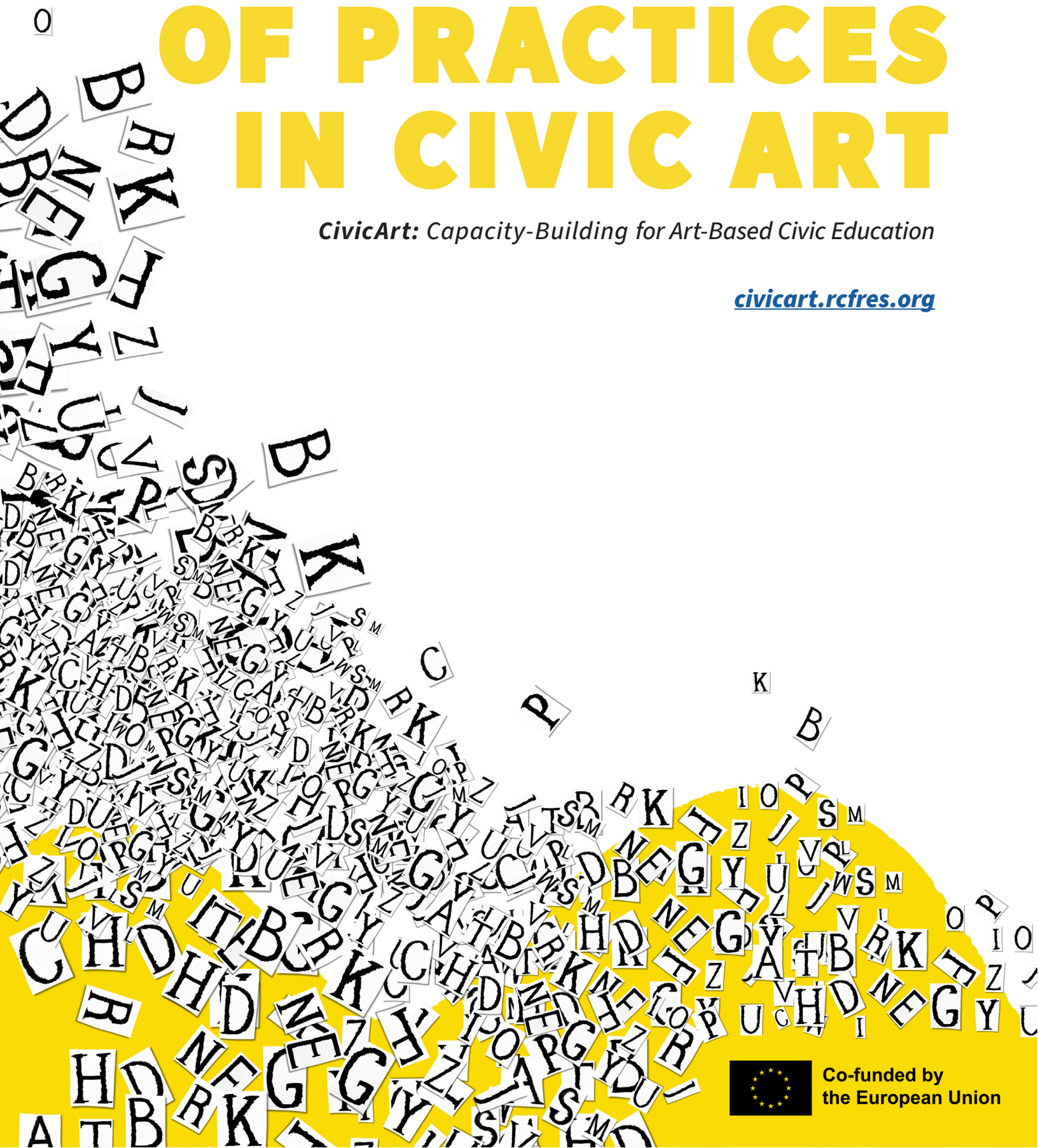# COLLECTION OF PRACTICES IN CIVIC ART

CivicArt: *Capacity-Building for Art-Based Civic Education*

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We invite you to explore this material, created to inspire others and encourage educational activities in civic education through art. The materials gathered here represent only a glimpse of the work taking place in the field of civic education through art across Europe. These practices were submitted through an open call, selected by experts, and adapted to the educational realities and possibilities in Ukraine and Georgia during 2025.

This collection of practices is not merely a description - it is a deeper analysis where we examine artistic methods, the competencies developed through these practices, and gather quotes from both creators and participants. We have organised the practices into four missions to make them easier to navigate, while also providing a clear message from the outset that civic education through art has a tangible impact on communities. It leaves traces not only in our consciousness but also in our subconscious.

By sharing these methodologies, insights, and real-world applications, we hope to contribute to a growing movement that recognises art not as separate from civic life, but as an integrated element.

What is a language of art?

Using a selection of practical examples (related to the missions of Environment, Human Rights, Active Citizenship, and Intersectional Dialogue), we demonstrate how actors, artists, communities, and institutional organisations such as schools utilise these elements to not only express their own experiences and perspectives but also to create a space for understanding, collaboration, communication, discourse, visibility, and change. The creators of the projects bring with them the understanding that artistic or political activism can be approached as laboratory work with an open process, employing situational and context-based work as a form of appreciative empowerment – serving as a driving force for change or as impulses that allow for unforeseen developments.

Birgit Mandel describes the following in an interview:

"Art offers special potentials for Cultural Education since it simultaneously addresses people at an emotional, aesthetic and intellectual level. Being free of any defined object and bearing a playful character, it enables "rehearsals of action" and can form utopian spaces: "everything could also be very different". Thanks to its ambiguity and its surplus of meaningfulness "there is no one correct solution", conflicts and contradictions can also be discussed within its framework. These qualities of art can become productive in connection with communication strategies in various societal contexts such as school, youth work, urban development, political activities or in business enterprises…"
Birgit Mandel – Künstlerische Interventionen

We provide insights through a selection of practical examples from the perspective of experiential knowledge and prompt reflection on what can be transferred to other contexts, perhaps even just as a fragment. The creators of the projects, artists, activists, educators, etc. develop situational strategies for action through artistic expression tailored to a specific context. Therefore, each project is unique in its process and is not meant for rigid imitation, like following a recipe, but rather serves as inspiration for one's own project work. Using artistic language and methods we can gain relevant insights that extend beyond traditionally museum-located art and make an impact within society.

The influence of the language of art as a collective force (civic education through art) on individual and

INTRODUCTION

societal contexts should not be underestimated. Art has the ability to raise awareness, evoke emotions, and stimulate reflection. It can act as a catalyst for social change, inspiring individuals to raise their voices and take action. Moreover, it enables a productive connection with communication strategies across various societal contexts, whether in schools, youth work, urban development, or political activities. It can open dialogue spaces through informal channels: it is possible to discuss conflicts and contradictions within this framework, which is crucial in today's world.

(Artivism) Art is a timeless and universal medium that connects people across cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries; it is transcultural. This is manifested in art's ability to express emotions, thoughts, and ideals in ways that are accessible and understandable to various cultures. The universal language of art speaks beyond the specific circumstances that often seem divisive; it addresses the fundamental human experiences that unite us all.

A central aspect of this universal language is improvisation, which lends a dynamism and flexibility to artistic creation, often leading to unexpected results. Frequently, it is improvisation that brings about innovative and surprising turns. It allows one to react in the moment, explore new ideas, engage with the unknown, and challenge existing concepts. The unexpected is not only accepted but valued as an integral part of the creative process.

Art is free from a defined object; it carries a playful character that enables "trial actions" and creates utopian spaces - spaces where "everything could also be quite different." These utopias are essential for developing new ideas and perspectives that go beyond the status quo.

Ambiguity is another powerful characteristic of art that contributes to transcultural communication. An artwork can be interpreted in various ways, allowing the viewer to discover their own meanings and connections. Birgit Mandel refers to an "abundance of meanings," which allows for the notion that "there is no concrete right solution."

Civic education through art enables new spaces for action and resonance in the direct environment—embracing openness to the unexpected. It fosters serendipity, meaning discovering something valuable or useful through fortunate accidents, unexpected encounters, or discoveries.

What is civic education?

All too often, one can come across apathy, passivity, and disinterest among members of many societies. Other members, although informed and educated about what is wrong or unfair in their society, often feel frustrated and powerless to make a change.

Civic education refers to teaching people about their rights and responsibilities as members of a community or society. It teaches them not just to understand political and social systems, but also to engage critically and constructively with them. It motivates them to change their defeatist beliefs to: "I too have a say in this," "I too can make a change". Furthermore, it educates them how to be active participants in such a society and empowers them to effect change where they see that change is needed. Civically engaged people tend to create collectives, associations, and initiatives to address problems in their communities.

Civic education includes three key aspects: civic knowledge, skills, and disposition. Civic knowledge is the citizens' understanding of how political and societal systems work and what their rights and responsibilities within them are. Civic skills involve the people's ability to use this understanding to participate in civic and political processes. Civic dispositions are personality traits that people need to have to be able to participate in a democratic society, for example, tolerance, active listening, and honesty.

Some of the topics civic education addresses are:

HUMAN RIGHTS
ENVIRONMENT
SOCIAL JUSTICE
SOLIDARITY
TOLERANCE
DEMOCRACY
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Civic education is mostly taught in formal educational systems (schools), but also with the help of non-formal educational organisations, such as NGOs, community organisations, etc. Through non-formal civic education, the goal is to equip people with a variety of competences, which they need to contribute to the co-creation of a more democratic society. In that respect, non-formal civic education is more experiential, practical, and action-oriented.

Civic Art Education

Civic art education utilises the power of art to educate members of a society about its pressing issues. It teaches the participants to express their opinions and attitudes through artistic techniques. It invites reflection, open-mindedness, and critical thinking, both for the creator and the viewer. Also, it engages with our many senses and subconscious layers of the mind and is thus more memorable and impactful.

What are the main themes of the manual (its MISSIONS)

MISSION: ENVIRONMENT

Due to the urgency of the matter, this is one of the four key missions of this manual. This mission is highly relevant to the present environmental challenges we are facing since these threaten our very existence on this planet, as well as the planet itself. Civic art education spreads awareness, educates and motivates individuals and communities to understand these challenges and take responsibility. It can inspire meaningful reflection and collective action for more sustainable and conscious living.

MISSION HUMAN RIGHTS

As Article 1 of the United Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN, declares: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Unfortunately, in the imperfect world we live in, too many are denied their rights on account of their skin colour, race, nationality, religion, and many other irrational and unjust reasons. Through civic art education, participants can learn to discern right from wrong and develop the courage and skills to stand up for their rights and those of others.

MISSION ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

This mission focuses on empowering individuals to actively contribute to the improvement of their communities and societies. It encourages them to participate in shaping a just society, one based on democratic values. Active citizens and residents recognise that dominant political and social realities are not something that happens to them; instead, they exercise their agency to co-create them. Through civic art education, people use accessible and inclusive artistic and creative tools to challenge and influence prevailing political and societal norms and narratives.

MISSION INTERSECTIONAL DIALOGUE

With so much diversity in the world, it is imperative to facilitate communication, understanding, and tolerance across different generations, cultures, religions, genders, socioeconomic classes, and other identities. Understanding and accepting our differences and similarities is a key prerequisite for a peaceful and harmonious coexistence. Intersectional dialogue as a mission of civic art education creates safe and inclusive spaces where diverse participants can express their unique identities and experiences through the use of artistic techniques. It fosters collaborative and participatory processes that bring together people from different backgrounds, allowing them to be heard and acknowledged.

How to navigate through the manual?

In the following chapter, you will find 22 examples of practices that use art as the primary language in cvic education.

The practices are organised under the main missions.

Each practice is described using a similar structure, in which we indicate the artistic techniques used and the complexity of the practice on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means a simple practice to implement and 5 indicates its comprehensive character.

Next, we describe the target audience for each method. We then go ahead and present the context in which the practice was applied and its objectives. Only in the subsequent section do we describe the practice itself. Each practice also includes a competencies section, which outlines the skills we believe can be developed through experiencing this practice.

In the final chapter, we describe each artistic practice in the form of a glossary, and we outline the context of the entire project.

WE INVITE YOU TO ENJOY THIS READING, WHICH WE
HOPE WILL SPARK INSPIRATION WITHIN YOU.

PRACTICES

MISSION: ENVIRONMENT

LABOR

Specified mission:

ecodiversity, sustainability, forms of participation, overproduction, overconsumption, ecology

Type of art techniques used:

land art, recycling, art based activism, visual art, architecture, design, participatory art

Complexity:

5 - very complex

Material:

Found objects; discontinued construction trailers, collected finds such as stones and wood, for example, old window frames.

Resources:

- Ample manpower and time permitted for students to engage in simple manual work during their regular classes. The manual work is very time-consuming
- Fees for artists.
- Open space on the school grounds that can be used as building land.

Time:

1 project week as a test phase for prototyping with students, during which greenhouses were created. 4 project weeks for the open-air laboratory.

Crew:

External crew: 2 artists, assistant carpenter.

Internal school crew: 2 teachers and social worker of the school.

Audience:

105 students from the entire year group of a seventh grade, aged 12 to 14 years.

Context of the practice:

It should be noted in this context that the Hagenbeck School was accompanied by cultural agent Eva Randelzhofer for four years. This made it possible to structurally implement artistically experimental and demanding formats sustainably into everyday school life. As part of the "Cultural Agents for Creative Schools" program, the fees and resources were funded. Cultural agent Eva Randelzhofer curated, moderated and accompanied the participatory approach. The concept was collaboratively developed in a dialogical two-part vision and idea workshop lasting three hours each afternoon, involving school leadership, participating teachers and student representatives.

The Hagenbeck School has an unusual history. It features a school zoo, its own farm with a biotope and a collection of scientific curiosities. Behind the school building, a panelled structure from 1977, lies another partially asphalted playground with relics from the past, adjacent to a meadow. This meadow serves as a sports field, which is used as pasture and natural meadow. What is remarkable about the school is that in the past, a celebrated personality , the late biology teacher Mr. Kranzin, significantly shaped the school's development with his personal commitment and enabled the special profile of "biological diversity." The teaching staff fostered a culture of "doing" through self-initiative; a form of self-empowerment.

Collaborative project development:

In the summer of 2012, a workshop took place at the Hagenbeck School, attended by teachers from the school and the artist Folke Köbberling, to devise plans for a joint project,between the school and the artist. Prior to this, a vision workshop was conducted, involving representatives from the entire school community, including school management, teachers and students. In this dialogue-driven process, the goals for the school's cultural roadmap were generated participatively. In the years leading up to this, a plan for the design of the outdoor space was developed with the involvement of landscape planners, allowing for many participatory design opportunities. Building on this plan, design questions, the possibilities of informal designs, participatory building and issues related to the design of the schoolyard were jointly discussed with artistic strategies on-site.

Beforehand, there were observation appointments with the involved artists. The idea was inspired by two unused construction trailers that the school wanted to repurpose. The school community was immediately convinced by the idea and the collaboration with the action-oriented artists.The two trailers, spray-painted with graffiti, which stood in the entrance area, provided ample discussion, as they were viewed with disapproval by the staff for being insufficiently representative of the desired aesthetics for this location.

As a test run before the realisation of the outdoor laboratory construction project, greenhouses for the school garden were built from old collected window frames. The project, titled "Cooking Without a Kitchen," aimed to test whether action-oriented building could be implemented with the students.

Goals of the practice:

The main goal was to make the special school profile "biological diversity" sustainably tangible through artistic methods and to involve as many groups within the school as possible in the participatory process.

Educational objectives included realising a Green Classroom and making nature accessible even in the city. Sustainability and environmental awareness were conveyed in a practical manner, encouraging imitation through practical experience.

Artistic educational processes raised awareness of ecological problems and prompted a change in thinking and action. Environmental issues and sustainability were conveyed in a practical way through upcycling methods, providing new perspectives through hands-on experience and craft skills were developed. What can be collectively achieved in a community was made experiential. Access to urban nature and ecological awareness was also created.

To strengthen identification with the school and its profile, students from the 7th grade who were new to the school were selected.

Description of the practice:

The mixed team of teachers and artists developed a repurposing concept for the construction trailers, inspired by the school's motto "Biodiversity": the idea of building an outdoor laboratory with the students that will be integrated as an artistic functional space in the vegetable garden and the school biotope. There, students can investigate the three realms of earth, water and air at observation stations.

For the implementation of the project, the two construction trailers were connected into one unit, utilising many unused resources, found objects and discarded furniture, items that had been stored on the school premises.

A total of 105 students from the entire seventh-grade cohort were involved. During a four-week construction phase in the fall of 2012 and spring of 2013 a space was created on the school grounds to be used as a versatile teaching area.

Quote from the teacher: "Our vision was to create an alternative teaching and experiential area, spatially integrated between the school biotope and the vegetable garden, where students can experience and explore the living beings of the Earth's, Water's and Air's habitats—what we call the creatures of the underworld, the beings of water and the creatures of the air—from artistic and scientific perspectives. In this laboratory, after completion, the living beings and characteristics of the three habitats can be actively and creatively investigated. Furthermore, both the interior design and the exterior layout of the, so-called, observation stations should represent the three habitats of Earth, Water, and Air. These observation stations are designed as long-term experiments that should make the passage of time visible and tangible for students by observing otherwise invisible processes."

Construction phase of the project:

From April 22 to April 26, 2013, the artists worked together with students from the Hagenbeck School to complete the project. In this dedicated space for classes focused on "Biodiversity, the old trailers transformed into a green classroom on the school's biotope, where all subjects can be taught outdoors. Whether it's music lessons, utilising the atrium for a choir, performing arts classes with the space and stairs serving as a backdrop, or presenting talks, dialogues and creative writing outcomes.

Various tasks were necessary for this, as participants practiced working with wood, laying pathways and stone tiles, hammering, sawing, sanding, painting, screwing, drilling and other groundwork such as leveling, digging up stones and sorting. On the school grounds, discarded furniture, an old doghouse, as well as awnings, benches, wood and other materials were found.

The project raised student awareness about resource management in their immediate vicinity and provided practical skills that could be applied on-site, leading to their unique construction. They learned that many items can be better and more effective through repair and repurposing than by buying new ones. All students were highly motivated throughout the three-week construction process, breathing

new life into old discarded items. As a result, the students created a unique and versatile classroom for themselves.

Observation Station Earth:

After a research trip to the Senckenberg Museum of Natural History in Görlitz and consultation with the Institute for Soil Zoology, the planning team decided on an observation station for underground decomposition processes: the "Earthworm Box." In it, students will be able to closely experience the decomposition process of leaves into soil through microorganisms. It aims to open a window into the hidden world within the soil. This content-rich and technically challenging part of the project could only have a chance of success through collaboration with various partners. For the technical implementation of the glass earthworm observation station, sponsors and experts were secured from the cooperating Marcel-Breuer school.

Observation Station Air:

The two construction trailers are painted yellow. This yellow is used conceptually, as this colour attracts insects to visit flowers. The students then have the opportunity to regularly examine the insects that fly to the surface of the trailers in the summer, for example by counting, photographing, identifying and drawing.

Observation Station Water:

Rainwater is channeled through pipes into aquariums in the construction trailer, allowing students to investigate and research the succession of aquatic organisms there.

Artistic approach, art tools and artistic methods

The artistic approach of the artist duo Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser aims to engage their audience both emotionally and intellectually, using their art as a medium to raise awareness of current societal and ecological challenges. The audience is included as active participants in the artistically action-oriented processes.

Further central concerns include environmental issues, sustainability, social interaction and urban living. Their works promote dialogue and reflection, involving viewers in the creative process. Through their artworks, they encourage viewers to think critically about social, cultural and political topics. They worked actively in urban spaces. Martin Kaltwasser passed away in 2022 and Folke Köbberling has continued to work as a solo artist since then.

Description of the working method of Folke Koebberling and Martin Kaltwasser, "the Art & Architecture of Public-Space- Bricolage- resistance- Resources- Aesthetics": "Hold it!", page 8:

"...The handling of resources has a central significance in our work. We almost exclusively work with construction waste, remnants of industrial production, privately donated objects and found items from various affluent waste disposal sites, which we sort, store and try to reuse as carefully as possible according to the principle "Hold it!" This way, we produce art, design, architecture and actions. The results are almost always site-specific and combine research and material exploration with a spatial, object-like, architectural implementation characterised by its imperfect craftsmanship. Many of our buildings and objects are created participatorily with the involvement of volunteers, as more or less elaborate crafts. After all, crafting is something anyone can do. Already through the material search, where the participation of many is crucial, our construction processes have a strong social and communicative component and the idea of openness and participation continues in the realisation through the claim

to imperfection of crafting."

In the school context framed by the program Culture Agents for Creative Schools, all groups in the school were reached and involved through a multi-stage dialogical participatory process. The choreography of the process and the workshop formats were developed and moderated by the cultural agent Eva Randelzhofer in her role as process facilitator. The idea for the lab was gradually developed collaboratively, which is a process with multiple authorship: The artistic concept for the construction project was developed by the artist Folke Köbberling, who connected and integrated the ideas of the participants from previous workshops. As a result, everyone was fully convinced and eager to act.

Quote from the catalogue "Hold it!", Folke Köbberling & Martin Kaltwasser, The Art & Architecture of Public Space: Bricolage Resistance Resources Aesthetics, page 9:

"To think further, "Hold it!" means pausing and focusing on small, precise, urban interventions, whose strength lies in their openness and accessibility. Translated to architecture and everyday urban life, "Hold it!" signifies that I could promote self-organised, urban design influence by residents and transform it into a democratic everyday culture for everyone, provided there is a high level of communication, personal and shared responsibility and a willingness for aesthetic education at play. All of this is easily learnable - it merely requires spaces for freedom and experimentation, affordable material sources and volunteers to demonstrate it. The built environment should be actively co-created by all; tinkering is just the beginning."

In the vision workshop, drawing and collaging took place to visualise what the school should look like in five years. This dialogically designed participatory process included an idea workshop with artist Folke Köbberling, where all participants could explore artistic approaches and possibilities of Actionist (spontaneous) construction. Following this, collaborative concept development took place between the artist and a biology teacher: during this phase, sketches and the concept for the outdoor laboratory with observation stations for earth, water and air were created and a plan was drawn up. Additionally, a project week was held as a trial run for collective building: mobile greenhouses were constructed on pallets from old discarded window frames that had been collected earlier. Craft-based collective building followed the principle of "Bricolage," involving material improvisations: discarded furniture and materials found on the school premises were gathered, resulting in a material collection for upcycling.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning (diary, discussion, feedback,...)

1. Observation of natural processes conducted at themed stations in the outdoor laboratory
2. Practical construction work through hands-on engagement in building, repairing and repurposing materials during the creation of the outdoor classroom
3. Artistic and scientific exploration through drawing, identifying species, and creatively transforming found objects within the school environment
4. Collaborative visualisation and design during workshops using drawing and collaging to imagine future school spaces and artistic concepts
5. Public sharing and documentation through student-led presentations during various construction phases and the project opening, as well as video reporting and visual archiving produced by the student media team

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential learning and hands-on learning

Participants learned that many items can be better and more fruitful through repair and repurposing than by buying new ones. On the school grounds, discarded furniture, an old doghouse, as well as awnings, benches, wood and other materials were found. The project raised students' awareness of the use of nearby resources.

Collective learning

The school community experienced that a vision can be realised collectively in small steps.

Participatory learning

Students were involved in the conceptual phase and were able to contribute their needs and ideas. Presentations for the school community and external visitors took place in various construction phases and during the inauguration. Additionally, the initiative was documented on film by their own student company.

Competences

Skills:
- Manual construction and technical skills
- Reusing discarded materials to build new functional structures
- Artistic expression and visualising ideas
- Teamwork and collaborative project work during extended group activities
- Communication skills, including articulating ideas, listening to others, negotiating design decisions, and participating in collective discussions
- Public presentation and documentation skills
- Creating video reports and visual documentation

Knowledge:
- Urban biodiversity and ecological systems
- Sustainability and circular resource use
- Upcycling as a sustainable practice
- Artistic methods and participatory design processes
- Practical knowledge that could be immediately applied on-site, leading to their own construction

Attitudes:
- Environmental awareness and appreciation for reuse over consumption with care for surroundings
- Openness to collective action and shared authorship
- Personal and collective responsibility in shaping shared spaces
- Democratic engagement through dialogue, decision-making and inclusive participation
- Collaborative and participatory engagement in school life

How to?

Step 1. Vision workshop in the school community, moderated by process facilitator/culture agent. The goal is to collectively imagine how the school environment should develop in the next years.

At this stage, it is important to involve the entire school community, including school leadership, teachers, students, social workers and maybe parents, and ensure that the process is dialogical and inclusive, giving all parties the opportunity to express their ideas, expectations, and needs.

Step 2. Observation by the participating artists to familiarise themselves with the school premises and find artifacts. Here artists are given the opportunity to explore the physical environment and atmosphere of the school, understand its daily routines and the school's culture, as well as identify available or unused materials that could later be repurposed in the project.

Step 3. Idea workshop led by an artist together with representatives of the school community: school management, teachers, students and social workers. This phase focuses on the creative development of ideas.

Step 4. Concept development by the artist in cooperation with biology teachers. Following the idea workshop, the initial ideas are translated into a concrete and feasible concept. Joint work between the artist and teachers helps to define the structure, content, and educational focus of the project, supported by thematic research (in this case - excursion to the museum).

Step 5. Fundraising for materials, tools, etc. In the practice described, funding was provided through the Cultural Agents programme, allowing the school to proceed without additional cost. Otherwise, funding or sponsorship to cover materials, tools, and technical support can be sought from local cultural foundations, educational grants, municipal youth programmes, or partnerships with private companies and community organisations. Preparing a clear concept note with a budget, timeline and social impact explanation can help attract support.

Step 6. Planning of construction work, including schedule: when can the seventh-grade students be exempt from regular classes for 3 weeks to carry out the construction work?

Step 7. Trial run with a project week and construction of temporary greenhouses within a project week. Running such a smaller hands-on test project can help identify potential challenges and prepare both students and facilitators for teamwork, tool use and collective decision-making.

Step 8. Implementation of the construction phase of the shell structure over three project weeks, with students working in shifts. One group in the morning and the other group in the afternoon. Such organising shifts ensures that all participants are engaged and the workload is balanced. Emphasis should be placed on participation, cooperation and shared responsibility.

Step 9. Acquisition of additional cooperation partners for the interior design. Furthermore, both the interior design and the exterior should represent the three life worlds of earth, water and air through so-called observation stations.

Story from a practice:

From the catalogue: "7 at once", page 48, as part of "7 at once", event in Kunsthochschule Weißensee 2014:

Cultural agent, Eva Randelzhofer:

How can art be taught in school and students be made conscious of how the principle of social sculpture has been adopted?

Folke Köbberling:

What is social sculpture? The students realise in their work that they collaborate; it is not the individual who creates a piece of art, an image, or a sculpture, but the students recognise that through collaboration,

what could never be accomplished alone is achievable. A social sculpture involves the community; it creates something that dissolves authorship. In the construction, it was mainly manual tasks that led the students to enhance the old materials on the premises. They retrieved so-called waste from the waste cycle and created something wonderfully their own. Everyone who contributed will identify with it to varying degrees. For me, this is a part of how the aspect of social sculpture can be conveyed in school.

Cultural agent:

What role does your artistic working method play in school work? In your projects, the results are almost always site-specific and connect research and material exploration with spatial and architectural implementation, characterised by their imperfect craftsmanship.

Folke:

The central significance in my work is the management of resources. I primarily work with construction waste, remnants of industrial production, privately donated items and found objects. Upon my first visit to Hagenbeck School, I encountered a wonderful site that looked partly wild and akin to a wasteland. There were two rundown construction trailers and an old dog house on the premises, which the school intended to have disposed of. These trailers inspired me to integrate them into an overarching concept. Hagenbeck School focuses on "biological diversity." With the collaboration of the biology teachers and the assistance of the students, a new educational concept emerged, resulting in an outdoor biology classroom built by its users.

Impact:

Merging of artistic and educational concepts: The unique school profile is lived and visible in the daily life and curriculum of the school. Through the realisation of the construction project, boundaries were crossed in the symbolic impact to sustainably usable space. The project triggered a strong identification of the entire school community with the special school profile of biological diversity. The experience of self-efficacy and social empowerment had a lasting effect.

Authors:

Leadership of student workshops: Folke Köbberling, Rob Vrijen and Christian Hoppe

Concept development: Collaboration of educators Harald Hauser, Esther Eichenauer and Alexandra Trauzettel with the artist duo Köbberling & Kaltwasser

Process facilitator/culture agent: Eva Randelzhofer

Links:

http://www.kulturagenten-programm.de/laender/projekte/3/366.html

https://youtu.be/LzXwJnkbn_4

FOTO CREDITS: EVA RANDELZHOFER

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- What specific environment (school, community, institution) should the project take place in?
- What are the unique characteristics and needs of this environment?
- Are resources (materials, expertise, facilities) available in the new context?
- Who are the relevant target groups (students, teachers, artists, community)? What are their interests and needs? How can the target groups be actively involved in the planning and implementation of the project?
- Which partners (e.g., local artists, environmental organisations, cultural institutions) could be engaged for the project and what roles could they assume?
- How can existing networks and communities be integrated into the new context to support the project?
- What cultural or social specifics need to be considered in the new context?
- How can the project be adapted to regional traditions or specific community needs?

FILIGREE OF THE DRAVA

Specified mission:

regional identity

Type of art techniques used:

Visual art, digital art, literature

Complexity:

3 - medium

Materials:

Collecting materials was easy, we collected photo collections from known people and groups.

Resources:

We needed to secure the availability of suitable venues for the exhibitions and plan the budget for printed materials (exhibition catalogue).

Time:

It took time to do a deeper research of motifs in photos and collect all specific details of the taken photos; date taken, location, author and what's on the image.

Crew:

Kristina Pongrac was responsible for research, collecting photographs, processing, archiving, graphic design of exhibition pieces and writing blog texts. The project partners from Croatia, Maja Izabela Lesinger (Director of the City Library of Prelog) and Vlatka Lemić (President of the ICARUS Croatia Association), supported the implementation of specific activities. The library provided printing of the catalog and exhibition pieces, the exhibition venue and managed a shared online archive where Kristina uploaded the collected historical photographs.

Audience:

The collections and stories of the elderly, exhibition visits and readings of the travelogue by young people and students.

Context of the practice:

General:

The Drava River has been vital for the area of Međimurje County, which is part of the upper stream of Drava in Croatia, since at least the 18th century, as evidenced by documents like the certificate for gold washing issued by Empress Maria Theresa during the Habsburg Empire era. The 19th and 20th centuries brought significant changes, including new bridges and infrastructure, which altered the river's environment and local way of life.

The Drava is known as the "Amazon of Europe" due to its rich biodiversity and relatively preserved natural state compared to other European rivers. The region's economy historically depended on the river for transportation, industry and livelihoods (e.g., gold washing, navigation, etc.). Modern interventions such as hydropower plants and infrastructure reflect industrialisation and energy production priorities, often neglecting the need for ecological preservation.

Regional identity is strongly tied to the river, making the project significant for community engagement and heritage preservation.

Specific:

The origin of the "Filigree of the Drava" project lies in a community-driven desire to rediscover and showcase the rich history and vibrant life that once flourished along the Drava River before industrialisation and large infrastructure projects transformed the region. The impulse behind the project was to connect past and present and depict how life on the river used to be by creating an exhibition of old photos. The project grew organically through collaboration and active participation from local people and groups who contributed their own photos, stories and historical materials.

This was a 6-month-long project, a part of the "E-Routes" project and co-funded by the European Union. Kristina carried out the project solo as an artist within the "E-Routes" project, for which she proposed the idea of the archive, exhibition and research and wrote two blog posts about the history of the Drava River, which was the main theme around which everything revolved. The project partners provided financial and organisational support.

Goals of the practice

1. Build regional identity and ecological awareness by involving the community in collecting, preserving and sharing the river's multifaceted legacy.
2. Through participatory activities, share a sense of responsibility and pride, transforming historical exploration into an educational and cultural campaign that bridges generations and perspectives.
3. Present the vivid life of the "Amazon of Europe" and maintain the global memory and respect for the rivers with community work and education.
4. Raise interest in the natural and cultural heritage of the last preserved lowland rivers in Europe, strengthen regional identity and grow ecological awareness.

Description of the practice:

Filigree of the Drava is a community-driven visual and literary art project focused on exploring and preserving the regional identity tied to the Drava River in Međimurje County, Croatia. Through a heritage-based, documentary artistic approach, the project involved archival research, collection of historical photographs and oral histories from local residents and creative reinterpretation via photo-collages and travelogues. The project fostered intergenerational dialogue and environmental awareness by reconnecting participants with the river's rich ecological and cultural legacy before industrialisation altered the landscape. The exhibition, digital archive and literary works encouraged collective reflection on identity, memory and ownership, empowering the local community to celebrate and preserve their shared heritage.

Artistic approach:

Heritage-based, documentary art approach, blending archival research, community storytelling and creative reinterpretation of historical materials. The artistic focus lies in reviving cultural memory and transforming it into contemporary visual and literary forms, making history tangible through public engagement.

Artistic tools:

Photography – Both as historical material (archival photos) and as an expressive tool (reframing, editing, collaging).

Photo-collage – Used as a visual storytelling technique to combine different periods, places and perspectives in one frame.

Oral storytelling – Informal sharing of memories by elderly community members, shaping both visual and written outputs.

Photo archives (from museums, families, clubs, etc.) Source materials that were selected, curated and transformed into new creative outputs, like photo-collages, exhibitions and travelogues. They were not used just for documentation, but artistically reinterpreted to tell a story and evoke emotions, memory and reflection.

Literary text/Travelogue – Personal and poetic narratives that connect space, memory and ecology, offering a literary interpretation of Drava's past and present.

Artistic methods:

Photo collection & crowdsourcing - Gathering images and stories from local residents, families and historical groups.

Photo analysis & documentation - Researching the origins, dates, authorship and context of the photographs.

Photo retouching & collage-making - Artistic reinterpretation of historical content, bridging the past and present through curated visual storytelling.

Community-based creative research - Encouraging locals to participate in building the artistic narrative by contributing materials and knowledge.

Literary composition - Writing travelogues as an artistic response to historical and ecological themes of the Drava river.

Exhibition curation - Organising public display spaces to engage both local and wider audiences with the outcomes.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning:

Exhibition of photo-collage, a booklet of stories about Drava's history, an online photo collection in the Topotheque of Međimurje and two travelogues about the navigation and ecology of Drava.

Exhibition of photo-collage:

The photo-collage exhibition visually captured the historical transformation of the Drava River and its surroundings. By combining old photographs with new arrangements and curated

contexts, the exhibition made it possible for both participants and visitors to reflect on the changes in lifestyle, environment and community over time. It inspired emotional reactions when people recognised family members, familiar places, or forgotten practices. This deepened the learning through personal connection and public dialogue and made the exhibition not just a display, but a living conversation with history.

Booklet of stories about Drava's history:

The booklet gathered local oral histories, written reflections and documented narratives that emerged during the participatory research process. It served as both an educational material and a cultural preservation tool, archiving memories that might otherwise have been lost. For participants, especially the elderly, it validated their lived experiences. For younger readers, it opened a window into life along the river in past centuries. The act of collecting and editing these stories was itself a way of learning through listening, writing and contextualising.

Online photo collection in Topotheque of Međimurje:

This digital archive extended the learning beyond the local or temporal boundaries of the project. It created a public, searchable and expandable platform where individuals could revisit the materials, contribute their own, or use the archive for further research. For participants, especially younger generations, this was a chance to engage with history through digital literacy and for the wider community, it became a tool for collective memory and informal education. The Topotheque also encouraged intergenerational collaboration by making heritage accessible to all.

Two travelogues on Drava navigation and ecology:

These literary pieces explored the Drava River through a creative lens, mixing personal reflection, storytelling and environmental observation. They functioned as educational resources and artistic outputs, helping readers understand the river as more than just a landscape. It is a living entity with a cultural and ecological role. Participants who read or contributed to the travelogues practiced creative writing, ecological thinking and cultural interpretation. Readers learned through narrative, connecting facts with feelings, places with memories.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential learning occurred as participants connected deeply with the history and environment of the Drava River through their own lived experiences and personal stories. By engaging directly with historical photos, local narratives and the natural landscape, they learned by doing, feeling and reflecting, making the river's past and present come alive in a meaningful, tangible way.

Participatory learning happened through active collaboration and sharing among community members. Participants contributed photos, stories and knowledge, working together to uncover and preserve the rich heritage of the Drava River. This collective involvement fostered a sense of ownership and connection, making learning a shared, inclusive process.

Collective learning unfolded as co-creators, together with the visitors of the exhibition, built a common understanding of the Drava's history and significance, strengthening social bonds and regional identity.

Transformational learning occurred as participants and visitors experienced a shift in perspective about their relationship with the Drava River and their regional heritage. By connecting with

personal and collective histories through stories, photographs and exhibitions, many developed a deeper appreciation for the river's ecological and cultural value. This process inspired a renewed sense of responsibility and pride, motivating them to actively preserve and celebrate their local environment and identity.

Competences

- Effective communication through storytelling and dialogue to foster civic engagement and cultural expression
- Collaborative participation in researching, curating and presenting community heritage, supporting co-creation and participatory democracy
- Organisational coordination for inclusive project management that respects diverse community voices
- Critical cultural awareness to interpret historical and artistic materials within social and environmental contexts
- Civic responsibility to preserve and promote regional identity, environmental stewardship and collective memory through art.

Skills
- Research of historical and visual materials
- Digital skills, such as photo editing
- Literary skills for storytelling and travelogue creation
- Interpersonal skills for engaging with elderly community members.

Knowledge
- Understanding of local history, cultural heritage and environmental issues related to the Drava River
- Familiarity with archival processes and digital platforms such as the Topotheque
- Awareness of ecological and social changes caused by industrialisation and infrastructure development.

Attitudes
- Commitment to community engagement and cultural preservation
- Openness to intergenerational learning and exchange
- Respect for diverse perspectives and collaborative processes
- Pride in regional identity and environmental stewardship.

How to?

Step 1. Project planning and resource mapping
Begin by outlining the project timeline, key phases, and desired outcomes. Identify potential collaborators, supporters, and information sources – this includes local museums, historical societies, families, and community clubs with photo archives or oral histories to share. Define communication channels for outreach and participation.

Step 2. Community outreach and material gathering
Engage the local community through personal networks, announcements, and local media. Invite residents to contribute photographs, stories, and memories related to the Drava River. Organise informal meetings or visits with elders and families to collect oral histories and contextual information. Establish a system to document origins, authorship, and dates of materials.

Step 3. Artistic and literary creation
Analyse and curate the gathered materials. Reframe selected photographs using collage techniques to create visual narratives. Develop travelogues or literary reflections based on the stories and ecological themes that emerge. Involve participants in creative reinterpretation where possible, encouraging intergenerational contributions and dialogue.

Step 4. Public sharing and dissemination
Organise a photo-collage exhibition in a local public space, accompanied by readings or storytelling events. Publish a booklet of collected stories and reflections. Upload the digital archive to the regional Topotheque to ensure public access and future use. Disseminate outputs through local media, cultural platforms, and the project website.

Step 5. Reflection, evaluation and continuity planning
Collect feedback from participants, visitors, and partners. Reflect on what was meaningful, what could be improved, and what new ideas arose. Discuss opportunities to expand the archive, repeat the format in another community, or integrate the materials into local schools or museums. Evaluate the project's contribution to regional identity, heritage preservation, and ecological awareness.

Story from a practice:

"Living alongside the jungle of the Drava River is incredibly exciting, especially when you immerse yourself in its flow and its changes, it will surprise you every year. In its depths lie numerous stories and treasures that resurface whenever the water level stabilises or drops, sparking the imagination…" Kristina Pongrac

Source: E-Routes
Retrieved from: https://e-routes.eu/navigating-on-the-drava-river-through-time/

"I imagine how, back in the day, when asphalt was not even a concept, we patiently and slowly made our way through the narrow paths with a massive Međimurje horse through this flower garden of ours on the island. Or rather – the former pedunculate oak rainforest. One of these paths certainly led to Adam and Eve somewhere in Orehovica near the Drava. Although it sounds as though I am talking about biblical figures, I am actually talking about beings who inhabited and somehow sheltered this area for much longer. These names were given to two centuries-old giant oaks, which were cut down and sold in 1925 for regular timber. Their grandeur is evidenced by records and photo documentation. It tells us their trunks had a diameter of two meters and based on the tree rings, they were estimated to be 500 years old."
Kristina Pongrac

Source: E-Routes

Retrieved from: …towards the 100th anniversary of Adam and Eve's departure from Međimurje – E-ROUTES

Impact:

Intended impact:

Strengthened intergenerational connections - The project created meaningful dialogue between younger and older generations. Learning more about the personal stories of the people who used to live in this area allowed younger participants to emotionally connect with Drava's past. This deepened their appreciation of oral history and fostered empathy and respect across age groups.

Increased ecological and cultural awareness through storytelling - Engagement with the project's travelogues helped participants understand Drava's ecology and history in an accessible, narrative way. This fostered a stronger emotional connection to the river and raised awareness about environmental and cultural preservation.

Enhanced visual and historical literacy - The photo-collage exhibition enabled participants to visually trace changes in the landscape and community over time. This encouraged reflection on identity, memory and ecological impact, promoting critical thinking and historical awareness.

Empowered community participation in research - By contributing and analysing old photos, participants actively engaged in uncovering and interpreting their own local history. This hands-on experience improved skills in research, observation and documentation, while building a sense of ownership over the project.

Expanded access to cultural heritage through digital engagement - The creation of the Topotheque digital archive allowed broader public access to historical materials. Participants and community members continued to engage with local heritage online, reinforcing informal, self-directed learning and digital literacy.

Deepened reflection on regional identity and place - The entire process, from collecting stories to presenting them visually and digitally, encouraged participants to reflect on their regional identity, their relationship with nature and the value of preserving collective memory. This strengthened community bonds and inspired ongoing interest in civic and environmental engagement.

Unexpected impact:

The photo-collage exhibition resonated so strongly with the local community that the city extended its public display beyond the originally planned time frame. Viewers frequently recognised family members or acquaintances in the photos, which sparked joy in them to hear about their adventures back in the old days and old Drava.

Authors:

Author of the project, travelogues and photo-collage - Kristina Pongrac; collaboration, owners or authors of photo collections: Frančić, Pavlic, Horvat, Pongrac, Ujlaki, Kedmenec and Kolenić families, Moto-nautical club "Vidovski zlatari" (eng. Gold washers of Vidovec), Ethnographic

museum, Museum of Međimurje, publisher "Meridijani", Topotheque Međimure and Prelog, Turistic Board Prelog and members of Facebook group "Stare fotografije Preloga" (eng. Old Photos of Prelog)

Links:

Exhibition opening:

Kristina Pongrac's exhibition opened on European Heritage Day – E-ROUTES
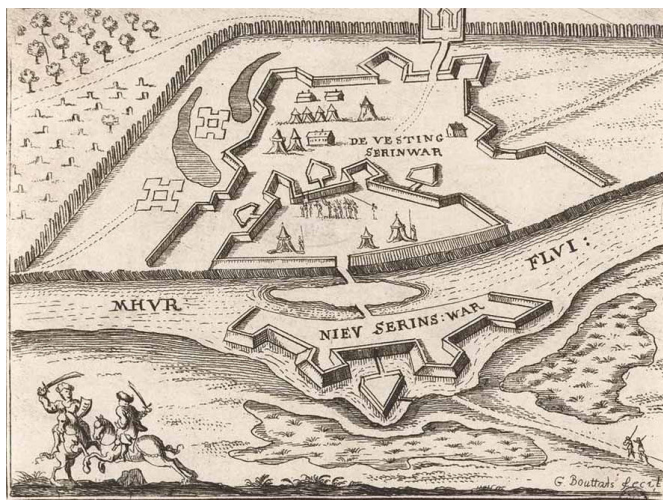
Travelogues:

Navigating on the Drava River through time…

…towards the 100th anniversary of Adam and Eve's departure from Međimurje – E-ROUTES

Topotheque (keyword search: "filigran Drave"): Topoteka Topoteka Medjimurje
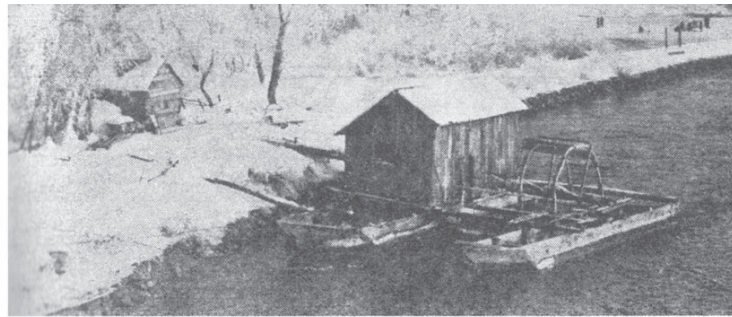
Reflection questions:

1. What part of your local history, landscape, or community would you like to highlight and inspire respect for?

2. What is the most powerful or expressive medium you could use to convey that message?

3. In what ways can the local community actively participate in shaping and sharing this story?

4. How can old photographs and personal stories become tools for civic memory and ecological awareness?

5. What value does intergenerational exchange bring to community-based artistic projects?

6. How can you make sure that contributions from older members of your community are respected, documented and integrated meaningfully?

7. How can creative methods like photo collage, storytelling, or digital archiving help make the invisible parts of history visible again?

8. How can participatory art projects encourage people to reflect on the impact of industrialisation and environmental change?

9. What unexpected stories or emotions might surface when working with local heritage materials? Are you ready to hold space for them?

10. How can your project bridge generations and strengthen a sense of belonging?

DUBLIN ARTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL

Specified mission:

active citizenship, social justice, diversity, inclusion, solidarity, freedom of expression, artivism, intercultural dialogue

Type of art techniques used: ●●●

visual arts, performance, digital, multimedia

Complexity:

5 - very complex

Materials:

audio-visual equipment, computers and editing software for digital and media art, physical materials for installations or visual art, promotional materials, venue supplies.

Resources: access to performance and exhibition venues across the city, funding or sponsorship to cover artist fees, venue costs, technical support and marketing, partnerships with local cultural organisations, human rights groups and community networks, a technical support team, volunteers or staff for event management and security.

Time:

several months of planning, 10 days was the duration of the festival and several days for dismantling the setup.

Crew:

artistic directors and curators, technical crews, event coordinators and managers, marketing and communications team, volunteers, workshop facilitators and educators.

Audience:

In the 2020 festival edition, there were approximately 10,000 participants, while in 2024, it is estimated that the festival had over 10,000 visitors per day due to its new hybrid format.

Context of the practice:

General:

The Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival arises from a pressing need to address ongoing social inequalities and human rights challenges both locally and globally. In a time when issues such as discrimination, social exclusion and injustice remain deeply rooted, the festival provides a vital platform to raise awareness and inspire action through artistic expression.

MISSION: HUMAN RIGHTS

Specific:

The festival was born out of collaboration between local artists, human rights activists and community organisations who recognised the power of art to challenge injustice and promote social change. Its development was driven by a participatory approach, involving diverse stakeholders in shaping the festival's themes and program. The impulse came from a shared desire to create a public space where marginalised voices could be heard and where art could serve as a catalyst for dialogue and empowerment. Over time, the festival has evolved to respond to contemporary human rights issues, reflecting current social and political climates and continuously adapting through feedback from participants and audiences. This participatory, community-rooted origin ensures the festival remains relevant and impactful.

Goals of the practice:

- Raise awareness about human rights issues through diverse artistic expressions.
- Foster dialogue and understanding among different communities.
- Empower marginalised voices by providing a platform for their expression.
- Inspire active citizenship and social engagement by linking art with social justice themes.
- Encourage reflection and action on human rights and social justice.
- Build inclusive cultural spaces for people from diverse backgrounds to come together.
- Promote empathy, solidarity and collaboration through creative activities.
- Use art as a tool for positive social change.

Description of the practice:

The Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival is an annual event that brings together a wide range of artistic disciplines, including visual arts, performance, film and digital media, to explore and highlight pressing human rights issues. The festival creates an inclusive platform where artists, activists and communities engage in meaningful dialogue and creative expression, fostering awareness and empathy around social justice themes. By combining diverse forms of art with human rights advocacy, the festival not only celebrates cultural diversity but also encourages active citizenship and inspires collective action for positive change. Through exhibitions, performances, workshops and discussions held across various venues in Dublin, the project transforms public spaces into dynamic arenas for reflection, connection and empowerment.

Artistic approach:

The festival adopts a multidisciplinary and participatory artistic approach, blending various art forms to engage audiences in critical conversations about human rights. It emphasises collaboration between artists, activists and communities, fostering an inclusive environment where creative expression becomes a catalyst for social change and civic engagement.

Art tools:

Depending on the art technique, the tools include traditional materials like paints, canvases and sculptures for visual arts; cameras and editing software for film and digital media; sound and lighting equipment for performances; and digital platforms for interactive installations and virtual engagement.

Artistic methods:

The festival employs a variety of methods such as site-specific installations, immersive performances, documentary and experimental filmmaking, interactive workshops and community co-creation projects. These methods are designed to provoke thought, invite participation and connect personal stories with broader human rights themes, encouraging reflection and dialogue among diverse audiences.

Educational approach:

- Ways of harvesting the learning
- Post-event discussions and reflection sessions with participating artists, organisers and attendees to share experiences and insights about human rights themes.
- Documentation through creating video and photo archives to capture performances, exhibitions and workshops for later review and evaluation.
- Monitoring social media engagement, tracking conversations, shares and comments related to the festival in order to understand public reception and reach.
- Panel talks or Q&A sessions after screenings or performances, encouraging dialogue around human rights issues and artistic expression.
- Informal feedback gathered by volunteers and staff interacting with festival visitors throughout the event.

Legend with different learning approaches

Experiential Learning

Participants and audiences engage directly with art forms, such as performances, exhibitions and workshops, that explore human rights issues, enabling them to learn through personal experience and emotional connection.

Collective Learning

Through group discussions, panel talks and collaborative workshops, diverse audiences and artists share perspectives and knowledge, fostering a shared understanding of human rights challenges.

Transformative Learning

The festival encourages critical reflection and challenges existing beliefs about social justice, inspiring changes in attitudes and behaviors toward human rights.

Participatory Learning

Attendees are actively involved not only as spectators but as contributors in workshops, discussions and interactive art pieces, making learning a two-way process.

Competences

Skills:

- Communication and dialogue skills through participation in discussions, workshops and collaborative projects.

- Critical thinking and reflective skills to analyse human rights issues and their social implications.
- Artistic expression across multiple media, including visual arts, film, performance, etc.
- Event organisation and collaborative project work in diverse teams
- Advocacy through creative practice and public engagement

Knowledge:
- Awareness of human rights principles and current social justice challenges.
- Understanding of how art can serve as a powerful tool for advocacy, raising awareness and fostering social change.
- Insight into diverse cultural perspectives and experiences related to human rights.

Attitudes:
- Empathy and solidarity toward marginalised groups and human rights defenders.
- Openness to diverse viewpoints and willingness to engage in respectful dialogue.
- Active citizenship mindset, feeling empowered to contribute to positive social transformation.

How to?

Due to lack of access to how this festival is exactly organised, the following steps are based on how similar festivals generally tend to be created. The order of steps may vary depending on context, resources, and team structure. Some steps can be carried out in parallel depending on timing and capacity. The process is often non-linear and should remain flexible and responsive to emerging needs and opportunities.

Step 1. Establish core partnerships. Collaborate with relevant organisations and engage with cultural institutions and artists to form a diverse organising team. A diverse organising team ensures a plurality of perspectives and builds legitimacy and trust across sectors. It helps to distribute responsibilities of perspectives and builds legitimacy and trust across sectors. It helps to distribute responsibilities effectively, tap into wider networks, and increase the festival's visibility, outreach, and social impact.

Step 2. Define artistic and human rights themes. Select themes that resonate with current human rights issues and align with the festival's mission. These themes can be connected to specific dates in the human rights calendar (such as International Human Rights Day, 10 December) or to the anniversary of a significant historical event. Thematic choices may also be informed by ongoing social developments or public debates. What matters most is to choose themes that are both socially relevant and emotionally engaging, while leaving space for critical reflection rather than celebration alone.

Curate content that explores these themes through a variety of artistic forms and mediums.

Step 3. Secure funding and sponsorships. Identify potential funding sources early in the planning process. These may include public arts and culture grants, human rights foundations, local government programmes, and sponsorships from socially engaged businesses. Partnerships with embassies, universities, or international organisations may also provide financial or in-kind support.

Crowdfunding campaigns can be an effective way to engage the community and raise smaller donations while building early interest in the festival. In addition, mobilising volunteers can help reduce costs and strengthen community ownership.

Step 4. Plan the festival programme. Design a diverse and inclusive programme that reflects the selected themes through various artistic forms. There could be exhibitions, performances, film screenings, workshops, panel discussions, flash mobs etc. The exact mix will depend on your team's capacity and

available budget. It is not necessary to create a large-scale festival from the outset – a series of small but well-executed events can be more impactful and help build support for future editions.

Aim for a balance between established and emerging artists, and include voices from marginalised communities. Consider combining in-person and online formats to increase accessibility and reach. When planning the schedule, allow space for informal exchange, reflection, and dialogue – not just performances. These moments often create meaningful connections and strengthen the festival's impact.

When planning for public gatherings, especially those involving large crowds, it is essential to assess and prepare for potential risks, including injuries, fire hazards, inappropriate behaviour, or emergencies. Contact relevant public safety authorities in advance to submit required notifications or permits, and ensure that venues are equipped with basic safety infrastructure (such as exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits). Assign trained staff or volunteers to oversee crowd management and safety protocols during events.

Step 5. Select venues and dates. Choose venues that are accessible, welcoming, and appropriate for the planned activities. This may include galleries, theatres, community centres, libraries, schools, outdoor public spaces, or online platforms. Ensure that physical spaces meet accessibility standards, are safe and are located in areas reachable by public transport. Select festival dates and avoid overlapping with major holidays or competing events in the area. If your programme includes outdoor events, take weather conditions into account and prepare a backup plan (e.g. indoor alternatives or online fallback formats). When possible, coordinate with venue partners early to secure availability and explore possibilities for in-kind contributions such as free or discounted space, equipment, or staffing support.

Step 6. Promote the festival.

Develop a clear and consistent communication strategy tailored to your audiences and available resources. Use a mix of channels, such as social media, local and independent media, mailing lists, posters, community noticeboards, and partner networks to reach different segments of the public. Highlight key events, artists, and themes to spark interest and make the programme easy to navigate. Share behind-the-scenes content and personal stories to humanise the message and build engagement.

Partnering with local influencers, activists, or artists with strong community presence can help amplify your message to new audiences. Engage schools and universities by offering materials through their communication channels, student networks, or academic departments. You can also frame parts of the festival, such as discussions or exhibitions, as educational resources or case studies, and offer them to educators or youth workers for use in classrooms and workshops.

Make sure that promotional materials are accessible (e.g. use alt text, plain language, subtitles for videos) and available in multiple languages if your community is multilingual. Consider assigning a dedicated communications lead or volunteer team to manage outreach consistently throughout the lead-up to the festival.

Step 7. Engage the community.

Community participation strengthens the festival's relevance and fosters a sense of ownership and belonging. Involve local communities not only as audiences but also as active contributors to the festival. This can include co-creating events, leading workshops, performing, volunteering, or curating parts of the programme. Reach out to grassroots organisations, neighbourhood groups, schools, and underrepresented communities early in the planning process. Listen to their ideas and build on existing local initiatives where possible. Consider forming a community advisory group or inviting local representatives to join the organising team, offering

different levels of involvement to suit varying capacities and interests.

Step 8. Evaluate and reflect.

After the festival, take time to assess what worked well, what could be improved, and what impact was made. Collect feedback from participants, audiences, volunteers, and partners through surveys, informal conversations, or reflection sessions.

Look beyond attendance numbers, consider the quality of engagement, diversity of voices represented, accessibility, and emotional or social resonance of the events. Document outcomes, challenges and lessons learned to support reporting, funding applications, and future planning.

And celebrate! Where possible, share your findings with the broader community – through a report, discussion, or social media to maintain transparency and invite ongoing dialogue.

Story from a practice:

"In a world where human rights continue to be under attack, Dublin Arts and Human Rights Festival sets out to celebrate the people who have stood up for them around the world and throughout history and highlight the role artists can play in promoting a more just society."

– Kevin Courtney, Irish Times

Source: Smashing Times

Retrieved: https://smashingtimes.ie/dublin-arts-human-rights-festival-2024/

Impact:

Intended Impact:

The festival has managed to raise awareness and deepen public understanding of human rights issues through artistic expression, fostering empathy and solidarity among participants and audiences. It has encouraged active citizenship by inspiring individuals and communities to engage in dialogue and take action for social justice. The festival has also provided a platform for artists and activists to connect and collaborate.

Unexpected Impact:

The festival often inspires new creative collaborations and community initiatives that extend well beyond the event itself. Sometimes it unexpectedly attracts diverse audiences who might not typically engage with human rights topics.

Authors: Smashing Times International Centre for the Arts and Equality and Front Line Defenders

Links: https://smashingtimes.ie/dublin-arts-human-rights-festival-2024/

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How can I ensure that the artistic content meaningfully reflects and raises awareness about current human rights issues?
- In what ways can my project actively engage and include diverse communities, especially those most affected by human rights challenges?
- How will I balance artistic expression with educational impact to inspire both emotional connection and critical thinking?
- What kinds of interactive educational or artistic workshops can I organise to engage the audience in a meaningful dialogue and reflection about the program's topics?
- How can I create a safe and empowering space for artists and participants to express themselves authentically?
- What partnerships and collaborations are essential to strengthen the project's reach?
- What strategies can I use to make the festival accessible and inclusive to a wide audience, including marginalised groups?
- How will I evaluate the social impact of the project beyond attendance numbers, such as changes in awareness, attitudes, or civic engagement?

ENLIGHTENED UNICORN

Specified mission:

Improving collective mental health and wellbeing

Type of art techniques used: ●●

Digital Art, Street Art

Complexity:

2 - easy

Materials:

The project does not require many materials, just special paper for printing stickers, graphic editing and design programs and a printer.

Resources:

The authors of the project did it on a voluntary basis, so there was no funding.The first stage of the project development does need many resources: a graphic designer, a street artist and volunteers to approach people. If the project is to be continued and workshops to teach people how to create street art are organised, then it would require more funding, finding the right venues and securing the best ways to promote workshops. Collaboration with different NGOs would be beneficial so as to reach more people.

Time:

The time was needed for organisers' meetings to discuss ideas, creating stickers, printing them out, handing them to people on the streets and placing them on walls and poles of Tbilisi. So, it was not too time-consuming.

However, as mentioned, if the project developed further and included more stages, the organisers would need more time to find and secure the funding, organise workshops, test them and then giving them to the participants would also require more time. Time would need be needed for finding the right cooperation partners, promoting the workshops, as well as locating the right channels to reach those target audiences who might be interested in street art.

Crew:

The staff consisted of two volunteers.

Audience:

Every Georgian who was walking in the streets of Tbilisi, as well as friends and family of the project organisers.

Context of the practice:
General:

The economic and political situation in Georgia is quite dire. The ruling authoritarian political party has been increasing pressure on its opponents and the media. Protesters and journalists face violent repression, arrests, growing restrictions on civil and media freedoms.

The unemployment rate is high and many people are leaving the country in search of better employment opportunities. Every year, the population is decreasing. Furthermore, numerous Russian and Arabic companies are arriving and buying Georgian land for different purposes, such as building tourism infrastructure, luxury housing and agriculture. This, in turn, leads to rising property prices, land inaccessibility and gentrification.

The ongoing economic and political situation of Georgia has adverse effects on the mental health of its population, especially among youth, rural communities and working-class citizens. The media also plays a part, as it mostly shares only negative news about what is going on in the country. People feel hopeless, frustrated and powerless. They feel like they do not have a say in anything going on in their country. There is an air of depression in the collective consciousness.

Specific:

The organisers launched the project in May 2025, when Ana had just returned from Berlin, where she participated in a Civic Art project. Inspired by the many artists she met and the rich street art scene of Berlin, she decided to use her newly gained knowledge to make a difference in her city.

Upon returning home, she became even more aware of the heavy emotional baggage the people of Tbilisi are carrying. So, she and her friend decided to do something about it. They often talk and share new ideas about mental health and spiritual development and are painfully aware of the despondency of their people. So, they decided to turn their combined knowledge into a character and have this character start talking to people on the streets. Their idea was to help the emergence of positive thought in the minds of the Georgian people.

Goals of the practice

- To improve the state of mental health and emotional wellbeing of the Georgian people and spread ideas about self-love and self-compassion.
- To make a difference in the collective consciousness of the Georgian people by introducing positivity in civic consciousness through simple yet meaningful street interventions. By using art in everyday public spaces, it invites people to pause, reflect on their mental state and recognise their inner worth.
- To increase the sense of empowerment in the collective consciousness through interactions with the stickers and their messages.
- To reveal the impact of small gestures in public spaces.
- To introduce the power of street art to the people of Tbilisi.
- To show that one does not need large resources to engage in civic creativity.

Description of the practice:

The Enlightened Unicorn project uses playful, affirming street art in the form of stickers to spark small moments of emotional connection and self-reflection in public spaces. By introducing gentle civic messages into the urban landscape, the project fosters collective mental wellbeing, reminds passersby of their worth and promotes the emergence of positive thought in the collective consciousness.

Artistic approach

The Enlightened Unicorn project embraced a playful, accessible and emotionally engaging artistic approach rooted in street art and digital design. It used micro-interventions in public space, in this case, stickers with hand-crafted messages, as a gentle yet impactful way to influence public consciousness and collective emotional wellbeing. The project drew inspiration from the Berlin street art scene and merged it with local context to address mental health in Georgia. Its artistic approach was participatory and dialogic, aiming not to shock or provoke but to connect gently, uplift and offer a moment of reflection to passersby. By introducing a symbolic character, the unicorn, it used visual storytelling to create a sense of magic, kindness and colour in emotionally heavy urban environments.

Art Tools

- Digital Design Software (e.g., Adobe Photoshop) for creating the visuals and messages.
- Printing materials, such as sticker paper and portable printing methods.
- Physical stickers used as the primary medium.
- Public urban surfaces (walls, poles and everyday objects like notebooks or phones) as a canvas for dissemination.

Artistic Methods

- Street Art: The act of placing stickers in public spaces brought art into daily life, outside gallery walls.
- Digital Art: The unicorn character and messages were created using digital tools, blending graphic design with emotive text.
- Text-based visual art: Each sticker carried a short message or question meant to provoke emotional resonance or self-reflection.
- Interactive distribution: Members of the public invited to choose a sticker that resonated with them, making the act of receiving art a personal decision.
- Symbolic visual narrative: The unicorn served as a recurring figure, turning abstract concepts like love, uniqueness, or gratitude into a visual identity.

Overall, the artistic strategy was simple but powerful: use humane visual design, short poetic text and physical presence in everyday space to disrupt negative thought loops and initiate emotional healing.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

Although the project was informal and street-based, several meaningful methods of harvesting the learning emerged organically through interactions and reflection:

Oral Feedback and Spontaneous Dialogue

Participants and passersby who received stickers often shared immediate emotional reactions, such as smiles, gratitude, or brief conversations about the quotes. These moments provided real-time feedback and emotional insight into the project's resonance.

Personal Reflection

Some recipients placed the stickers in visible personal spaces (wallets, phone cases, refrigerators, notebooks), allowing the messages to become part of their daily life. This placement encouraged ongoing personal reflection and positive self-talk, showing a subtle but lasting learning impact.

Peer Sharing and Informal Dissemination

Friends and community members who received stickers expressed a desire to share them further or initiate similar ideas. This form of peer-to-peer learning showed that the project sparked not just individual reflection, but a ripple effect of awareness and engagement.

Storytelling and Anecdotal Reflection

Stories emerged, such as the woman with cancer who was deeply moved by a sticker that read "Thank you for your existence." These shared stories became narrative evidence of emotional learning and connection, reinforcing the value of small gestures.

Creator Reflection

The project initiators themselves engaged in reflective dialogue about the process, outcomes and responses. Through this, they deepened their understanding of civic engagement, public art and the emotional power of creative expression.

Even without formal tools like diaries or workshops, Enlightened Unicorn demonstrated that simple acts, emotional responses and shared stories can be powerful ways of harvesting learning in civic art projects.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential Learning

Participants learned by directly experiencing the project's messages in real-world settings, receiving a sticker with an uplifting message, deciding where to place it and reflecting on its emotional impact. This hands-on engagement allowed them to process and internalise positive ideas in everyday life contexts.

Transformative Learning

Several participants described subtle but meaningful shifts in self-perception and mindset, for example, beginning to believe in their uniqueness or feeling more seen and appreciated. These internal changes point to a process of transformative learning, where personal beliefs are reconsidered through emotional and reflective engagement with the art.

Participatory Learning

The project relied on people not just as an audience, but as co-distributors and messengers. Friends and volunteers shared stickers with others, chose where to place them and initiated conversations, making learning a shared, participatory act.

Tandem Learning

Although not formalised, the collaboration between the two project authors, one an experienced

designer, the other a newcomer to artistic activism, shows tandem learning in action. The second organiser gained new insights into the power of civic art through working side by side with her friend.

Collective Learning

As people passed stickers to others, offered feedback and witnessed responses in public spaces, they took part in a collective learning process, where shared emotional reactions, curiosity and joy became part of a larger social awareness about mental wellbeing and artistic expression.

These learning approaches worked together to create an open, human-centred learning environment, one that valued feeling, connection and the power of a small gesture to open up reflection and dialogue.

Competences

Skills

- Civic expression through art – Participants learned how visual art (like stickers) can carry civic messages, encouraging public reflection and emotional wellbeing.
- Symbolic and emotional communication – By reading and sometimes choosing to display the stickers, people engaged in non-verbal civic dialogue which includes humor, colour and emotional resonance.
- Critical observation of public space – The act of encountering the unicorn stickers in unexpected places sharpened participants' ability to notice, question and interpret messages in their environment.

Knowledge

- Understanding of civic art as a tool for social change – Many participants encountered, possibly for the first time, the concept of using public art and street art to address mental health, societal mood and collective awareness.
- Awareness of street art as a participatory medium – Participants came to understand that art in public space can be inclusive, low-cost and impactful, even without formal exhibitions or institutions.
- Insight into how emotional wellbeing can be encouraged – Through positive and reflective messages, participants were introduced to simple but powerful ideas from mental health advocacy, self-love and mindfulness.

Attitudes

- Openness to civic dialogue through art – Engaging with the project fostered a more open attitude toward receiving and reflecting on civic art messages in public space.
- Empowerment and personal agency – Several participants expressed feeling inspired, not only by the messages but by the idea that anyone could initiate something similar, shifting them from passive observers to potential creative activists.
- Appreciation for public, non-institutional art – The project cultivated a sense that meaningful, civic-oriented art does not require galleries or permission, but can live in everyday places.
- Solidarity and community awareness – Messages like "Thank you for your existence" or "Shine! We need you!" reminded individuals of their value to their community, fostering a civic-minded, compassionate outlook.

How to?

Step 1. Meeting with friends and discussing ideas.

Step 2. Creating stickers in Adobe Photoshop.

Step 3. Going to a print shop.

Step 4. Giving the stickers to friends and family.

Step 5. The most challenging one - approaching people on the streets of Tbilisi and giving them stickers. Also, putting stickers on walls and poles everywhere around the city.

Story from a practice:

The quotes on the stickers:

"Hey You! You are perfect!"

"Hey You! My enlightened horn sees your inner sun!"

"Hey You! Human! Do you know that you are special?"

"Hey You! Do you shine in the colourful sun?"

"Hey You! The world needs your uniqueness!"

"Hey You! Shine! Sound! We need you!"

"Hey You! Thank You for your existence!"

"Hey You! What made you happy today?"

"Hey You! Do you know how bright you are?"

"Hey You! How many times have you said Thank You?"

"Hey You! Have you felt the magic in your breath today? "

"Hey You! Your presence colours the air around you!"

Impact:

The intended impact of the Enlightened Unicorn project was to uplift the collective mental health of people in Tbilisi by sparking moments of positivity, self-reflection and emotional relief in public spaces. Through playful, brightly coloured stickers with affirming messages, the organisers aimed to interrupt negative thought patterns and remind people of their inherent worth and uniqueness.

The project introduced the power of civic art and micro-interventions in public space to the Georgian public in a new, relatable way. It promoted mental health awareness, self-love and the belief that street art can be a tool for healing and social change. It also introduced street art to Georgians, as this art form is mostly unknown and not present in their country.

The project revealed that even without institutional support, civic art can become a meaningful force for connection and transformation. Its simplicity, emotional resonance and accessibility make it easily replicable in other communities.

Unexpected impact:

The emotional depth of the public's response exceeded expectations. Many recipients shared personal stories of how the messages moved them, such as a woman who had survived cancer and found special meaning in a sticker that said, "Thank you for your existence." A friend of the organiser, who had previously never recognised herself as an artist, became inspired to explore creative expression as a result of the project. People began placing the stickers in meaningful places, such as wallets, notebooks and refrigerators, turning them into daily affirmations. Others asked to distribute the stickers in cities across Georgia.

Perhaps most significantly, the project gave the organisers themselves renewed faith in the transformative power of small-scale art. It shifted how they saw their creative potential and sparked ideas for future projects, including workshops and wearable art. The project not only brightened individuals' days, but it began planting seeds for a wider movement of civic creativity. Future stages may include workshops, intergenerational exchanges, or youth-led art actions that extend the reach and deepen the impact of Enlightened Unicorn.

Authors:

Ana Topuridze, graphic designer and Sopio Tabagari, head of strategic planning and projects division

Links:
Since the project started last month, there are no links available yet. Social media profiles dedicated to describing and promoting this project are to be created soon.

FOTO CREDITS: SOPIO TABAGARI

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- What small, low-cost artistic gesture could you bring into public space to positively impact passersby?
- How can your project respond to a specific emotional or social atmosphere in your city or community?
- In what ways can civic art promote collective care and mental wellbeing?
- What kinds of public messages might resonate most with your audience? How will you create them?
- What creative formats (e.g., stickers, posters, murals, performances) are most accessible and impactful in your context?
- How can you involve non-artists or first-time participants in meaningful ways?
- What local spaces (physical or digital) can you use to gently interrupt people's routines and spark reflection?
- How will you recognise and harvest the emotional or social learning that happens during the project?
- What feedback or reactions would signal to you that your intervention had an impact?
- Since this is the first phase of this project, what next steps could you take to increase and deepen its impact (workshops, exhibitions, protests, etc.)?
- Would you create street art workshops to popularise this art form and to involve people more and if so, how would you go about it?
- How would you involve and adapt this project to different target groups you might be working with (youth, participants with disabilities, immigrants, etc.)?

HAUSRAT

Specified mission:
Human rights, migration, health and wellbeing, education, intercultural

Type of art techniques used: ●●●

Visual art, handwork, design, participatory art

Complexity:

4 - complex

Resources:

An holistic choreography of artistic, educational workshops and targeted excursions that serve as peer-to-peer explorations of domestic environments, within a school context. In total, four workshops were held to create unique items that can be used as household goods. The participating artists developed their own ideas on the theme of household goods in a brief conceptual phase, working collaboratively with the students to establish the goals of the excursions.

Materials:

- Paper and pencils for drawing and designing, paints and brushes, muslin and fabric scraps, cardboard and cutting materials.
- Lamp construction: Lamp rings, heat-resistant lamp foil, tape for lamps and old fabrics.
- Stamps: Cardboard, cutting tools, foam rubber and craft glue.
- Cushions: Muslin or solid-coloured fabric, sewing machine, thread and sewing accessories.

Resources:

Time: The project was carried out within two weeks during the normal school curriculum. It started with a one-day introduction, during which the design sketches of household items were created and the excursion goals were established, along with a joint getting-to-know-you session. Embedded in the regular German lessons, two to three days were allocated for the workshops (lamp construction, stamp workshop, pillow sewing and bowl making), each lasted approximately three hours per day. A project day was scheduled for each excursion.

Crew:

The artistic workshops were led by a team of artists, while an internal teacher accompanied the workshops and excursions.

Audience:

12 adolescents with refugee backgrounds, students aged 16 to 22 in a welcome class at a senior high school centre in Berlin.

Context of the practice:

The project took place in 2017 and was developed for a school context, specifically for a class designed to welcome 12 adolescents with a migration background into a senior high school centre supported by the Project Fund Cultural Education Berlin. The Marcel Breuer Senior High school centre has a unique educational profile focusing on design, aesthetics and craft. Welcome classes in the German school system are specifically set up for newly arrived students to facilitate their access to education. They provide intensive language instruction, promote social integration, offer cultural orientation and prepare students for the transition to regular classes. Through individual support and collaboration with other institutions, they significantly enhance educational and participation opportunities. These classes were established in Germany in the early 2010s in response to the increase in refugee numbers and rising migration. They were particularly bolstered from 2015 when a large number of refugees, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and other crisis regions, arrived in Germany. Federal states and municipalities subsequently developed various models and concepts for welcome classes to provide targeted linguistic and social support to newly arrived students. Today, they are an integral part of the German school system for the integration of children and young people with a migration background.

Goals of the practice:

The project symbolically accompanied the individual process of youth finding their footing, allowing participants to perceive and utilise local opportunities and resources. Individual learning paths and the development of perspectives, especially for career paths, were encouraged through artistic strategies in small steps.

Description of the practice:

"Household items refer to objects that are part of the home decor, such as furniture, carpets and pictures, as well as items that are needed like dishes and clothing."

hausRAT operates on two creative levels:

- haus (house) = becoming domestic through artisanal artistic production.
- RAT = Empowerment, creating networks, an overview of local connections and professional prospects in the design field.

Every participant in the welcome classes created at least one individual personal utility item that has practical use in everyday life and simultaneously embodies a symbolic creation of value through art.

Connecting the useful with the beautiful:

The handmade, usable unique item is a symbolic companion and simultaneously an emotional "marker" for arriving and becoming domestic again for arriving and, in the context of the individual's recent history, reconnecting with the domestic as an important part of peaceful daily life. The young people developed their own aesthetics and designed creations in their unique visual language. They crafted handmade lamps, bowls and cushions for their daily use according to their own ideas and preferences. Drawing, designing, painting and writing took place.

In total, 4 workshops were conducted. Lampshades were designed, bowls were cast from plaster, painted and printed. The young people designed ornaments and created printing stamps. In addition to acting as the interpreter for Arabic speakers, Nasser Alibrahim bridged the gap artistically between Oriental and European aesthetics.

In the final workshop, cushions were sewn and printed with the self-made stamps. The young refugees from 8 different countries worked with great motivation. They helped each other and took their self-made unique items home with joy and gratitude after completion.

Some of the young people brought professional experiences from their home countries and supported the group with their craftsmanship know-how. For example, we had a trained tailor and carpenter among us.

RAT = Empowerment, creating networks, an overview of local connection opportunities and career prospects in the creative field: We conducted a total of 4 excursions as peer-to-peer explorations. We visited the "Prenzlauer Berg Museum" at Dunckerstraße 77, the "CUCULA" project, the "Werkbundarchiv – Museum of Things" in Kreuzberg and Charlottenburg Palace. Excursion to Dunckerstraße 77.

"Master Carpenter Brunzel builds a rental house" is a museum showing construction techniques and living conditions in Prenzlauer Berg around 1900. Located in the middle of the residential area around Helmholtzplatz, remains one of the most densely populated residential neighbourhoods in the Prenzlauer Berg district to this day. It shows how an apartment in the front building, consisting of a living room, bedroom and kitchen, was furnished around 1900 and informs about the different circumstances of the residents in the front and rear buildings. Additionally, the exhibition addresses aspects such as immigration to Berlin, the development and settlement of the Helmholtzplatz residential area, as well as the living and working conditions in the northeast of Berlin at that time.

Active seniors from "Herbstlaube" and the Pankow Senior Citizens' Council supervise and guide visitors through the exhibition during opening hours – interaction with visitors is encouraged and intended. The planned visit to the "Bermuda Garden," a temporary community garden located between the art school, refugee accommodation and office building, which was within walking distance from the school grounds, could not take place since the garden has not existed since January 2017 due to changed ownership conditions. Instead, Charlottenburg Palace and its gardens were visited. The participants were involved in the decision-making process of the alternative excursion site and they chose the palace. Among other highlights was the visit to "CUCULA – REFUGEES COMPANY."

Some of the participating students brought work experience from their home country and they are highly motivated to reestablish themselves in these professions. The networking between the project leader of the refugee company with the vocational teacher and workshop supervisor of the Secondary High centre was a first step and impetus for sustainable exchange. For example, the idea came up to mutually offer internship positions and enable student exchanges.

We visited the collection of the "Werkbundarchiv – Museum der Dinge" (Museum of Things) in Kreuzberg. The Werkbundarchiv – Museum der Dinge is a museum of product culture from the 20th and 21st centuries, characterised by industrial mass and commodity production.

The project results were presented over two days during the open house days of the OSZ Marcel-Breuer. All produced works were showcased as an exhibition installation along the school corridor during the annual tour. Both days were well-attended, with around 1000 external visitors. In a room installation made of moving boxes, the handmade designs, pillow stamps and photos were displayed. We collaboratively set up the installation in the hallway.

Artistic approach, art tools and artistic methods

The project, in its holistic choreography, utilises a variety of artistic approaches, methods and tools to not only give participants the opportunity to express their creativity but also to strengthen their personal and cultural identity through craftsmanship. At the same time, it enables empowerment

through networking and career prospects in the creative field. Participants create unique functional and symbolic objects, merging the practical with the aesthetic and creating emotional value for them. Four different workshops were conducted where participants made items like lamps, bowls and cushions. These workshops promote hands-on learning and the development of craft skills. Each participant develops their own aesthetics and designs in their personal visual language. The self-production of printing stamps offers a creative way to develop personal designs by simplifying shapes and colours into motifs which can be applied to the created objects. Design methods such as drawing and painting are central components of the creative process, allowing participants to enhance their artistic expression skills. Additionally, technical knowledge of the materials was taught. The young people used various materials; plaster for bowl design, fabrics and paints for painting and printing, as well as different tools for stamping and sewing.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

Integrative approach
The project connects different cultural perspectives by having an artist act as a language mediator, bridging Eastern and European aesthetics.
Peer-to-peer learning
Collaborative work and the exchange of knowledge and skills among participants create a supportive learning environment. Group work and collective learning are new educational settings for many of the young people, as they have not experienced these in their school backgrounds.
Excursions
Visits to museums and cultural institutions provide the youth with insights into various aspects of art and design while fostering an understanding of local "cultural sites" and their significance. Some participants brought specific work experiences from their home countries, enriching the project's diversity of techniques and approaches, this included both tailoring and carpentry skills. The appreciation of these skills allowed them to showcase their abilities meaningfully within the community, contributing to the project's success and offering a notable achievement for some.
Public presentations
Two presentations were showcased in the school community as spatial arrangements. Additionally, the participants were portrayed with their handmade unique creations and a photographic documentation of the project results was created for exhibition purposes. Each participant was able to take home their handmade, functional unique item – a lamp, bowl, or cushion. These objects serve as symbolic companions and emotional "markers" for settling in and acclimatising to individual daily life.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Tandem learning
Students with different skills and backgrounds supported each other throughout the process, more experienced participants with prior craft training (e.g. tailoring, carpentry) helped others during the workshops.
Experiential Learning
Learning took place through hands-on artistic production, excursions, and direct engagement with materials and spaces.
Collective Learning
Group-based workshops, collaborative installation setup, and shared excursions fostered mutual learning, teamwork and solidarity.
Participatory learning
Students actively contributed to the design process, chose excursion destinations, developed their own visual styles, and co-created the final exhibition. This deep engagement allowed them to take ownership of their learning and connect personally with the outcomes.

Competences

Skills:
- Craft and manual skills: sewing, printing, lamp construction, bowl casting, stamp making
- Artistic skills: drawing, painting, designing personal motifs and visual compositions
- Technical handling of materials: plaster, textiles, paints, stamps, lamp-making components
- Presentation and exhibition design: collaborative preparation of a public display
- Peer support and teamwork: helping others, sharing expertise, and learning from each other
- Intercultural communication

Knowledge:
- Understanding of local culture and domestic design traditions
- Familiarity with tools, materials, and artistic techniques used in craft-based design
- Insights into possible career pathways in design, craft, and creative industries
- Orientation in the German educational context, especially vocational education pathways

Attitudes:
- Empowerment and confidence through self-directed artistic creation
- Openness to intercultural exchange and diverse aesthetic perspectives
- Appreciation of manual work and personal expression in everyday objects
- Emotional reconnection with the idea of "home" and a sense of belonging

How to?

Step 1. Needs assessment and goal definition
Identify the target group (in this case there are newly arrived young people with refugee or migration backgrounds) and assess their needs in terms of education, integration, and creative expression. To identify these needs, use simple tools such as informal conversations, short surveys, drawing exercises, or small group discussions. Collaborate with teachers, social workers or interpreters who know the group well.
Define clear project goals that combine both social and artistic objectives, such as empowerment, cultural orientation, emotional wellbeing, and hands-on skills development. Involve participants in shaping the goals where possible, even at a basic level, to increase relevance and ownership.
Step 2. Planning of workshops
Decide on the main focus for each workshop based on the project goals and the interests of the group. In this practice, the participants created everyday items such as lamps, bowls, cushions, and stamps. However, the specific objects can vary depending on what the participants are interested in and what the artists or facilitators are able to support.
Choose items that are meaningful, useful, and achievable within the available time and resources. Prepare a detailed plan for each session, including the timeline, materials needed, and step-by-step

instructions. Ensure that the chosen techniques are safe and appropriate for the group's age and experience.

Step 3. Recruitment of professionals

Invite artists, craftspeople, or designers who have experience working with young people and are open to collaborative, process-based work. It's important that they are not only skilled in their craft but also able to support participants in developing their own ideas.

Make sure the team is diverse and culturally sensitive. If some participants don't speak the local language fluently, provide interpreters or bilingual facilitators to ensure that everyone can follow instructions and contribute fully. In some cases, team members with shared cultural backgrounds can also act as important bridges during the process.

Step 4. Conducting the workshops

Organise the workshops in a space that feels safe, welcoming, and easy to work in – for example, a school art room or community centre. Start each session with a short introduction or demonstration, and then guide participants through the practical steps, offering support when needed.

Give enough room for experimentation and personal input. Some participants may bring existing skills or experience, so let them share and support others. Encourage collaboration, but also respect individual working styles. Make sure all materials and tools are prepared in advance and that the schedule includes enough time for both work and informal interaction.

Step 5. Creative development and personal design

Support participants in developing their own ideas for how the objects should look and feel. Offer inspiration and examples, but avoid prescribing one "correct" outcome. The aim is for each person to create something that reflects their own taste, memories, or story.

Encourage participants to experiment with colour, shape, texture, and symbolism. For some, this may be the first time working with certain materials – allow time for trial and error. Provide gentle guidance when needed, but let personal decisions shape the final design. This freedom helps build confidence and a sense of authorship.

Step 6. Networking and empowerment

Where possible, plan excursions to places that can broaden participants' perspectives, such as museums, creative studios, cultural centres, or community projects. These visits give insight into local history, design traditions, and possible career paths in the creative field. Involve participants in choosing the destinations. Encourage dialogue with people they meet during the visits: artists, curators, educators, or craftspeople. These encounters can spark ideas, reduce distance between "insiders" and "outsiders," and help participants imagine their own future opportunities.

Try to build bridges between the project and local organisations or vocational institutions. Even informal contacts or a first conversation about internships or mentorships can be valuable steps toward long-term inclusion.

Step 7. Presentation of results

Organise a final event where the participants can present their creations. This could be a part of a school open day, a pop-up exhibition, or a simple in-class display. Choose a format that feels accessible and celebratory, and that gives value to the work done.

Involve the participants in setting up the space and deciding how their pieces will be shown. Encourage them to explain their ideas, if they feel comfortable doing so. Invite classmates, teachers, families, and external guests to acknowledge the effort and creativity involved. A well-prepared presentation can boost confidence and give a sense of closure and pride.

Step 8. Evaluation and feedback

After the workshops and final presentation, take time to reflect on the process together with the group. Create space for participants to share what they enjoyed, what challenged them, and what they learned. This can happen through open conversation, simple feedback forms, or creative formats like drawing or writing.

Also collect feedback from the artistic team, teachers, and partner organisations. Discuss what worked well and where there is room for improvement. These insights can help refine future projects and better respond to the needs of participants.

Step 9. Sustainability and continuation

Think about how the experience can continue beyond the end of the project. What are possible options for follow-up activities? Additional workshops? Visits to vocational schools? Informal mentoring?. If possible, connect participants with ongoing local programmes or networks in the creative or educational field.

Document the process and results in a way that others can learn from: a short written report, a photo gallery, a video, etc. Share it with schools, cultural institutions, and community groups to inspire similar initiatives and build new partnerships.

Story from a practice:

Some lamps were adorned with personal symbolic messages. A teenager wrote a poem in Arabic letters to his girlfriend. He had lost contact with her during his escape.

Impact:

All self-made unique items were taken home by the participants after the presentation to the school community and used in their personal environments. The project provided visibility for those involved and was highly appreciated by the school community and visitors on the Open Day. The excursions not only broadened the horizons of experience but also enabled structural networking between the school and the project. The visit to "CUCULA - REFUGEES COMPANY," an innovative project that offers refugees a perspective through creative and craft employment, was particularly well received. That project was founded in Berlin in 2016 in response to the increasing number of refugees and the need for integration and participation. The project targets refugees, especially young adults, who wish to start a new life in Germany. Its goal is to provide participants with craft skills and access to German society and the labor market through creative work. Agreements were made between the accompanying teacher and the social worker of the CUCULA project regarding future possible internships for the participating students. The young people were highly motivated to secure a spot there.

Authors:

Project development, conception, documentation and project management: Eva Randelzhofer

Involved artists:
Eva Randelzhofer, Ellen Nonnenmacher, Natalie Espinosa, Nasser Alibrahim

Links: https://www.bvka.org/einblicke/projekte/hausrat/
https://www.evarandelzhofer.com/projekte-bildung-1

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- Target group: How do the needs and interests of participants in another country differ from those in Germany? What specific cultural, social and economic backgrounds need to be considered?
- Cultural relevance: What local traditions and artisanal techniques are relevant and how can they be integrated into the creative concept? How can these traditions influence the aesthetics and symbolism of the produced items?
- Materials and resources: What materials are available in the new context and how can they be creatively utilised? Are there local resources or specific materials that participants could use?
- Establishing networks: Which local actors, organisations, or communities could be involved as partners for the project? How can these networks help participants develop professional perspectives in the design field?
- Empowerment and participation: How can the project ensure that all participants are actively involved in the creative process and can contribute their individual experiences and skills? What measures could be taken to address power dynamics and inequalities within the group?
- Integration and interaction: How can interaction between refugee youth and local youth be promoted? What activities could support intercultural exchange and foster a shared understanding?
- Evaluation and feedback: What evaluation methods for the project make sense in the new context? How can feedback from participants and partners be gathered to continuously improve the project?
- Long-term perspectives: How can the results of the project be sustainably secured? What opportunities exist to continue supporting participants and maintaining their networks after the project concludes?
- Public relations: How can the project be made visible in the new community? What communication strategies are effective for presenting the project's results and gaining external support?
- Integration of expertise: What expertise from the participants' home countries could be utilised to enrich the creative process? How can knowledge transfer among participants be promoted?

TEJIENDO VIDAS: THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY FOR PEACE

Specified mission:

human rights, migration, health and wellbeing, peacebuilding

Type of art techniques used: 🔴

Visual art

Complexity:

5 - high complexity due to safety measures and skilled knowledge required

Materials:

Easy because all that was needed were phones, access to the Internet, Zoom, WhatsApp and emails and participants' photos.

Resources:

Iit was easy to secure the funding, but it ultimately proved insufficient. So, a significant portion of the work was done without financial compensation.

Time:

Trying to find a time that would suit everybody was challenging. And sometimes the workshops had to be rescheduled. Also, although the intended time for the workshops was 2 hours, they would often get extended up to 4 hours. Because when people in such vulnerable positions start talking and opening up, one is not supposed to stop them. It's important that they all feel respected and listened to. Also, more time was needed between the sessions, because the project organisers needed to check in on the participants to make sure they were doing well in between the sessions. And the participants would sometimes share images and their stories in between the sessions as well, so a lot of time was spent on that as well. Also, workshops often needed to be replanned and reorganised using the feedback received from the previous ones.

Crew:

The project organisers needed volunteers to organise the logistics behind the scene, liaising with and supporting the participants by training them in basic IT skills. Need of an experienced holistic therapist and participatory photography facilitator with a trauma-informed do-no-harm approach and ethical approach to ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants, active listening skills and empathy, peacebuilding and local context knowledge. Each workshop was divided into the psychosocial support part and the photographic part. Both elements were given their own space, but each overlapped and expanded the other.

Audience:

Exiled victims of the Colombian conflict in Spain in 2020. The project supported 15 participants over a five-month period. Participants ranged from newly arrived to long-term exiles and had to deal with the emotional impacts of the conflict as well as the challenges of migration which combine to create multiple forms of mourning, loss, invisibility and insecurity.

Context of the practice:

General:

In 2016, Colombia signed a historic peace agreement with the FARC, ending over 50 years of internal conflict. Despite progress, the peace process has faced challenges, particularly in recognising victims in exile. The Colombian Truth Commission estimates that one million people fled the country between 1982 and 2020 due to the conflict, yet exile remains largely unacknowledged in official records. Only around 26,000 exiled individuals are registered as victims. While 14% of all victims have received compensation, exile itself is not recognised as a specific harm eligible for reparation.

As part of transitional justice efforts, the Colombian consulate in Barcelona offered psychosocial support workshops for both newly arrived and long-term exiled Colombians, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Victims Unit. These workshops aimed to address emotional and social isolation, which worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing vulnerability to exclusion and mental health struggles.

Specific:

Tejiendo Vidas ("Weaving Lives") was created to address this isolation by Fotosynthesis, a social enterprise specialising in participatory photography and ethical storytelling with years of experience on the subject of Colombia and peacebuilding. It was inspired by Colombian-led Mujer Diaspora's feminist methodology that creates a safe and welcoming collective space to promote active listening of individual testimonies from the Diaspora in Europe, which are then transformed into art to encourage symbolic reparation as Fotosynthesis has been working with them since the peace agreement. This project is a contributing project of the 'Peace Photography: A Guide' as an example of therapeutic peace photography using photography for healing, reconciliation and dialogue.

"Isabella and Ingrid, the initiators of this project, crossed paths through their respective work with the Colombian women's diaspora. Both passionate about healing through art and deep listening, they decided to pool their experiences to develop a methodology together. When the pandemic and confinement hit, the face-to-face psychosocial support workshops led by Isabella were put on hold and the Colombians in need of this psychological support were left behind. Isabella found it hard to imagine the possibility of working therapeutically and collectively at a distance, even though she was already doing it individually. Ingrid, on the other hand, began to reinvent the form of accompaniment by creating online participatory photography processes and that is where the idea for this process came from.

Without hesitation, they decided to take the risk and adapt their workshops to an online format without knowing that they would create such a healing, intimate and caring space through a screen.

The participants, like them, overcame their fears of technology and physical distance with a lot of love and care. The online version allowed them to reach people who were far away, who at other times had wanted to be part of the meetings, but distance or medical circumstances had prevented them from doing so.

They met through the screen, at first a little shy and expectant and little by little, through the magic of careful listening, they created a safe space for storytelling. Heartfelt stories, for many untold, which are central to life, and make up part of who the participants are today.

Each one gave the other the gift of trust. Trust that made it possible to create that space of intimacy where the healing of wounds becomes possible and social fabric is built.

The stories in this exhibition are the fruit of this collective, creative and therapeutic process."

Source: Fotosynthesis Community

Retrieved from https://www.fotosynthesiscommunity.org/tejiendo-vidas/

Goals of the practice

The goal of this online project was to provide a space for recognition and reconciliation, generosity and active listening for Colombian men and women in exile in the framework of psychosocial care for victims of the Colombian armed conflict abroad.

- Combat social isolation: Create a supportive, communal space for members of the Colombian diaspora in Spain, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, to reduce feelings of loneliness and disconnection.
- Provide psychosocial support: Offer therapeutic tools, such as participatory photography, meditation and body movement, to help participants process trauma, manage emotions and strengthen mental wellbeing.
- Promote symbolic reparation: Use art and storytelling to honour and validate personal experiences of conflict and displacement, contributing to the larger peacebuilding and victim reparation efforts led by the Colombian government.
- Empower through creativity: Foster self-expression, creativity and self-esteem by enabling participants to tell their stories visually and collectively.
- Build community and active listening: Facilitate a feminist, empathetic space where participants actively listen to one another's testimonies, strengthening solidarity and mutual understanding within the diaspora.
- Develop remote therapeutic practices: Innovate and adapt psychosocial support methods for remote access, ensuring continuity of care despite pandemic-related restrictions to create a space for emotional-relational nourishment, foster creativity and self-esteem and provide strategies for managing emotions in moments of crisis.
- Bridge past and present through art: Combine old family photos from Colombia with new images of life in Spain to create a visual narrative that honours their history while envisioning a future of resilience and integration.
- Ensure ethical, participant-centred and trauma-informed practices: Use a personalised, informed consent process that respects individual preferences around privacy and anonymity, particularly important for vulnerable or traumatised individuals; there is no obligation to reveal identity or to share personal stories. The Victims Unit never had permission to use any of the photos and texts at any time. The permissions are held by Fotosynthesis and we are the guardians of the photos. We continue to be in conversation with the participants.

Description of the practice:

Tejiendo Vidas used therapeutic participatory photography to support Colombian exiles in Spain in processing trauma, rebuilding identity and fostering emotional healing in a safe, empathetic online community. By blending visual storytelling, collective dialogue and trauma-informed care, the project created space for symbolic reparation, mutual recognition and the restoration of social fabric disrupted by conflict and displacement.

Artistic approach:

Tejiendo Vidas developed its own unique approach using participatory therapeutic photography to support participants' psychosocial and mental wellbeing.

Artistic methods: Participatory peace photography, trauma-informed therapeutic photography, ethical storytelling.

Peace photography: a reflective and intentional practice that uses photography as a tool to support peacebuilding, healing and dialogue. Rather than simply documenting conflict, it aims to transform narratives by creating spaces where individuals and communities can express their experiences, emotions and strengthen resilience.

It helps people affected by war, violence, or displacement to make sense of their stories through visual expression and metaphor, share emotions and experiences safely and on their own terms, heal both individually and collectively and reconnect with others.

"When we experience situations that are highly stressful, our nervous system by default starts to focus on things that could be threatening, what we need to run from, how we need to protect ourselves. Photography can help us refocus or narrow our attention away from what threatens us onto, say, how a place is safe. This helps the nervous system to recalibrate. Another thing is that photography can be used as a pretext to talk about oneself. It can be a means to talk about painful things, which you haven't shared before, indirectly through visual symbols and metaphors. People do not have to talk explicitly about their painful or traumatic experiences and the details. They do not need to recount exactly what happened to them. They might want to tell their story but they can reconstruct their narrative, finding visual symbols and metaphors to express themselves." Isabella Marín Muñoz, "Images from Exile: Participatory Photography As a Means for Reparation and Healing." Membrana – Journal of Photography, Theory and Visual Culture 8 (1): 85–114.

Peace photography reinvents how cameras are used, not as tools for passive observation, but as means of connection, empowerment and recognition, facilitating community restoration.

Art tools: photography, drawing, body movement, role play, meditation, storytelling.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Storytelling

Participants harvested learning through storytelling by reflecting on their experiences of exile and healing. Sharing stories and photographs of their previous lives in Colombia in a safe, supportive space allowed for emotional processing, mutual recognition and the transformation of pain into insight, identity and connection.

Theatre

Towards the end of the project, the participants acted out being speakers in a conference. They spoke about their future plans and they all, without consulting each other, decided they wanted to start an association to help other Colombian immigrants. They became aware of what they learned and wanted to use that knowledge to help others in a similar situation.

Online photo exhibition (can be seen in the links section)

It was the product of the transformation of the participants about how they see themselves, their past, their stories and their countries.

Online feedback evaluation session

Each participant was asked to take a picture that represented how they felt at the beginning of the project and at the end, after a meditation and drawing exercise. They then shared these together. (See images attached)

Legend with different learning approaches:

Collective learning, participatory learning, transformative learning, art-based learning, narrative learning, experiential and holistic, collaborative learning.

Art-based learning

Participants used participatory photography, drawing, and visual storytelling as tools for emotional processing, identity exploration, and symbolic reparation. Art became a gentle and indirect means of expressing complex experiences of displacement, grief, and hope.

Narrative learning

Personal stories of exile were shared, reflected on, and visually reconstructed through metaphor, allowing participants to find meaning and coherence in their experiences. Combining old photos from Colombia with new ones from Spain created a bridge between past and present.

Experiential and holistic learning

The methodology integrated mind, body, and emotion—combining meditation, body movement, theatre exercises, and storytelling in an online space. Learning was not only cognitive but emotional, relational, and embodied.

Transformative learning

Through deep self-reflection and shared storytelling, participants gained new perspectives on their trauma, rebuilt self-esteem, and found strength in mutual recognition. Many expressed a desire to use their learning to support others, e.g. by forming a new association.

Participatory learning

Participants were involved in shaping the process—from co-creating safe space agreements to deciding what to share and how. Their autonomy and consent were prioritised throughout, fostering agency and ownership.

Collective learning

Healing and learning happened in a group context where mutual listening, solidarity, and the validation of shared pain were central. Participants learned from one another's stories, building a sense of belonging and community.

Collaborative learning

Through co-curating the online exhibition and conference presentations, participants engaged in collaborative meaning-making. The process of selecting photos and captions was done together, with care and reflection.

Competences

- Artistic expression for personal and collective healing
- Using photography to process trauma and create shared narratives of resilience. Contributing to symbolic reparation and civic recognition of victims' voices.
- Intercultural identity building
  Reflecting on personal and cultural identity through visual storytelling.
- Empathetic communication and community support
  Fostering mutual understanding and solidarity through shared stories and art.

Skills

- IT skills
  Gaining basic IT skills, such as using online platforms, sending images via email.
- Photography and visual storytelling
  Learning to use images to communicate and process complex emotions and life experiences.
- Emotional expression and regulation
  Developing personal strategies for managing trauma and stress.
- Empathetic listening and dialogue
  Practicing deep listening and compassionate interaction in group settings.
- Collaborative art-making
  Engaging in co-creation and community-based creative processes through photography (Newly created digital images and personal archive images.)
- Critical reflection on identity and displacement
  Exploring how personal and collective histories shape present experiences.

Knowledge

- Understanding the importance of community, understanding others and being understood and collectively supported.
- Learning how visual arts can aid healing and reparation.

Attitudes

- Empathy and solidarity
  Deepened compassion for others' stories and shared pain.
- The right to be seen and heard
  A strengthened sense of voice and self-worth. Reconciliation with themselves and with others.
- Openness and trust
  Willingness to share and listen in a safe, respectful space.

How to?

Step 1. Forming the partnership

The project organisers worked with the Colombian consulate in Barcelona, its social workers and the Colombian Victim Reparation Unit.

Step 2. Choosing the participants

The Colombian social workers identified the people who would participate. Some were already a part of

the psychological support program organised by the Colombian consulate in Barcelona. The consulate issued an open call and some of the participants answered it.

Step 3. Preparing the participants in terms of technological skills

Some of the participants did not have any computer knowledge and were fearful of technology. They were taught how to use Zoom, WhatsApp and emails.

Step 4. Building trust

From the first meeting, ground rules were co-created and constantly reviewed, so that the participants could know what to expect. The therapist who was working with the participants was Colombian and had 20 years of experience in working with Colombians, so they knew they could trust her. The photography facilitator had 15 years of experience working with the Colombian diaspora, peacebuilding and had knowledge about the culture and could speak Colombian Spanish. Also, the participants were asked for permission about everything and their wishes and privacy were strictly respected. Nothing was shared without their informed consent and nobody could visit the workshops without their permission. They also didn't have to talk about anything they didn't want to, which is an important requirement for working with traumatised persons. Another element contributing to forming trust was that the organisers shared their personal stories of migration, opening up and showing their vulnerability.

Step 5. Giving workshops

Step 6. Staying in contact with the participants outside of the workshops.

Step 7. Reorganising the structure and content of future workshops using the information from the previous ones.

Step 8. Selecting photos and captions for the online exhibition (due to COVID, otherwise one could consider a physical exhibition).

Step 9. Designing the exhibition

Step 10. Organising a celebration online exhibition launch.

The participants joined and shared their stories, photos and insights.

Step 11. Participating in an online conference organised by The Victim Unit in Colombia. Some of the participants joined and shared their stories, photos and insights.

Story from a practice:

Quote from one of the participants:

"Sometimes we forget to share and interact with other people, because our minds are so busy or we are doing so many things and with so many worries. The positivity of the workshops has given us the opportunity to interact with other people who are in the same circumstances and focus on what we have in common rather than our differences." Claudia

Creators of the practice:

"When we tell our stories in a context of heartfelt listening, in person or online, we give them air, we open space for the wounds to heal and we fertilise our souls with the loving acceptance of those who listen and understand. When we give value to what we have lived and we give our stories, we water the present with experience to build a future with more hope and possibilities, full of our strengths and learning, seeing the stories from the perspective of strength and creation rather than from fear and escape." Ingrid Guyon and Isabella Marín Muñoz

Impact:

The intended impact

The project successfully created a safe and emotionally supportive space for storytelling, active listening, mutual acknowledgment, individual and collective healing, where participants could make sense of their experiences through visual and verbal expression.

The intention of transforming how the participants see themselves, their future and their past, was realised. In the end, they were all more hopeful about their future, aware of their resilience, what they have achieved and learned and how they can use that for the future.

The practice of "feeling listening", listening to others' stories and then sharing reflective words on the screen, strengthened emotional connection, empathy and solidarity among participants, validating their stories in ways many had never experienced before.

Unexpected impact on the participants

Trust for their country and fellow Colombians. The way people talked about Colombia changed from the beginning to the end of the workshops. They developed more trust because many hadn't trusted the Colombian government and other Colombians before this project.

'They saw the project as a form of collective healing because it made them recognise that they were all Colombians, no matter their different experiences of the conflict. They wanted to continue working together, to form an association and to stay connected. They said it did not matter which groups or sides they came from but that they needed to support and listen to each other, to put their politics to the side, to stop judging each other and to stop competing over who is more of a victim. Something that worked well was that participants brought photos they had from Colombia, from their personal archives. Those photos helped a lot to connect people with each other, because they talked about Colombian food, specific cultural things, about places they knew or had been to. There was lots of laughter and that helped to weave everyone together not so much as victims but as Colombians.' Ingrid Guyon

Unexpected impact on the community

By the end of the project, many participants wanted to do the same thing; to form an association for helping other Colombians arriving in Barcelona. They all wanted to help and support others in a similar situation using what they learnt.

Unexpected impact on the project organisers

The project became a good practice case study on many platforms. They received many requests for interviews and many articles were written about the project including a UK photography magazine. It was also chosen as the best project by the Colombian Victim Unit.

Authors:

Fotosynthesis. Co-designed and facilitated by Ingrid Guyon, photography facilitator and founder of Fotosynthesis and Isabella Marín Muñoz, a Colombian Barcelona-based psychologist with the support from the Colombian consulate in Spain and the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation of Victims.
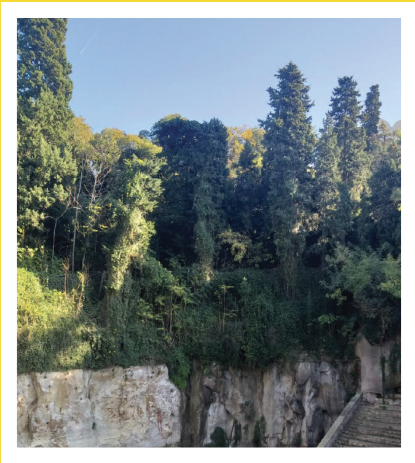
Links:

Peace Photography: A Guide: Peace Photography Guide

Case study of good practice Tejiendo Vidas | Imaging Peace

Online exhibition: TEJIENDO VIDAS | Fotosynthesis

Journal article: Images from Exile: Participatory Photography as a Means for Reparation and Healing

'Theater'.
Photo by Bajo la Piel,
Tejiendo Vidas / Fotosynthesis.

This represents when I got to the new stage (the workshop space), to see what was going to be presented. I had just a little bit of confidence. The Colombian government, inside Colombia, works in one way and outside Colombia it works in another way, so I was curious. But now (at the end of the project), I've arrived home, now I can take off my shoes and feel better as if I turned on the TV or opened the fridge to have a soft drink. That's how I feel now, I feel confident here. Evaluation hands. At the end of the project, we used visualisation, meditation and drawing to reflect on the project. These hands represent the end of the project. Words include: trust, happiness, positivism, calm, family, connection, love, empathy, gratitude, unity. © Tejiendo Vidas
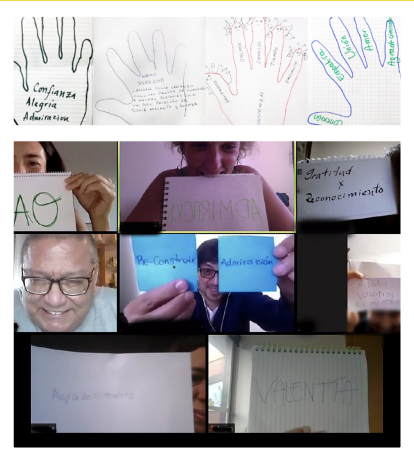
Feeling listening
© Tejiendo Vidas / Fotosynthesis.

In relation to that notion of listening, in Teijiendo Vidas, we practiced a form of "feeling listening" where we reflected to each other the feelings that people's stories inspired in us. We would write words on paper and hold them up to the screens when people finished telling their stories. They were words that resonated, that we felt when listening to their stories, focusing on the positive and supportive. With these words we showed each other what we were hearing and learning from each other. We acted as witnesses to each other's experiences, recognising each other's stories.

My future in Colombia
Photo by José, Tejiendo
Vidas/ Fotosynthesis

The youth build the country. I was 17 when my father was murdered. We were peasants, my father was happy because he didn't need anything else in life but to work, he lived happily on his farm. We had to flee. I arrived in Bogotá to work in a bakery with some friends until now. I didn't choose to be a baker; I was lucky that life gave me this opportunity. When a young person is poor, they can't choose, they go at the first opportunity and often, the first opportunity they get is to pick up a gun. I have always generated employment and I have always succeeded. Although my illness limits my ability to work, I can teach other people. I want to help young people, give them opportunities and continue fighting for the country.

Flowering.
Photo by Claudia, participant of Tejiendo Vidas / Fotosynthesis.

On one of those grey days I went for a walk, a day when you feel sad and melancholic, when you remember all your loved ones. Walking along a deserted street, I came across a flower... it was all alone in the middle of nowhere and as I got closer, I could see that surprisingly its branch had managed to cross a fence passing through a narrow hole, making its way and blossoming on the other side...

At that moment, that beautiful flower gave me a great lesson of life, to see how, despite its difficulty, she was able to make its way, against all odds with tenacity, going through different obstacles, fighting with perseverance, patience, strength and resilience, until she reached her goal. That day that flower taught me that we can stay locked up and trapped by our fears, difficulties and problems, or we can be a bit like her, fight our way out and show the world our best colours, transmitting a bit of joy and hope.

© Juan Francisco Vargas Gómez, participant of Tejiendvo Vidas / Fotosynthesis.

Image taken from his family archive.

I am a visual artist (still living in Colombia) and also a victim of the armed conflict in Colombia. My father died in Pablo Escobar's assassination attempt in 1989 when I was 11 years old. My siblings were small and that marked my life. It has given me the strength to go on, my mother was left alone with four children and her strength gave us the tenacity to go on. As a child, you didn't understand why it happened but over the years, you understand the complexities of the violent event. I understand that my father had died because of the armed conflict but I was not close to the conflict because in Bogotá, which is like a bubble, we are not touched by the conflict in the cities. But it did affect me. Then I understood the conflict. My mother's role, her resilience, changed my life and that of my siblings and it is something I share in stories of survival.

'My tatoo' Photo by Nancy, Tejiendo Vidas / Fotosynthesis

The Lion is like strength, being brave and not letting myself be stopped by anything, despite adversity. The arrow is that I want to go on, I don't know where it ends, it has an infinity. I want to continue with that strength, with that desire to fight and move forward, but with courage. I'm the smallest, but the strongest. There are moments when I forget that I'm strong, but they happen to all of us, that's totally human and you have to embrace it. Don't punish yourself. We are human beings, we are not machines, we have emotions, we have a heart and we have to find the balance, like that pendulum in the tattoo. Despite all the things that have happened to us, we have the strength to keep fighting for something we want.

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- What is the emotional or social need I want to respond to in this community?
- What kind of transformation do I hope the participants will experience?
- Why is photography (or another art form) the right medium for this context?
- How can I ensure the art process is therapeutic, not retraumatising?
- Do I have the right knowledge, collaborators, or training to work with trauma?
- How can I make this a safe, welcoming and culturally sensitive space?
- Who do I need to partner with to meet the civic goals of this project?
- What does symbolic reparation mean in my project and how can art support it?
- What long-term impact do I want this project to have on the individuals and their communities?

"FORMWANDLER"

Specified mission:

Human rights, freedom of expression, education.

Type of art techniques used: 🔴🟢🟡

Visual Art, literature, participatory art, poetry slam

Complexity:

4 - complex

Materials:

Various art supplies, creative writing resources and installation materials, graphic consumables like paints, markers, brushes, ink, adhesive tape, paper.
Time: 1 project week integrated into the school curriculum for implementation phase

Resources:

Honoraria for the artists

Crew:

- External staff: A total of seven artists, including five poetry slammers, a communication designer (Paul Beaury) and a graphic designer.
- Internal staff: Cultural team, approximately 10 active teachers from the school who facilitated the organisation and coordination of the project work and communication with the school administration.

Audience:

75 students aged 16 to 18 years, 1,000 visitors attended the open house, poetry slam workshops included the entire 11th-grade cohort, approximately 50 students.

Context of the practice:

All workshops, except for creative writing and poetry slam, were held during a project week at the end of the school year, outside the normal classroom setting. Students could freely choose projects based on their interests. Creative writing and poetry slam workshops were conducted each year with the entire 11th-grade cohort over 3 to 5 project days and concluded with an internal public slam. The initiative came from the teaching staff, who wanted to encourage student participation and identification with the school's unique profile. The projects offered during the project week were meant to be thematically interconnected while allowing as much creative agency and responsibility to the students as possible. The school also operated in the tradition of Bauhaus education and sought new methods to integrate this philosophy into the curriculum contemporarily. The Bauhaus was an influential movement in art and design history, founded in Germany in 1919. It combined aesthetic principles with functional design, aiming to merge art, craft and technology. The goal was to improve everyday objects through

innovative design methods while optimally tailoring them to the users' needs. One of the school's objectives, as a senior secondary centre for wood technology, glass technology and design, was to connect traditionally separate areas of fine arts, applied arts and performing arts within regular classes, similarly to the Bauhaus philosophy. Furthermore, artistic innovative methods in project work aimed to build metaphorical bridges to the students' real-life experiences.

Goals of the practice:

The moderation and visibility of multiple voices within the school community and the opening of discourse spaces beyond established routines through aesthetic methods was the overarching goal of promoting democracy in education. To achieve this, various artistic forms of expression were to be used playfully to represent plurality and to create process-oriented, interactive dialogue spaces. A thematic framework, akin to the Bauhaus philosophy, was intended to serve as a unifying structure between the individual workshops.

In this way, students were able to share their perspectives, learn from one another and inspire each other. Another essential aspect was to give students a voice through aesthetics, visibility and language that transcended conventional school norms and expectations. This not only fostered their self-expression but also enhanced their communication skills, both individually and in groups. This collaborative environment strengthened not only the self-confidence and identity of each student but also promoted community and exchange among them. One objective was to create a comprehensive and enriching learning environment that contributes to a positive school climate and fosters a learning atmosphere free from grading and performance pressure.

Description of the practice:

Under the motto "Contrasts", students collaborated with artists from various disciplines to create new, process-oriented dialogue spaces. In line with the Bauhaus philosophy, the traditionally separate fields of fine arts, applied arts and performing arts were interconnected even within regular classes.

Unlike the image of the "squaring the circle," a metaphor for an insurmountable task, the school embarked on a journey to forge new paths and, under the motto "Contrasts", to moderate and orchestrate its plurality, making it visible through aesthetic presentation and reflection formats.

In the workshop "Loud Contrasts: Have You Ever Really... Argued Today?" students, together with designer Paul Beaury, developed an atmospheric communication space:

"Do you enjoy arguing? Why do we argue at all? How can we argue well? And what happens afterwards?"

This resulted in an interactive game about the culture of dispute, designed as a walkable spatial intervention in the school courtyard, which could be played during the open house.

In a workshop with graphic designer Paul Paetzel, participants engaged in printing, drawing and exploring colour contrasts. A limited edition of art prints, published as a book, was showcased during the open house.

On 31st May 2018, a poetry slam took place at Marcel-Breuer school. Five classes from the 11th grade of the upper secondary school participated in workshops led by slam poets Felix Römer, Wolf Hegekamp, Tanasgol Sabbah, Lena Nöske and Max Gebhard.

Artistic approach, art tools and artistic methods:

In the workshop planning, entitled "Contrasts" various artistic methods, tools and approaches were employed:

Creative writing workshop - Poetry Slam:

Under the close guidance of slam poets Felix Römer, Wolf Hegekamp, Tanasgol Sabbah, Lena Nöske and Max Gebhard, each participant developed their own texts on a topic of their choice.

Additionally, improvisation and group dynamic theatre techniques were repeatedly practiced to prepare participants for the final slam. Some students were initially hesitant to perform but, ultimately, all of them contributed their own texts. Through the close collaboration with the poetry slam mentors, who supported each student in their performance, the participants were able to overcome their fear of speaking freely in front of an audience with a microphone.

The workshops fostered an atmosphere of psychological safety, allowing everyone to grow and develop their skills. The discussed themes and texts were collected and served as inspiration for the graphic design workshops.

Workshop "Contrast" in experimental graphic design:

In a workshop led by graphic designer Paul Paetzel, participants had the opportunity to immerse themselves in various artistic practices, including printing, drawing and the exploration of colour contrasts. Paul guided the students through a variety of techniques, encouraging them to experiment with different printing methods that highlighted the interplay of colours and forms. This hands-on approach allowed participants to express their creativity while learning about the fundamentals of graphic design.

The students engaged in drawing exercises aimed at enhancing their understanding of composition and colour theory. They were encouraged to think critically about the relationship between colours and how they can evoke different emotions and meanings. This exploration of colour contrasts helped them to create visually striking pieces that ultimately contributed to their artistic narratives.

As a culmination of their efforts, limited edition art prints were produced, showcasing the students' work and creative experimentation. These prints were then published as a book, which served not only as a tangible representation of their artistic journey but also as a means of sharing their work with a broader audience. The book was prominently displayed during the open house event, where visitors could appreciate the students' artistic achievements and the collaborative spirit of the workshops. This experience not only enhanced the participants' skills but also fostered a sense of pride in their creative expressions.

Workshop "Loud Contrasts: Have You Ever Really... Argued Today?"

In the workshop students, together with designer Paul Beaury, developed an atmospheric communication space: "Do you enjoy arguing? Why do we argue at all? How can we argue well? And what happens afterward?" This resulted in an interactive game about the culture of dispute, designed as a walkable spatial intervention in the school courtyard, which could be played during the open house. The play areas were marked on the floor with adhesive tape and were designed to be walkable, resembling an artistic installation. Questions were crafted to encourage reflection on constructive feedback and the culture of dispute.

Educational Approach:

The principle of voluntary participation in the offerings during the project week and self-organisation within small groups was particularly important.

Ways of harvesting the learning

In all the workshops, the facilitators guided participants not only in technical instruction but also facilitated feedback sessions conducted on an equal footing. At the end of the project week, the project results were presented and celebrated during the open house, which was attended by approximately 1,000 visitors.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experimental Learning:
The students collaborated with artists, promoting a dialogue-oriented and cooperative approach. This method encouraged participants to contribute their ideas and perspectives and to actively engage in the creative process.

Interactive Workshops:
Formats such as the workshop "Loud Contrasts: Have You Ever Really… Argued Today?" allowed students to engage in active learning and reflection through discussions and practical exercises. This interactive method helped participants view topics from various angles.

Aesthetic Sensitivity:
Through their engagement with aesthetics and creative processes, students became familiar with recognising and evaluating visual and artistic elements, thereby sharpening their aesthetic perception.

Interactive Creativity:
The development of interactive games centred around the culture of dispute enabled students to create, test and apply innovative and participatory concepts as a playful form of presentation.

Competences:

Self-expression through creative writing: The creative writing process, particularly in poetry slam workshops, encouraged students to express their emotions and experiences, allowing them to learn and apply stylistic and narrative techniques.

Stage Presence:
Students practiced speaking freely and improvising in front of an audience, which helped them gain confidence in their public speaking abilities and collaborate without the pressure of performance expectations.

Skills:
Creative Writing: Students developed their writing skills through various artistic exercises.

Drawing and Painting: Participants engaged in visual arts to enhance their creative expression.

Presentation: Students learned to present their work effectively, utilising the skills acquired throughout the workshops.

Visual Language and Composition: Students learned to use visual language and image composition, enhancing their ability to communicate ideas through art.

Artistic Expression: The workshops fostered creative thinking and the ability to express ideas both visually and in writing, encouraging a wide range of artistic exploration.

How to?

Step 1: The Poetry Slam workshop was integrated into the regular German classes at the participating grade level and took place prior to the final project week. This allowed topics generated by the students in their texts and presentations to be carried over into the other workshops, such as the graphic design workshop, establishing relevant connections.

Step 2: Internal organisation of the project week: A multi-member cultural team from the teaching staff agreed on the theme and took charge of internal school communication, including arrangements with department heads for the release of students during the project week, coordination of spaces and communication with the student body, among other things.

Preliminary discussions were also held with the participating artists, covering essential details for the proceedings, such as maintaining participant lists, scheduling classes, breaks and the use of materials.

Step 3: Implementation of the project days.

Step 4: On the last day, presentation of the results during the open house.

Step 5: Evaluation using questionnaires to capture feedback from the student body and gather ideas for improvements for future projects.

Story from a practice:

Direct quote from a student after participating in the poetry slam workshop held in his class: "I think it's great to be able to look into my classmate's mind."

Impact:

In addition to fostering creativity and expression, creative spaces were created within the daily school routine. The workshops provided students with a space to experiment and express their ideas and emotions. Through various approaches and diverse artistic forms of expression, such as drama, creative writing and visual arts, students were able to discover and explore new ways of self-representation and uncover their hidden talents.

The open project formats and interdisciplinary collaboration strengthened community and teamwork, which was also reflected in the public presentations. The collaboration between students, artists and teachers fostered a sense of community, as all participants worked towards a common goal. This was particularly evident during the open house, the culminating presentation of the projects.

The shared experience and celebration of results outside the normative school routine transformed the school atmosphere by creating an environment that promoted innovation, openness and mutual respect. New connections were established among the students and their ability to engage in discourse was playfully encouraged. The workshops encouraged the exchange of opinions and discussion of different perspectives, which improved the students' communication skills and fostered a culture of openness and respect.

In particular, workshops focused on dispute culture enhanced understanding of respectful debate and critical engagement, positively impacting the communication culture within the school community in the long term. The Poetry Slam workshops were integrated into the school routine, leading to a sustainable revitalization of the school profile and culture. This not only promoted the individual growth of the

students but also contributed to a vibrant school culture of dialogue. Participation in public events such as a Poetry Slam allows students to build self-confidence and strengthen their stage presence.

Authors:

Team Culture of the Marcel-Breuer school in collaboration with cultural agent Eva Randelzhofer

participating artists: slam poets Felix Römer, Wolf Hegekamp, Tanasgol Sabbah, Lena Nöske and Max Gebhard; designer Paul Beaury; graphic designer Paul Paetzel.

Links:
http://www.kulturagenten-programm.de/laender/projekte/3/1427.html

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How do the themes and objectives of the project align with the specific cultural, educational and social context of the new environment or community?
- What resources (such as materials, funding and expertise) are available in the new context and how can they be leveraged to achieve the project's goals effectively?
- How can we ensure that the participants in the new context feel motivated and empowered to engage in the project and what strategies can we implement to foster their active involvement?
- Who are the key stakeholders (such as educators, artists and community leaders) in the new context and how can we build effective partnerships to enhance the project's impact?
- What metrics and methods will we use to evaluate the success of the project in the new context and how can we adapt the project based on participant feedback and outcomes to better fit local needs?

THE BREAK FILLER

Specified mission:

education, freedom of expression

Type of art techniques used: ●●●

Literature, performance, spoken chorus, visual art, temporary installation as a pattern interruption.

Complexity:

3 - medium

Materials:

Old collected books and fabrics, packaging materials like trash bags, wool and found objects.
Time: 4 project days

Crew:

2 artists
24 students

Audience:

24 students from the student-run company, adolescents aged 14 to 16, as well as all visitors to the cafeteria and staff working in the cafeteria.

Context of the practice:

It should be noted in this context that the Reinhold Burger School was accompanied by cultural agent Eva Randelzhofer for four years. This made it possible to structurally implement artistically experimental and demanding formats sustainably into everyday school life. Through educational artistic projects, new intramural dialogue spaces were created.

Ellen Nonnenmacher: "Since we have been working closely and continuously with the school and the cultural agent for a long time, we (Franz Josef Becker, Ellen Nonnenmacher) were able to develop the project cooperatively and dialogically with the cultural agent, teaching staff and school management. The student body of the student-run company that operates in the cafeteria was also involved and was able to provide impulses and feedback on our ideas.

From the desire to make the cafeteria useful outside of meal times, the project emerged to define the space as flexible and usable in various ways through a temporary installation. Through discussions among teaching staff, artists and students, ideas for developing a Christmas design and giving it the theme "Reading" were born."

Goals of the practice:

Create access to artistic working methods.

Familiarise the audience with the artistic strategies of the artist duo Christo and Jeanne-Claude, in

particular their wrapping actions. These have been adapted to Christmas and the rituals of gift wrapping and creating moments of surprise. Playful engagement with the layers of meaning and allusions to major moments in art history.

The works of Christo and Jeanne-Claude are all temporary and ephemeral. Their installations are fleeting and transformative. Their art stimulates new perceptions of familiar landscapes and was never intended for permanent exhibition. This artistic approach has been applied to the transformation of the cafeteria. Participants learned to disrupt everyday school life, routines and habits through artistic methods. New dialogue spaces were opened and artistic experimental working methods were conveyed. Students were encouraged to express themselves, become creative and also showcase themselves publicly within the school community.

Description of the practice:

Action 1: Our Christmas

How can we seasonally design the cafeteria? Inspired by the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude (Christo and Jeanne-Claude) and the Christmas gift culture, we wrapped the cafeteria: columns in gift wrap, chairs with decorative silver trash bag covers, tables in green and white fabrics.

Wrapping the lampshades created a new lighting atmosphere. The door handles wrapped in wool provided an unusual tactile entrance into the space. For the presentation, students from invited classes brought "light" into the initially dimmed room. The screens of their mobile phones served as "candles." Acoustically, Christmas was themed with recorder music and caramelised almonds spread a festive scent.

Action 2: "Reading New Land"

How can we utilise the cafeteria outside of meal times? By transforming the cafeteria into a temporary "Reading New Land". We created building blocks from packaging film and discarded school books. These blocks transformed into seating and platforms. Additional books were constructed into a column. For reading materials, we provided both books that students rarely read on their own initiative, such as cookbooks, parenting guides, philosophy, a poetry collection by Gertrude Stein, as well as young adult books that resonate with the students.

The students formed a reading choir that read in various tempos, rhythms and volumes. In small groups, they developed their own reading styles; for example: spelling, rhythmic two-word reading. During the lunch break, the reading choir performed on the book seats arranged in the dining area.

The redesigns and performative interventions ignite the potential of a space that is used by everyone on a daily basis. The students and teachers perceive the dining area anew and as something that can be shaped. Actors and visitors thereby develop new opportunities for action. The school vocabulary of artistic expressions expanded.

Artistic approach

The project involved interventionist actions, performances and temporary sculptural and set design elements. We provided materials, handling suggestions and objectives, from which the students developed their own ways and form of engagement.

Franz Josef Becker is an actor and director. He works with performative artistic interventions in public space. Ellen Nonnenmacher comes from the field of Fine Arts and has worked performatively.

The theme of "Reading" was artistically explored through a free engagement with reading materials, going beyond the standard approach to texts required in schools. This included working with a speaking chorus and consciously utilised language as reading and theatre training.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

In the plenary session, the project is presented and discussed in a discussion circle and the individual steps are methodically introduced. During the conversation, we determine whether the students have understood the project and the working methods, take suggestions and criticism into account and accordingly modify aspects of the project or expand the working methods. After agreed time periods or after completing a step, we discuss in feedback rounds what went well and how we will proceed. As moderators, we place great importance on recognising the efforts made (applause, highlighting successful or even unsuccessful but courageous attempts…) to encourage students in the unfamiliar learning environment to experiment and build self-confidence.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experimental learning

In the creative processes, we focus on collective learning; students work in desired teams, or alone if preferred. The work process allows for experimentation and errors, leading students to develop their own solutions.

Participational learning

Own ideas and projects that can fit into the broader framework of the overall project are encouraged.

Process-oriented learning

After each step of work, feedback rounds are held and reorganisation of groups and collaboration is possible in the discussions.

Opportunity for transformational learning

Competencies

Skills

- Artistic and spatial design: transforming everyday environments through materials, light, texture, and composition
- Performative and vocal practice: experimenting with voice, rhythm, and group presence in public space
- Communication and collaboration: engaging in group discussions, listening actively, giving feedback, and presenting ideas
- Group dynamics and self-organisation: assessing one's own role and the contributions of others, sharing tasks, and supporting teamwork
- Reflective practice: asking questions, observing outcomes, pausing to evaluate, and adapting based on reflection

Knowledge

- Temporary and interventionist art strategies, including the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude
- Reading as artistic and performative practice, beyond its school-based function

- Understanding how space, ritual, and atmosphere can be shaped through artistic actions
- Familiarity with collaborative creative processes and concepts such as transformation, layering, and visibility

Attitudes

- Confidence to take up space while respecting and making room for others
- Openness to experimentation, imperfection, and change during the creative process
- Willingness to share responsibility and participate in collective decisions
- Appreciation for diverse voices, styles, and roles in a group
- Curiosity and critical thinking: readiness to ask, observe, listen, and respond

How to?

In this project, the approach was to deliberately confront the students with perspectives and working methods that were likely unfamiliar to them, or to make the familiar newly experienced through defamiliarization. We focused on quickly implementable methods that should achieve significant effects at low cost: For example, covering with garbage bags, dimming the lighting, using old materials such as books and wool scraps and employing mobile phones as light sources.

Prerequisite:

Since the school has continuously worked with a cultural agent and external partners, both the teachers and the students were prepared and ready for this challenge.

Essential to the project was constant communication with all participants, reflection on what had happened and adjustments to the planning.

Steps:

1. Gather in a discussion circle. Begin the session by outlining the overall goalsof the project or the specific objective for the day. Invite everyone to share thoughts or questions. If needed, decisions can be made collectively at this point.
2. Define a time frame. Agree on how long the work session will last. This can be adjusted depending on the group's energy or progress.
3. Explain the methods and materials. Introduce the tools and techniques to be used that day. Demonstrate if necessary, and make sure everyone understands the possibilities and limitations.
4. Creative work session. Participants work individually or in groups toward the agreed creative task. Some may prefer to work alone; others may collaborate. The goal is to explore and respond to the space, materials, and theme.
5. Feedback and planning round. Regroup to discuss what has been done, what went well, what could be improved, and what comes next. This also creates space for new ideas or adaptations.

(Repeat or alternate steps 4 and 5 as needed.)

Closing round:

At the end of each day, hold a short discussion to reflect on the experience:

- What did we do today?
- What didn't go well?
- What worked or felt meaningful?
- What should we try tomorrow?

Story from a practice:

Ellen Nonnenmacher:

My favorite story is reflected in the cover image of the documentary: After the project, the room had to be returned to its original state. Dismantling is always the least appreciated task of a project. A small group of students volunteered for this. While unpacking the chairs, they discovered that the plastic bags made funny noises when they fluttered and began to create a kind of dance with the bags, which naturally became increasingly wild. In the end, a large pile of materials formed, into which they could jump and rummage. A lot of energy and fun unexpectedly and spontaneously erupted. The organised cleaning and packing away then went smoothly.
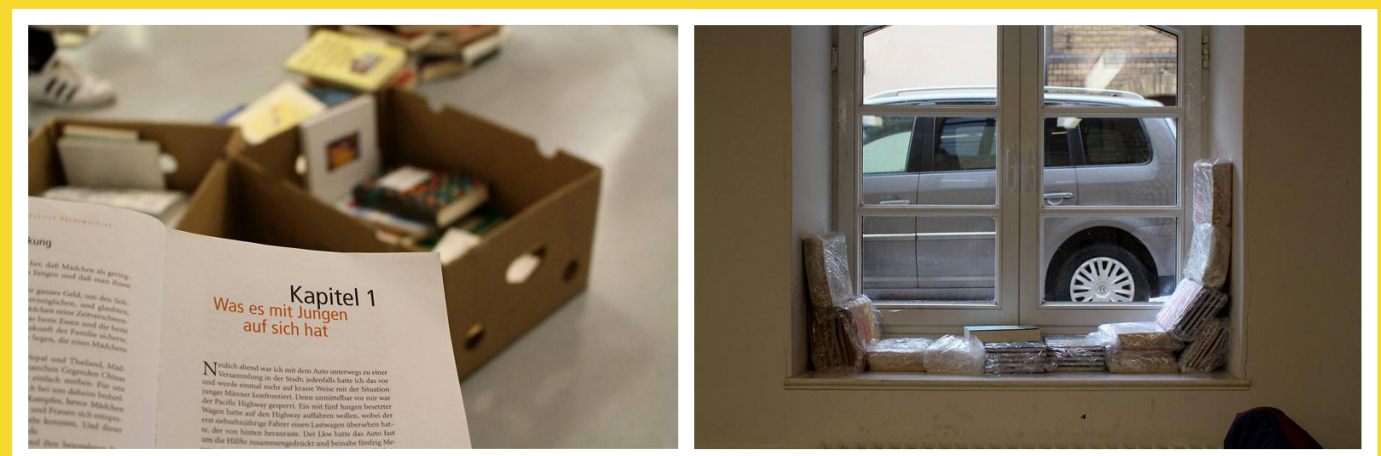
Impact:

Involved students demonstrated great courage with performative skills for the school public that did not meet the expectations of their environment. Not only was their expressive ability developed and their perception sensitised, but also the self-confidence of the performers was strengthened. Teachers' comments reflected that they did not believe the students were capable of this, yet the students were able to showcase new strengths.

Authors: Concept and implementation, Franz Josef Becker, Ellen Nonnenmacher

Links:

http://www.kulturagenten-programm.de/laender/projekte/3/1047.html

PICTURES: ELLEN NONNENMACHER

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- What specific needs or desires does the target audience have in a different context and how can the project be aligned with them?
- What new creative approaches could be applied in a different context to temporarily transform a space?
- How can additional groups (e.g., teachers, parents, other students) be involved in the design process?
- What other materials and resources are available in a different context and how could they be used creatively?
- What different themes or concepts could be implemented instead of Christmas and the reading-new-land idea?
- How can the project be made more sustainable and what eco-friendly materials could be used?
- To what extent can modern technologies or digital media be incorporated into the design to create an interactive experience?
- What cultural or local elements could be integrated to make the cafeteria more relevant in the new context?
- How can user feedback on the new design of the cafeteria be gathered and incorporated into future projects?
- What other aspects of spatial design (e.g., acoustics, lighting, ergonomics) should be considered in a different context to enhance the user experi

THINK COMMON - PLAY COMMON

Specified mission:
migration, education, Intercultural, global citizenship, forms of participation

Type of art techniques used: ⬤⬤⬤⬤

Visual art, theatre, dance, digital art, participatory art

Complexity:

5 - very complex

Materials:

Consumables for artistic work, such as pens, paper, cardboard, paints, art supplies, materials for stage design and production, costume materials, technical equipment including video technology, green screen, camera, tripods, microphones, computers and editing software.

Resources:

Fees for the involved artists and a media educator. The participating artists had previously worked as German teachers in the facility, making them familiar with the local conditions and the social work being conducted there. The building provided several rooms for working. The social workers on site facilitated the dissemination of the program within the facility, ensured regular participation by the children and adolescents, invited parents to the presentation and accompanied excursions.

Crew:

The workshops were conducted by three artists with specific expertise in visual arts, theatre direction with knowledge of film editing and a media educator.

Audience:

24 children and adolescents aged 8 to 14 years with a history of migration from seven different countries of origin.

Context of the practice:

The project took place in a refugee accommodation in Berlin Marzahn. The facility consists of two former office buildings with a total of 550 spaces in family and shared rooms: two slab buildings with six stories each. The plot covers a total area of 15,000 square meters. The outdoor space is overgrown and resembles a neglected urban wasteland, featuring a sand playground, a ball playground and various seating options.

The impetus for the artistic educational project was an empty pavilion located not far from the facility, intended to be activated through participatory artistic actions. A collective of artists, known as the ZIP group, temporarily opened "The Radical Dreams Office" there. One objective was to bring the pavilion, situated in the middle of a large square in a pedestrian zone, to life through artistic activities.

One of the influences behind this project's conception, developed during the COVID-19 crisis, was the

phenomenon of news avoidance; people avoiding news due to being overwhelmed by simultaneous crises. Additionally, the variety of access to different media and information sources increasingly leads to the spread of fake news, which commonly represents alarmism and misinformation in everyday language.

The project was funded through "Global Village," the Performing Arts Fund in Berlin, as part of the "Culture Strengthens" program.

The project was implemented in 2023 with 10 individual sessions over 5 weeks, culminating in a compact project week.

Goals of the practice:

Through the project, participants were able to learn media-critical skills and develop strategies for self-empowerment, personal effectiveness and self-organisation. The involved children and adolescents, aged 8 to 14 years, expanded their horizons in the city and met in a moderated setting. Typically, children and adolescents spend their time chilling in the surrounding area of the refugee accommodation and in the hallways of the facility. Since parents usually lack the time and resources for excursions or similar activities during the holidays, these events were gratefully received.

Another concern of the participants was to learn German and escape the isolation and dreariness of the refugee accommodation. The project aimed to encourage children and adolescents to creatively engage with each other and their living environment. Collaborative work with participants from the accommodation was intended to help break down existing prejudices, promote dialogue among one another and enhance the awareness of each other's worlds. The creative work and artistic expression in public spaces were designed to help children and adolescents express themselves and open up. Additionally, the participatory approach fostered a significant sense of personal responsibility. Particularly, participants who otherwise found it difficult to access cultural offerings were not only introduced to artistic and contemporary cultural formats, but also encouraged to overcome their apprehensions. They became a part of it.

The creation of positive news enabled the children and adolescents to confront the uncomfortable realities of their daily lives while simultaneously learning positive mechanisms for dealing with these situations. Through the media work, a news program and formats were developed that the children not only conceived together but also took responsibility for in terms of staging and moderation.

Description of the practice:

In various project phases, three artists initially established contacts with the children and adolescents and offered easily accessible artistic working methods in the afternoons to find a committed group of children and adolescents motivated to develop a storyboard during the summer holidays and be active both in front of and behind the camera. Additionally, we undertook several excursions, such as visiting the Deutsche Kinemathek – Museum for Film and Television, which was still located at Potsdamer Platz at that time and organised a cinema visit. We watched the film "Barbie" from 2023, a feature film by Greta Gerwig, which was produced with a lot of animations.

We focused on "Good News" and participatively produced a storytelling project as an artistic strategy in the format of a fictional news program, which was moderated by the participants. Using green screen technology, an image of the vacant neighbouring pavilion in Hellersdorf was placed in the background of the film scenes, turning it into the setting for the invented story presented as a brand-new current event in the news program.

To achieve this, we developed a collective future lab with the children and adolescents, incorporating storytelling and staging in a participatory manner. This involved blending forms of classical theatre with media educational approaches. Artistic strategies such as public performance, role play, improvisational theatre, creative writing and storytelling were employed.

In the final phase, individual storylines converged into a collective vision—a fictional depiction of a better world presented in the format of this news program. The participants acted as authors, actors and contributors simultaneously.

We addressed this issues of news avoidance and fake news by focusing on "Good News" and utilising storytelling as an artistic strategy in the format of a fictional news program.

Inspired by the fictional narrative of journalist R. Roberts's "Birds Aren't Real," which went viral in 2018 as a conspiracy theory and evolved into an activist movement, we collaborated with the participants to create fictional "fake news." We also educated them about deception as an artistically employed strategy. By utilising media strategies from fake news, we designed a setup that reflects positive changes as the "next possible" outcome.

We staged media images of a better world, which were ultimately mirrored and published as "good news" stories in the final phase of the project. The phrase "fake it till you make it" was employed as a psychological method to learn new skills and techniques. The call to "fake it!" focused on stories that, as collective narratives imbued with vision, offer humorous impulses for change.

Artistic approach

In the three project phases, artistic strategies such as public performance, role-playing, improvisational theatre, creative writing and storytelling were employed.

The collaborative storytelling and theatre activities served as a holistic social glue, enabling both nonverbal translations and the creation of a collective language and means of expression. Building on this, we developed a participatory, fairy-tale-like fable in simple language as content for the news program. Language barriers were overcome and apprehensions were playfully dismantled.

The use of green screen technology played a significant role in the project. The completed short story was filmed in an improvised green screen setting within a room of the refugee accommodation. The footage was later edited by one of the artists, with the pavilion staged as a fabricated space, serving as both an illusionistic and artistic visionary space.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, we opted for a less elaborate staging, using simple props such as wigs and self-crafted animal masks. This approach helped to conceal the identities of the involved children and adolescents in the digital realm, thereby protecting them.

Through participatory, dialogical scenic development the everyday lives of the children and adolescents were playfully integrated into the project. Both methods of improvisational theatre and filmic digital media productions were utilised.

The artists who carried out the project as a team are experts in participatory, exploratory research practices. With their creative perspective the artists approach theatre as like scientists in the lab with an open process, employing situational and context-based methods bringing appreciative empowerment.

Through improvisation techniques and drawing on the concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed, common themes were filtered and the participants were empowered in their self-perception and self-representation. The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) describes theatrical forms that the Brazilian theatre

practitioner Augusto Boal first elaborated in the 1970s, initially in Brazil and later in Europe.

They were encouraged to experiment with forms of self-organisation and collaboration, to network, to create and to learn collectively. The practical work also addressed media educational aspects.

The participating artists view every location and context as unique and engage with all participants through exploratory and participatory methods in an open design process.

The themes and content were developed collaboratively with the participants in an experimental and open framework. Through questions and actions, new spaces for interaction were opened and explored.

Low-threshold theatre workshops at the beginning allowed for the participants' enthusiasm for the project to grow. They facilitated mutual acquaintance and introduced the topic at hand. The mobile setting of the project within the accommodation and the collaborative work in the outdoor area supported the building of relationships between professionals and participants.

For the development of the collective story, we drew on methods and practices of creative writing and drawing. Storytelling was used as a format for a future lab. The media educational project content was conveyed in a learning-by-doing approach, avoiding traditional frontal instruction.

The actual media production consciously opted for a minimalist approach, foregoing oversized equipment. Any gender-specific themes were not forcibly imposed but rather allowed to emerge organically through the work. This was already evident in the educators and volunteers involved, who brought diverse personal backgrounds (in terms of gender, sexual orientation, age, life models and origins) to the project.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

Learning was gathered continuously through informal reflection and practical engagement. Each session involved dialogue-based check-ins and feedback rounds, where participants could express how they felt, what they learned, and what they would like to explore further. Artistic outcomes such as drawings, short scripts, and performance scenes became both expressive tools and evidence of learning. In the later stages, the video production process itself served as a collective moment of reflection and synthesis. The artists facilitated moments of group sharing and encouraged peer feedback in a safe and supportive atmosphere.

Through creative play with the genre of news broadcasting, participants learned to analyse, question, and reconstruct narratives, which are the foundational steps towards media literacy.

Legend with different learning approaches

In an open artistic process, participatory learning, experiential learning and collective learning were facilitated, strengthening awareness of media competencies. This included the deconstruction of illusion in the medium of film and education about fake news, which were made tangible through practical implementation.

Participatory learning: Young participants were involved in co-creating the themes, storylines, roles and visual style of the fictional news programme. They made key decisions throughout the process and actively shaped the direction of the project.

Experiential learning: Learning took place through direct engagement with artistic tools and real-time

media production. Children explored theatre, media, and storytelling not through lectures but by doing, creating, and performing.

Collective learning: Most processes were collaborative – from improvisation exercises to the final video shoot. Group discussions, joint problem-solving and co-creation encouraged mutual support and horizontal learning.

Exploratory learning: The open format allowed for playful experimentation and discovery. Young people explored multiple possibilities, tested ideas, and adjusted them on the go.

Competences

Skills:
- Creative storytelling and scripting, developing fictional narratives, dialogues and structures for staged news formats
- Media production and performance, acting in front of the camera, experimenting with role play, supporting basic video creation processes
- Artistic self-expression, including expressing emotions, experiences and hopes through drawing, improvisation and writing
- Communication and teamwork, collaborating in groups, contributing ideas, listening actively, co-creating shared outcomes
- Reflective practice, recognising personal progress, articulating feedback
- German language improvement, including expanding vocabulary and confidence through practical application in storytelling, discussion and performance

Knowledge
- Understanding how news is produced and how it shapes perception, recognising bias, misinformation and narrative framing
- Fake news mechanisms
- Applied theatre practices (including Theatre of the Oppressed) as tools for expression, dialogue and social reflection
- Visual storytelling and green screen techniques
- Social and cultural diversity

Attitudes
- Confidence in self-expression
- Tolerance and patience
- Openness to different viewpoints, collaborative paces, and diverse working styles
- Empathy
- Readiness to take initiative, participate actively and support others in achieving shared goals

How to?

The project was structured into three phases. The first phase focused on introducing the theme through low-threshold practices to ease participants into the project. In the second phase, the shared stories were developed as potential "fake headlines." During this phase, stage designs, scenarios and costumes were created. The third phase, the project week during the summer holidays, was dedicated to the final staging and media production.

For the implementation of the project, ten sessions, each lasting four hours, were scheduled outside of the holiday period, spread over approximately five to seven weeks. At least one and often two, sessions took place each week in the afternoon. This setup allowed for continuous engagement and helped maintain momentum. This distribution was intentionally chosen based on experiences from previous projects, which indicated that it could be challenging to keep the enthusiasm of the children and adolescents consistent with only one weekly session, especially if a child missed a meeting and had to reconnect with the topic after a two-week gap. Following these ten sessions, an intensive phase took place in the first week of the summer holidays. In this phase, a total of 6 hours were spent working with the participants.

At a final joint film screening, the improvised short animation film was presented.

Step 1: Exploring the environment and needs of the target group. The initial step involved understanding the context and identifying the needs of the target group.

Step 2: Concept development and fundraising. This phase focused on designing the project and securing necessary funding.

Step 3: Realisation – the project is structured in 3 phases:

Phase 1 - Matching instead of Casting:

Low-threshold theatrical, pedagogical workshops facilitated not only acquaintance among participants but also introduced them to the project. The uniqueness of the mobile setting, where the initial phase took place in the community accommodation and at the pavilion in Hellersdorf, ensured broad access and enabled quick and direct relationship building between professionals and participants. Artistic play served as a common ground and a means of communication.

Phase 2 - Collective Storytelling Lab:

In group work, stories were created using methods of creative writing, which serve as visionary reflections for change and transformation. These stories were staged as a fictional news program. In this phase, initial media educational aspects were also addressed: What is fake news? How do we recognise which information is true? Here, media strategies were differentiated from artistic strategies, focusing on symbolic storytelling that can also go viral.

Phase 3 - Staging and filming the short film:

Filming took place in a room within the refugee accommodation, where we set up a simple mobile green screen studio. The story was fictitiously set at the pavilion in Hellersdorf. The pavilion became the site for the staging, using green screen technology and was artistically integrated into the film background as an illusion through photographic techniques. In the format of a self-moderated news broadcast, what appeared to be true events were artistically packaged. Unlike "real" fake news, the deception was clarified as an artistic strategy.

Step 4: Film editing and follow-up. This stage involved editing the filmed material and conducting follow-up activities.

Step 5: Presentation and publication. The final step included presenting the completed project and publishing it to share the results with a broader audience.

Story from a practice:

Think common, play common! Final GoodNews Film

Impact:

The children and adolescents, along with their parents and the staff members of the facility, were very proud of the outcome and celebrated it in a joint presentation. Even those participants who had since moved to another facility were informed through informal channels and attended the presentation. All participants experienced, within a temporarily defined experiential space, how forms of self-organisation and collaboration can lead to a shared sense of collective success.

Authors:

Project Development: Eva Randelzhofer in collaboration with David Fischer

Participating Artists: Anis Hamdoun, Georgios Kechagias, Eva Randelzhofer
Cooperation Partners:
Stadt|RaumMuseum e. V.
NESWA e. V. (New Empowered Society for Women and Activism)
Community accommodation for refugees at Bitterfelder Straße
EJF (Evangelical Youth and Welfare Association)

Links:

Think common – play common! – StadtRaumMuseum
Website of Eva Randelzhofer_ProjectPage
Think common, play common! Final GoodNews Film

FOTO CREDITS: EVA RANDELZHOFER

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

1. What specific artistic methods that were successful in the described project could be applied in other contexts (e.g., schools, youth centres, communities)?
2. What other topics, similar to news avoidance, could be addressed and deconstructed through artistic methods? What themes are relevant at the moment?
3. Is the project easier to implement in the context of the advancement of AI and smartphones? How can children and adolescents become media creators using the simplest tools, such as smartphones and AI?
4. In what ways can the concept of the "Future Lab" be utilised in other projects to develop creative visions for the future?
5. How can the artistic strategies employed (such as performance, role play, or storytelling) be adapted to different target groups or themes?

THE POWER VACUUM -
A THEATRE EXPERIMENT IN THE
ABSENCE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Specified mission:

Digital art, power and power structures, democracy experiment, children's participation, institutional critique, theatre/performance, educational institutions, authority and leadership, hierarchies, fiction vs. reality, social hotspots, diversity, integration, artificial intelligence, surveillance, decision-making processes, school community, communication, status and prestige, loss of control, transformative art.

Type of art techniques used: ●●●●●●●●

- Installation (permanent long-term installation in the institutional power centre)
- Performance (9-week theatrical long-term experiment)
- Participatory art (unknowing involvement of the entire school community)
- Conceptual art (systematic blurring of fiction and reality)
- Social practice art (direct intervention in real societal structures)
- Process art (dynamically evolved over three months)
- Documentary art (media accompaniment and archiving)

Complexity:

5 - very complex

Why: The project required months of secret pre-planning with a team of six professional artists, coordinated collaboration with school authorities and school supervision, permanent intervention in the ongoing operations of one of Hamburg's largest schools with 1,800 students and 300 employees, as well as maintaining a complex fiction over nine weeks that required daily new improvisations and reactions, without the majority of participants being informed about the art project.

Audience:

The entire school community of the primary and secondary school Alter Teichweg in Hamburg-Dulsberg: 1,800 students aged 6-18, their parents from over 80 nations, 300 employees (teachers, administration, janitors, cafeteria staff).

Context of the practice:

General:

The project took place from January to March 2025 in Hamburg, during a time of intense societal debates about participation in educational institutions, democratic education, and the introduction of artificial intelligence in schools.

The primary and secondary school Alter Teichweg is located in the Dulsberg district, a social hotspot, a large portion of families receive social benefits, there is high unemployment and limited educational opportunities. Many families have migration backgrounds and little contact with experimental theatre forms or contemporary art. The children and young people rarely get the feeling outside of school that their opinions are heard and their ideas taken seriously.

In this environment, the project developed a particularly intense impact. The time was characterised by societal discussions about authority, leadership, and the role of institutions in democratic processes.

Specific:

 The idea emerged from the long-standing trusting collaboration between cultural agent Matthias Vogel and the school. When the popular and active principal Björn Lengwenus planned a three-month sabbatical in New Zealand, Vogel recognised the unique opportunity for an experiment about power and leadership. The concept developed through collaborative work with a team of professional theatre makers, all experienced with participatory and institutional-critical projects. The impulse was to make visible and question the normally invisible power structures of an educational institution, and to examine who actually makes decisions and according to what criteria.

Goals of the practice:

"The Power Vacuum" pursued the ambitious goal of not only theoretically discussing power structures within a large educational institution, but making them experimentally and artistically tangible. Through the temporary transfer of school leadership to a turtle, three elementary school children, and finally an artificial intelligence, fundamental societal questions were to be brought to the centre of attention: Who decides about us and according to what criteria? How do we distribute power in democratic institutions? How can we take children and young people seriously and integrate them into our decision-making processes? The project particularly wanted to give the children and young people at Alter Teichweg, who otherwise have little voice, the concrete feeling that their opinions matter, their interests are seen, and their ideas can be implemented, while simultaneously opening new spaces of possibility through the connection of art, education, and courageous experimentation.

Description of the practice:

Artistic approach:

The art project functioned as a permanent installation that completely transformed the principal's office into a stage - completely emptied except for a bonsai tree and an aquarium in the centre. Unlike classical theatre performances with clear separation between stage and audience, the installation worked permanently and diffusely into the entire school community. The project used alienation effects through deliberate blurring of the boundaries between fiction and reality - no one initially knew whether these were serious personnel decisions or art.

The performative elements included authentic official acts: emails to the faculty, loudspeaker announcements, appointment scheduling, speeches to the school community, website changes, and social media posts. The participatory methods involved the entire school community as unknowing actors - every reaction became part of the performance. Media strategies extended the reach through

Instagram, LinkedIn, and a visit from the children's news program LOGO. The project deliberately worked with irritation and uncertainty as artistic means to make automated reactions to authority visible.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning:

Learning was harvested through multiple documentation and reflection formats: Renowned filmmaker Martin D'Costa accompanied the entire project and created a fascinating 20-minute documentary film that captured the emotional reactions and societal dynamics. After the principal's return, an almost 90-minute intensive discussion took place with the entire faculty, in which both positive and critical voices were heard. The media response - from local newspapers to the children's news program LOGO - created a broad public debate about power, participation, and the role of art in educational institutions. Social media posts from the "children's leadership" were shared and commented on hundreds of times, creating societal discussions. The ongoing discussions in the faculty and among parents showed that the project had raised deeper questions about hierarchies and decision-making processes.

Legend with different learning approaches:

- Experiential learning: All participants directly and physically experienced how power structures feel - both gaining and losing influence and creative spaces
- Transformative learning: The project forced critical reflection on existing authority structures and questioning of hierarchies perceived as natural
- Collective learning: The entire school community went through a joint learning process about power, communication, and decision-making
- Participatory learning: Especially the three elementary school children experienced real participation and co-determination by actually being allowed to make decisions that were implemented
- Conflict-based learning: The sometimes intense emotional reactions created learning situations through the necessity to process conflicts and understand different perspectives

Competences:

Skills:
- Critical thinking about power structures and hierarchies
- Communication skills in conflict situations
- Participation competence and democratic participation
- Media literacy through handling social media and public attention
- Ambiguity tolerance in dealing with unclear situations
- Reflection ability about one's own reactions and emotions.

Knowledge:
- Deeper understanding of power structures in institutions
- Insights into democratic processes and decision-making
- Knowledge about the role of status and prestige in social systems
- Insights into how schools function as "peculiar biotopes" with informal hierarchies.

Attitudes:

- Courage to criticise existing structures
- Openness to alternative perspectives and unconventional solutions
- Empathy for different positions in power relations
- Willingness for self-reflection about one's own privileges and reactions
- Respect for the opinions and ideas of children and young people.

How to? (Steps):

1. Trust building and idea development: Multi-year collaboration between cultural agent and school created the trust basis for a risky experiment

2. Secret concept development: Collaborative planning with professional artist team over several months, development of a three-phase concept with different "successors"

3. Strategic initiation: Only a few key people were informed in advance: deputy principal, school supervision, janitor, school office manager - all others remained unknowing

4. Phase 1 - The Turtle (January): Complete emptying of the principal's office, installation of aquarium and bonsai, announcement of new principal Gonzala Zeidler-Brack without reference to art project

5. Phase 2 - The Children's Leadership (February): After the turtle's "resignation," assumption of office by Marcel (10), Jerina (10), and Celine (9), immediate implementation of childlike reforms (homework abolished, hats allowed, daily fries), media coverage by LOGO

6. Phase 3 - The AI (March): "Intervention" by school authority, installation of artificial intelligence KI.nd 1.4.0 with totalitarian surveillance plans as escalation of irritation

7. Resolution and reflection: Principal's return, extensive discussion with faculty, documentation of experiences, premiere of documentary film

Story from a practice:

"I experienced the key moment myself when Björn handed me the master key to the school: With the small piece of metal in my hand, a whole cosmos of possibilities opened up. The sudden creative power literally tingled in my fingertips. The later return of the key felt like a small amputation. Even clearing out the principal's office again meant simultaneously vacating my privileged workplace." (Matthias Vogel)

A particularly moving scene occurred when the three elementary school children opened their first faculty meeting. With their self-made official badges and serious faces, they gave a speech to 300 adult employees. Marcel proudly announced: "We abolished homework because learning works without stress too!" The reactions in the audience ranged from touched smiles to confused head-shaking. One colleague later formulated her experience: "It felt unpleasant to suddenly no longer be among those in the know. As if I were just a normal subject and not an important person in the school hierarchy."

Impact:

Intended Impact:

The project achieved its goal of making power structures visible and initiating a broad debate about participation and democracy in educational institutions. The children experienced real creative power for the first time and saw their ideas implemented. The school community was sensitised to the importance of hierarchies and informal power structures.

Unexpected Impact:

The emotional force of the reactions surprised even the experienced artist team. Especially teachers in functional positions reacted with strong emotions to the temporary loss of their proximity to power. The project revealed how much status and prestige in schools are negotiated through informal access to school leadership. The realisation that even an obviously fictional experiment can trigger real feelings of power loss showed the strength of artistic interventions.

The media attention exceeded all expectations - from the children's news program LOGO to hundreds of shares on social media. The project was alternately celebrated as "heartwarming mischief" or an "extraordinarily exciting democracy experiment." At the same time, ongoing discussions arose about the boundaries of art, the legitimacy of such experiments, and the question of when art stops being harmless. The fact that even a 90-minute discussion and formal apology could not completely smooth the waters showed the sustainability of the reflection processes triggered.

Authors:

Core artistic team: Matthias Vogel (cultural agent, lawyer and filmmaker), Kerstin Steeb (opera director), Antonia Rehfueß (theatre maker), Sophia Hussain (theatre maker), Hanne Lenze-Lauch (costume and set designer), Leonie Appold (costume and set designer), Martin D'Costa (filmmaker for documentation)

Cooperation partners in the institution: Jan Pohl (deputy principal), Eckart Kunze (didactic leader), Janette Reiser (school supervision), school office manager, janitor, cafeteria manager

12. Links:

https://kulturagenten-hamburg.de/projekte/das-machtvakuum/
https://www.instagram.com/p/DGX8BbIMGL-/?hl=de
https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/all/?fetchDeterministicClustersOnly=true&heroEntityKey=urn%3Ali%3Aorganization%3A105547877&keywords=kulturagent*innen%20hamburg&origin=RICH_QUERY_TYPEAHEAD_HISTORY&position=0&searchId=740e7417-8378-4410-910a-3f85c101cc47&sid=%402Z&spellCorrectionEnabled=true

- Funded by the Project Fund Culture & School Hamburg
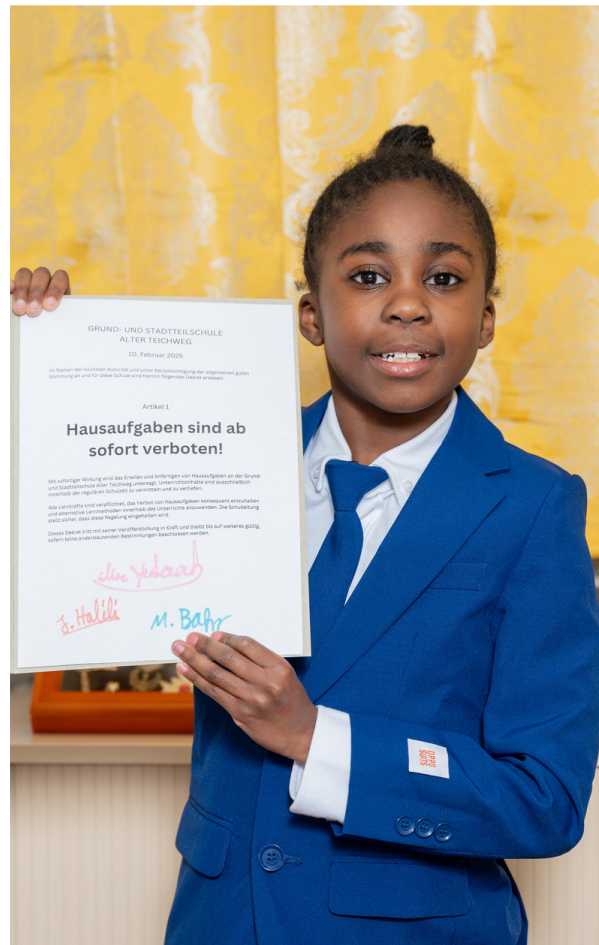- Documentary film premiere Summer 2025

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- Which power structures in your institution do you take for granted that could actually be questioned? How would it feel if these were suddenly changed?
- When you think about your own emotional reaction to such experiments: What does that say about your relationship to power, status, and privileges?
- How can we enable real participation and co-determination for children and young people without endangering proven structures? Where do we draw the line between participation and responsibility?
- What role may and should art play in societal institutions? When does "harmless mischief" stop for you and problematic boundary crossing begin?
- How do you deal with it when fiction and reality blur? What securities do you need to engage with experimental processes?

BOOK PARTY WITH A TREE

Specified mission:

community involvement, civic expression, human connection, health and wellbeing

Type of art techniques used: ⬤⬤

Literature, Performance

Complexity:

2 - easy

Time:

The main complexity was related to the people's availability, since the practice was done on a voluntary basis and everybody had other professional commitments.

Organisation: The other difficulty was related to deciding on the book choice (since the organisers had to adhere to Italian copyright laws), rehearsing, deciding what to discuss and then doing the event itself.

Materials and resources

Books were not difficult to obtain and if the activity was done under the Pampuelo Tree, it was easy because there were chairs available and the location was very comfortable. The organisers usually didn't need an amplifier, but if they did, they had a portable microphone with the speaker. For bigger events, it was more challenging. For example, on the beach, one needed a megaphone. If amplification was needed, it had to be one with batteries, not a plug.

Crew: several facilitators are included in preparing the session and guiding it and a few more volunteers are needed for preparing the setting (bringing chairs, etc).

Audience:

There were diverse target audiences - people from the neighbourhood, the homeless, minority groups, elderly people and neurodiverse individuals - 20-30 people each time. Also, some events were held online, but these had fewer participants.

Context of the practice:
General:

During the pandemic, the Italian government imposed strict lockdowns. This had detrimental effects on the mental health and wellbeing of its population, especially the elderly. Once the lockdown was lifted, people had difficulties getting back to their previous lives and socialising with others.

Specific:

After the lockdown in Rome was lifted, Cristina Cau, activist and founder of the UN Pensiero Per Initiative, came up with an idea for a place where people could meet, connect, share and spend time together -

MISSION:
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

everything that was much needed at the time. This was an informal and spontaneous activity, meaning that she received no funding and did everything voluntarily. Later on, because of her love for reading out loud for the community, Barbara Sbrocca from the Blu Shabaka APS organisation joined her, together with a few other passionate activists. This volunteer-based practice then grew and expanded over the next 4 years. The reading aloud events have now spread to other areas in and around Rome, but also to other countries, such as Berlin. These events have also become a part of other activist projects with themes such as protecting civil rights and political engagement.

The project started in a neighbourhood named Ostia on the outskirts of Rome. Cristina started taking care of a crossroads in Ostia, where there was a beautiful tree surrounded by trash and neglected. She decided to clean the area and create a story for the tree. She invented a legend of the tree, which she named Pampuelo. Pampuelo came from South America and left it in search of a place to live, a place with good souls. He travelled the whole world and finally arrived in Ostia and decided to grow roots there and became a beautiful tree. The tree is situated on the corner of two streets and thanks to Cristina, it became a place for people to meet. Over time, she started bringing books to the tree and she would hang them on the tree branches. She wrote the story of Pampuelo and created a poster that is now permanently displayed there, revealing its story to anyone who wishes to read it.

In time, with the help of the local community, she started creating events called "Book Party with a Tree," and now there are even benches and chairs, with the branches of the tree creating a cooling shade for the visitors of the event.

The events were sometimes promoted officially and sometimes they simply happened spontaneously, naturally. Someone had a book and they started reading. There were always people passing by and sometimes they joined in. The location has also become a place for the elderly to come and relax, since they have somewhere to sit. The corner of Pampuelo has become an organic place for people to meet and be.

Goals of the practice:

- Creating and empowering the community of the neighbourhood, helping it grow and feeling united at a time when social isolation caused by the pandemic and lockdown was threatening to make people forget what it all meant.
- Forging new bonds and human connections. Helping people to get to know each other and interact again. To remind them what it means to be physically present with someone else.
- Relearning social skills, such as negotiating, discussing, compromising, actively listening, having empathy and being open to the experiences of others.
- Holding space and encouraging people to share their emotions, thoughts and opinions.
- Bringing back the powerful practice of reading aloud to everyday people and not just trained professionals, such as actors.
- Improving the wellbeing of those involved

Description of the practice:

Book Party with a Tree is a volunteer-based community arts practice that blends performative reading, civic dialogue and collective care in a post-pandemic urban setting. Through reading aloud, discussion and storytelling in public spaces, the project fosters emotional expression, community solidarity and

civic engagement. It reclaims the act of reading as a democratic, healing and activist tool, inviting anyone, regardless of background, to share stories, reflect collectively and cultivate active citizenship.

Artistic approach

Literary and performative approach rooted in oral interpretation of literature. Reading aloud is treated as a performative act that blends the appeal of literature with the intimacy of voice and presence. The artistic approach centres on performative reading as a civic ritual, using the spoken word to foster reflection, emotional connection and dialogue in public, community-driven spaces.

Artistic tools:

Active listening, voice, books, space.

Active listening is the main requirement for the event to have any impact. Although the organisers did not explicitly teach this skill, they noticed that the capacity for it was growing. Every time they met, the public was more and more present.

Voice is used to bring literature to life and to connect people emotionally and socially. The organisers use their voices not just to convey words, but to create a shared atmosphere, rhythm and emotional tone that invites presence and deep listening. The voice transforms public spaces into intimate shared spaces. It also becomes a tool of non-violent civic expression, allowing readers to speak on social issues, human rights, or emotional experiences in a gentle yet powerful way.

Actual physical books, not photocopies, were used because the organisers wanted people to feel the pleasure of reading a paper book and also out of respect for their authors. They wanted people to enjoy and appreciate books. This is why there were books all around Pampuelo and in its branches.

Space:
The location — the corner where the Pampuelo Tree stands — is an artistic tool in itself. What was once a neglected, trash-covered public spot became a meeting point for the locals, strengthening their sense of community and helping them connect with others.

Artistic methods:
Reading aloud, storytelling and discussion

Reading aloud:
Reclaiming the practice of reading aloud as something for everyone, not just for trained actors or performers. By holding open, public events where books are read aloud in everyday settings, the project challenges the idea that only professionals can give voice to literature. It democratises storytelling, emphasising that every voice matters and that the act of reading aloud is a shared cultural and civic practice, not a performance limited to the stage.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Discussion - Participants often engaged in conversations sparked by the readings, sharing personal reflections, emotions and related stories. The spontaneity of the gatherings encouraged people to express themselves freely. The interactive nature of the discussions and consistent participant return helped organisers adapt and respond to the group's needs, confirming that personal and collective learning was occurring.

Feedback - often immediate and heartfelt—participants smiled, thanked the organisers and expressed a desire to return. This recurring interest and emotional connection indicated that learning was taking place in a deep, transformational way. While there was no formal system like written evaluation or diaries, These exchanges served as natural moments of feedback, where organisers could observe emotional responses, attentiveness and growing engagement over time.

Repeated participation - Returning to events regularly allowed participants to deepen their connection to the community.

Social interaction - Informal exchanges and sharing stories with others during the event helped reinforce learning.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Participatory learning: Participants were actively involved in the process; choosing books, reading aloud and engaging in discussions. This inclusive setup encouraged everyone, regardless of background or skill level, to contribute their voice and reflections.

Transformational learning: After the isolation caused by the pandemic, many participants experienced a shift in how they related to others. Reconnecting through shared stories, live gatherings and emotional expression helped rebuild a sense of trust, presence and belonging, transforming how they viewed community and human connection.

Collective learning: Through mutual exchange, dialogue, active listening and reflection, the participants relearned how to be with each other again, understand and feel good around each other, create connections and develop a sense of community.

Experiential learning: Rather than being theoretical, learning occurred through direct experience; reading aloud in public, reacting to the environment and interacting spontaneously. Participants learned by doing, feeling and being fully present in the moment.

Competences

- Community building: Participants developed the ability to foster social bonds and create inclusive spaces that promote a sense of belonging
- Civic expression: Through storytelling and dialogue, participants practiced voicing personal and collective experiences relevant to social and political contexts.
- Empathy and solidarity: The shared experience of listening and reflecting cultivated attitudes of compassion, solidarity and openness toward others.
- Active citizenship: Participants learned to engage peacefully and constructively in public life, using art as a medium to raise awareness and connect people.

Skills:
- Active, mindful and empathetic listening during readings and discussions
- Collaborative storytelling, co-creating narratives and engaging audiences collectively
- Using art and reading for non-violent protest and social connection

Knowledge:
- Cultural and literary awareness, exposure to classic literature and contemporary stories linked to social justice

- Understanding social issues related to identity, migration and community challenges
- Legal awareness in the field of copyright law
- Social context: awareness of local social and environmental issues, such as port privatisation and its impact.

Attitudes:
- Community solidarity, fostering belonging through shared cultural experiences
- Openness to authentic emotional expression and acceptance of imperfection
- Commitment to peaceful civic engagement
- Respect for cultural heritage
- Valuing reading aloud as a traditional practice reconnecting people.

How to?

Step 1. Organisers meet in person or discuss via their group on WhatsApp when the next book party will take place. The parties usually happen once a month. They brainstorm what book i.e. what civic issue they wish to address. They usually organise a series of events and remain consistent with one author throughout. They have explored the works of Rodari, Ginzburg, Sapienza, Calvino and others.

Step 2. The organisers meet once or twice to choose which sections of the book they wish to read and to rehearse.

Step 3. Promoting the event. The event is usually shared on social media. Word of mouth has a great impact, especially because the events are aimed at including the elderly, most of whom do not use technology.

Step 3. The organisers prepare the setting. They bring enough chairs and sometimes snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.

Step 4. The events take place. First, there is a talk about the author, then the reading aloud activity, questions and comments. After that, people stay, spend time with each other and connect.

Story from a practice:

Barbara Sbrocca from the Blu Shabaka APS organisation, one of the co-organisers: "You can laugh together, you can think together, you can share the emotions together. And it's something that we feel. The feedback we receive is that all the people are smiling, all the people thank us a lot every time. They want to know when we are doing it next, when it's happening next, because people want to stay together. There's a lot of solitude, isolation and loneliness and this is a very simple but also meaningful, intelligent way to be together. Also, for the listeners, it's not passive, it's not like watching TV because we are humans, we're there, they can share with us their emotions, their thoughts. They react, they can read, they can tell us a story related to what we're reading, so it's something simple and it's free."

Cristina Cau, the founder of the initiative:

"Pampuelo's Corner is a self-managed literary corner that was born to contrast the condition of the century-old tree that resided in the flowerbed. Once this space was covered with bulky waste, but through a constant practice of care and cleaning, it was able to gradually become a corner for free book exchange and meetings with the people of the Ostia neighbourhood in Rome".

Impact:

Expected impact:

- Empowering the community of the neighbourhood by fostering a sense of unity and belonging.
- Sharing the powers of this practice with diverse groups, including elderly people, minorities and neurodiverse individuals.
- Encouraging non-virtual, in-person social interactions that help overcome isolation, loneliness and improve the participants' wellbeing.
- Helping people reconnect and relearn how to socialise
- Promoting active participation through shared reading and dialogue, allowing people to express emotions, thoughts and stories.
- Enhancing presence and mindfulness through the practice of reading aloud, which also supports personal development, such as overcoming self-judgment and improving confidence.
- Reviving the cultural practice of reading aloud as a communal, inclusive activity accessible to everyone, not only professionals.
- Using storytelling and theatrical elements to engage participants creatively and emotionally, fostering empathy and connection.
- Offering a free, simple and meaningful way for people to gather, share and feel part of a supportive community.

Unexpected impact:

Noticing that during these events, everyone was smiling. The feedback the organisers received was extremely positive; everyone was thanking them and asking when and where the next event would be.

As the project grew, it started to become a part of protests related to various causes, such as human rights and political activism. One such event was organised in the metro of Berlin. It was a flash mob in 2023, held with the intention to fight for the rights of a famous Italian politician who had experienced severe injustice. The book was read in three different languages. Another reading aloud activity was set up on the beach on the periphery of Rome. It was a part of a protest - a sit-in and a flash mob - against the imprisonment of the same politician. Everybody could bring a book and read something related to the cause. An upcoming reading aloud event is happening by the harbor because it is becoming privatised without consulting the people. This protest also aims to raise awareness about the amount of pollution tourist cruises cause to the environment.

Noticeable growth in participants' capacity for active listening. Although active listening was not an explicit teaching goal of the organisers, over time, participants became increasingly engaged and attentive, creating a more present and connected audience with every new gathering.

Authors:

Cristina Cau, the founder of UN Pensiero Per, an active, free and solidarity-based initiative aimed at collective engagement.
Barbara Sbrocca from the Blu Shabaka APS organisation and the Collective "I poeti del Parco".
Links: https://www.facebook.com/UnPensieroPer

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- What kind of community do you hope to build or strengthen through reading aloud?
  (Think about the emotional and social connections you want to foster.)
- How can you make the project inclusive and accessible to diverse participants (e.g., elderly, neurodiverse individuals, migrants)?
  (Consider physical access, language, cultural background and reading confidence.)
- Are you creating a space that encourages both listening and participation?
  (Is the environment safe and welcoming for people to express emotions or contribute?)
- How will you choose your texts and what values do they reflect?
  (Are you selecting literature that resonates with local realities, political contexts, or social struggles?)
- How will you balance spontaneity with structure in your gatherings?
  (Will your events be informal or organised in advance and why?)
- In what ways can you ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project if you don't have outside funding?
  (Think about volunteer motivation, partnerships, or community engagement.)
- What role does storytelling or shared reading play in healing, protests, or activism in your context?
  (Reflect on the power of voice, presence and collective sharing.)

DONAUWELLE

Specified mission:
political engagement, empowerment, community strengthening

Type of art techniques used: ●●
Literature, media, journalism.

Complexity:
4 - quite complex

Materials:
Pen and paper for writing, a graphic program and a printer

Resources:
A venue for workshops and staff meetings

Time:
Production of one issue takes about 3-4 months

Crew:
Volunteers, 2 editors, translators, an illustrator and a graphic designer

Audience:

For every issue, five to ten people from the neighbourhood participated in its release. As for the readers of the newspaper, a significant number of residents living in the neighbourhood have a migrant background. For this reason, the issues are usually translated into Turkish and Arabic. Each issue of the newspaper is printed in 2,000 copies.

Context of the practice:

General:

Historically, in the Donaukiez Nord neighbourhood mainly lower socioeconomic classes live. Also, a large portion of its residents are migrants with lower incomes, many of whom do not speak German and lack residency permits or official documentation. This makes integration into society more difficult. Also, the neighbourhood has been undergoing the process of gentrification, which brings about additional challenges for local residents.

Specific:

Quartiersmanagement (neighbourhood management) in Berlin is a city-run program that aims to support and strengthen socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The program is co-funded by the Berlin Senate. It supports local projects that improve education, employment, integration, housing and public spaces. It manages coordination between residents, local institutions and city administration to solve neighbourhood-specific problems and empower local communities to get involved in shaping their area.

The Donauwelle project started as a product of collaboration between this program and the Schillerwerkstatt e.V association. The impulse was the need to encourage neighbourhood residents to engage in local politics, to empower them to participate in what is happening in their daily lives and to strengthen the local community.

Goals of the practice:

1. To support civic and political education by encouraging local participation, especially among marginalised groups, through accessible formats for raising concerns, co-developing solutions, and engaging in democratic processes such as petitions and neighbourhood initiatives.
2. To implement a participatory journalism approach in order to strengthen critical thinking and empower non-professionals to co-create public narratives.
3. To promote community building and social inclusion by strengthening neighbourly connections, ensuring the participation of diverse voices, including migrants, older residents, and children, and fostering intergenerational and intercultural exchange.
4. To support artistic expression through accessible creative formats such as storytelling, collage, comics, and photography, encouraging participation even among those less confident in writing.
5. To promote cultural diversity and multilingualism by translating selected content into Turkish and Arabic and highlighting alternative cultural narratives on themes such as ageing and loneliness.
6. To enhance empowerment through visibility by featuring residents' contributions in printed form, fostering recognition, pride, and a stronger sense of ownership that encourages continued engagement.

Description of the practice:

The Donauwelle project is a participatory neighbourhood newspaper aiming to boost civic engagement, political participation and community empowerment. It addresses local issues such as gentrification and social inclusion through storytelling, illustration and collective editing. Donauwelle strengthens neighbourhood bonds and gives voice to the people, turning creative expression into a powerful tool for social change and active citizenship.

Artistic Approaches:

Participatory art

The main artistic approach used in the Donauwelle project is participatory art. The production of each newspaper issue involves the active involvement of neighbourhood residents. Participation is open, flexible and non-hierarchical; anyone from the community can join, regardless of background, language skills, or artistic experience. This approach is used because many residents, especially migrants or those with lower education, may feel excluded from formal political or cultural spaces. Participation through art offers an accessible and empowering approach. It also shifts the role of art from a product made by professionals to a collective process of making meaning and shaping identity. It allows diverse members of the community to engage with social and political issues creatively, collaboratively and meaningfully.

Through workshops and open editorial meetings, residents contribute stories, drawings, photographs and ideas. Children are invited to express themselves through drawings, while elderly participants contribute memory-based columns. Final editing sessions are done in groups, where all participants reflect on, comment on and vote on the material to be published. People who initially come just to share ideas often become regular contributors.

Art for Critical Reflection

The second key artistic approach is the use of art as a tool for critical reflection on local politics, urban development, social issues, identity and more. The newspaper reflects lived experiences in the neighbourhood and allows the acknowledgment of perspectives that are often underrepresented.

Since the neighbourhood is facing challenges like gentrification, poor infrastructure and pollution, art provides a space for neighbourhood residents to present their stories, thoughts and solutions to these problems.

Each issue focuses on a theme rooted in the local context, such as transportation, trash, schools, or loneliness. Residents reflect critically on these issues through writing, illustration, interviews and photographic contributions. Diverse perspectives are included, such as a Turkish resident challenging Western views on loneliness or children imagining a better school. The final publication is multilingual (German, Turkish, Arabic) to allow for inclusion.

By combining participatory processes with critical artistic reflection, Donauwelle empowers residents to become both authors of their stories and agents of local change. It turns creative expression into a civic tool.

Artistic tools and methods:

Storytelling, illustration, editing and photography are used both as tools and methods.

Artistic methods:

Storytelling:

Storytelling is the foundational artistic method of the project. Participants share their lived experiences, observations and emotions in written form, often blending narrative, opinion, memory and journalistic styles. Storytelling enables emotional resonance and accessibility, the surfacing of marginalised perspectives, a bridge between private experiences and public discourse.

Illustration:

Illustration is used as a complementary or alternative expressive method, especially for those less comfortable with written language. Participants contribute hand-drawn illustrations, comics, visual metaphors and children's drawings, expressing their views through imagination rather than words. Elderly participants' visual memory-mapping connects past and present.

Participatory editing:

Editing is done collectively. Participants are invited to read, critique and vote on submitted content. This includes feedback rounds where everyone comments on tone, clarity and accessibility and negotiating how to frame sensitive or contested issues. Editing becomes an artistic and civic tool for dialogue and collective authorship.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Collaborative editing sessions: After contributors submit their texts, all participants, both core team and neighbours, gather to read, comment on and collaboratively shape the content. These sessions act as reflective spaces where participants give and receive peer feedback and compare perspectives.

Discussion and feedback: Each issue of the newspaper is shaped through multiple rounds of meetings, where neighbours share their lived experiences, concerns and opinions. These discussions serve as informal but effective tools for reflection, helping participants become more aware of their social reality and how to articulate it.

Civic action as evidence of learning: Tangible outcomes, such as neighbours organising street clean-ups or initiating policy petitions after reading or contributing to an issue, serve as powerful indicators of applied learning and increased civic competence.

Legend with different learning approaches:

The Donauwelle project integrates several non-formal and civic learning approaches that support both personal development and community empowerment:

1. Participatory Learning

Neighbours are not passive recipients but active contributors to the content and direction of the newspaper. From choosing topics to contributing texts and visuals, participants shape the learning environment based on their lived experiences. This approach increases ownership, relevance and motivation to learn.

2. Collective Learning

The creation process is deliberately collective. People with different backgrounds come together, share knowledge and reflect on one another's contributions. This mutual exchange builds a shared understanding of community issues and fosters solidarity, empathy and critical thinking.

3. Transformative Learning

By reflecting on community problems (e.g., gentrification, trash, exclusion), participants are invited to challenge existing assumptions and develop new perspectives. The process of articulating concerns in public and seeing them taken seriously empowers individuals, increasing their sense of agency and transforming their relationship with their environment and society.

Competences

Skills

- Communication and expression: Participants learned to express their ideas, opinions and experiences through writing, illustration, photography and other creative formats. Many people engaged in storytelling or created visual contributions (e.g., collages, drawings), strengthening their ability to communicate in public or semi-public settings.
- Editorial and media literacy: Through exposure to the newspaper production process, pitching

ideas, drafting texts and editing collaboratively, participants gained insight into how media is shaped, which fosters critical awareness of media narratives and power structures.

- Participatory collaboration: Working alongside neighbours with diverse perspectives required negotiation, active listening and collaborative decision-making (e.g., choosing topics, reviewing others' contributions).

Knowledge

- Understanding of Local Civic Issues: Participants deepened their understanding of neighbourhood-level issues (e.g., transport, trash management, gentrification) and how these relate to broader political and social structures.
- Insight into Democratic and Civic Participation: The project enabled participants to see how their voices can influence public discourse. For instance, after thematic issues were published, several neighbourhood initiatives were formed (e.g., lobbying for a car-free street), illustrating a growing understanding of how civic change can begin.
- Awareness of Cultural Diversity: Through multilingual content and intercultural dialogue, participants developed awareness of different perspectives and practices around issues like community, loneliness, or aging.

Attitudes

- Empowerment and Agency: Participants experienced the value of their contributions being published and visible, which reinforced a sense of belonging and agency. Many felt more confident in sharing their views publicly and in initiating civic actions.

- Empathy and Inclusion: Exposure to diverse voices (e.g., elderly perspectives, migrant perspectives) helped cultivate empathy and a more inclusive attitude toward different community members.

How to?

Step 1: Topic Development
An open editorial meeting with local residents is used to identify key themes: What matters to the neighbourhood? Which topics are relevant for the current issue?

Step 2: Mobile Editorial Unit
The editorial team takes to the streets with a mobile editorial cart, gathering voices and perspectives from residents and local experts on the selected topic.

Step 3: Research
Facts, data and personal stories related to the topic are collected, reviewed and discussed in preparation for publication.

Step 4: Production
Working groups are formed around individual articles and workshop outputs. These groups are responsible for writing, conducting interviews and taking photographs.

Step 5: Editing
Draft texts and images are printed and reviewed collectively during the final editorial meeting. The material is discussed, revised, shortened and adjusted where needed.

Step 6: Final Editing
Feedback and revision suggestions are discussed and implemented collaboratively. Selected texts are translated. A professional editor reviews the content to ensure clarity and readability.

Step 7: Design
A graphic designer lays out all contributions, developing several options for the cover and the overall colour concept. The editorial board selects the final version, which is then sent to print.

Step 8: Distribution
2,000 freshly printed copies of Donauwellen are picked up and distributed throughout the neighbourhood, right into the hands of readers.

Story from a practice:

Irit Mogilevsky, the Illustrator of Donauwelle:

"Life is not a football match. Not a war between the light and the darkness, the right and the wrong. Life is vague, elusive, ambiguous.

Taking one side, looking at the world through an individualistic perspective, closing oneself off to the experiences of other living beings, is not just sad, it's also a recipe for disaster.

When we can't relate to others, we feel completely alone, alienated and miserable. We become self-centred, carrying our selfishness as a badge of honor.

We hurt others, because their hurt means nothing to us. Their hurt can't touch us. And so others around us adapt, grow a thicker skin, reclude their attention, put up walls and other defense mechanisms. Some act out, hurt back. Here starts a cycle of revenge – hurt, revenge, hurt, revenge… eye for an eye and the whole world is blind.

Now let's roll the tape back. Let's remember all we think we know. Forget everything we were taught.

Forget that we thought once white is the opposite of black, light is the opposite of dark, big is the opposite of small. Forget where we come from and what name our mother has given to us. Let's remember only being alive, in a human body, slowly breathing in and breathing out…"

Source: Schillerwerkstatt

Retrieved from: Schillerwerkstatt

Impact:

Intended Impact:

- Residents become more engaged in neighbourhood issues and local politics, fostering active citizenship.
- Participants gain confidence and skills in expression, critical thinking, storytelling and collaboration.
- Strengthened local identity and sense of belonging, especially for newcomers and marginalised groups.
- Creation of inclusive spaces for dialogue that promote cultural exchange, mutual understanding and respect among diverse community members.

- Encouragement of intergenerational connections and community cohesion, bridging gaps between different age groups and backgrounds.
- Empowerment of residents to take collective action, advocate for their needs and influence positive change in their neighbourhood.
- Increased awareness of social and political issues affecting the community, inspiring ongoing learning and participation beyond the project.

Unexpected Impact:

- Formation of neighbourhood action groups (e.g., trash cleanup, street traffic petitions).
- Conflicts or critiques lead to new contributions and perspectives (e.g., a reader disagrees and joins to write their own view).
- Residents recognise and interact with project organisers as well, helping them feel a part of the community, too.
- Children and older people feel included and valued through special participation formats.

Authors:

Schillerwerkstatt Team: Stefanie Battisti, Yael Parish, Katrin Friedmann, Irit Mogilevsky

Links: https://www.schillerwerkstatt.de/

Online versions of all the issues: Kiezredaktion der Donauwelle - Schillerwerkstatt

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

1. Whose voices are missing and why?
   (How will you reach underrepresented or marginalised residents (e.g., non-native speakers, elderly, youth) in a way that feels welcoming and appealing to them?)

2. What does participation really mean in your context?
   (Will participants shape the content, the process, or both?)

3. Is the art medium you plan to use user-friendly for the project participants?
   (Are the artistic tools you're choosing (e.g., writing, drawing, photography) accessible to your audience in terms of skill, language and confidence?)

4. What local issues do you wish to tackle?
   (What are the urgent social issues in your neighbourhood and how can your project become a catalyst for local change?)

5. How will you sustain community relationships beyond a single issue or exhibition?
   (What structures or routines can you build to keep people engaged, especially those who don't usually participate in civic initiatives?)

6. Are you ready to give up some control?
   (Participatory art means embracing unpredictability. How will you hold space for conflict, disagreement, or radically different views?)

LINOLEUM EXPRESS

Specified mission:

Democratic empowerment, political engagement, protest art, wellbeing, focus

Type of art techniques used: ●●

Linocut Printing, Visual Art, Street Art

Complexity:

2 - easy

It's easy to teach the basic technique to the participants (how to hold a knife, how to use the materials, etc.). All they need is the belief in their own abilities to master the skill.

Materials: Linoleum (either 100% natural or soft-cut, which contains plastic), cutting knives, printing press.

Resources:

Collaboration with the right associations to attract the desired target group. As for the space, one needs indoor venues for rainy weather and suitable busy pedestrian locations for outdoor workshops.

Time:

Since it's a mobile workshop, the setup doesn't require much time. One should account for the fact that once people immerse themselves in the process, the workshops can extend up to five hours.

Crew:

Even just one person is enough to guide the workshops. Once some of the participants learn the skills, they can continue teaching it to others.

Audience:

The practice is conducive to a wide variety of audiences, from children to adults. Groups included political activists, youth from socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, artists with ADHD, or simply passersby - adults, families with children who had some spare time. The number of participants varied; usually 10-12 people, but the number can be significantly higher depending on the busyness of the space where it is held and the time allotted for it.

Context of the practice:

General:

The project took place in a context marked by political tension, particularly the rise of the far-right AfD party in Germany, whose influence among young people was growing. This was accompanied by a general sense of political passivity and disengagement in the public. Many people seemed to have given up on active participation, feeling indifferent. The project responded to this atmosphere by

offering an alternative space for expression, reflection and informal political education, especially for youth who felt disconnected from mainstream political discourse. Also, the broader context included a deep concern about rising right-wing influence in East Germany's youth work sector, especially due to historical gaps in post-war denazification. This made it crucial to ensure the network was ideologically safe and inclusive.

Specific:

The project was born out of the need for responding to the political events and social injustice happening at the time. Luc's impulse was to use linocut printing to motivate the public to be more politically active. The concept took shape when he connected with a network of like minded political activists, social workers and youth workers in Berlin and Leipzig. These individuals, many with NGO experience, helped him navigate project funding, outreach and logistics.

Goals of the practice:

1. Foster political awareness, activism and critical thinking through accessible art-making processes.
2. Empower participants to express dissent and civic concerns via linocut printing.
3. Develop artistic and technical skills in printmaking for use in spontaneous public spaces.
4. Provide a meditative, hands-on creative activity that helps participants calm down, regain focus and build emotional resilience.
5. Promote art as a coping mechanism, offering psychological relief alongside civic expression.
6. Popularise linocut printing as a form of therapeutic and creative tool.

Description of the practice:

"Linoleum Express" is a mobile, participatory art project that empowers individuals, especially political activists, youth and marginalised groups, through accessible linocut printmaking workshops held in public spaces. Developed in response to political disengagement, the project fosters active citizenship, political expression and emotional resilience through spontaneous, hands-on art-making.

The workshops use linoleum printing techniques to engage participants in creating protest art, encouraging self-expression, critical thinking and civic dialogue. The process is easy to learn, low-cost and deeply meditative, making it especially impactful for those with ADHD or emotional stress.

Whether held on busy streets or in community centres, these workshops are open to all ages and thrive on peer learning, collaboration and inclusivity. The project's core mission is to bridge artistic creation with political awareness, turning sidewalks into studios and prints into powerful public messages.

Artistic approach:

"Linoleum Express" uses an activist and spontaneous artistic approach rooted in accessibility, urgency and street-level engagement. The goal is to enable rapid, collective artistic production in response to political or social developments. The approach is both participatory and mobile, emphasising the democratisation of protest art.

Artistic tools:

- Linoleum and carving tools for printmaking.
- Portable printing press or setup for on-site creation.
- Mobile cart for transporting materials through public spaces.

Artistic methods:

- Relief printing: Using linocuts to generate focus, calm and the state of flow.
- Street-based workshops: Bringing art-making directly to public spaces.
- Spontaneous protest art: Creating prints in real time for immediate political response.
- Collaborative design: Participants co-create slogans, symbols and messages.
- Hands-on skill sharing: On-the-spot learning a skill that is easy to master.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Spontaneous discussion during and after the sessions allowed participants to reflect on the political messages and emotional responses triggered by the creative process.

Observing reactions from passersby in public spaces offered immediate, real-world feedback. Peer exchange happened naturally, as participants taught the technique of linocut printing to each other.

Group reflection emerged when people returned for more sessions, often discussing what they learned, what inspired them, or how they used the prints afterward.

Emotional processing happened through tactile work and focused attention. Participants found moments of calm and clarity, which was of great value to those struggling with ADHD.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential learning was central since participants carved, printed and physically created protest materials, learning by doing in real time.

Participatory learning occurred as individuals shaped workshop content through their own messages and political expression.

Collective learning unfolded in shared public spaces where ideas, tools and techniques were exchanged freely.

Transformative learning happened when people gained new insights about activism, expression and their role in society.

Tandem learning emerged when participants taught each other the skill of linocut printing.

Competences
Skills
- Visual self-expression through linocut printing
- Basic design and manual printing techniques
- Message development and slogan writing

- Public engagement and street-level activism

Knowledge

- Awareness of the effects of linocut printing on one's well being
- Understanding how art can be used for civic expression
- Insight into political processes and public discourse

Attitudes

- Confidence in self-expression
- Empowerment through creativity
- Increased political awareness and critical thinking
- Openness to collaboration and inclusive dialogue

How to?

Step 1. Secure collaboration with needed partners to obtain project funding and ensure outreach. Agree on the goals of the project and the target audience.

Step 2. Find appropriate space. If it's an outdoor event, it is preferable that it is a busy pedestrian area.

Step 3. Deliver the workshop(s). If there are more than 10 participants, 2 facilitators are needed.

Step 4. Evaluation of the project success using feedback from the facilitators, participants and the public.

Story from a practice:

Feedback from the participants:
"That was amazing, I never thought of using this simple technique for creating something so complex!

"So much easier to organise and do than screen printing and so much more fun doing!"

"I want to do that all the time now! That was really inspiring and I can finally concentrate on something for more than 5 minutes without getting bored or asking myself questions!"

Impact:

Intended Impact:

- Creative empowerment: Enabling people, especially youth and marginalised groups, to express themselves through linoleum cutting and printing.
- Improved focus and calm: Helping individuals, particularly those with ADHD or trauma, concentrate and relax through the meditative process of cutting and printing, while at the same time activating both brain hemispheres.
- Accessible skill-building: Teaching a simple, replicable technique that can be used independently or passed on to others ("each one, teach one").
- Fostering self-esteem and agency: Boosting participants' belief in their creative capacity, regardless of prior experience.
- Motivating political activation: Encouraging participants to become more politically aware and active by realising they have something to say and a way to say it.

- Political expression: Equipping activists with tools to produce protest materials quickly and spontaneously in public space.
- Bridging art and civil life: Making artistic production part of public spaces, not confined to museums or elite spaces.

Unexpected Impact:

- Formation of new collectives: Some participants were so inspired they went on to start their own printing groups or projects.
- Ongoing personal practice: Participants continued linoleum cutting on their own long after the workshops ended, sometimes producing hundreds of prints (e.g., DIY Christmas card mass production).
- Social ripple effects: Skills were passed on to children, peers and local networks, spreading creativity beyond the original project circle.
- Digital engagement: Participants began sharing their work on social media, amplifying visibility and civic messaging.
- Therapeutic outcomes: Participants experienced deep emotional release and reflection, even without formal therapy support, especially in trauma-affected communities.

Authors:

Luc Wattendorff, product designer with a social approach.

Links: linoleumexpress.wordpress.com and luec.carbonmade.com
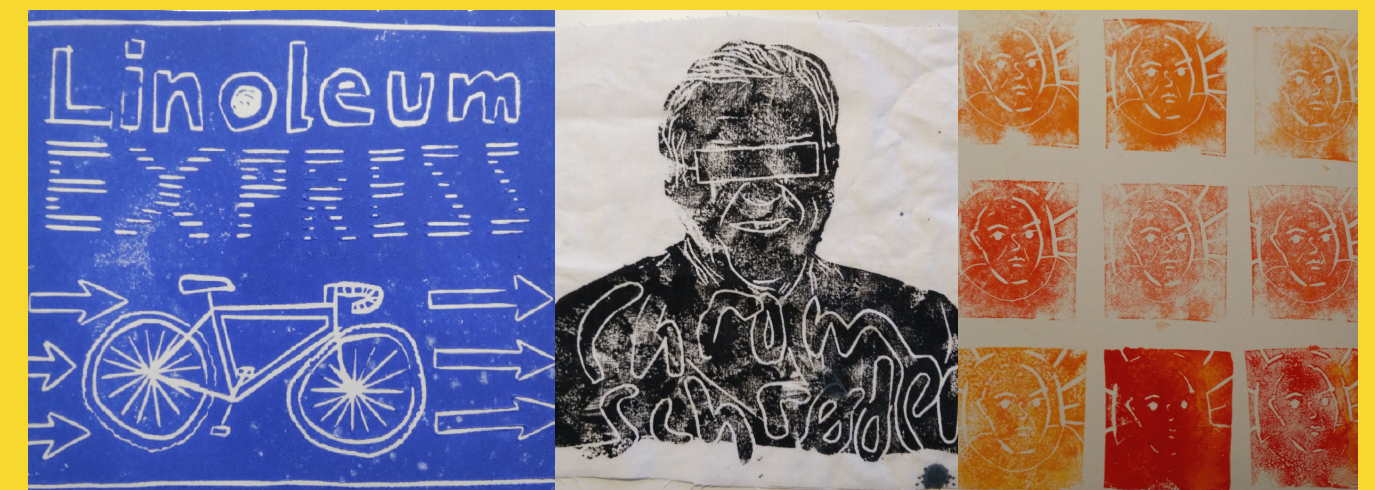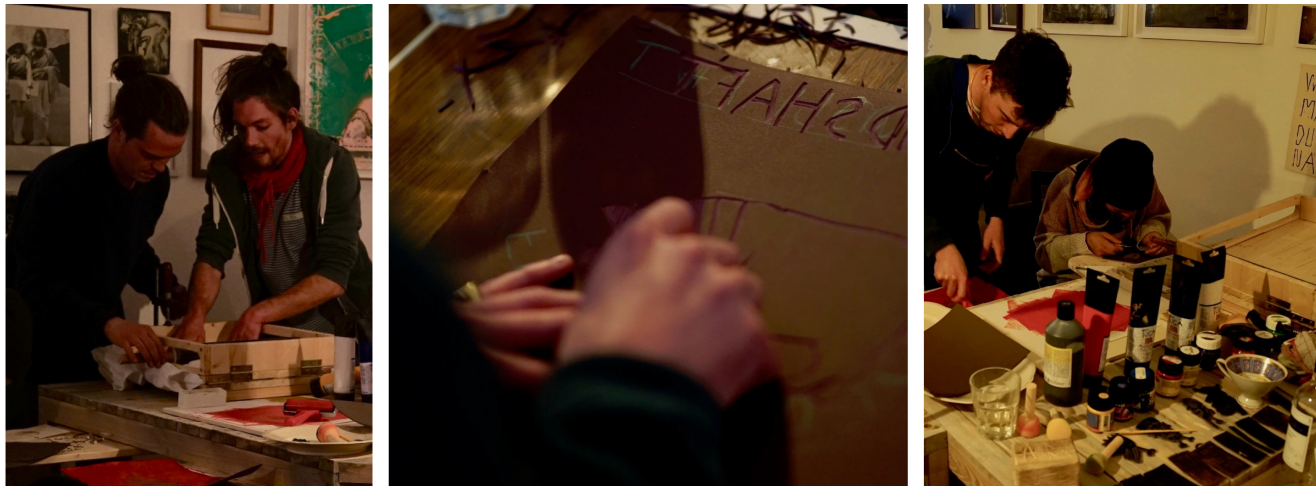

PHOTO CREDIT: LUC WATTENDORFF

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

1. How can artistic printmaking techniques like linocut be used to encourage public discourse on political or social issues?
2. In what ways can art workshops be designed to include and empower people who may not identify as artists?
3. What partners (associations, NGOs, etc.) might you need to attract specific target groups (for example, marginalised youth)?
4. What structures of support (space, funding, facilitators) are necessary to make a project like this accessible and sustainable?
5. How might your project create ripple effects beyond the workshop, such as exhibitions, publications, or activist actions?
6. How will you motivate participants to be curious and open-minded enough to join the workshops, what value will you offer them?

ART, DISLOCATION AND VULNERABILITY. PHOTOGRAPHING BARCELONA FROM ITS EDGE

Specified mission:
Social inclusion, civic engagement, humanising mental health care

Type of art techniques used: ⬤⬤⬤
Visual art, media, digital art

Complexity:
4 - quite complex

Materials
The project requires a variety of materials, including analog cameras, Polaroid cameras and developing supplies (liquids, photographic paper). Materials for the final exhibition, such as frames and projectors, are also necessary.

Resources
The project needs spaces to carry out the workshops and the final exhibition. It also relies on financial resources, which were obtained thanks to the "Fundación la Caixa" and its Arts for Change award. Free collaborations were secured with the Civic Center Pati Llimona in Barcelona and with David Jarque, who offered his sailboat Ikigai for outings at sea.

Time
The project requires time for the selection of participants and the formation of four groups to carry out the workshops, as well as time for the creation of the artworks, the exhibition and, most importantly, for working with the various people who have contributed to the project.

Crew
A diverse group of people is involved in the project; members of the Radio Nikosia collective, artists, psychologists and volunteers. The project demands a high level of coordination and communication among everyone involved.

Audience:
- People diagnosed with and without mental health issues.
- People and institutions working in the mental health sector with the need to humanise mental health care.
- The public, encouraging citizen participation through talks and exhibitions.

Context of the practice:
General:
The practice emerged in a post-pandemic urban context marked by increased social inequality, mental health challenges and ongoing debates around inclusion and public space. Barcelona, a city known for its vibrant cultural scene and diverse population, provided a fertile ground for artistic experimentation and community-based work, especially in marginalised urban areas.

Specific:
Operating at the intersection of art, social engagement and mental health advocacy, the project "Art, dislocation and vulnerability. Photographing Barcelona from its edges" reflected broader socio-political efforts in Spain to destigmatise mental illness, promote participatory culture and reclaim peripheral urban spaces as zones of creativity and belonging.

The project was developed in Barcelona, Spain, in 2023. It was launched after being selected and funded by the Art for Change grant from Fundación "la Caixa", which supports artistic initiatives with a strong social impact.

The collaboration brought together Spanish photojournalist Quintina Valero and Radio Nikosia, a cultural association composed of people with and without psychiatric diagnoses. Their joint work focused on using photography and audiovisual media as tools for empowerment, collective expression and emotional healing.

The project also benefited from partnerships with local institutions like the Civic Center Pati Llimona, which offered space for analog photography workshops and hosted the final exhibition. Additionally, therapeutic sailing sessions were incorporated through the support of David Jarque, who contributed his boat Ikigai as a space for inspiration and connection with nature.

Goals of the practice:
- To raise awareness, promote civic education and drive activism
- To challenge and transform narratives around mental health stereotypes by sharing stories that inspire others. Through these visual narratives, we aimed to inspire empathy, break down stigma and shift public perception towards a more human and compassionate understanding of mental health.
- To create participatory photography workshops and spaces that foster reflection, critical thinking and active listening.
- To organise awareness-raising talks in institutions, universities, schools, community centres and conferences. These events served as platforms to disseminate the project's outcomes, encourage dialogue and promote community engagement.
- To reach a broad and diverse audience, the artworks were displayed in an exhibition in Barcelona and amplified through media channels including Radio Nikosia, its website and national outlets such as La Vanguardia.

Description of the practice:
This project uses ethical participatory photography and audiovisual media to engage individuals with diverse mental health experiences in collaborative art-making, fostering social inclusion and

empowerment. Through a combination of analog photography workshops, sailing excursions and collective reflection, participants actively shape narratives that challenge mental health stigma and build resilience.

Artistic approach:

Ethical participatory image-making and art.

This approach encourages experiential learning, constructive criticism and positive discussions. It was guided by five key principles:

- Inclusion: Amplifying the voices of those less visible within our communities.
- Listening: Creating community-led dialogues, actions and analyses.
- Reframing: Exploring and redefining identities and complex issues.
- Appropriation: Empowering participants to take control of their narratives and identify solutions.
- Transformation: Connecting people, healing personal and collective traumas and fostering reconciliation.

Art tools:

- Photography (analog cameras, Polaroids, mobile phones)
- Video recording (for documenting, storytelling and audiovisual pieces)

Artistic methods: ethical storytelling, conscious communication, sailing excursions, analog development workshops

Ethical storytelling and conscious communication are central tools used. The creative and human process is considered as important as the final product. The project focuses on building participants' confidence and motivation, using both successes and mistakes as tools for learning and empowerment.

Sailing excursions were used as a creative and therapeutic method to expand ways of seeing, speaking, listening and creating.

During analog film development workshops, collective participation was fostered by producing collaborative images, which were later selected for the final exhibition. After each workshop, group sessions were held to share personal experiences and creative techniques learned. Participants were actively involved in the artistic process, with their needs carefully attended to. The core idea was to experiment with various photographic media and document the creative journey. Additionally, ongoing psychological support was provided to participants by the Radio Nikosia team, ensuring a safe and supportive environment throughout the project.

Educational approach

Ways of harvesting the learning

Group discussions and personal reflections:

After each workshop, whether photography, sailing, or analog film development, group discussions were held where participants shared personal experiences and reflected on the emotional and artistic process. These dialogues helped make learning visible and meaningful.

The exhibition:

The exhibition served as a powerful method for harvesting learning by transforming the participants'

personal and collective experiences into a shared public narrative. It allowed them to see their work contextualised, appreciated and interpreted by others, validating their creative efforts and emotional journey. Through preparing and curating the exhibit, participants reflected deeply on their learning, made decisions about what to show and why, and practiced critical thinking, storytelling and collaboration. Presenting their work to an audience also fostered confidence, pride and a stronger sense of identity and civic engagement.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Participatory learning was central, with individuals actively involved in shaping the workshops, co-creating content and influencing the final exhibition. Their voices and experiences guided the artistic and educational process.

Experiential learning took place through hands-on activities like analog photography, sailing excursions and film development. Participants learned by doing, reflecting and iterating.

Transformative learning was encouraged through critical reflection and storytelling, helping participants challenge internalised stigma, reframe personal narratives and develop new ways of seeing themselves and the world.

Collective learning occurred in group sessions, where experiences, artistic techniques and feedback were shared. These exchanges created a strong sense of community and mutual support.

Competences

Skills
- Analog photography and audiovisual creation (shooting, developing, editing)
- Storytelling and self-expression through visual media
- Communication and group collaboration
- Observational abilities (especially through the sailing trips)

Knowledge
- Understanding of mental health issues from lived and shared perspectives
- Insight into civic participation and the role of public art in social change
- Art as a medium for social inclusion, healing and activism

Attitudes
- Empathy and openness toward others' experiences
- Confidence in their ability to contribute artistically and socially
- Critical awareness of stereotypes and stigmas
- Sense of belonging and civic responsibility
- Curiosity and motivation to continue learning and expressing through art

How to?

Step 1. Initial Phase:

Building on participatory methodologies and attentive listening to the participants, artist Quintina Valero designed analog photography workshops for the cultural association Radio Nikosia, working with individuals both with and without mental health diagnoses.

This phase included meetings between the artist Quintina Valero, Radio Nikosia association and collaborating professionals to exchange ideas and develop innovative, creative approaches using participatory methodologies, design of communication and evaluation platforms and selection and integration of participants into project design, planning and workshop roles.

Step 2. Production Phase:

Fieldwork and research workshops were conducted at Radio Nikosia's Red Sin Gravedad space in Barcelona, including city visits and sailing excursions from Masnou along Barcelona's coastline. This phase included basic photography and editing technique workshops, weekly art production with ongoing dialogue between artists and participants, monthly evaluations and project consolidation and final production of photographic series and audiovisual pieces.

- Four sailing trips were conducted aboard David Jarque's sailboat, departing from the Port of Masnou to Barcelona. During these outings, participants navigated while using compact black-and-white film cameras and mobile phones to capture photographs. At the end of each trip, the group reflected on their experience.
- Two excursions were held within the city of Barcelona, where participants used analog compact cameras and mobile phones for video recordings.
- Four film developing workshops took place at the Pati Llimona Civic Center. Additionally, a Polaroid camera was used to create portraits among participants. Reflections on the experience concluded each outing.

Step 3. Postproduction and Exhibition Phase:

Workshops were held for editing and final image selection. The final exhibition preparation involved printing 100 black-and-white photographic images of various sizes on fine art paper. Twenty selected images were displayed in the Sala Ruines at the Pati Llimona Civic Center in Barcelona. The images were accompanied by texts in both Catalan and Spanish.The exhibition was inaugurated at the Pati Llimona Civic Center on March 21, 2024 and ran until April 17, 2024.

An audiovisual piece featuring the sea, accompanied by a voiceover and poem inspired by the city of Barcelona and created by artist Cris Inca, was presented on a screen in the Sala Ruines and it was visible from the street.

Another audiovisual work, composed of videos and photographs produced by the Radio Nikosia collective documenting the creative process, was available via a QR code at the exhibition and included as a digital file.

This phase of the project included:

- Preparation of the exhibition: photo printing, video editing and installation setup.
- Development and dissemination of project outcomes through websites, social media, radio programs and magazines. Collaborations included the Civic Center Pati Llimona, Radio Nikosia, Barcelona City Council, La Vanguardia and Fundación "la Caixa."
- Exhibition setup and inauguration.
- Organisation of talks and events at project partner spaces, public and private institutions, including the Universidad de Cataluña and Universidad Rovira I Virgili in Italy.
- Continued dissemination of project results through online platforms and media post-exhibition.

Step 4. Evaluation:

The final phase of the project included an ongoing evaluation throughout all project phases, culminating in a comprehensive final assessment. Continuous evaluation of the sessions was carried out by artist Quintina Valero, in close collaboration with the participants and Radio Nikosia, to improve the creative process and participant interaction.

Story from a practice:

The following is a part of the poem created by the artist Cris Inca from the Radio Nikosia collective, inspired by our project and the city of Barcelona. This poem was recited by Cris Inca in a video produced by the Radio Nikosia collective and projected during the exhibition of the project at the Salas Ruines of the Pati Llimona Civic Center.
This City of Limits
By Cris Inca (translated)

This city of limits,
this city of precipice—
our soul left
on the edge of a landscape,
a tree,
a window.

Where the places we sighed
remain marked,
where we kissed,
where we cried.

On which street,
in which sea,
on what asphalt
that breathed beside us.

We gaze at this labyrinthine city,
at the glass of storefronts—
trapping a love that once passed,
an empty answer
when we asked who we were,
where we were going.

This city,
beautiful and terrible,
we inhabit it like a non-place
that breathes
in our small, red heart.

City of disorder,
city of light,
vanished city,
crowded with tourists
and empty fountains.

Where can we place ourselves

to see you differently?
Where do we put what we feel,
so you don't tear us apart?

We look at your sea—
which to me is an ocean—
your mountain,
wrapping around us.

And from your heights,
from your distances,
I believe
we still love you,
even as we remain
prisoners
of your noise,
your smoke,
your rush……..

Impact:

For participants

Working in the field of mental health requires a strong focus on regenerating the bonds between affected individuals and their communities. The primary expected outcome of the project was the reconstruction of relational spaces through art and photography, promoting shared life experiences and fostering connections between people and their environment.

The project facilitated the development of a new perspective on the surroundings, serving as a potential pathway for social reintegration. The sailing excursions had a particularly positive impact on participants, creating spaces that expanded their ways of seeing and feeling by connecting with the sea and fostering interconnections with the city.

Empowerment was achieved through the acquisition of artistic techniques. The use of compact analog cameras was especially successful, as many participants had never experienced this form. The main goal was to create meaningful images while enjoying the creative process from diverse perspectives. Using analog cameras and black-and-white film development enhanced participants' photography skills, observational abilities, memory and reflective capacities.

Group outings, especially those on the sailboat, fostered warm and memorable moments, encouraging teamwork through image creation, music and navigation learning. This creative stimulation inspired participants, many of whom expressed a desire to engage in further analog photography projects.

Significant improvements in self-confidence were observed as participants developed a new artistic skill, which in turn offered a form of socialisation centred on a professional photographic identity rather than mental health labels.

For Artists and Educators:

The project generated synergies and new bonds within spaces of full citizenship. It contributed to the deconstruction of stigma by making visible and normalising differences in broader social environments. It also expanded the cultural and artistic resonance needed to humanise mental health.

By creating and expanding spaces for recognition, the project enhanced participants' self-esteem. It fostered a profound sense of meaningful work with a strong social impact on individuals living with mental health conditions and functional diversity.

Engaging in activities within new environments also supported the learning of new techniques and social skills among participants with mental health challenges.

Authors:

Project coordinators:
Quintina Valero (artists) & Fabiana Rossarola (Radio Nikosia)

Quintina Valero, a Spanish photographer, artist and educator based in Spain.

Quintina, a lover of nomadic lives, defines herself as a migrant photographer who, for nearly two decades, has used her images to shed light on the displacement of individuals and communities at risk of social exclusion. Her investigative work has explored how to photograph both the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of these diasporas. Her photo reports have been published in Financial Times, The Guardian, Sunday Times, BBC, Internationale, Stern Magazine, El País, La Vanguardia and XL Semanal.

Since 2015, together with her art collective Food of War, she has been involved in the design and management of artistic and educational projects that reflect on food consumption, the environment and international conflicts. Quintina has extensive experience working with socially excluded communities through participatory photography workshops. The collective, made up of five international artists, has exhibited in Ukraine, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Italy, Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Mexico.

www.quintinavalero.com

Nikosia is a platform, a collective and an association made up of people both with and without diagnosed experiences of suffering. Among them are artists, economists, philologists, writers, poets, dietitians, professionals of doubt, psychologists, educators, anthropologists and many more. It claims its place as a social space where the struggle resists forced identity-based exclusivity, instead opening up to the plurality necessary in any encounter that seeks to address complexity.

Nikosia is, on a daily basis and above all, a political territory: an assembly, a network of shared care spaces and support systems; workshops held in cultural centres, radio programs and interventions, literary, audiovisual, academic productions and more. In general, nothing more and nothing less than moments of encounter and collective creation, approached with a sensitivity to the intersubjective — at the intersection of the personal and the communal, with an honest commitment to the subjectivity of the other. Here, the individual symbolic expression of each person is just as important as the collective production of meaning and interaction.

www.radionikosia.org

Project participants:
Marta, Victoria, Mayra, Xavi Xtuset, Francesc, Mercedes, Clara, DjMartin, Israel, Laura P, Laura, Lola, Nathalie, Jenny, David, Esperanza, Santi, Sheyla, Maria Prosperina, Marcela, Tania, Gloria, Luisa, Cris Inca i Tania Quintana.

Links:
https://youtu.be/bDu-LzliQwQ

https://youtu.be/XS8v2lLIBDs
Lección de cordura de pacientes mentales en el mar

[Exposició] ARTE, DISLOCAMIENTO Y VULNERABILIDAD: FOTOGRAFIAR BARCELONA DESDE SUS ORILLAS
- Ràdio Nikosia i Quintina Valero - Centre Cívic PATI LLIMONA

https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/agendajove/es/detall/exposicio-arte-dislocamiento-y-vulnerabilidad-fotografiar-barcelona-desde-sus-orillas_99400724459.html

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP5YX6xkOfQ

Art for Change impulsa en Cataluña ocho nuevos proyectos artísticos de transformación social para colectivos en situación de vulnerabilidad – NewsTerceraEdad
Pictures: see folder with images.

QUINTINA VALERO & RADIO NIKOSIA SOCIOCULTURAL ASSOCIATION

QUINTINA VALERO & RADIO NIKOSIA SOCIOCULTURAL ASSOCIATION

QUINTINA VALERO & RADIO NIKOSIA SOCIOCULTURAL ASSOCIATION

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

1.   How can participatory art practices, like analog photography, create spaces for empowerment and social connection among marginalised communities?

2.   In what ways can creative collaboration help challenge and transform prevailing stereotypes about mental health?

3.   How might engaging with nature and unconventional learning environments (such as sailing excursions) influence personal healing and group dynamics?

4.   What responsibilities do artists and cultural organisations have in promoting ethical storytelling and amplifying underrepresented voices?

5.   How can the process of collective art-making foster empathy, resilience and a sense of belonging within diverse communities?

SOCIAL STREET ART - SOMBRERO GARBAGE BINS - IN BUDAPEST (HU)

Specified mission:

Social awareness, solidarity, direct action, social inclusion, ecology, redesigning public spaces, social street art

Type of art techniques used: ●●●

Visual art, street art, recycling.

Complexity:

2-3 - easy to medium

Resources:

Graphic designer, workshop space, someone handy with tinkering.

Materials:

Wood, screws, different metal elements, strong glue, printing facility (with proper paper equipment to print stickers in large sizes), graffiti sprays, scissors, masking tape, papers, pencil and pen and a measuring rod.

Time:

Preparing the project took about one week and realising it took one evening. Afterwards, some adjustments had to be made, which didn't take much time.

Crew:

A small team of volunteers. It is possible even for one person to do it, but having more people is more

interesting and effective.

Audience:

As the end product is aimed at individuals who wish to donate their used beverage bottles and cans and since the chosen location is a public transportation hub with a nearby park and playground, surrounded by three- to five-story apartment buildings, the project targets both local residents and passersby, encouraging them to offer their charity to those less fortunate.

Another key target group includes homeless individuals and others in precarious social or financial situations, for whom collecting empty bottles and cans provides a significant additional income, often essential for getting through the month. These individuals are often seen walking through the city with large garbage bags or carts, rummaging through public bins and containers in search of returnable items.

The project also aims to engage anyone motivated to replicate this idea and transform their solidarity

into action and practical solutions. We are here to support and connect them, thereby also fostering intercommunity cooperation.

Context of the practice:

General:

The practice emerged in response to growing urban isolation and the need for increased solidarity, particularly toward homeless individuals. In large cities shaped by fast-paced, capitalistic lifestyles, people often live disconnected from one another, creating a greater need for initiatives that foster social connection and mutual care. The project was also influenced by a policy shift: the government introduced a small refund for returned beverage bottles and cans, further incentivising collection. However, even before this change, collecting bottles, especially aluminum cans, was already a common survival strategy for many homeless people due to their material value. Additionally, Veronika's organisation has a strong tradition of inspiring best practices that reimagine and reshape public spaces to serve as platforms for civic engagement and social solidarity.

Specific:

The idea came to Veronika as an impulse about three years ago because it seemed so obvious. Typically, she prefers to develop such projects through a participatory process from the beginning, but in this case, the path forward was clear and she chose to move quickly.

She had long observed people searching through public bins for anything usable and she also noticed how often residents reacted with annoyance to the mess, frequently placing the blame on homeless individuals. This visible tension in public spaces sparked her determination to find a constructive solution.

Alongside her role as an activist, she also serves as an elected council member in her district. Over the following years, she repeatedly tried to convince the Municipality to support the idea. She submitted multiple proposals and gave several speeches, aiming to initiate and fund a pilot project through the Local Council as a gesture of solidarity. Unfortunately, the leadership continually rejected her proposals.

Eventually, she decided to take matters into her own hands and build a prototype herself. Fortunately, her political party has deep roots in street art, which gave her easy access to many of the necessary resources. As a passionate community organiser, she gathered a small team of equally enthusiastic individuals. And that's how the project finally came to life.

They didn't ask for official permission to carry it out and they don't regret it. The authorities didn't cause problems in the end, which only confirms that direct action, especially when rooted in good intentions, often works. The project is in a well-frequented location, making it easily accessible to many.

Beyond the practical solution it offers, the project also sends a clear political message about active citizenship: that we can create useful, solidarity-based interventions with minimal resources, without being blocked by bureaucracy. Sometimes, instead of starting with risky permission processes, it's more effective to demonstrate a good idea in action, something that wasn't there before and might even be embraced later.

From an economic standpoint, this is a typical low-budget initiative, proving that meaningful impact doesn't have to come with high costs.

Goals of the practice:

1. Promoting direct civic engagement and active citizenship by empowering people to take meaningful action that feels good and makes a difference.
2. Offering direct support to homeless individuals.
3. Fostering connection across social backgrounds.
4. Turning solidarity into tangible acts of inclusion.
5. Encouragement of ecological thinking.
6. Reimagining public spaces through human creativity and collective care.

Description of the practice:

This socially engaged street art project, Social Streetart – Sombrero Garbage Bins, combines creative urban intervention with a powerful message of solidarity and active citizenship. Designed and executed in Budapest, the project transforms ordinary public garbage bins into humorous, eye-catching installations that invite local residents to donate their used beverage bottles and cans for collection by homeless individuals.

Inspired by a need to counter urban isolation and social tension around homelessness, the project reclaims public space as a site for empathy, inclusion and ecological awareness. By turning a street bin into a colourful "sombrero" art piece, the team used visual and street art techniques, such as graffiti spraying, custom stickers and handmade wooden structures, to combine functionality with creativity.

Low in complexity and cost, but rich in meaning, the project demonstrates that direct action, citizen-led design and spontaneous solidarity can reshape both mindsets and urban environments.

Artistic Approach:

The project embraces a community-based artistic approach, actively involving local people—residents, passersby and marginalised groups—in the shared experience of public space. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and solidarity by transforming everyday urban objects into accessible symbols of inclusion and support. It uses art as a tool to strengthen community ties, raise social awareness and inspire direct action. The project demonstrates how community-driven art can reshape public environments and nurture social cohesion.

Art Tools:

Graffiti spray paints, stickers, wood and screws to craft the sombrero-shaped holding device, different metal elements, strong glue and basic hand tools (scissors, measuring tools, pencils)

Art Methods:

- Upcycling and repurposing: Using existing urban infrastructure (garbage bins) as artistic media.
- Public art intervention: Installing the pieces directly in busy public spaces to engage diverse audiences

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Learning is harvested through multiple channels that reflect both direct engagement and broader community interaction. The active use of the bin for its new purpose, collecting empty bottles and cans to support homeless individuals, provides tangible evidence of behavioral change and social impact. Observing how passersby respond, often with curiosity, smiles, or conversation, offers immediate, informal feedback on the project's success.

In addition to in-person reactions, the project has generated significant online dialogue. Blog posts, Facebook updates and a public speech at the municipal council have helped share the project's story and intentions with a wider audience. Enthusiastic bystanders have further amplified its reach by posting photos and positive comments on social media platforms, spreading awareness further.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Transformative learning: The project invites people to rethink and actively reshape their public spaces, encouraging them to see the urban environment through the eyes of people experiencing very different life circumstances. It highlights how creative action can break down isolation and build meaningful connections within the community.

Participatory learning unfolds as the community embraces the transformed garbage bins and integrates their new use into daily life. When residents and passersby actively deposit their empty bottles and cans, they move beyond passive observation to become agents of solidarity, directly supporting homeless individuals.

Competences

Skills:
- Visual self-expression through engagement with street art and creative urban design
- Hands-on making skills, such as painting, assembling and adapting everyday objects
- Collaboration and co-creation, especially when participating in shared redesign efforts
- Problem-solving, by reimagining public spaces to address social or ecological challenges
- Civic engagement, through taking initiative in community-based action

Knowledge:
- Awareness of homelessness and social exclusion in urban contexts
- Understanding of recycling systems and how bottle/can collection supports vulnerable populations
- Familiarity with alternative uses of public infrastructure, inspiring rethinking of common city elements
- Insight into active citizenship, showing how individual action can contribute to collective wellbeing
- Recognition of the emotional and symbolic impact of art in public spaces

Attitudes:
- Empathy and solidarity with people experiencing homelessness or financial hardship
- Sense of shared responsibility for public spaces and social challenges
- Openness to non-institutional forms of change, including direct action and DIY initiatives
- Willingness to participate, even without prior artistic or technical experience
- Increased confidence in one's ability to make a difference through small, creative actions
- Joy and playfulness, seeing urban space as a place for meaningful and positive encounters

How to?

Step 1. Explore your habitat and ask yourself if you can see another use for the elements in the public spaces that surround you.

Step 2. Draw a draft of the visual idea for the graphic designer.

Step 3. Measure the size of the bin.

Step 4. Explore the choices of materials (paint, stickers and wood).

Step 5. Prepare the necessary materials in a workshop.

Step 6. Take the materials out to the street. First, clean and paint the bin and then apply the stickers and the hat.

Step 7. Some final adjustments might be needed. You might need to reshape the hat because it doesn't attach properly to the bin.

Step 8. Put some of our own empty cans in it to inspire others to use it and to show its purpose.

Story from a practice:

"Public places are your own spaces to shape, reshape and use according to your wishes and that of others. You have the right to act if you have an idea for solidarity. Take the liberty to make things better." Veronika Juhász, organiser of the project

"Society is as good as we make it." Inspired by the Ubuntu philosophy

"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." the Bible, Gospel of Mark

Impact:
Intended Impact:

The project successfully encouraged members of the local community to use the decorated bins to deposit their empty beverage bottles and cans, directly supporting homeless individuals who

rely on collecting these recyclables for income. By making the bins more visible and inviting, the project fostered solidarity and practical help within the urban environment, promoting active citizenship and ecological awareness.

Unexpected Impact:

The bins attracted attention beyond their immediate location, with bystanders sharing photos and positive comments on social media platforms such as Facebook, thereby amplifying the project's reach and inspiring curiosity.

However, the project also faced some resistance: a small number of individuals expressed hostility by vandalizing the "sombrero" hat element of the bin, removing and discarding it. Fortunately, the hat was repaired and brought back, demonstrating the resilience of the initiative and the ongoing commitment to reclaim and maintain inclusive public spaces.

Authors:

Veronika Juhász (Hungary), Juan Perucha-Cannadas (Spain)

Links: Szociális streetart a II. kerületben: kukára szerelhető sörösdobozgyűjtőt készítettünk – Kétfarkú Kutya Párt

PHOTO CREDITS - VERONIKA JUH.SZ
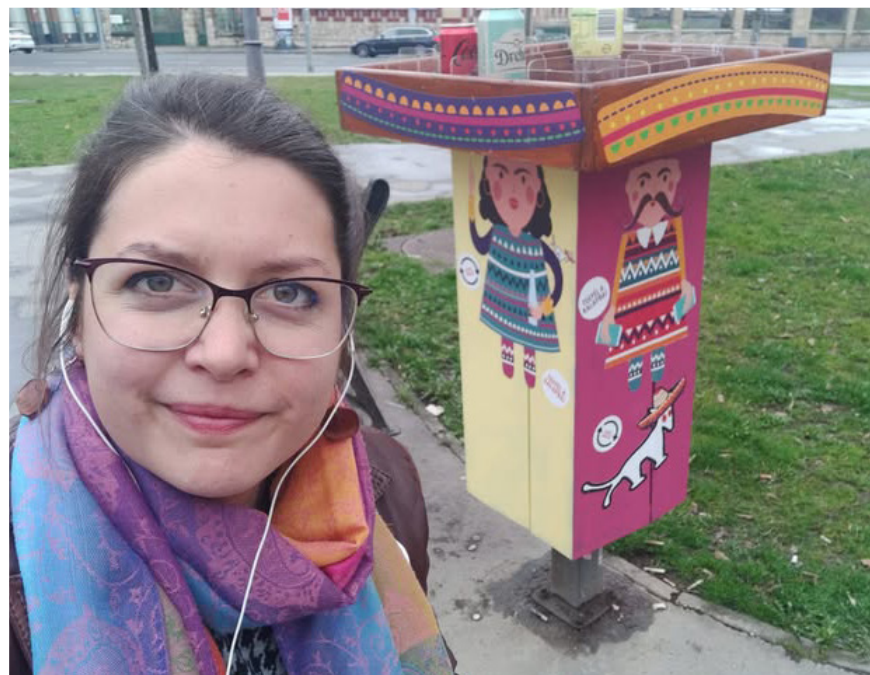
Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

• Is it possible to use human creativity to enhance social inclusion?
• In what ways can (street) art add a different meaning to public spaces?
• In what ways can social sensitivity and street art be combined for a practical purpose?
• In what simple ways can you, as a citizen, add to social inclusion, using minimal budget and effort?
• Can volunteer-based, creative co-creation change our society, or our local communities?
• Explore the public spaces around you: can you see another use for them?
• Do you get inspired by the shapes and usage of public spaces? If so, what could add to the overall satisfaction of yourself and others, by, for example, repurposing?
• If you have such an idea, whose skill set might you need to realise it?
• Can you permit yourself to surrender to the notion that public spaces are also your own spaces to "occupy" and co-create?

"BE HUMAN"
(QUOTE BY MARGOT FRIEDLÄNDER)

Specified mission:

Political education, forms of participation, Erinnerungskultur (culture of remembrance)

Type of art techniques used: ●●

Performance in the public space, biographical theatre according to Marcel Cremer, interactive flash mob

Complexity:

5 - Very complex

Material:

Each student brought a piece of chalk and two small stones. Each participant researched the names of one or two Jews from Berlin who perished in Auschwitz, including their date of death and brief information about their lives, during the preparatory workshops. This biographical data was used in the performance.

Sound system with wireless microphone and audio file of "Polymorphia" by Krzysztof Penderecki - Approval from the Polish authority for public performance at the selected location.

Time:

Duration including preparatory workshops, excursions and travel: 5 days. The performance on site lasted 25 minutes, for which at least an hour should be allocated.

Involved in the project were, in addition to the organiser and supervising teacher Liane Matern, two artists, two speakers from the House of the Wannsee Conference and a total of seven teachers from three schools. On-site in Krakow, there were additional artists for sound engineering, video and drone cameras, as well as police officers.

Target group:

60 students, as well as passersby and visitors at the Square of Ghetto Heroes. In cooperation with German and Polish artists, a German student group and Polish students.

The event was financed by the three participating schools and their support associations, as well as the funds acquired from the Berlin Senate by the "Building Bridges" association for memorial trips.

Audience:

60 students aged 15 to 20 from three secondary schools in Berlin: ISS Heinz Brandt, ISS Rheinhold Burger and Oberstufenzentrum Max Bill.

Context of the practice:

General:

Over two workshop days at the Max-Bill secondary school, students were prepared for the historical background related to the Holocaust, especially concerning the former concentration camp Auschwitz. Participation in the project was voluntary for the students, who had the option to choose between projects, albeit within the framework of regular classes. One day was planned for travel to Kraków, on January 25, 2025, a visit to the memorial site in Auschwitz, on January 26, 2025, a performance at the site and in the evening, the return journey to Berlin.

Location: Platz Bohatterow Ghetta in Podgorze in Krakau

Specific:

The origin of the idea arose from the performative conclusion of the "ConAct" conference aimed at establishing new partnerships between German and Israeli organisations in youth welfare and educational work, which the organiser Liane Matern attended in November 2024.

In the exchange regarding the desire to make the memorial site trips more modern, artistic and interactive, the collaboration with artists Heidi Zengerle and Franz-Josef Becker emerged, known from their long-standing joint project work at Rheinhold-Burger-Oberschule.

The "Square of the Ghetto Heroes" in Krakow was chosen as an appropriate location for the performance due to its historical significance and artistic design, which commemorates the nearly 70,000 deportees from the Krakow ghetto.

This place, also known as "Heroes of the Ghetto Square," is located near the former Jewish ghetto in the Podgórze district, which was significant during the Nazi occupation. The memorial consists of 70 fixed, massive iron chairs, each symbolizing 1,000 deported Jews. The arrangement of the chairs reflects the site of the former ghetto and illustrates the empty seats left behind by the persecuted and murdered Jews. The square is where predominantly Jewish people living in the Krakow ghetto were rounded up before their deportation. The event took place on January 27, 2025, the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The memorial, inaugurated in 2005, is a striking symbol of remembrance for the tragedy of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Jewish community in Krakow.

During the research on how to engage with the memorial, it was pointed out that the installed chairs should also be used as such, which in turn contributed to the development of the performance.

Further project development ideas arose, for example, from the connections of Jewish customs in cemeteries, where relatives place stones on gravestones during a visit or commemorate through the Stolpersteine (stumbling stones).

A particular concern for the partners is the reflection and briefing: respectful behavior in relation to the culture of remembrance and the question: "How should I behave on the grounds of this memorial in consideration of the people murdered there?"

The concept for the performance's flow was participatively adjusted and modified with the students, as well as playfully improvised and rehearsed.

The performance in the public space was already registered in advance with the city administration in Kraków, approved by them and supervised for safety by police officers on site, which helped convey to the students a sense of legal protection, contributing to their trust in the action.

A planned student exchange with Polish students could not be realised this year due to the winter holidays in Poland.

Goals of the practice

A overarching goal is to engage passersby and students interactively and collectively to reflect and empathise, thereby expressing and conveying the unimaginable, through artistic means and evoked feelings. Involved students learn to express themselves and recognise their impact in public spaces. In times of rising xenophobia against minorities in Germany, the action in Krakow serves to promote understanding among nations and is seen as a gesture of remembrance. Students grapple with the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The students also address the question of what a respectful approach to this topic can be.

Description of the practice::

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the interactive piece titled "Be Human" was developed and rehearsed with the participation of 60 students and a multi-professional, three-person team of artists and teachers, with the ambitious goal of performing in public spaces.

On January 26, 2025, the interactive flash mob was performed at the Square of the Ghetto Heroes in Podgórze district in Krakow, with all participants involved.

The title of the performance is a quote from Margot Friedländer, a Holocaust survivor and eyewitness, who has strongly advocated for the memory culture among young people in Germany through her commitment.

The interactive flash mob involves the audience and includes the reading of the names of the deported individuals. Developed in theatre workshops with the artist Franz Becker, 20 students participated in the public space. The method of biographical theatre according to Marcel Cremer was used in this process to address the topic of Memory Culture. The music provided a soundscape created by Christoph Tenderecki.

As part of a memorial trip to Auschwitz, organised in cooperation with the non-profit association "Building Bridges," a total of 60 students from three different Berlin schools participated: ISS Heinz Brandt, OSZ Max Bill and ISS Reinhold Burger. The group consisted of two 10th-grade classes with adolescents aged 15 to 16 years, as well as an 11th-grade class with students averaging 16 to 18 years old.

Details:
The name of a deportee was written on a chair with chalk and two stones were placed on it. The performance process is divided into four phases and concludes with a moment of reflection.

Beginning of the Performance:
The event starts with a certain number of students discreetly distributed around the area. With the sound of the music "Polymorphia" by Krzysztof Penderecki, which creates an atmospheric and urgent mood, the students swarm into the area. They take their seats on pre-selected chairs, which symbolically represent the Jewish individuals being honored.

Phase 1: Start of the flashmob
In this first phase, initiated by the music, the space transitions from a place with people going about their daily routines to a dynamic assembly of students acting with a clear purpose. This initial movement

is crucial and serves as a wake-up call for the audience.

Phase 2: Silence and message

After the music stops, there is initially a phase of silence that gives the audience space to reflect. A message is heard over the loudspeakers in three languages – German, English and Polish: "Ich sage nur: Seid Menschen!", "I'm just saying: Be human!" and "Mówię tylko: bądź człowiekiem!". These messages encourage those present to take action. The students approach the people around them, extend their hands and say: "Trust and follow me!". Each German student has the task of leading one person to their own chair.

Phase 3: Commemoration and naming

Once the guests reach the chair, this moment illustrates the profound connection between the past and the present. The Berlin student uses chalk to write the name of the Jewish man or woman from Berlin on the chair and hands a brought stone to the guest. This symbolic act demonstrates respect and remembrance for the deceased Jewish individuals. The students convey this nonverbally through eye contact and gestures, inviting their guests to also place a stone on the chair.

Phase 4: Returning the names

In the final phase, the name is returned. Each student clearly and audibly states the name, date of death and place of death (Auschwitz) of the Jewish person from Berlin through a microphone that is symbolically passed from chair to chair. This not only represents a restitution of identity but also an act of remembrance and respect.

Conclusion

The performance ends with a powerful moment of reflection and silence. In this phase, participants and spectators can embed the significance of what has transpired in their memories and absorb the deep emotions and thoughts evoked during the performance.

This moving event not only serves as a commemoration but also as a call to reflect on humanity, individual responsibility and the importance of remembering the past.

Artistic approach

Through artistic expression and experience, a connection is created between historical past and contemporary artistic mediums (flashmob, performance), which engages young generations and encourages them to engage while also serving as a sustainability experience in the form of a culture of remembrance.

Used techniques include: interaction, sound installation, performance, documentation (video).

Biographical theatre according to Marcel Cremer: The students were tasked with using the stolpersteine.de website to select a person who perished in Auschwitz and to reproduce the information outlined there for a short biography, establishing a connection to the person being commemorated.

Improvisation with an internal test audience to verify and secure the impact.

Immersive theatre: Immersive theatre is a type of theatre where the audience is actively involved in the performance. Unlike traditional theatre, where one simply watches, in immersive theatre, one can often explore the surroundings, interact with actors and other audience members and experience the story in one's own way. It is about immersing the audience in the action and making them feel part of the story rather than just spectators.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

The memorial site trips are based on the principles of Holocaust education. This means that participation is voluntary and the trips are pedagogically accompanied by appropriate preparation, implementation and follow-up. The focus is not on conveying pure factual knowledge, but rather on fostering empathy, historical understanding and critical thinking. The trips aim to empower students to not only cognitively understand the events of the Holocaust but also to process them emotionally and personally. Therefore, we use methods during our trips that allow students to express and process their experiences personally, such as keeping individual video diaries or engaging in performance actions.

Legend with various learning approaches:

Participatory learning:

The approach of collaboratively developing and implementing a performance with students during the memorial site trip aims to represent their remembrance work in the public space. The performance is created in such a way that as many participants as possible can join and everyone can find an expression that suits them. The barriers for the students are kept as low as possible. All participants (including adult companions) learn from and with each other, give each other tips, exchange their thoughts and encourage one another to implement the performance. The culture of remembrance becomes not just a theoretical engagement through the performance; individual thoughts and feelings about the Holocaust can be expressed personally and represented collectively as a group. Regardless of whether someone is socially inhibited or has physical or language limitations, everyone can participate in the performance, including passersby and tourists, as it predominantly relies on gestures and facial expressions.

Experiential and transformative learning:

For Krakow, the proximity to the Auschwitz memorial means that primarily German school classes arrive in Krakow, quickly travel to Auschwitz and leave again. We wanted to present ourselves as a German school class through the development and presentation of the performance in Krakow and "leave something" behind. We wanted to "show our face" as a group and symbolically "extend our hand" (as a gesture of reconciliation) to indicate that while we are not responsible for what happened, we recognise the responsibility to ensure that such events do not occur again. Tandem learning, experiential learning, transformative learning, collective learning and participatory learning were applied.

Competencies

Skills:

- Empathic communication and presence in public space, using gesture, facial expression, and silent interaction to express emotion and meaning
- Collaborative performance-making, co-creating and performing in a coordinated group setting, balancing personal initiative with collective rhythm and intention
- Biographical and historical storytelling through artistic forms, researching real

individuals and conveying their stories with accuracy and emotional depth

- Practising solidarity in public space, creating moments of shared responsibility and collective remembrance

Knowledge:

- Basic knowledge about National Socialism, conveying knowledge about the historical site of Auschwitz (Why this specific location, the site's history as an Austrian barracks until its development as a museum)
- Intercultural differences in cultures of remembrance (how the culture of remembrance of the Holocaust in general and Auschwitz in particular differs in Poland, Israel and Germany and why)
- Awareness of injustice, democratic values and commitment to human rights
- Rules of conduct in a concentration camp memorial site: What behavior is appropriate and what is not (e.g., taking selfies, dress codes).

Attitudes:

- Critical attitude towards National Socialism
- Intercultural interest and understanding, especially regarding German-Polish relations
- Sense of responsibility: What does it mean for a German teenager to visit Auschwitz?
- Respect for human dignity and memory
- Commitment to peace, justice, inclusion, and critical remembrance as a foundation for a more humane society
- Intercultural sensitivity and understanding of different ways of remembering and mourning, especially across national and cultural contexts

How to?

Preparation Time:

The permission to carry out the performance in the square should be obtained in advance.

Days 1 and 2:

In the two-day introductory workshops, the history of the memorial was researched. This led to numerous ideas for project development, particularly in connection with Jewish customs in cemeteries. During visits, relatives place stones on the gravestones of their deceased. Another aspect is the commemoration through "Stolpersteine."

"Stolpersteine" are commemorative stones that are laid in front of the last freely chosen residences of the victims of National Socialism. Their primary objective is to remind people of these victims and to keep the history of the Holocaust alive. These small, square brass plates are embedded in the sidewalk and commemorate individuals who were persecuted and murdered because of their origin, religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation.

By now, thousands of Stolpersteine have been laid in Germany and other European countries. The project has developed into one of the largest decentralised memorial initiatives and encourages further discussions about Memory Culture and the handling of the Nazi past.

As part of the project, participants researched the names of one or two Jewish Berliners who perished in Auschwitz. They also recorded the date of death and, if possible, brief information about their lives. The website (Stolpersteine Finden | Stolpersteine in Berlin) was used for the research.

In the two-day introductory workshop, team building was stimulated through improvisation training and creative writing in various settings, including small and large group work.

Story from a practice:

During the workshop, the topic of war was also discussed, specifically how presumptuous and careless it is for people who have never experienced war themselves to talk about and judge the extent and consequences of war traumas. In this context, the question was posed to the students present as to whether anyone had ever experienced war, which led to a student, a Ukrainian refugee, stepping forward to share his story. At that moment, the room became very quiet and everyone listened attentively. After he had shared his experiences, the other students appreciatively applauded his contribution. This student explained after the workshop that he would actively participate in the performance because he understood the message.

Astrid Lindgren's speech "Never Violence" on the occasion of the awarding of the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1978, which has been inspirational, not least because a stone plays an important role here, influenced the performance. Here is an excerpt from the end of the speech:

"…To those who are so vocally calling for stricter discipline and tighter reins, I would like to share what an old lady once told me. She was a young mother at the time when people still believed in that biblical saying, 'He who spares the rod spoils the child.'

In the depths of her heart, she probably didn't believe it at all, but one day her little son did something for which she thought he deserved a beating, the first one in his life. She told him to go into the garden and find a stick, which he was then to bring to her.

The little boy went and was gone for a long time. Finally, he came back crying and said, 'I couldn't find a stick, but here is a stone; you can throw that at me.' At that moment, the mother started to cry as well, for suddenly she saw everything through the child's eyes. The child must have thought, 'My mother really wants to hurt me and she can do that with a stone too.'

She took her little son in her arms and they both cried together for a while. Then she put the stone on a shelf in the kitchen, where it remained as a constant reminder of the promise she made to herself in that moment: 'NEVER VIOLENCE!'…"

Film: "Das weiße Band" ("The White Ribbon") by Michael Haneke

The film brutally portrays how, through physical and psychological punishment of a young generation in the early 20th century, the foundation was laid for the blind conformity of the subsequent wartime generations (World War I and II) and reveals one of the causes of how masses can be mobilised for wrongful behavior.

In other words: How violence begets more violence.

Quote: "Be Human" and interviews with Margot Friedländer

Poem: "Death is a Master from Germany" (Paul Celan)

Impact:

The intended effect was for the participating students to become aware that Jewish individuals from Berlin were deported to Auschwitz against their will, that Berlin citizens were denied the right to self-determined lives in Berlin and that they, as young people today in the year 2025, have the opportunity to restore the names of these former Berlin citizens, thereby publicly honoring their memory.

The effect on the participating educators was that they were positively surprised by the behavior and reactions of their students. Furthermore, they were surprised themselves by how moved they were by the performance: cognitively, they had all the factual knowledge about what happened in the Holocaust. However, expressing this in the performance, in a public space, deeply affected them personally and sustainably.

The engagement and feedback from the Polish participants, such as artists, sound engineers and cameramen, as well as various Polish voices, was consistently positive. The cameraman and sound engineer assured us they had never participated in such an event before. They were very impressed, especially by the fact that this performance was presented by German students.

The hope was that passersby and tourists would participate in the performance by either responding to the students' prompts or integrating independently. This hope became reality: many tourists and passersby stopped, filmed, or simply watched. Here, it became apparent that younger viewers had more difficulty joining in. Adult tourists and passersby (around 40 years and older) were more easily integrated by the students. Notably, a tourist couple stood out as they participated very actively, independently; for instance, they built their own communication with the students, attending to them through conversations.

A woman even started to cry and said that she had been touched. She thanked the students for putting on the performance and for allowing her to participate.

What was unexpected was that a part of the students did not participate and stayed on the sidelines. The conversations about this afterwards were interesting: They often said they hesitated or missed their cue with the musical signal. However, during the reflection of these students, it was almost unanimously stated that they would choose to participate in the performance differently next time and would overcome their inhibitions because they were convinced by the impact of the performance on the people in the square.

Authors:

Liane Matern, Heidi Zengerle, Franz-Josef Becker

Artist collective "polymat berlin", three different Berlin schools: ISS Heinz Brandt, OSZ Max Bill, ISS Rheinhold Burger in cooperation with the non-profit organisation "Building Bridges".

Links: www.bbridges.de
Homepage der Stolpersteine
https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/stolpersteine-finden
Pictures: jes and link zu video auf youtube

PHOTO CREDIT: HEIDI ZIEGERLE

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

• To what contexts can the approaches be transferred?
• How can a safe framework for learners, or all participants, be ensured that allows room for reflection and also unexpected feelings and emotions?
• The original concept is designed around the framing of school and in great complexity. In what smaller settings can parts of it be applied in a similar or simpler form?

WANDERING LIVING ROOMS

Specified mission:

Equitable and qualitative public spaces, active participation in social life, community engagement, littering and waste management in public space.

Type of art techniques used: ●●

Public Intervention, Street Art, Relational Art

Complexity:

3 - medium
Note: Materials are very accessible. The setup could require some effort and support, depending on where the "living room" will be built.

Materials and Resources:

Basic and easily accessible materials such as carpets, tables, chairs, books, photo frames, plants, and vases. Cleaning equipment including litter pickers, gloves, and buckets may be needed depending on the site conditions.

Time:

The time required depends on the context. In the described case, preparatory activities (such as weekly workshops) took place over nine months, while the living room itself was created and used during a neighbourhood festival.

Crew:

Volunteers and community members, supported by local organisers. The number and roles can vary depending on the chosen location and scale of the setup.

Audience:

The inhabitants of the neighbourhood with no limitations in terms of gender, age, or background.

Context of the practice:

This initiative was carried out in a marginalised area of the city with high levels of poverty, social challenges and inadequate housing. The residents are primarily migrants, many of them second or third generation. Within the area, there are two refugee shelters and two social housing facilities serving the Roma and Sinti communities. In the streets of the area many unhoused individuals are also living. In the neighbourhood, there is a rich mix of religions and cultural traditions that exist side by side but lack spaces and opportunities for interaction.

The practice was implemented as part of a neighbourhood festival organised by a local centre, which started offering weekly activities in the nine months prior to the event. .

The practice is suitable for implementation in most other contexts.

Goals of the practice:

Creating a temporary living room in a public space engages the community in a shared creative effort and raises awareness about the quality and use of shared urban environments.

Description of the practice:
Artistic approach

This practice is rooted in the belief that streets and squares, as public spaces, belong to everyone and for that very reason, everyone should both care for them and have a voice in how they are designed and managed. It adopts a street art approach, using creative interventions to transform public space as a way to reclaim a sense of shared ownership and spark awareness around these issues. By collectively creating something temporary yet thoughtfully crafted, the project is also a powerful example of socially engaged art, where process, participation and context are just as important, if not more so, than the final outcome.

The practice also moves on a symbolic level, playing with contrast and irony, bringing a poetic touch to everyday reality.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Learning in the "Wandering Living Rooms" practice is gathered through collective discussion, informal feedback, and reflective dialogue during and after the shared creation process. The act of decorating and co-inhabiting the space invites spontaneous conversations that help participants articulate their experiences and observations. The symbolic nature of the activity (e.g. walking barefoot, sharing objects) encourages emotional engagement, making personal reflection a natural part of the process.

Legend with different learning approaches:

"Wandering Living Rooms" is a collective and participative process which involves experiential, participatory and transformative learning, drawing from critical pedagogy and art-based education. While being involved in the common creation of a shared living room, participants are creating bonds and developing a sense of ownership for the place. The cooperation also encourages mutual respect, shared responsibility and the recognition of different forms of knowledge (cultural, experiential and technical).

Experiential learning
Participants learned by actively engaging in the hands-on process of transforming a public space. Cleaning, furnishing, and decorating the square offered opportunities to reflect on their environment and their role within it through direct action.

Transformative learning

By reimagining a neglected public space as a shared living room, participants shifted their perception of public space, fostering new attitudes about ownership, care, and community belonging.

Collective learning
The practice relied on cooperation and co-creation. Participants worked together to build and inhabit the living room, learning from one another and forming new social connections through shared effort.

Participatory learning
Everyone involved contributed to shaping the space by bringing personal objects and ideas. This inclusive approach enabled participants to see their input reflected in the final result, reinforcing agency and shared responsibility.

Competences

Skills
- Collaborative planning and spatial design, organising, arranging, and decorating a public space collectively
- Creative problem-solving: adapting to the constraints of public space and available resources to realise a shared vision
- Communication and negotiation skills, including sharing ideas, listening to others, and finding common ground in decision-making

Knowledge
- Understanding public space as a civic and cultural arena
- Recognising how shared spaces reflect social values, power dynamics, and opportunities for engagement
- Awareness of diverse life experiences, traditions, and everyday practices
- Material awareness and reuse

Attitudes
- Sense of shared responsibility for shared spaces
- Respect for diversity, valuing different cultural perspectives and personal contributions within a collective process
- Willingness to engage and take initiative
- Curiosity and openness to creative experimentation

How to?

First of all, it is important to choose the right place and time for the practice. Things that can be taken into consideration are: with which target groups we want to work and which is the one which better supports our educational purpose (i.e. we can choose a square with a particular meaning

because of the name or the history, a space where there is lack of attention and care, a playground which needs repair).

In the case of the example we are describing, we choose to create our living room in a square area which is fenced on three sides and is usually used for garbage bags or big trash items. The first step has been to gather volunteers to clean the space, using proper and safe materials (litter picker, gloves, buckets).

After making sure the place was safe and clean (no glass, cans, metal elements..) we started to arrange the space, with carpets, tables, chairs and house objects like books, photo frames, telephones, plants and vases…

Each person is invited to bring something for the shared living room and decorate it together.

When the space is all "furnished", the living room is ready to be enjoyed, to welcome new people and to host encounters.

Coffee and biscuits or even shared meals are also activities that could well be implemented within this practice.

Story from a practice:

The cosy atmosphere of the space was reflected in the natural instinct everyone had to remove their shoes before stepping "into" the living room. Walking barefoot became a metaphor symbolising vulnerability, a sense of safety and respect for the shared space collectively created.

Impact:

The re-creation in a public space of a space which is traditionally a private, intimate and comfortable setting, like a living room, blurs the line between private and public, sending a strong message: public spaces should feel just as welcoming, safe and livable as our homes. It invites residents to reclaim the public realm as a shared "living room" where everyone belongs.

Living rooms are also spaces for conversations and encounters: in the same way as inside houses, the living room in the public space creates a casual and familiar setting, a temporary living room encourages spontaneous encounters, dialogue and interaction among diverse groups who might otherwise never engage with one another.

The temporary aspect of the practice also brings a transformative long-term impact: by playing with different symbols, bringing together private and public spheres and altering the "normality" of the spaces we walk through daily, this installation disrupts everyday routines and invites people to see their environment with fresh eyes, planting the idea that public spaces can and should be collectively shaped and cared for.

Authors:

Zuhause Kollektiv
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Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How will the community be involved in the creation and use of the space?
- (Consider the form of participation in the setup, decision-making, contribution of personal items, shared activities, etc.)
- What artistic methods will you use to create meaning, provoke reflection, or foster connection? (for example, street art, public intervention, symbolic design elements)
- Why is the specific location important, and how does it reflect or challenge the area's social context? (e.g., cultural relevance, visibility, accessibility, or neglect of the chosen space.)
- What kind of atmosphere or experience do you want to create in the space, and what impact do you hope it will leave? (a sense of home, safety, dialogue, reimagining of public spaces...)

MISSION: INTERSECTIONAL DIOLOGUE

ARTISTANIA

Specified mission:

Empowerment, artivism, lifelong learning, creativity, transculturality, mutual learning, social inclusion

Type of art techniques used:

Performance, Theatre, Visual Art, Multimedia, Recycling, Digital, Installations.

Complexity:

4

Artistania's projects are quite complex due to their multidisciplinary, collaborative and community-based nature. The planning, coordination and facilitation require significant effort and experience.

Materials:

Recycled materials, art supplies, digital equipment, materials for installations and performances.

Resources:

Indoor and outdoor creative spaces, access to technical equipment, local networks and partnerships, financial resources are often limited, requiring inventive, low-cost solutions and shared resources.

Time:

Projects typically last several weeks or months, especially if they involve community co-creation, workshops with vulnerable or mixed-ability groups, specific installation, or street performance. They also include time for reflection, feedback and documentation.

Crew:

Interdisciplinary artists and facilitators trained in non-formal education and participatory methods, local volunteers and technical experts.

Audience:

The audience is diverse, both in terms of those who actively participate and those who attend performances or exhibitions. Participants, who are primarily children and adults, come from different sociocultural backgrounds to foster mutual cooperation and understanding. Many of them have limited access to cultural or artistic education and are often new to creative expression.

The audiences who attend Artistania's public presentations, such as parades, exhibitions, or theatre performances, are equally diverse, including both communities from their district and beyond.

Context of the practice:

General:

In 2012, when Artistania was founded, there was a lack of inclusive creative space, particularly for those from marginalised communities and people with limited access to formal education or the art world.

Specific:

The initial idea emerged collaboratively, rooted in the belief that art could be both a transformative social tool and a platform for mutual learning. The early projects were highly participatory, involving neighbourhood residents in co-creating installations, performances and workshops. The approach has remained deeply community-based and process-oriented, responding flexibly to the needs, experiences and contributions of participants, rather than imposing predefined outcomes. This origin reflects a clear intent to promote transcultural exchange, address social exclusion and activate civic engagement through artistic expression.

Goals of the practice:

Create safe spaces for creative exploration
Through workshops, such as mask-building, puppetry, street art and theatre, Artistania nurtures environments where participants can experiment freely, share perspectives and reflect together on diverse themes like ecology, equality and social justice.

Foster positive self-concept and social skills
Artistic practices are used intentionally to strengthen participants' self-awareness, confidence, empathy and social competence, empowering them to positively influence their surroundings.

Encourage transcultural creativity and mutual learning
By bringing together individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds, the organisation promotes the idea that cultural diversity stimulates creativity. Their projects implement transcultural collaboration while overcoming processes of exclusion.

Promote participation, tolerance and community engagement
Artistania supports community engagement through non-commercial artistic projects, encouraging participants to collaborate in public performances, exhibitions and workshops. This builds a sense of belonging, respect and shared responsibility in the local context.

Empower participants to co-create public life
Their vision includes maintaining a community atelier that fosters interdisciplinary practice and enabling participants to contribute actively to urban transformation and cultural life through neighbourhood-based art initiatives.

Description of the practice:

Artistania is a socio-cultural art initiative that creates inclusive, participatory art projects focused on empowerment, intercultural exchange and creative expression. Working with children, youth and marginalised communities, Artistania combines artistic disciplines, such as theatre, visual arts, storytelling and crafts, with educational methods to foster social dialogue and co-creation. Their projects typically involve collaborative processes where participants design, build and perform together, promoting self-confidence, critical thinking and active citizenship. Through imaginative exploration

and playful learning, Artistania creates safe spaces where diverse identities are acknowledged and celebrated and where artistic expression becomes a tool for social connection and transformation.

Artistic approach:

Artistania embraces a community-based, participatory artistic approach that values co-creation, collective imagination and empowerment through the arts. Their projects are rooted in socially engaged art practices, often combining various disciplines, such as theatre, performance, puppetry, visual arts, upcycling and storytelling, to create inclusive and accessible art experiences.

Art tools:

These vary widely and often include everyday or recycled materials (e.g., cardboard, textiles, wood, plastic), as well as paint, clay, papier-mâché and craft supplies. In addition, they use performance tools like masks, costumes, puppets and musical instruments, all crafted by participants in collaborative workshops.

Artistic methods:

These include improvisation, storytelling, mask-making, puppet construction, collaborative mural painting and site-specific installations. These methods are designed to support self-expression, emotional exploration and cultural exchange, while also fostering a sense of belonging and collective ownership of public cultural spaces.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

- Group discussions, where participants reflect on their experiences, challenges and emotional insights gained through the artistic work.
- Feedback rounds, both verbal and written, are regularly integrated to assess how participants felt about the process and what they learned.
- Peer feedback, encouraging collective learning through witnessing and responding to each other's performances, artworks, or stories.
- Public presentations or performances, which serve as a space not only for sharing outcomes but also for validating the learning journey in front of an audience.
- Post-event evaluations, where organisers gather impressions or testimonials to understand the broader impact of the experience, emotionally, artistically and socially.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential Learning: Participants learn by doing, through hands-on creation, movement and performance. This embodied approach allows for deeper emotional and intellectual connection to the themes explored, such as identity, inclusion, or community.

Transformative Learning: By engaging with art in a socially conscious framework, participants are encouraged to reflect, grow and see themselves and others from new perspectives.

Collective Learning: Group-based activities and collaborative artistic processes foster shared learning experiences. Participants contribute their ideas and talents while being exposed to the diverse

perspectives of others, reinforcing the idea of community as a co-creator.

Participatory Learning: Every project is built with and for the participants. They are invited to shape the content, themes and final outcomes. This inclusivity ensures relevance and empowerment for all involved.

Tandem Learning: Artists, facilitators and participants often learn from one another across differences in age, culture, background and experience. These intergenerational and intercultural exchanges enrich the learning process and build bridges between communities.

Competences

Skills:

- Creative self-expression: through performance, DIY experiments, visual arts, storytelling and more, participants learn to convey personal experiences and viewpoints.
- Collaborative creation: working in diverse groups fosters teamwork, listening, negotiation and co-creation.
- Practical artistic skills: such as sculpting, costume making, mural painting, mask building and movement.
- Communication skills: both verbal and non-verbal, developed through sharing, performing and interaction with others.

Knowledge:

- Cultural awareness: understanding diverse cultural narratives through dialogue.
- Art as a tool for change: learning how creative methods can influence public opinion, policy and community engagement.

Attitudes:

- Empathy and openness: toward others' experiences and expressions, especially across differences.
- Confidence and agency: developing a sense of one's voice, ideas and ability to make an impact.
- Responsibility and care: for the community, public space and the social issues being explored.
- Playfulness and curiosity: fostering a joyful, exploratory mindset that supports lifelong learning and engagement.

How to?

Step 1. Community and context research
Understanding the cultural, social and political context of the community one wants to engage, focusing on diversity and inclusion needs.

Step 2. Collaborative concept development
Artistania involves local artists, community members and stakeholders in brainstorming and shaping the project's goals and artistic approach to ensure relevance and co-creation.

Step 3. Resource gathering and partnerships
They secure spaces, materials (often sustainable or recycled) and partnerships with local institutions such as schools, community centres and youth organisations.

Step 4. Design of participatory workshops

The project is structured around participatory, non-formal educational methods, blending various art techniques (visual, digital, performance) and cultural expressions.

Step 5. Recruitment and training of facilitators
Skilled facilitators with backgrounds in arts and intercultural education are engaged or trained to guide participants.

Step 6. Implementation: artistic activities and dialogue
Participants engage in creative sessions fostering transcultural dialogue and self-expression, often using mixed media, performance, or digital art.

Step 7. Ongoing reflection and adaptation
Through feedback, discussions and observation, the project evolves responsively to participant needs and emerging ideas.

Step 8. Documentation and dissemination
Outputs (artworks, performances, exhibitions) are shared with the wider community to promote social values and encourage further engagement.

Step 9. Sustainability and lifelong learning
Artistania seeks to create ongoing opportunities for participation beyond the initial project, emphasising community empowerment and cultural exchange.

Story from a practice:

"We believe that freedom of expression is necessary for the society to evolve and as well, it's very important for individuals to have the space for their own expression, to express their troubles, to express their joy, to express their sorrow, in order to be able to identify themselves within themselves and not only be part of the bigger mass that often we are exposed to. One very important fact for me, at least and I stand for it: there is no such thing as us preaching someone or teaching someone or delivering messages as a messiah or liberator of the world. It's more of a humble idea of the inspiration of one person being healthy in mind, with oneself and this is already enough to give this energy forward."

Saba Tsereteli, co-founder and art director of Artistania

Impact:

Intended Impact:

Artistania aims to create inclusive spaces where individuals across all age groups and regardless of their sociocultural background, can express themselves creatively, explore social issues and build stronger connections with others. The organisation's projects are designed to foster empathy, intercultural dialogue and civic engagement by using participatory art as a tool for personal and collective empowerment. Artistania also seeks to activate public spaces and make art more accessible, encouraging communities to co-create rather than consume passively.

Unexpected Impact:

Beyond its structured goals, Artistania's projects have sparked spontaneous acts of solidarity, long-lasting friendships and continued creative initiatives led by former participants. Some individuals discovered new talents, hobbies through their involvement, while others reported increased confidence and emotional healing. Artistania's presence in local neighbourhoods has also drawn interest from broader audiences and institutions, leading to collaborations and more visibility for cultural activism than initially anticipated.

Authors:

Claire Chaulet, Saba Tsereteli, Thym'Art, Miriam Aberkane, Fiona Kelly, Patricia Morosan

Links: Artistania
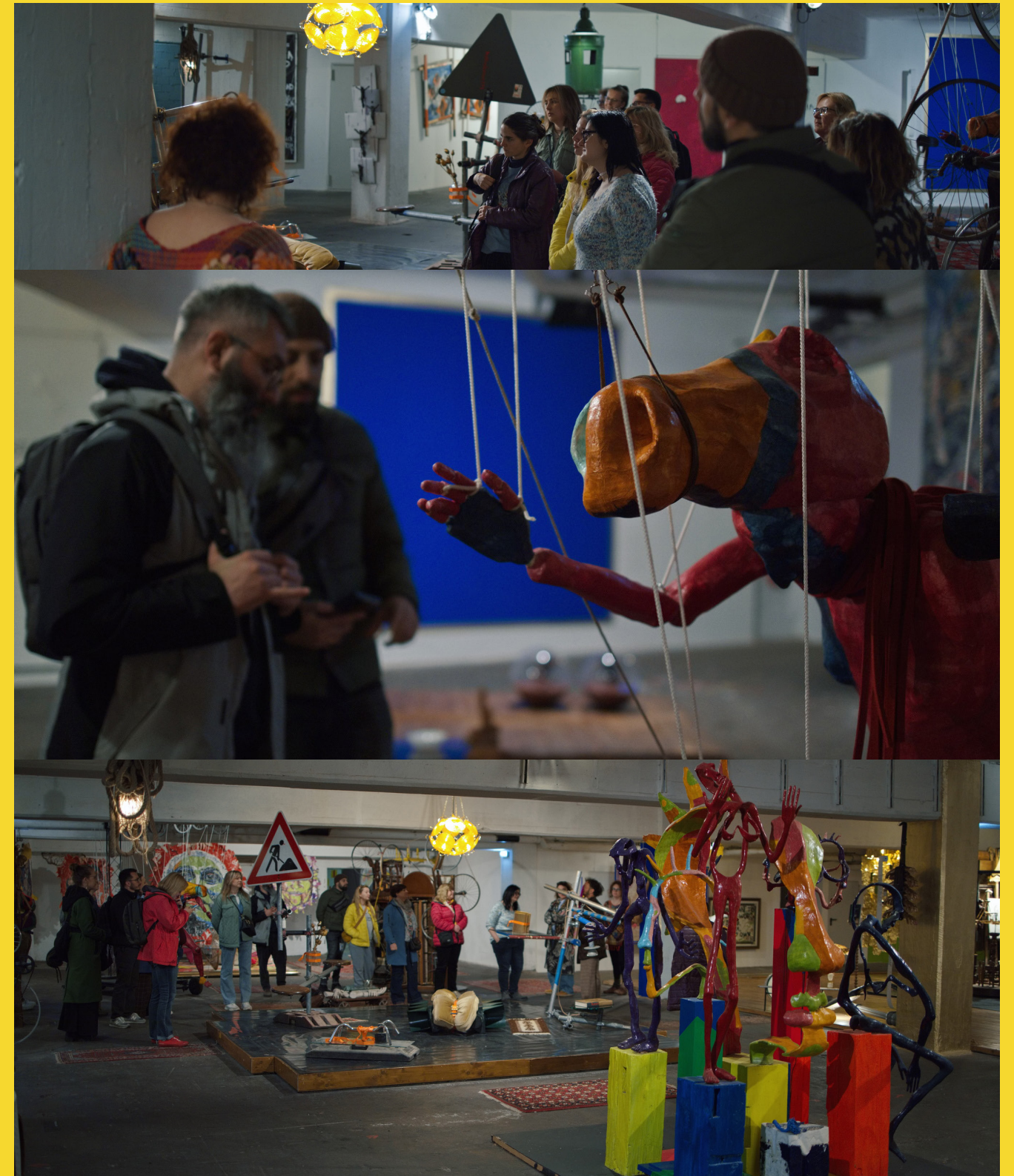
Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How does your project create genuine transcultural exchange?
  Are you designing spaces where different cultural expressions not
  only coexist but inspire and transform each other?

- In what ways are you dissolving the boundaries between "artist" and "non-artist"?
  How do you include people who might not identify as artists and
  empower them to create and express themselves?

- Are the creative processes in your project accessible to those often left out of cultural life?
  Have you considered working with isolated groups, neighbourhood
  communities, or those without prior access to the arts?

- Does your project use art to challenge social issues meaningfully?
  How do your artistic choices reflect or confront topics like
  climate justice, social injustice, or inequality?

- How will you support ongoing, lifelong learning through your project?
  What steps will you take to ensure participants not only create, but also
  grow in self-awareness, empathy and creative confidence?

- What kind of community are you building through your artistic work?
  Does your project actively cultivate kindness, care and mutual responsibility among diverse
  participants?

FROM HEART TO HEART

Specified mission:

Intergenerational, intercultural, creative self-expression, empowerment

Type of art techniques used: 🔴

Visual art

Complexity:

4 - quite complex

Materials:

The project requires a wide range of materials such as art supplies (paints, markers, pencils, etc.), cultural items for crafting (e.g., traditional toys, stars) and exhibition materials. The need for high-quality materials for the exhibition space (lighting, display boards, etc.) adds to the complexity.

Resources:

The project involves international collaboration, requiring coordination of resources across different countries. This includes securing funding, organising travel and logistics and ensuring the availability of proper venues and spaces for the workshops and exhibitions.

Time:

The project spans multiple phases; workshops, creating art, organising the exhibition and ensuring follow-up activities. Each phase requires careful timing and planning to ensure smooth execution, particularly when working with children and international partners.

Crew:

A diverse staff is needed, including artists, educators, volunteers and project managers to oversee and facilitate activities. Managing international collaboration between artists and cultural institutions requires coordination and communication skills, as well as a strong understanding of the local context in each country involved.

Audience:

Children in war (3-12 years old), internally displaced people

Context of the practice:

General:

The project was launched in 2022, at a time when the war in Ukraine sparked a wave of support from around the world, including Japan. The political situation in Ukraine, especially the war, demanded not only emotional support but also active humanitarian efforts to assist those affected. With a large number of refugees forced to flee their homes, there was an urgent need for cultural integration and adaptation, helping them regain a sense of belonging in society. Among these humanitarian initiatives,

cultural projects aimed at supporting children and young people played a crucial role, becoming the foundation for the development of creative opportunities and psychological recovery in difficult circumstances.

The allocation of funds to humanitarian initiatives, particularly cultural ones, became a key element of this process. With the support of international partners, such as Japan, opportunities were created to hold artistic events, workshops and exhibitions, which not only helped children cope with this difficult time but also supported their adaptation to new circumstances. This initiative provided not only material support but also a valuable tool for building cultural connections and overcoming psychological barriers.

Cultural cooperation between Ukraine and Japan became a vital part of this process, providing a platform for the exchange of creative achievements and experiences between the two nations during this challenging period.

Specific:

The idea for this initiative emerged in the wake of the full-scale war launched by Russia against Ukraine in 2022, when Japanese artists and the public sought a way to express their solidarity with the Ukrainian people. The driving force behind the project was a deep desire to support children affected by the war and help them feel the support from abroad. The goal was to use creativity, a universal language, to unite children from different countries and give them the opportunity to express their emotions and experiences.

The project was initiated by Japanese artists, who reached out to Japanese children, encouraging them to create drawings for Ukrainian children. This was a form of collective co-creation, where participation in the creative process became an act of support and solidarity through art. This approach stemmed from the desire to unite communities through collaborative action, where everyone could contribute to a global initiative, regardless of distance or political boundaries.

In response, Ukrainian children, together with artists, prepared works for Japanese children as a token of gratitude for their solidarity. As a result, a joint exhibition was formed, showcasing the artworks of both Ukrainian and Japanese children. The exhibition became not only a symbol of creative exchange but also a powerful demonstration of the deep connections between children from different cultures. Through their artwork, participants were able to express their shared hopes for peace and understanding, proving that art can be a vital tool for overcoming barriers and creating true solidarity between nations.

Over time, the project evolved to include workshops for Ukrainian children and their parents, organised with the support of Ukrainian artists. While Japanese artists were not directly involved in the workshops, they played an important role in organising a fundraising exhibition in Japan. The exhibition showcased the artwork created by the children and the funds raised were donated to the Ukrainian ArtRespect Foundation, which was responsible for organising the workshops. The funds helped sustain the continuation of the project, supporting the creation of new opportunities for artistic expression and psychological recovery for children affected by the war.

The primary purpose of the workshops was to provide a therapeutic environment for children affected by the war and internally displaced persons, using art as a means of emotional expression and healing. The workshops, focusing on traditional Ukrainian folk art, provided a space for children to engage in activities like painting, embroidery and crafting, allowing them to reconnect with their cultural heritage. For parents, the workshops were an opportunity to bond with their children and participate in creative activities together, strengthening family ties and building a sense of community amidst the challenges of displacement and conflict. These sessions, acting as a form of art therapy, offered emotional relief and promoted healing through creative expression.

Goals of the practice:

The goal of this initiative is to provide emotional support and healing for children affected by war through creative expression, fostering a sense of solidarity and cultural exchange between Ukraine and Japan. Additionally, it aims to promote artistic development and cultural understanding, helping children reconnect with their heritage while strengthening family bonds and community ties.

Description of the practice:

Artistic approach

The project utilises art as a tool for collective expression, allowing children, especially those affected by war, to communicate their emotions and experiences. The primary mediums were drawing, using traditional materials such as paints, markers, pencils and watercolours. Working in a free style, children had the opportunity to reflect on their inner feelings and hopes, expressing themselves in ways that words could not capture. This approach aimed at offering them a therapeutic outlet for their emotions, fostering a sense of agency and control during a time of upheaval.

In addition to drawing, the workshops in Ukraine incorporated elements of Ukrainian cultural heritage, such as creating Christmas stars, lithographs and folk toys. These activities provided children not only with an opportunity to express their creativity but also with a deeper connection to their cultural roots. By engaging in traditional Ukrainian crafts, children and their parents were able to explore their heritage, creating meaningful works that represented their connection to their identity and history. This approach served to enrich their artistic skills while helping to preserve and pass on cultural traditions in a time of uncertainty.

In addition to creating their artworks, group discussions provided a space for children to share their thoughts and reflections on the meaning behind their work. These conversations helped foster emotional support and deepen connections among participants.

The culmination of this project was the exhibition at the Lviv Palace of Arts, where over 100 works by children from Ukraine, Poland, the UK, Australia, Thailand and Japan were displayed. The children created their pieces using various artistic techniques, which allowed them to freely express their dreams, emotions and hopes for peace. Through the play of colours, they were able to explore their inner world and develop their imagination, marking an important stage in shaping their creative personalities.

The artworks at the exhibition became sincere messages of peace and friendship between nations. The main message was that through art, we can not only convey emotions but also foster intercultural dialogue, establishing mutual understanding and support between people. One of the highlights of the exhibition was the archival works of young artists from the Lviv School of Emotional Painting by V. Patiyk, which added additional depth to the exhibition. This project became possible thanks to the support of the ArtKawado Studio (Japan) and many other partners, as well as the significant contribution of volunteers who helped create an atmosphere of festive creativity for children and their parents.

Educational approach:
Ways of harvesting the learning

Reflection on self-expression through the development of a personal style was a key aspect of the project. Each artwork, on one hand, reflected the children's personal emotions and experiences, while on the other, it demonstrated their evolving creative style. During the presentation of their works, children explained what they were trying to express through their art. This not only encouraged the development of their communication skills but also helped reinforce the knowledge they gained by presenting their ideas. Explaining their works allowed children to refine their self-expression abilities and develop critical thinking about their own creations in a creative context.

After the workshops, group discussions were organised where participants shared their impressions of the process and the works of others. These discussions fostered collective learning and mutual support, both of which are important aspects of developing creative skills. Through these exchanges, children gained new ideas, broadened their horizons and discovered new approaches to their own work.

Feedback from the group and adults was focused on identifying what was unique in each piece, highlighting the individuality of each artwork. This approach helped children recognise the value of their own creative expression and understand how their work could communicate something special. By emphasising the uniqueness of each child's creation, the feedback not only validated their artistic efforts but also reinforced the importance of their personal voice in the creative process.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential learning: the project was built on the principle of learning through experience, where children were given the opportunity to immerse themselves directly in the process of creating artworks. Through their experience with drawing, crafting folk art, or participating in workshops, participants acquired new knowledge and skills, allowing them to develop their creativity in a hands-on manner.

Transformative learning: The children went through a transformative process, where their emotions and experiences related to the war and life's difficulties found expression in art. This approach helped children shift their perception of the world, reflect deeply on their own experiences and transform those emotions into positive creative outcomes.

Collective learningThe project also fostered collective learning, where children worked together to create a series of artworks and participated in group discussions. Interaction within the group allowed the children to exchange ideas and improve their skills through collaboration and mutual support, enhancing their sense of community and shared learning.

Competences
Skills
- Ability to express thoughts, emotions, and experiences through visual art, gaining confidence in translating inner worlds into creative forms
- Mastering diverse artistic techniques and styles, fostering imagination, experimentation, and personal expression
- Engaging in collaborative creation, learning to share ideas, offer and receive constructive feedback, and work toward common goals in a group setting

- Developing verbal communication skills through the presentation and discussion of one's own artwork
- Building technical proficiency in drawing, lithography, and traditional toy-making through hands-on practice with various materials and tools
- Giving and receiving constructive feedback, sharing ideas and work towards common creative goals in a supportive environment.

Knowledge
- New knowledge of various artistic techniques, including drawing, painting, lithography and traditional folk crafts
- Expanded understanding of different creative processes and materials, giving them the skills to explore and apply diverse methods in their own work
- Expressing and processing emotions in a healthy way, navigating their feelings in a constructive manner via art and communicating ideas via art
- Broadened knowledge about artistic traditions from Ukraine and other countries in the context of global art practices
- Enhanced their awareness of different cultures, promoting empathy and cross-cultural understanding.

Attitudes
- Open and flexible attitude towards creativity, experimentation with various materials and techniques, which helped them embrace the process of artistic exploration without fear of making mistakes
- Empathy and understanding of the feelings and perspectives of their peers
- Appreciation for cultural diversity as the project involved different cultural elements
- Confidence in self-expression while creating and presenting their artworks.

How to?

Step 1. Initiating the project

The first step in initiating the project is to identify the specific needs of the target group. By understanding these needs, you can define the themes and objectives of the project, ensuring that it addresses the most pressing issues for the participants and is truly relevant to their experiences and meets the emotional, psychological and cultural needs of the target group.

Choosing the project theme and finding reliable partners comes next and are essential decisions. The sequence of these steps can vary depending on the specific situation: you can have good partners and choose the theme together, or you can look for the partners who work with your desired theme. Either way, the theme should be universal and meaningful across different countries and cultures, helping to unite participants from around the world and helping the partners align the project's objectives with the cultural values and needs of the target group.

Themes such as peace, solidarity, or children's rights are particularly effective because they resonate with diverse audiences and create a powerful, shared artistic message. Partners can include cultural institutions, art studios, schools and non-governmental organisations. Engaging international partners is particularly important for creating a multicultural approach, which will enrich the project and expand its reach.

The next step is to secure the necessary materials, resources and a suitable space for the project activities.

This includes organising the venue, gathering the required artistic materials and ensuring that there are enough resources to facilitate the workshops and exhibition effectively. It's also essential to involve partners, volunteers and artists who will assist in conducting the sessions and provide their expertise, ensuring that the activities run smoothly and that the participants gain the most from the experience.

Step 2. Engaging participants and establishing an environment

The second task is to communicate effectively with children and their parents, to clearly explain the project's purpose and significance, making sure everyone understands how they can contribute and benefit. This initial communication sets the foundation for active participation, helping participants feel informed and excited about joining the project.

Creating a safe and supportive environment is equally important. During the first meetings, it's essential to establish a trusting atmosphere where children can freely experiment with art and express their emotions. The environment should be comfortable and non-judgmental, allowing children to feel secure in their creative exploration. This fosters a sense of safety, which is crucial for emotional expression, especially for children who may have experienced trauma or displacement.

Support and motivation from volunteers and curators play a key role in this step. They should actively encourage the children, providing guidance and positive feedback that helps boost confidence and creativity. By offering emotional support and constructive suggestions, they ensure that the children not only develop their artistic skills but also feel empowered to continue expressing themselves throughout the project.

Step 3. Conducting the workshops, creating the artworks

The third step focuses on the core of the project; guiding participants through the creation of their artworks. It is essential to provide a structured yet flexible environment where children can explore different artistic techniques and mediums, such as drawing, painting, lithography, crafting folk toys etc, depending on the artist involved. Ultimately, the workshops should allow participants to express their emotions and experiences freely while experimenting with various materials and styles. This creative freedom helps children connect with their inner feelings and gives them the opportunity to develop their unique artistic voice.

The workshops should not be conducted all at once but rather as a series of sessions, each focusing on different artistic techniques. For example, one series of workshops could focus on drawing, while another could introduce lithography, folk toys, or other forms of art. This allows children to explore different forms of expression and keeps them engaged as they experiment with new methods. The schedule should be flexible enough to accommodate the evolving needs and creative interests of the participants.

It's also important to note that the group of participants may change from one session to another. This can be due to various reasons, such as availability or personal preferences. The diversity of participants in each workshop can enrich the experience, as children learn from each other and share different perspectives. Throughout the workshops, guidance and support should be provided by volunteers, artists and facilitators, encouraging exploration and offering constructive feedback to help the children refine their skills. These sessions should emphasise the importance of self-expression and personal interpretation, allowing children to share their stories through their work.

Additionally, it is important to foster a collaborative atmosphere during the workshops. While each child works on their individual pieces, group discussions and sharing moments can enrich the experience by allowing participants to reflect on their work, share ideas and offer encouragement to one another.

This sense of community and shared purpose enhances the overall learning experience, encouraging children to express themselves openly and confidently.

Step 4. Exhibition

While organising the exhibition it is important to ensure that it provides a meaningful experience for both the participants and the visitors. A venue should be aligned with the project's concept and be accessible to all participants. This could be a cultural centre, an art gallery, or another suitable space that allows the artworks to be presented in the best possible way. Following the participatory approach, the exhibition concept should be discussed with the participants, curatorial team and volunteers, where children have the same voice as adults. The concept determines how the works will be displayed and includes organising the layout, selecting appropriate lighting and ensuring that there is space for visitors to interact with the pieces.

It's crucial to arrange the exhibition so that the children's works are clearly visible and easily accessible for viewing. The curators and the children should collaborate on the setup, ensuring that the space reflects the significance of each artwork. The exhibition should not only serve as a place to showcase the works but also as a platform for engagement, where participants can explain their pieces and share the meaning behind their creations with visitors.

During the exhibition, young artists have the opportunity to present their artwork to the audience, explaining what they intended to express through their pieces. This helps them develop both their creative and communication skills, as they learn to articulate their ideas in a public space. The process also boosts their confidence and allows them to understand how their work can impact others.

To enhance visibility and attract more attention to the exhibition, it's important to involve media outlets. This can include local news, social media platforms, blogs and other channels that can help spread information about the project and the exhibition. Capturing the exhibition through photographs and videos will allow important moments to be documented, creating media content that can be shared later to promote the project.

To further engage the audience, interactive elements can be introduced, such as creative workshops where visitors, especially children, can participate in the process of making art. This gives the visitors the opportunity to not only observe the artwork but also actively contribute to the creative process alongside the participants, fostering a deeper connection to the exhibition.

It's also crucial to maintain contact with international partners throughout the project's duration. Keeping them informed about the progress and outcomes of the project ensures they remain engaged and invested. Promoting the partners' involvement helps maintain their enthusiasm and highlights the global collaboration. International partners can also organise mirrored exhibitions in their own countries, with a simultaneous online opening, providing a broader platform for sharing the children's artwork and deepening the cultural exchange. This ongoing collaboration allows for a continuous flow of ideas, feedback and support between countries, extending the project's reach and impact.

Step 5. Follow-up

After the exhibition, it's important to maintain ongoing support for the participants. Additional activities where children can continue working on new projects can include collaborative art projects, or follow-up sessions that encourage participants to keep exploring their creativity.

Given the varied attendance of the workshop participants, the follow-up activities should be flexible and accessible. These could include optional creative sessions where children can work on new projects at their own pace, or even informal online check-ins where participants can share their progress, ask

questions and receive feedback when convenient for them.

The idea is to keep the engagement relaxed and open, allowing children to continue expressing themselves creatively without feeling pressured to commit to rigid schedules. Offering opportunities for occasional group discussions, where children can reflect on their work and share new ideas, will help maintain the sense of community.

Additionally, to keep the engagement alive, there could be opportunities for joint visits to museums or cultural events, where children can explore new artistic and cultural experiences. These outings can be designed as informal gatherings, where children and their parents are invited to attend together, further strengthening the connection between participants and encouraging family involvement in the creative process. This approach allows for ongoing learning and engagement while maintaining a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.

Moreover, online platforms or group chats could be set up to keep the connection between participants alive, enabling them to support one another and stay engaged in their artistic journey at their own rhythm.

Story from a practice:

Olha Lukovska, Director of the ArtRespect Foundation:

My collaboration with Japan began in 2002 when, with the support of my friends Oksana Viter, Taras Pelekh and Misako Kawado, I presented my tapestry exhibition. Back then, few people knew where Ukraine was, but today, thanks to projects like this, everyone knows about our country! During my recent visits to Japan, I had the honor of participating in the Tobacco Festival in Hadano, where, together with Misako Kawado and the mayor of the city, Masakazu Takahashi, we presented a Ukrainian-Japanese children's art exhibition. It was an important step in developing cooperation, where Japanese and Ukrainian children had the opportunity to showcase their works, supporting each other in creativity and mutual understanding. This project supports reciprocal cultural ties and also became a wonderful opportunity for the Japanese to learn more about Ukrainian traditions and culture.

One example is a workshop organised for school children, where the children not only created decorative Stritenskie candles but also deepened their understanding of religious holidays and Ukrainian traditions. This event, held with the support of the ArtRespekt Foundation and the Japanese community of Hadano, became an important element of cultural exchange and contributed to the development of children's creative abilities. These workshops demonstrated how art can not only convey creativity but also strengthen bonds between nations going through difficult times.

We thank the Ukrainian Armed Forces for allowing us to live and create!

Impact:

The main expected outcome of the project is the development of creative and communication skills in children, as well as their emotional growth through self-expression in art. Children are given the opportunity not only to create artistic works but also to express their emotions, experiences and dreams, which is crucial for their psycho-emotional development, especially in times of stress and war. The project aims to enhance the children's self-esteem and foster their creative potential.

For educators and artists, this project offers an opportunity to deepen their professional skills by developing new teaching methods through art, while also engaging children in the creative process and reflection. They gain valuable experience working with different age groups and cultures, broadening their teaching and educational approaches. For artists, this is also a chance to pass on their skills and knowledge to the younger generation, forming new cultural connections.

At the community level, the project plays an essential role in fostering community cohesion. As children work together on creative projects, they build connections with each other, strengthening the social fabric of the community. For IDPs, this engagement provides a means of integration into the broader community, helping them feel included and valued. Through art, they can express their experiences and challenges, while also participating in the community's collective creative and cultural activities.

The project also helps strengthen the overall solidarity within the community, creating a shared space for mutual understanding and support. Children from different backgrounds – both locals and IDPs – have the chance to connect, share stories and learn from one another, which deepens their empathy and fosters unity.

On the audience: The exhibition and creative events aim not only to showcase the children's work but also to create a space for interaction with the audience. Visitors who attend the exhibitions may be surprised and inspired by the children's works, gaining new perspectives on how to view children's creativity and emotional expression. It can also change perceptions of art as a tool for addressing social and psychological issues, encouraging broader awareness and empathy.

The project began with Japanese children creating drawings for Ukrainian children as a way to show solidarity during the war. This simple act of kindness had a meaningful impact on both groups. For the Ukrainian children, receiving these drawings helped them feel supported and connected to others, offering them comfort in difficult times. For the Japanese children, creating the drawings allowed them to express empathy and understand the struggles of others, even from afar. This exchange became a valuable way for both groups to connect emotionally and culturally, using art as a medium for shared support.

As the project evolved, Ukrainian children reciprocated by creating artwork for the Japanese children, continuing the cycle of mutual support. This ongoing exchange not only strengthened emotional connections but also deepened the understanding of each other's cultures and experiences. Through this process, the children experienced firsthand the power of art to bridge gaps between people from different backgrounds and to foster solidarity even in the most challenging times.

One of the unexpected effects of the initiative was that adults became more open to children's creativity and began to appreciate it for its emotional depth and sincerity. This shift in perspective helped change the way children's artwork is viewed, as it is often underestimated as naive or simple. In reality, these works carry powerful messages of peace, hope and unity, showing that children's art can be a profound and meaningful form of expression.
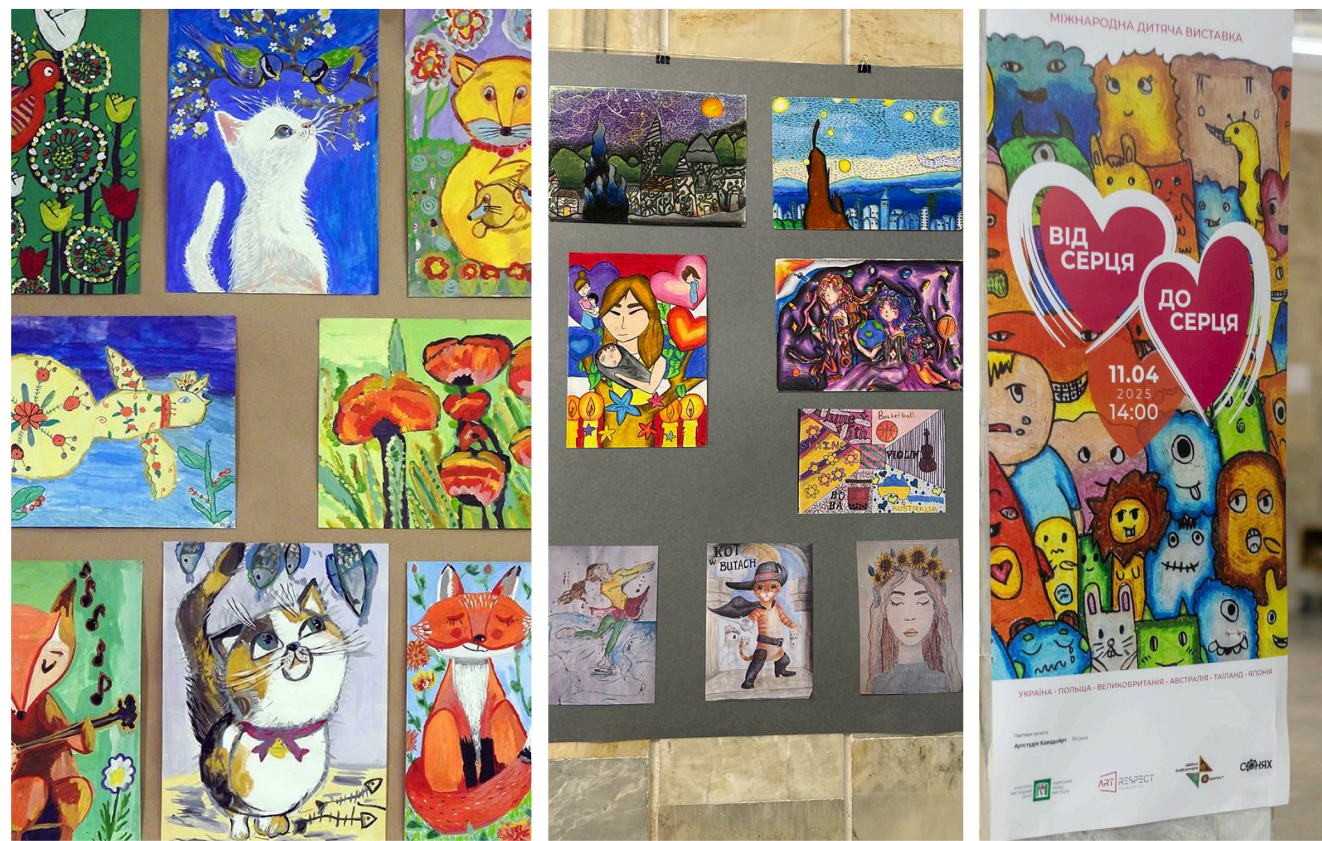
Authors:

Olha Lukovska

Links:

- https://www.facebook.com/artsrespect/posts/pfbid02Hj8tVptwUSLXvHNKyRY5hCBCi7QsJF24dKYBJjqYmtyiZANgdv5zxc2kGq1etLkVl
- https://www.facebook.com/artsrespect/posts/pfbid02tJztUE7WqWbc5q5RkaSztvLjvjwnswzqtxsJXfeNPiCcKJh2PzymJhGmTvNLRvy1l
- https://www.facebook.com/artsrespect/posts/pfbid02n5J3BknrEm8YnJMqqJq7sKyqJECyhtf4oi3o7KQYnz2LkThMdhaWYo87C5cBFv2Tl

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How can art be used as a tool for building international solidarity and bridging cultural divides, especially in times of crisis?
- In what ways can creative projects like this one empower children to express their emotions, develop their identity and promote peace on a global scale?
- How can we ensure that projects like this continue to foster long-term relationships and collaboration between diverse communities and cultures?
- What role do educators and artists play in facilitating meaningful exchanges between different cultures through artistic expression and how can they continue to support these efforts?
- How can the lessons learned from this project be applied to other global initiatives aimed at promoting peace and understanding through art?

THEATER DER KLEINEN FORM (THEATRE OF THE SMALL FORM)

Specified mission:

Critical thinking, self-expression, self-exploration, empathy, empowerment, imagination, creativity

Type of art techniques used: ●●

Theatre, Performance

Complexity:

3 - medium

Materials:

Materials such as fabric, sewing supplies and props for costume design and puppet creation.
Resources: a suitable workshop space with adequate room for movement and creative activities, as well as access to theatrical equipment like lighting or sound if performances are needed.

Time:

A workshop can last from one day to several weeks.

Crew:

Experienced facilitators or trainers skilled in theatre and educational methods. A small, dedicated team of 2 people is usually sufficient to guide the process effectively.

Audience:

In the theatre, there are enough places to accommodate 55 people per show. Children aged 3+ with and without parents participate in the theatre's activities. During the week, the program is designed for daycare and school groups during the weekdays and for families on the weekend.

Context of the practice:

General:
Theater der kleinen Form was founded over 20 years ago, out of a strong belief in the power of theatre as a tool for children's emotional, social and creative development. Back then, many children in Berlin lacked access to meaningful artistic expression and participatory learning environments.

Specific:

The founder of the theatre is Evelyn Geller, who, after graduating from the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts, became inspired by the impact this art form has on young audiences. She wanted to further pursue working with social challenges that children face. The concept was developed collaboratively, shaped by years of hands-on work with children from diverse backgrounds. The team recognised that many children benefit enormously from spaces where they can express themselves freely, explore social themes, such as justice, healthy living, inclusion and build confidence through play and storytelling.

Geller deliberately chose to create a small theatre, to make her work more personal and intimate. Her theatre aims for a meaningful and direct connection with children, where storytelling and puppetry are used as tools for imagination, empathy and playful learning.

The participatory nature of the project ensures that children are not just passive learners but active creators in the theatrical process, contributing their own ideas, experiences and narratives to the performances. This emphasis on co-creation and empowerment has remained central to the project's identity from the very beginning.

Goals of the practice:

1. Foster critical thinking, empathy and self-expression through creative theatre work with children.
2. To create a safe, inclusive and playful environment where children can explore the world around them and within them through puppetry, movement, storytelling and improvisation.
3. To support children's holistic development by enhancing their communication skills, emotional intelligence and self-confidence.
4. To encourage collaboration, respect for diversity and imaginative thinking.
5. To empower children to better understand social challenges, such as the environment.

Description of the practice:

Theater der kleinen Form offers inclusive, participatory theatre projects for children that combine artistic expression with social learning. Rooted in process-based, improvisational methods, the practice invites children to social themes, such as environmental issues, develop empathy and express themselves through puppet theatre, performance and roleplay. The practice encourages creative freedom and emotional intelligence. By providing a safe, collaborative space, it empowers children, regardless of their background, to express themselves in playful yet meaningful ways.

Artistic approach:

The practice uses a participatory and process-oriented theatrical approach, where creativity, emotional expression and self-discovery are prioritised over performance perfection. The emphasis is on creating a safe and imaginative space where children can freely explore personal and social themes.

Art tools:

Costumes and props (handmade or improvised)
Musical instruments and voice
Puppets

Artistic methods:

Improvisational and puppet theatre: Encouraging spontaneous storytelling and character development
Roleplay: Helping children explore different perspectives and emotions
Storytelling: Using personal or collective stories for creating a performance

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

Reflection: After activities or performances, children are gathered to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences verbally, fostering open communication and self-awareness.

Performances: Public presentations allow children to express what they have learned creatively, while audience reactions provide immediate feedback and validation.

Legend with different learning approaches:

Experiential Learning: Children learn by actively engaging in puppet theatre games and performance, allowing them to discover new concepts through direct experience and reflection.

Participatory Learning: The process encourages children to collaborate, make choices and contribute creatively, fostering a sense of ownership and active involvement in their learning journey.

Collective Learning: Group activities and performances promote teamwork, shared problem-solving and social interaction, helping children learn from and with each other.

Transformative Learning: Through exploring emotions, identities and stories, children may develop new perspectives about themselves and others, leading to personal growth and greater empathy.

Tandem Learning: More experienced or confident children support peers during activities, enabling peer-to-peer teaching and learning in a supportive environment.

Competences

Skills
- Creativity and imaginative thinking, generating original ideas and transforming them into expressive forms
- Improvisation, responding spontaneously in character, developing scenes in real time, and adapting to group dynamics
- Puppet theatre techniques (voice, gesture, and manipulation)
- Storytelling and narrative development
- Performance and presentation skills, ability to express ideas clearly and confidently in front of an audience

Knowledge
- Understanding the expressive potential of theatre to explore emotions, identities, and social themes
- Awareness of social issues explored through theatre (e.g., environment, justice, inclusion)
- Understanding the role of theatre as a medium for self-expression, empathy, and social dialogue
- Familiarity with basic theatrical vocabulary, structures, and processes

Attitudes
- Empathy, sensitivity to others' emotions and experiences, both within stories and in group work
- Self-confidence and willingness to take artistic risks
- Openness to diversity, appreciation for different backgrounds, perspectives, and modes of expression in a shared creative process

How to?

Step 1. Define objectives and theme
Clarify the goals (e.g., social inclusion, self-expression) and select themes relevant to the participants' context.

Step 2. Assemble a team
Gather facilitators skilled in theatre pedagogy and participatory methods. Include volunteers or collaborators if needed.

Step 3. Secure resources and space
Find a suitable rehearsal/performance space with room for movement and any technical equipment needed.

Step 4. Plan the workshop structure
Design sessions around puppet theatre, adapted to participant needs and project goals.

Step 5. Find participants
Engage target groups—children, youth, or adults—especially those from marginalised or diverse backgrounds.

Step 6. Conduct participatory workshops
Facilitate collaborative creation of short theatre pieces, encouraging self-expression and group interaction.

Step 7. Rehearse and refine performances
Support participants in rehearsing and developing their performances, fostering confidence and ownership.

Step 8. Present the final performance
Share the work with an audience, possibly followed by a discussion or reflection.

Step 10. Harvest learning and feedback
Collect reflections, feedback and document the process to evaluate impact and improve future projects.

Story from a practice:

"What we can understand in our childhood will be with us for all our lives. And I think that through this puppet, through the theatre, through the art, we can influence a future generation." Kateryna Magdenko, participant and artist.

"Puppetry offers the richest and most creative form of performing arts to reflect our reality. Everything becomes possible; we lose our footing and gain a sense of lightness in our minds. The audience is given the opportunity to use their imagination and decipher the events together. And children are world champions at this!" Author unknown.

Source: Theater der kleinen Form

Retrieved from: https://www.theatre-der-kleinen-form.de/ueberuns.htm

Impact:

Intended impact:

The primary intended impact of Theater der kleinen Form on children is to support their emotional, social and cognitive development by engaging them in stories that reflect diverse realities and encourage critical thinking. The performances aim to create a space where children feel seen and represented. By using accessible language, interactive formats and relatable characters, the theatre fosters empathy and emotional intelligence. The theatre manages to plant the seeds of understanding and compassion at an early age, helping children grow into socially aware and open-minded individuals.

Unexpected impact:

Aside from the impact shows have on children, they also challenge the perspectives of parents, pedagogues and educators who have expressed surprise at how powerfully the performances resonate with them. This, in turn, can lead to a change in the way they address social themes with their children and pupils.

Authors:

Evelyn Geller - Puppeteer - Dramaturg and Artistic Director

Links: https://www.theatre-der-kleinen-form.de/

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How can you use puppetry or visual storytelling to help children explore complex social topics such as diversity, fairness, or belonging in a way that is age-appropriate yet thought-provoking?

- What cultural or social realities are present in your community that children may already be experiencing, but rarely see reflected in the stories they are told?

- In what ways can you ensure that your project reflects intersectional realities (e.g., different backgrounds, abilities, languages, family dynamics)?

- How can puppet theatre be used not just for entertainment, but also as tools for building empathy and making invisible voices visible?

- How do you create a performance or workshop space where children feel safe and empowered to share their own stories and interpretations, no matter their background or identity?

- How can you involve parents, educators, or community members in a dialogue inspired by the performance, so the conversation about social themes continues beyond the theatre?

IDISCOVER – MASKS & IDENTITY

Specified mission:

Identity, self-exploration and self-expression, belonging, connection, inclusion

Type of art techniques used: ● ●

Theatre, Performing.

Complexity:

3 - medium

Materials:

Clown noses and clay, paper glue, old newspapers, paint and decorations were needed for masks. Paper and pens were used for reflection time.

It was easy to order clown noses online; however, making the masks was quite challenging because it all had to be done manually.

Resources:

The workshops require a warm, welcoming space with a secure floor for movement, as well as access to music to support creative exploration.

Time: the project took place over the course of 5 weekends. It was important to have the workshops on weekends so that the participants could join. Ensure that enough time is given in advance to planning which topics you want to address in the workshops, e.g., sexual, ethnic, and that the trainers are sensitive to diversity.

Crew: trainers who are well-versed in teaching mask theatre and clowning. One trainer is enough to guide a workshop of 10 participants, although two are preferable.

Audience:

The target group was the first and second generation of immigrants. There were approximately 10 young adults participating, aged 20-35. They were complete beginners and had no artistic background.

Context of the practice:

General:

The IDiscover – Masks & Identity project emerged in response to the complex identity struggles experienced by first and second-generation immigrants, particularly young adults navigating the space between their cultural heritage and societal expectations in their country of residence.

These individuals often face internal and external tensions: the pressure to assimilate and the challenge of reconciling multiple cultural influences. Many grow up feeling neither fully belonging to their home country nor entirely accepted in their current social environment. This feeling of "neither here nor there" can lead to confusion, low self-esteem, or identity fragmentation.

The workshops were designed as a creative, supportive space to explore these tensions through movement, play and mask-making. The project provided a much-needed outlet for self-exploration, connection and inclusion through the arts.

Specific:

The idea came to Omar when he was having a conversation with his friend about why expressive masks are almost always white. Since he is a person of colour, he couldn't really relate to a white mask as it did not reflect his identity. This lack of representation led to the question of whether creating masks in a wide range of colours could offer people of colour a more meaningful way to engage with mask-based theatre and if this in turn would affect their feeling of identity.

While the initial spark was personal, the project quickly evolved into a collaborative and inclusive space for people from diverse backgrounds to come together and explore identity through creativity and play.

Goals of the practice:

To create a supportive, creative and playful space where participants could engage in both artistic exploration and deep personal reflection.

To promote self-exploration and self-expression through the artistic process of mask-making and theatrical improvisation. The act of designing and embodying a self-created mask served as a metaphor and a medium for participants to access and express parts of their identity that might otherwise remain unspoken or invisible.

To create a sense of belonging and connection among participants with diverse cultural, ethnic and personal backgrounds. Through shared play and reflection, the workshop encouraged empathy, collective learning and intercultural dialogue.

To challenge dominant norms of representation, particularly around race and identity in traditional expressive mask theatre. The project questioned why expressive masks are typically white and introduced the idea of creating more representative, inclusive forms of expression.

To foster inclusion and visibility for marginalised identities, by offering participants, many of whom had no previous artistic experience, a space to be seen, heard and acknowledged for who they are.

To encourage intercultural solidarity, inviting a diversity of voices and stories into the creative space.

To explore identity as an evolving and layered concept, recognising that many individuals, especially those from immigrant backgrounds, hold complex identities shaped by multiple cultural narratives.

To equip participants with tools for self-reflection and ongoing personal development, through both creative and educational methods, including performance, dialogue and feedback.

Description of the practice:

IDiscover – Masks & Identity is a community-based artistic workshop series that combines mask-making, clowning and theatre to explore themes of identity, belonging and inclusion. Designed primarily for first and second-generation immigrants with no prior artistic experience, the practice offers a safe and playful space for self-exploration and self-expression. Through hands-on creation of personalised masks and guided improvisation, participants reflect on the complexities of their identities, shaped by culture, migration and social expectations. Rooted in the mission of active citizenship, the project empowers participants to reclaim representation, build connections across differences and use creativity as a tool for personal insight and social inclusion.

Artistic approach:

Community-based artistic approach, using theatre as an inclusive and playful tool for self-exploration and social connection. The emphasis was not on artistic perfection, but on personal expression and collective creativity. Art served as a tool to foster dialogue, belonging and identity work among diverse participants.

Art tools:

Clown noses (for playfulness and character exploration)

Clay, old newspapers, paper glue and paint (for mask creation)

Music (to support movement, rhythm and mood)

Pens and paper (for reflection and journaling)

Artistic methods:

Mask-making – shaping and painting masks allowed participants to externalise parts of their identity in a symbolic, visual way.

Improvisation and mask theatre – participants used their masks in individual and group exercises to explore how identity can shift and expand.

Clowning – introduced as a tool for vulnerability, spontaneity and emotional expression, helping participants let go of fear and tap into authenticity.

Interactive performance – the final sharing emphasised group cohesion and empowered participants to express what they discovered about themselves in front of others.

Educational approach:

Ways of harvesting the learning

Legend with different learning approaches

Experiential Learning was central, as participants actively engaged in creating masks, improvising with them and reflecting on their experiences. Learning emerged through doing, by shaping, playing and expressing identity through different theatre and performance-based exercises.

Transformative Learning took place as participants found new perspectives on understanding who they are. They accessed new understandings of themselves and others. The creative process encouraged them to uncover and reflect on parts of their identity that had not yet found expression.

Participatory Learning was evident in how the group co-created the experience. Participants brought their own stories, ideas and emotions, influencing the atmosphere and direction of the sessions. The learning was collective and co-owned.

Collective Learning developed through shared play and group performances. As participants interacted, they explored how their identities relate to those of others, fostering empathy, solidarity and mutual respect.

Tandem Learning naturally emerged in the informal exchanges between participants, many of whom came from different backgrounds. Through collaboration and dialogue, they learned from each other's perspectives and experiences.

Competences

The workshops fostered a range of civic art competences that empowered participants to engage more consciously with themselves, others and their communities through creative expression.
Skills:
- self-expression through movement and performance
- basic mask-making and design techniques
- improvisation
- active listening
- public speaking
- storytelling

Knowledge:
- understanding the role of masks in theatre traditions
- the power of playfulness and fun
- diversity in identities
- how art can be used as a tool for dialogue and inclusion

Attitudes:
- openness, empathy and curiosity, especially toward one's own complex identity and those of others
- trust, playfulness and courage to be vulnerable in a group setting
- a sense of belonging and recognition that their voices and creative input matter in shaping inclusive, participatory artistic spaces, although they had no prior experience

How to?

Different stages of the project consist of developing and designing the masks and then applying mask theatre-based playful exercises exploring the topic of identity, first individually and then in a group.

Step 1. Getting to Know
Participants are introduced to one another and begin exploring the theme of identity through playful and reflective theatre games that build trust and inspire personal insight.

Step 2. Mask Creation
Participants move into the creative process: designing, shaping and painting their own masks. This hands-on phase of participants creating their masks deepens the connection to their identity by translating internal experiences into visual form.

Step 3. Individual Exploration
With the finished masks, participants begin improvising and interacting with their creations. This solo exploration helps them embody and express aspects of their personal identity in a safe, supported and imaginative way.

Step 4. Group Interaction
Participants engage in interactive group exercises using the masks, focusing on the themes of belonging and connection. Through shared play, they explore how individual identities relate within a collective context.

Step 5. Final Performance & Reflection
The workshop culminates in a collective performance, followed by

reflection, evaluation and a celebratory closing. Participants look back on their journey and consider how to carry their insights forward.

Story from a practice:

Omar Mahmoud:
"Participants enjoyed the whole journey from making the masks, starting giving meaning to them, having first interactions, developing individual and group presentations until the final performance and reflecting on the process. The complexity and diversity of the steps allow the participants to dive deep into the process and explore what identity means to them and how they can develop a sense of belonging and trustful connection with others. The workshop offered an excellent opportunity to explore the topic of solidarity through the perspective of "Who I am" and "How I want to connect to others". It offered a lot of potential to reflect experiences from our lives and see what needs, wishes and desires are alive in us and how solidarity and empathy can be a foundation for connection."

Source: SALTO-YOUTH

Retrieved from: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-2826/Solidarity_Alliance_Guidebook.pdf

Impact:

Intended Impact:

Through mask-making and theatrical play, the participants gained deeper self-awareness and built confidence in their unique identities and narratives. Participants became aware of how playfulness and fun can serve as a powerful tool for exploring more serious topics, such as deeper layers of their identities. They were able to access emotions, stories and aspects of themselves that might be difficult to express in everyday life.

They experienced a strengthened sense of belonging. The connection and solidarity within a diverse group were created. The project encouraged active citizenship by empowering individuals to share their stories and engage meaningfully with others.

Unexpected Impact:

The creative format inspired participants who had no prior artistic experience to continue exploring theatre and mask-making as tools for personal growth and social engagement. Occasionally, the project challenged participants' preconceptions or evoked emotional responses that led to unanticipated but valuable discussions about identity, belonging and social barriers.

Authors:

Omar Mahmoud
Links: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-2826/Solidarity_Alliance_Guidebook.pdf

Reflection questions regarding the specific mission for the reader:

- How can you create a safe and welcoming environment that encourages participants from diverse backgrounds to openly explore and express their identities?
- In what ways can mask-making and theatrical play help participants embody and reflect on complex experiences of cultural belonging and self-expression?
- How will you ensure that the voices, perspectives and needs of marginalised groups, such as first- and second-generation immigrants or people of colour, are meaningfully represented at the centre of your project?
- What strategies can you use to balance artistic creativity with deeper personal and social exploration within limited time and resources?
- How can the process of co-creating and performing together foster a sense of community, belonging and active citizenship among participants?
- How will you gather and use participant feedback and reflections to adapt and deepen the learning experience throughout the project?
- What partnerships or local networks can you engage to support outreach, inclusivity and sustainability of the project?
- How can you prepare to navigate potential challenges around identity sensitivity, cultural differences and power dynamics within the group?
- In what ways might your project contribute to broader conversations about identity and inclusion in your community?

APPENDIX A: PROJECT OVERVIEW

The CivicArt project represents an innovative approach to civic education, designed to enhance the capacity of youth organisations in Ukraine and Georgia through the integration of artistic practices. This initiative recognises art not merely as creative expression, but as a powerful educational tool that can foster active citizenship and democratic engagement among young people.

Project Vision and Approach

At its core, CivicArt seeks to bridge the gap between artistic creativity and civic responsibility by employing European best practices from Germany and Spain, carefully adapted to the local contexts of Ukraine and Georgia. This cross-cultural approach ensures that educational tools are both innovative and culturally relevant, creating meaningful learning experiences that resonate with diverse audiences.

The project's methodology centres on the belief that art-based civic education can transform how young people understand and engage with democratic principles. By integrating artistic practices into non-formal education, CivicArt creates space for creative expression while simultaneously developing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and active participation in civic life.

Core Objectives

The project pursues five fundamental objectives that guide all activities and outcomes:

Methodological enrichment: CivicArt works to enhance civic education methodologies by seamlessly integrating artistic practices, creating new pathways for learning and engagement that go beyond traditional educational approaches.

Capacity building: The project directly strengthens the competencies of 26 youth workers from Ukraine and Georgia, equipping them with practical skills to use art as an educational tool for civic education.

Cross-sectoral collaboration: By fostering cooperation among youth NGOs, artistic unions, and formal education institutions, CivicArt promotes a holistic approach to civic education that leverages diverse expertise and perspectives.

Network expansion: The initiative actively works to expand the networks of partner organisations, facilitating international cooperation and the exchange of best practices across borders.

Multiplier impact: Through strategic dissemination of innovative educational materials, CivicArt aims to reach at least 5,000 stakeholders across various sectors, ensuring the project's influence extends far beyond its direct participants.

Project Structure and Implementation

CivicArt unfolds through three carefully designed stages, each building upon the previous to create a comprehensive learning and implementation journey:

Stage 1 focuses on research and adaptation, analysing European practices in art-based civic education and adjusting them for Ukrainian and Georgian contexts. This stage produces this curated collection of Practices in CivicArt, which serves as the foundation for subsequent development work

Stage 2 emphasises capacity building and tool development. Partners collaborate to create the Methodology Guide on Civic Education through Art and deliver training courses for youth workers, ensuring that innovative practices can be effectively implemented in real-world settings.

Stage 3 centres on implementation and sustainability. Youth workers apply their newly developed skills in local, artistically enriched civic education activities, supported by comprehensive social media campaigns. The creation of the CivicArt Alliance network ensures long-term sustainability and ongoing international cooperation.

Expected Impact and Legacy

The CivicArt project is designed to create lasting change at multiple levels. For individual participants,

it offers new skills, perspectives, and opportunities for creative civic engagement. For organisations, it provides enhanced capacity, expanded networks, and innovative methodologies. For communities, it fosters more engaged, informed and active young citizens.

The project's commitment to accessibility through Creative Commons licensing and multilingual translations ensures that its benefits extend beyond the immediate participants. By creating resources in English, Ukrainian, Georgian, German, and Spanish, CivicArt builds bridges linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Target Communities

CivicArt directly serves youth workers seeking innovative educational approaches, young people eager for meaningful civic engagement opportunities, young artists looking to expand their social impact, and representatives of formal education institutions interested in enhancing their civic education curricula. Through these diverse beneficiaries, the project creates a rich ecosystem of learning, creativity, and civic participation.

The project aligns with European Youth Goals and the EU Youth Strategy, contributing to a broader movement toward youth empowerment through innovative civic education practices. By documenting and sharing these practices, CivicArt becomes part of a growing international effort to reimagine how we prepare young people for active citizenship in democratic societies.

Project Consortium:

- Resonance Foundation (Ukraine)
- Gergart (Georgia)
  https://www.linkedin.com/company/gergart
  https://www.facebook.com/GergArt.NGO/
- KulturNest eV. (Germany)
- Asociacion International initiatives for cooperation Letur (Spain)

Additional Material: Documentary Film from Berlin

An additional resource is a film published on YouTube channel, which is a collection of interviews with artists and collectives in Berlin. It was recorded during the project's study visit in March 2025. By watching the film, you will hear and see different spaces and approaches to engaged artistic practices.

The film is available at the link: [https://youtu.be/_zH2o1p-UKA]

We invite you to interact: Write a comment under the film if something interests you. Let's co-create the world together!

Art Techniques Color Codes:

- ● Land Art
- ● Recycling
- ● Visual Art
- ● Architecture
- ● Design
- ● Performance
- ● Digital art
- ● Media art
- ● Street Art
- ● Installations
- ● Literature & Journalism

- ● Theatre
- ● Dance
- ● Relational Art
- ● Participatory Art
- ● Conceptual Art
- ● Social Practice art
- ● Process art
- ● Documentary art

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Land Art ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Also known as Earth Art, Land Art is a technique and a movement that refers to creating art in nature, using materials such as rocks, trees, sand, water, and everything else available in the landscape where it is created. It started as a rebellion against the commercialisation of art because it is not possible to buy these pieces. Other reasons are environmental causes and an invitation to appreciate nature. This type of art changes with the natural forces, inviting viewers to contemplate the natural, transient nature of all things.

TYPES:

1. Land art pieces that require deep modifications of the landscape using heavy machinery for digging and moving the earth to create long-lasting massive sculptures.

2. Artworks made without changing the landscape. Leaves, ice, and other natural materials that will eventually disappear are used.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Respect and do not damage nature where you are creating your work of art. Start with the simplest materials you can find. Arrange them in patterns and play with repetition to create the visual appeal. Think about the message you want to send. Be aware of the transience of your work.

REFERENCES:

What Is Land Art? | The Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Land art | Tate

Land Art: Where Art and Nature Become One for a Brief Moment in Time | Sound of Life

Recycling ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Recycling is an art technique where one uses discarded materials, such as bottles, furniture, textiles, and more, and transforms them into aesthetically appealing works of art. The impacts of this art technique are many; it not only raises awareness about eco-friendly, sustainable living and invites the viewers to rethink their own use of waste, but it also develops creativity, resourcefulness, and lateral thinking. Looking at a discarded table and thinking about how to create something new from it fosters both practical and artistic skills.

TYPES:

Upcycled art and downcycled art. Upcycled art uses discarded materials to create something new and beautiful. Downcycled art breaks down materials into their simpler components and then creates something new but unrecognisable in comparison to the original product.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Take a look around you and start by using the most frequently found waste, such as toilet paper rolls, bottles, and newspapers. Use what you already have. If you have to buy new items to create recycled art, then it defeats the purpose. Next, allow the material to inspire you – let your imagination run wild, and get creative about what these materials could become. You can create collage, sculptures, murals, or something functional, such as a lamp.

REFERENCES:

Watson & Wolfe - Recycled Art - a form of Environmental Activism

The Artling - 10 Artists Creating Recycled & Eco-Conscious Art

"Artistic Waste"- The Other Side of the Art-Making Process | by Jiaxin Li Dani | Medium

Visual Art ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Visual art encompasses all types of art that are primarily intended to be enjoyed through the sense of sight. Some are meant to be understood the way the artist had intended, while others give the viewer the freedom of interpretation. Either way, they can send powerful messages. They can have a strong personal, emotional, therapeutic, or educational impact that stays with the viewer long after they have seen it.

TYPES:

There are numerous types of visual art, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, murals, video art, digital media, and more.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS: Think about the type of visual art that attracts you the most. Reflect on what you wish to create and what message you would like to send. Consider finding help from outside sources, whether through internet tutorials or by finding an actual tutor to teach you the basics of the technique. Don't get frustrated with initial failures, these can't be avoided. Make sure you enjoy the process.

REFERENCES:

What is Visual Art? Complete Guide for Beginners, Students, and Aspiring Artists | by Malcolm Fernandes | Medium

The Importance of Visual Arts and Creativity in Education - Radford College

Architecture ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Architecture is considered art because it creates a sensory experience. It can express ideas and values, and awaken emotions, such as awe and peacefulness, just like any other work of art can. Also, it combines aesthetic expression with functional design. It utilises materials, light, shapes, and space to create structures that are both functional and visually appealing.

TYPES:

Throughout centuries, many types, or styles, of architecture have emerged: Classical, Gothic, Modern, Art Nouveau, Baroque, etc.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Start by studying famous architects and what was special about their work. Observe the buildings around you. Think about how they utilise form, shapes, proportions, and light. Try drawing them. Learn the basics of design.

REFERENCES:

Art Miami Magazine - Architecture as an Artistic Expression

Public Delivery - The relationship between architecture and art

Design ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: There has been much debate about whether design is an art form. We take the position that it is because it awakens something in the viewer, something that goes further and deeper than the mere respect for the functionality of the product. Design merges art and functionality. It is a means of expression that aims to create an impact on the perception of the recipient.

TYPES:

There are numerous types of design: graphic design, illustration design, web design, interior design, fashion design, and much more.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Learn about colour theory and design principles, such as balance, contrast, alignment, white space, and hierarchy. Start with less, limit yourself to a few colours, fonts, and other elements. You don't wish to overcrown your design – always bear the viewers in mind and what looks appealing to them. Ask for feedback from others about what they think of your design - even professionals do it.

REFERENCES:

Design 101: A Beginner's Guide to the Various Types of Design - Unlimited Graphic Design Service

Design… is it art? - Artsper Magazine

Performance ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Performance art involves the presence of an artist using their body, voice, or any object and installation. It consists of four elements: time, space, the performer's presence, even digital, and a relationship with an audience. It can be scripted or improvised. It can happen anywhere, and last for any period of time (think of Marina Abramovic's performance at the MoMA gallery, which lasted 736 hours and 30 minutes). It is an event rather than a product that you can take home with you and look at (unless it is recorded).

TYPES:

Many types of art fall under the umbrella of performance art: music, dance, theatre, standup comedy, circus arts, mime, etc.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Focus on the type of performance art that has left the most powerful impact on you and start there. You don't even need to study the technique; it's okay to be authentic and raw. Start by playing around and exploring an emotion, idea, or situation that you feel is worth addressing. Reflect on what message you wish to convey. Dare to be vulnerable and exposed. Start by performing in front of people you feel most comfortable with, such as your family and friends.

REFERENCES:

How Performance Art Took Over the Art World | Art for Sale | Artspace

Smarthistory – Performance art, an introduction

Digital art ⬤

What defines digital art is the use of digital technology (such as illustrations, drawings, photos, and videos) to create, transform, or exhibit an artwork. Though you need serious creative and technical skills, this type of art has several advantages, such as flexibility, speed, accessibility, affordability, and minimal waste of materials.

TYPES:

digital drawing, digital painting, animation, pixel art, vector painting, 3D modeling, photo painting, digital collage, etc.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS: There are many software programmes, AI tools, and online programmes that enable you to make digital art. The most common one is Adobe Photoshop. There are numerous online tutorials for using it. Then, all you have to do is pick your tools and brushes, and off you go.

REFERENCES:

Skill Share- Exploring the Various Types of Digital Art

What is Digital Art? | Digital Painting & Drawing Guide | Adobe

Media art

DESCRIPTION:

The main characteristic of Media art, also called New Media art, is the fusion of artistic ideas with emerging technologies, such as virtual reality, computer animation, 3D printing, algorithms, coding, biotechnology, robotics, as well as the internet. Artists influence the technologies they work with and are influenced by them. The four pillars of Media art are digital technologies, multimedia, interactivity, and digital culture. So, aside from utilising new technologies, it blends several forms of media. It aims to be interactive or experiential, giving the viewer an active role. It explores digital culture, i.e., the influence new media has on our lives, society, and identity.

TYPES:

virtual art, digital art, interactive art, sound art, Internet art, and more

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS: Master several technologies of your choice and think how you can blend several forms of media to create an artwork that both sends a message and enables the participants to engage with it.

REFERENCES:

New Media Art : What it is and How to Create It! - HeavyM Blog
Introduction to New Media Art

Street Art

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Street Art is any piece of art that is created in public spaces, sometimes without official permission. It invites the public to reflect on its message, which is usually related to social, civic, or political themes. Street art has no set rules—it encourages creative freedom where anything is possible.

TYPES: graffiti, sculpture, sticker art, murals, carving, poster art, video projecting

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS: Aside from obviously needing to develop some skills, you need to be passionate and authentic. You need to be able to tell a story that the public can understand, and be touched by it.

REFERENCES:

Street and Graffiti Art | The Art Story

What Is Street Art? | Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics

Installations

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Installation art involves the use of objects in space; these two elements are what make up the artwork itself. Installations are presented in 3D and require active engagement of the viewer - by entering their space, one can see the artwork from different perspectives, with each creating a new experience. Installations often engage more than just the visual sense.

TYPES:

site-specific, interactive, immersive, multimedia, conceptual, and environmental installations

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Choose long-lasting materials, so that you don't have to worry about unexpected repairs. That said, account for regular replacements of certain parts of the installation, so make sure they are inexpensive and that you can easily access them within the installation. Test any prototypes you make, and keep the safety of the viewers in mind.

REFERENCES:

Interactive Art Installations: 6 Tips for a Flawless Project

What Is Installation Art and How Does It Transform Our Perception?

Literature & Journalism

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Literature involves creative use of language to convey experiences, ideas, emotions, and thoughts. The writer uses words as symbols, which are then interpreted by the reader. In that sense, literature requires active participation from the reader, engaging their cognitive faculties, imagination, and personal experiences.

TYPES:

poetry, novels, drama, short stories, non-fiction

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Start with what you already know, a topic you are passionate about. Enjoy the process and don't worry about the quality. Learn the rules of writing. Read a lot and study writers whose styles have touched you. Schedule a regular writing routine. The more you write, the better you will get.

REFERENCES:

Literature as an Art Form: The Eternal Symphony of Words

The Art of Literature and the Science of Literature - The American Scholar

Theatre

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Theatre is a combination of several art techniques: literature, performance, dance, music, and more. It is collaborative in nature and usually involves the combined use of words, body, voice, emotions, costumes, and props to convey the universal topics of human experience and social interactions. Theatre aims to both entertain and educate. Also, it can be an instrument of social change, or a reflection of a historical period.

TYPES:

Traditional, Experimental, Physical, Classical, Improvisational, Musical, Shadow, Street, Interactive, Puppet Theatre.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Take acting classes to understand the use of voice, presence, body, the expression of emotions, different techniques, and more. Join a local theatre group. Watch a lot of plays and films. Practice memorising scripts. Don't be afraid to expose yourself and to make mistakes in front of people.

REFERENCES:

THEATRE An Introduction Theatre is a collaborative art form which combines words, voice, movement and visual elements to express

Introduction Into Theater Arts: Definition, History, & More

Dance ●

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Dance is a powerful art technique, a universal language that communicates emotions, stories, and ideas without the use of words. Through visually appealing, choreographed or improvised movements, it engages the viewer and awakens something deep inside of them. By employing elements of repetition, rhythm, timing, formations, lighting, and costumes, the choreographer and dancers create a transcendental experience, albeit interpreted differently by everyone in the audience.

TYPES:

This is by far the most diverse art form; there are as many types of dance as there are countries and cultures in the world! Dance can be categorised into classical/traditional, modern (contemporary), and street/social dance, and this is by no means an exhaustive list.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Think about the type of music and movements you enjoy the most. Watch different styles of dance live or online and pick the one that gets your heart racing. Learn the basics and practice regularly. Don't forget to have fun.

REFERENCES:

The Art of Dance; Choreography, Movements & History

Dance as Art: The Expressive Movement of the Soul - IDO

Relational Art ●

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:
Relational art or Relational Aesthetics is an art form that has social interaction as its key component. It aims to replicate human relations and their social context. It relies on the engagement and contribution of the audience to exist, and its outcomes are unpredictable. An example is Rirkrit Tiravanija's "Untitled (Free/Still)" art piece, where he cooks and shares meals with the audience, redefining the gallery into a common space for social interaction and shared experience.

TYPES:
interactive installations, participatory sculptures, street interviews, urban interventions, events, and more

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

To create relational art, you first need to understand its key principles: social interaction, audience participation, dissolving boundaries between art and reality, and focus on the process rather than the product. First, reflect on which social topic you wish to explore. Next, develop the concept. Then, find the appropriate setting and materials. Finally, start and observe what happens.

REFERENCES:

What Is Relational Aesthetics? | TheCollector

Relational Aesthetics Movement Overview | TheArtStory

Participatory Art ●

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The key prerequisite of this type of art is the active participation of the audience. Rather than being passive observers, the audience becomes a co-creator. What matters most is the collaboration and social bonds created among the participants through a shared activity. Instead of being in the spotlight, the artist serves more as a facilitator. Examples of participatory art include interactive installations, public sculptures, and community art projects.

TYPES:

Community Arts, Activist Art, New Genre Public Art, Dialogical Art

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Decide on the cause or civic issue that you wish to explore. Think about how you can involve the audience and encourage democratic collaboration and connection. Give clear instructions and ask for feedback from the participants. Use it to improve the project.

REFERENCES:

Participatory Arts – Participedia

Participatory art | MoMA

Conceptual Art ●

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Conceptual art is an art form in which the idea or concept and the process of its realisation are more important than the object created. Unlike a musician or a painter who is limited by their tools, a conceptual artist uses any materials or tools that are best for expressing their idea; the end product can range from a performance to an everyday object.

TYPES:

performance art, video art, installations, painting, photography, literature, land art, everyday objects.

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

The goal of Conceptual art is not to look beautiful, but to make you think. Try to guess what the artist's message is. How you perceive and interpret it is just as important as the artist's original intention.

REFERENCES:

Conceptual Art: Development and Evolution - Artland Magazine

Conceptual Art Movement Overview | TheArtStory

Social Practice art ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Social practice art, also known as socially engaged art, focuses on collaboration and social interaction between its creators. Its primary goal is not the art piece, but community building and the exploration of social issues. The main focus is on the process and encouraging social change.
TYPES: educational art, interventions, therapeutic art, dialogical art, artivism, participatory art, community art

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Social practice art is less about the art piece and more about people's interactions and collaboration. It's okay if it doesn't resemble traditional art; what matters is the process of bringing people together and inspiring change.
REFERENCES:

Social Practice Art Movement Overview | TheArtStory

Learn More Series: Introduction to Social Practice Art: Engaging Communities and Promoting Social Change

Process art ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

With Process Art, what matters the most is the act of creation, not the final product. It is the creative process itself that becomes the artwork. Process art values unpredictability - accidents are embraced. It can be unfinished, and the traces of work are left visible. It can change with time due to decay. All ideas are welcome.

TYPES: material-driven, time-based, collaborative, documented

COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Don't stress about the final product; instead, allow the materials to guide you. Embrace whatever happens.

REFERENCES:

An Introduction to Process Art (Or, How Minimalism Went From Pretty to Gritty) | Art for Sale | Artspace

Process art | The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation

Documentary art ⬤

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Documentary art is an art technique that uses creative expression to present real-life events, people, and social situations. It is rooted in research, observation, and truth-based representation. It often uses testimonies, archival material, photography, and video to create art pieces that inform, educate, and raise awareness about social, historical, or political issues. Artists perform as both creators and investigators. This form of art blends together journalism, activism, and art, inviting audiences not just to observe but to reflect and act.

TYPES:

photographic, video, installation, performance, interviews, and more
COMMENTS FOR BEGINNERS:

Start with an issue you care about. Use any affordable equipment, such as a smartphone or a notebook. Focus on the truthful representation of the issue, but take the liberty to add your personal commentary to it, your own emotions and attitudes. Be ethical in your representation, and create a safe space for others to share their stories. Combine different art forms (photography, sound, writing) if you feel it conveys the message better.

REFERENCES:

https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca - Theoretical and Practical Definitions of Documentary Art in Canadian Archives (pdf)

Between Frames - Documentary Art & Journalism

About the authors

Eva Randelzhofer is a freelance artist, curator, lecturer, and art educator who also works as a systemic consultant in change and transformation processes. Her mission revolves around exploring the question: "What can artistic strategies achieve in non-art contexts?"

She describes her methodology as "social dimensions of aesthetic appropriation of the world".
These processes, which she designs and facilitates, sit alongside her curatorial practice.

In her artistic work, Eva develops site-specific and participatory projects that not only reflect the history of a place but also activate unused resources and potentials. Through interdisciplinary approaches, she creates visible and tangible changes in both spatial and systemic contexts.

She studied art and architecture at the Kunsthochschule Kassel, received her diploma in painting, and holds an M.A. in Kunst im Kontext from the UdK Berlin.

As part of the "Cultural Agents for Creative Schools" program, she served as a cultural agent and process facilitator, supporting four schools in developing a cultural school profile, via twenty two participatory projects

Publications:

Formats and Methods: Die Wochenwand
Reflection: "Whose Project Is It Anyway?"
The Question of Authorship in Participatory Art Projects

Teaching Activities:

2022 Seminar and Mentoring at UdK Berlin, "Diversity in Dialogue - the General Studies of UdK Berlin," funded by NEUSTART Culture
2021 Curriculum consulting for "Artistic Interventions in Cultural Education", a certificate course at the University of Hildesheim, as part of the Cultural Agents team
2015 Conceptualisation and co-design of the event "7 auf einen Streich" in collaboration with Mona Jas and Carsten Cremer, Kunsthochschule Weißensee

BVKA - Künstlerische Strategien in edukativen Kontexten: Eva Randelzhofer
Eva Randelzhofer

Tatjana Glogovac is a non-formal education trainer, writer, English teacher, and yoga instructor. She holds two master's degrees; one in English Teaching Methodology and another in Humanistic Sciences in Philology. Tatjana has worked as a writer and researcher on various non-formal education projects, focusing on participatory art, developing emotional intelligence in children and youth, and the development of trainer competences. As a teacher and yoga instructor, she is a strong believer in the power of humanistic education and she approaches every student as a unique and valuable individual.

Her writing and research work primarily center around wellbeing and helping others live healthier and more meaningful lives. Currently, she is writing a book about teaching wellbeing to teenagers.

Lorena Terzi is a community artist, youth worker and project coordinator with a Master in Art History and Critique and currently undergoing a formation in Transformative Coaching.

She works for different social organizations offering workshops and facilitation for processes focusing on creative learning, DIY and DIT, public spaces awareness, and sustainability.

She is co-founder and board member of KulturNest e.V. and project coordinator at the social circus CABUWAZI.

In her practice she explores different mediums, from printmaking to textile art, from street interventions to photography and storytelling, as means to engage with people, and as tools to create community building and fostering self-empowerment. She believes in the motto "gentileza gera gentileza", kindness generates kindness, and in the power of artivism and creativity to shape the world around us.

Contributors

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Links for further reading:

Künstlerische Interventionen – Erkenntnisse eines Pilotkurses zur Weiterbildung von Künstler*innen in der Kulturellen Bildung | kubi-online
Review – Künstlerische Interventionen

Partners: