

# **art as foundation**

General Overview

**artasfoundation**  
for peace.







«Art is about asking questions and allowing people to explore the complexities of the answers to those questions. It's not about getting everybody to think the same thing. It's about getting people to experience humanity on a different level.»

Gillian Slovo

artasfoundation, the Swiss foundation for art in conflict regions is an independent, politically unaffiliated, operating foundation. Established in 2011, it is financed by private contributions. It initiates its own art projects, accompanies their realisation, and investigates how spaces for art can promote conflict meditation and peace building.

This brochure gives an overview of artasfoundation. Current information and news can be found on the website [www.artasfoundation.ch](http://www.artasfoundation.ch). For further questions, please contact us!

## artasfoundation

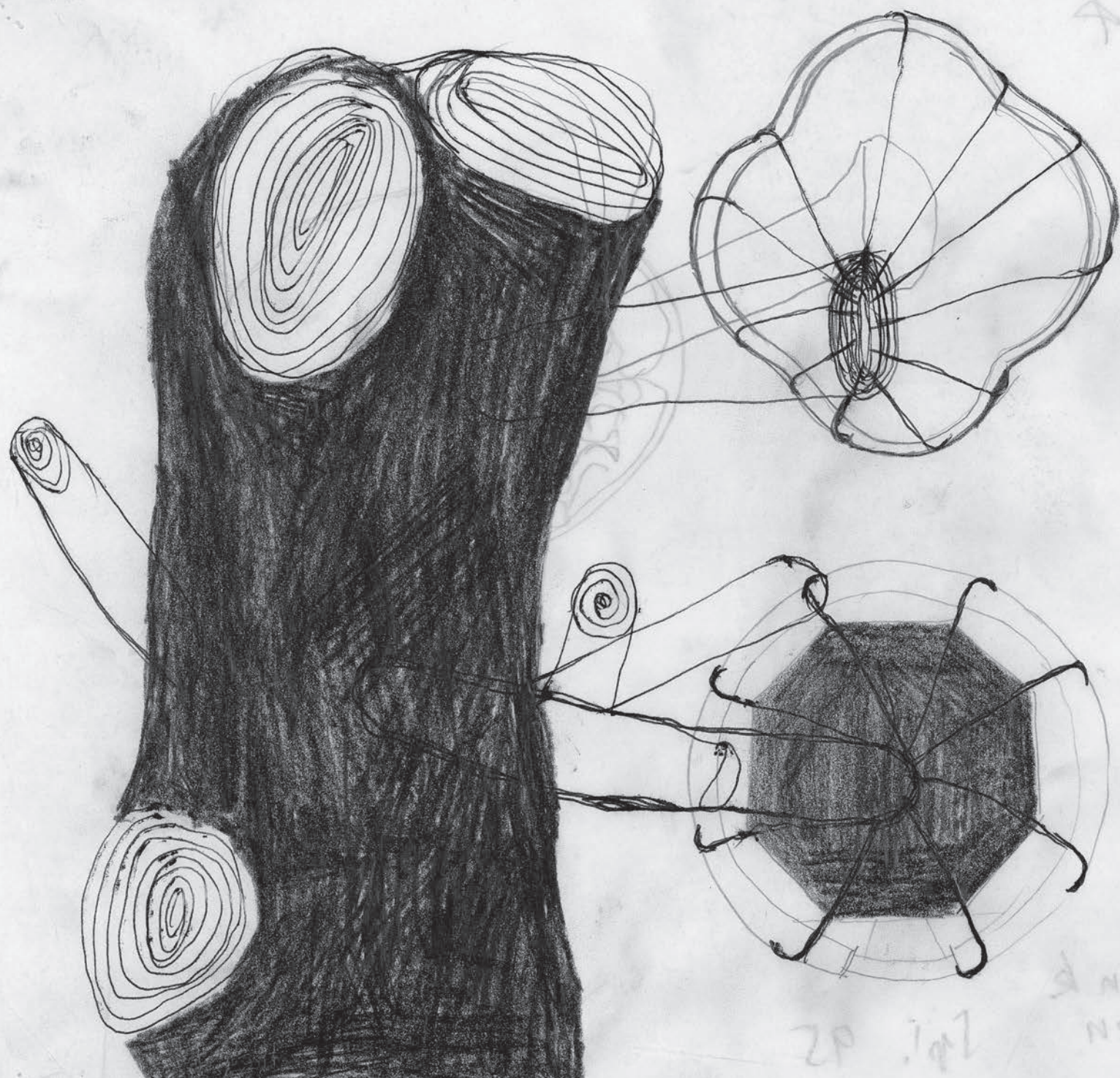
Swiss Foundation for Art  
in Regions of Conflict

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## What we think

- Engaging in art is a basic human need. Humanitarian support in the aftermath of conflicts should also provide time and space for art.
- Art offers a specific way of relating to the world. It invites us to let go of utilitarian calculations, sharpen our perception and see the supposedly known in a new way. Accordingly, it creates new perspectives for conflict resolution.
- Art allows us to communicate experiences that are difficult to put into words and to bring together people of very different cultural backgrounds.
- Creating a space beyond everyday concerns, art invites us to experiment with new ways of acting. Artworks stimulate discussion and exchange of opinions between conflicting parties—without letting anyone have the last word.
- By engaging in art, even underprivileged people can achieve dignity and personal recognition. As such, art is similar to religion, but it can intervene in situations where religion is politically instrumentalized.
- In order for art to develop this potential, it must not be subordinated to any fixed goals or purposes—no matter how good the intentions might be. It needs spaces of trust in which to play, without guaranteed outcomes or proven effects.
- The above applies to quality artistic work in all forms, media and traditions (visual, music, dance, drama, film, literature, etc.).



### What we want to do

- To establish in Switzerland a centre of competence for art in the context of conflict mediation and peace building.
- To initiate art projects in affected regions in the aftermath of wars, civil strife or hostilities and to supplement established humanitarian work with art.
- To make this possible functionally and financially in conjunction with partner organisations, to follow up on the projects and document them.
- To support ongoing diplomatic peace-building mediation by independent international or national institutions with specific artistic initiatives at various levels of society.
- To conduct research and analyse the existing examples and methods of art within the context of conflict mediation and peace building and to apply this research to new initiatives.
- To set up international networks between individual initiatives for art in the context of conflict mediation and peace building and to encourage the exchange of experiences.
- To publicly present projects of conflict mediation and peace building through art and foster dialogue outside of the conflict areas.

### What we commit ourselves to

- The foundation is non-profit. Its purpose is to provide help and opportunities for self-help: it wants to alleviate for its representatives, its sponsors and partners the feeling of powerlessness in the face of violence and create the possibility for meaningful commitment. For those who are directly exposed to violence, it wants to enable experiences and encounters that will give them support in overcoming this violence.
- In its work and cooperation with other organisations, the foundation subscribes to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The foundation has no political affiliations.
- The foundation calls upon art of high quality in different media and from different places of origin, and provides it with the necessary space.
- With its projects, the foundation seeks to create lasting effects by fostering cooperation between artists based in the conflict areas and artists from other countries or regions.
- The foundation works together with highly qualified public and private institutions in the field of international peace building and endeavours to supplement their established practices and methods with contributions from the arts.
- The foundation makes its sponsorship transparent. It ensures that its donors give their support free of political obligations and without imposing conditions on the artistic work.



### How we work

- artasfoundation is an operating foundation that is financed by grants and private contributions and that initiates its own projects. It is not an awarding foundation and does not process unsolicited applications for support from other parties.
- The foundation has its seat in Switzerland and maintains an office to establish a centre of competence for art in the context of conflict mediation and peace building.
- The foundation's competence centre is active internationally and conducts projects in various geographic areas. Initially, 1-2 projects will be undertaken each year and financed individually.
- There are three types of projects:
  1. Art in Reconstruction
  2. Art in Mediation
  3. Research and Networking
 The results of these projects will also be presented and discussed outside of the particular project region.
- In selecting projects and inviting artists, the foundation is assisted by an advisory board with experts in the fields of "Art," "Conflict Mediation" and "Civil Society."

### Our projects

Our first task is the consolidation of the foundation, which was founded in 2011. We are bringing together committed and qualified individuals in order to create a centre of competence for art in the context of peace processes and making the necessary institutional contacts. Through regular events in Switzerland, a growing circle of friends of the foundation will be kept informed about art projects in post-conflict situations.

The main area of activity concerns three types of projects:

#### 1. Art in reconstruction

This involves art initiatives in regions that have experienced wars or other violent conflicts. They can take the form of concerts, dance or theatre performances, workshops, exhibitions, film projections in towns, villages or refugee camps. Based on in-depth research, these initiatives are carried out in close collaboration with humanitarian organisations that are active in the conflict regions. Their effect should be to durably empower the local artistic actors.

The treatment of traumas through medical art-therapeutic means and the long-term operation of cultural centres are not among the foundation's tasks.





An example of a possible project:

*A choir in a region inhabited by refugees  
in the southern caucasus*

*In the wake of the armed conflict between Georgian and Abkhazian units in the 1990s and the Russian-Georgian War over Abkhazia and South Ossetian (2008), many people had to leave their homes and native regions. In Georgia alone, the number of these refugees is estimated to be more than 200 000. Many still live in emergency shelters or in isolated refugee camps. While the economic situation in the country makes new beginnings difficult, and as international aid agencies are turning to other conflict areas, many of these people, are trapped in a position of waiting.*

*A music festival initiated by artasfoundation and featuring well-known singers invites the inhabitants of the refugee camps and surrounding villages to join a new choir. artasfoundation organizes the director of the choir, a music hearsals. Composers are involved in the process to revive the local musical traditions in contemporary forms. The members of the choir can write their own lyrics to the music and sing about issues that are of special concern to them. They will gradually be able to perform for a wider audience.*

## 2. Art in mediation

This encompasses art interventions as a supportive accompaniment to independent diplomatic efforts in the context of international or national peace initiatives or mediation processes. These may be addressed to different participants, such as the peace delegations of the conflicting parties, significant opinion-makers or the general public. Depending on the particular phase of negotiations, the art interventions will be carried out in close collaboration with the intermediaries or meditation teams.

An example of a possible project:

*Two artists participate in peace talks in sudan*

*In January 2011 a referendum led to the division between North and South Sudan, but did not resolve the conflict completely. While South Sudan gained national independence, the status of the Abyei Province, which lies on the border between the two states, remains unsettled. Negotiations are underway through the intermediary of the former South African President Thabo Mbeki.*

*Mediators often invite outside experts for advice on certain negotiation issues. It can also happen that they try to unblock stagnating talks with shared activities. These can involve looking at a football game or participating in excursions.*

*Our suggestion is to invite two artists from other regions who have experience with conflict to attend the peace negotiations; at first only as observers, then to react to what they have observed with a personal artwork. They*

*will present this artwork at a subsequent round of negotiations. The mediators can decide whether this input is to be used as an alternative to watching football together or to introduce it as a direct contribution to the negotiations, on an equal footing with other expert input. The goal in both cases is to bring a fresh perception or new points of view into the negotiations.*

### 3. Research and networking

This involves research projects and analyses of art initiatives that have already taken place in the context of conflict mediation and peace building, as well as an ongoing reflection on the projects initiated by the artasfoundation. The goal is to make existing experience accessible and bring the interested actors into contact with each other.

An example of a possible project:

#### *Research project “art in conflict”*

*artasfoundation focuses more directly on art in the context of conflict mediation than other foundations, but it is not the first or only initiative of its kind by any means. It is our concern to conduct research on other projects in this area, compare experiences and exchange knowledge and information.*

*To be studied are well-known initiatives, such as the Operndorf-Project by Christoph Schlingensiefel or the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, as well as (art) initiatives that*

*have not been given as much publicity, like “Face2Face” by the French artist J.R., “L’auditeur/Dakar” by K. Meyer, concerts in Sarajevo in the summer of 1994, or events at the Belgrade “Centre for Cultural Decontamination”, to name just a few examples.*

*Projects like these can be analysed from different points of view: for example, from the point of view of the institutions involved in peace building, from that of the public directly or indirectly involved, or from that of the participating artists involved at the professional level. A first research project is devoted to this last perspective. Its purpose is to establish a checklist for considerations and clarification in the planning of art projects in the context of conflict mediation and to provide a basis for discussion with representatives of other projects.*







## We support artasfoundation

The foundation board and advisory committee is composed of notable personalities in the area of art, conflict mediation and civil society:

Mauro Abbühl (Co-Director, artlink—Office for Cultural Cooperation) • Günther Bächler (Swiss Ambassador in Georgia) • Christine Beerli (Vice-President of the ICRC) • Franziska Burkhardt (Department Head, Federal Department of Culture, Switzerland) • Catherine David (Curator, Paris) • Barbara Ellenberger (Manager of the Theater am Kirchplatz, Schaan/FL) • Maaïke Engelen (Child and Adolescent Psychoanalyst, London) • Angelo Gnädinger (Regional Director, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva) • Maren Haartje (Programme Manager for Peace-Women Across the Globe) • Ursula König (Independent Mediator and Consultant for Conflict Transformation) • Esther Kouyaté Marty (Theatre Director and West-African Griotte, Paris) • Sandro Lunin (Programme Director of the Zurich Theaterspektakel) • Thomas D. Meier (Dean of the Zurich University of the Arts) • Cyrus Mosayebi (free-lance Marketing Counsellor) • Nicole Müller (Writer and Director of Communications) • Danielle Nanchen (Director of the “Programme” Section of Pro Helvetia) • Dagmar Reichert (Cultural Geographer, Lecturer at the Zurich University of the Arts) • Birgit Reichert (TV und film producer, Dor-Film, Vienna) • Dieter Senghaas (Professor for Peace Research, University of Bremen) • Peter Studer (President of the Swiss Kunstverein, former President of the Swiss Press Council) • Alice Thomann (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) • Annina Zimmermann (Co-Director of the firm “Kunstbetrieb AG Münchenstein”) • and others

You will find a presentation of the foundation board and advisory council—including the professional background of its members—on our website, as well as in a separate brochure. We will be happy to mail it to you upon request.

Many private persons and institutions have supported the founding of artasfoundation financially or with their help:

Andreas and Brigitte Albicker • Therese Augsburgers and Jürg Spörri • Astrid Bodisch • Daniela Brunner • Jean-Marie Clarke • Katharina Flieger • Christian Fürholz • Simon Gaus • Stefan Gerster • Gruppenpraxis Paradies • Patrick Kull • Cyrus Mosayebi • Nicole Müller • Nadine Naville • Elodie Pong • Dagmar Reichert • Lilian Ryser • Andrea Saemann • Lilian Saemann • Marcel Schwald • Valüna Foundation • Marianne Vogler • Mara Züst • and others

A regularly updated list of supporters can be found on our website.

## We are in dialog with

For its projects, the foundation collaborates with experienced partners. It is discussing concrete projects with representatives of the following institutions:

Artlink, Switzerland • British Council, Switzerland • Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva • SDC, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation • FDFA, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation • ICRC, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva • norient, Switzerland • pre-art, Switzerland • Pro Helvetia • Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland • and others

## artas**foundation** needs your support

We would like to give the foundation a broad social base and invite you to participate as a friend, donor or patron for a particular project. Please contact us if you have questions or wish to offer your support in some other form.

### Friend of artas**foundation**

With a yearly contribution of 100 SF you will be kept informed of the foundation's activities and receive an invitation and free admission to an annual cultural events.

### Donor to artas**foundation**

With a yearly contribution of 2,000 SF or more, you will receive a multiple from each project and all the publications of the foundation in addition to current information, invitations and free admission to the foundation's events.

### Patron for an artas**foundation** project

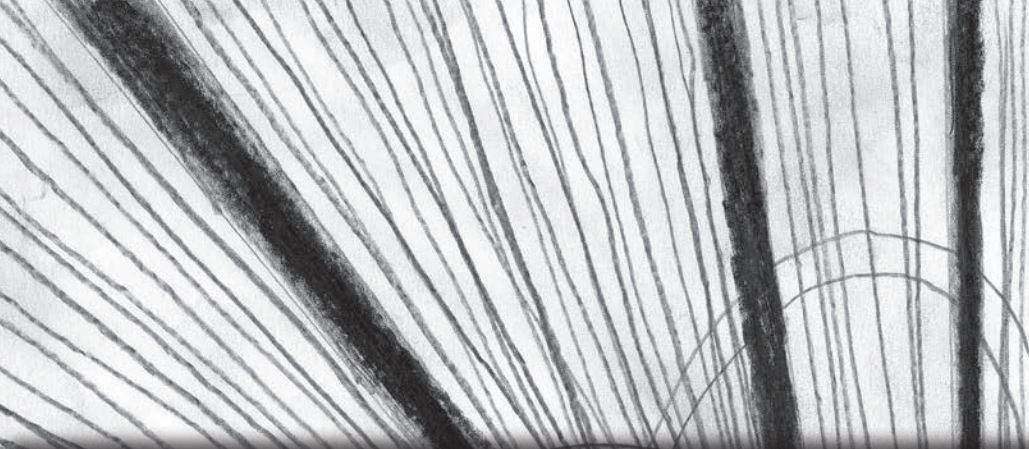
Support a particular art project and accompany us in the on site-realisation. If you wish, we will help you with planning your travel to the project region.

Please support the work of artasfoundation!

Thank you for your interest and for your contribution!

artasfoundation is recognised by the Swiss Bureau of Finance as a charitable trust: donations and contributions are tax deductible.

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