

artasfoundation Circular

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What We Can Do

Many regions of the world are in turmoil. Where *artasfoundation* is active, political tensions rise, war rages, artists, colleagues and friends live under threat. What is it that we can do? Here is the beginning of the list we made for ourselves:

- (Continue to) heat the *artasfoundation* office with wood instead of fossil fuels
- Resist thinking in terms of broad, blanket categories
- Not forget other regions in crisis (Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Yemen, among, unfortunately, many more) despite the relentless flood of news from Eastern Europe
- Neither forget the people from those very regions who also seek protection in our countries
- Take the long view: the “peace industry” changes its focus quickly. After it has moved on to the next place of acute need, much will remain to be done, especially with art
- Find good concert opportunities for the Ukrainian Youth Jazz Band that we have been supporting since their arrival in Bern last March
- Assist endangered artists holding Russian passports in applying for Schengen visas
- Read as much poetry as news
- Arrange private accommodation and workspaces for refugee artists
- Continue our planned projects in the Caucasus, where it is possible
- Develop new projects drawing on art as a means for mediation in divided societies
- Keep in mind how well we are living in Switzerland and reflect on how we can share more
- ...

Dear friends of *artasfoundation*, in response to our call after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we received financial donations and more than 40 offers of accommodation for people seeking protection. Although we were able to arrange some, the need is not over. As we try to respond to both short- and long-term needs, we do our best to pass on your contributions as wisely as possible. We thank you for your engagement and solidarity!

The *artasfoundation* team,
Dagmar Reichert, Sandra Frimmel, Sandra Suter,
as well as our new colleague Julien Fehlmann

Welcome to Bern!



The Ukrainian Youth Jazz Band in Bern. Photo: Julien Fehlmann

On March 25, we could bring sixteen musicians aged 14 to 20 in a bus from Ukraine to Switzerland. Thanks to a partnership between *artasfoundation* and the *Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation*, they found accommodation in Niederscherli near Bern. Our team's friends and family helped set up the three apartments they live in and prepared food to welcome them after what had been an arduous journey.

As their smiles reappeared, they conquered the hearts and minds of the neighbourhood and proactively managed to find clothes, rehearsal spaces, bikes, and more. We, at *artasfoundation*, have been supplying the missing bits, managing the administration, sourcing instruments and organising concert opportunities. Now two months after their arrival, we work toward providing them with opportunities for musical training for the short- and long-term. A number of jazz professionals in the area will deliver workshops aiming at supporting their musical education and getting them acquainted with the rich jazz landscape of Switzerland. The flux of musical influences that will result from their journey might spread Swiss and Ukrainian music in territories in which none were likely to meet the other. *artasfoundation* is glad to make such encounters possible.

“In the End All Will Be Fine!”



A wishing tree in Dilijan, inspired by the Chinese Tanabata ritual. Photo: Kilian Haselbeck

“I told you that everything would be fine in the end!” And indeed, after we had added an additional workshop to the *Wishing Wishes* dance project in the Armenian region of Tavush, all those involved could marvel at an impressive dance performance by the young people in the rehearsal room in Dilijan. In the beginning of the third workshop in mid-April, it had not been entirely clear whether and how Armenian and contemporary European dance would combine and how everyone involved would stand behind the result with full conviction. But Satenik Arzumanyan, a teacher of traditional Armenian dance from the Berd area, was right after all. The performance is now accompanied by the Armenian band Tiezerk, which creates the ideal combination of contemporary and traditional music. “When you work with united forces in a concentrated way,” said dance teacher Artur Grigoryan, “then the result will also be convincing.” And now we all very much hope that this result will also convince the audience during our tour in the autumn as it travels through the home towns of the young participants!

Exploring the Reciprocity of Art Education and Society



Photo: Mary Yeghyazaryan

How is art taught in public schools in Armenia? What are the educational goals of the curriculum there? And what do these look like in different Swiss cantons? How do the – sometimes implicit – values and orientations of the respective societies flow into school teaching? What is the understanding of art in the different countries' approaches to teaching?

In an exchange organised by *artasfoundation* between students of art education from three Swiss universities and the State Pedagogical University of Armenia, the participants were able to explore such questions in joint practical work. Eleven Armenian students and lecturers spent two weeks in Switzerland last March, while students and lecturers from Lucerne, Basel and Zurich travelled to Armenia in April. In both workshops, lessons were prepared together and held in public schools. In addition to deepening their sensitivity to cultural differences, the participants made new friends. Furthermore, the experience will make it easier for future art teachers from Switzerland to work in schools with a high proportion of students from other cultures.

Fighters for Peace in Beirut



Photo: *Fighters for Peace*

The study trip of ZHdK's continuing education course *CAS Arts and International Cooperation* led by *artasfoundation* took place in Beirut in February this year. Visiting twelve different organisations, the 16 participants experienced how difficult the situation in Lebanon currently is for the people, and how artists continue to commit themselves to society despite everything.

One example is the organisation *Fighters for Peace*, founded by fighters from different – and sometimes enemy – factions during the Lebanese civil war. Having experienced the price and senselessness of violence, these men and women are now doing educational work for the new generation. In school events, they plead for the value of peaceful conflict resolution, sometimes also using artistic media. Their interventions are deemed credible, as these people know what they are talking about.

The next *CAS Arts and International Cooperation* will start in the spring of 2023.

Insight on an Art Therapy Training in Abkhazia¹



Photo: Dagmar Reichert

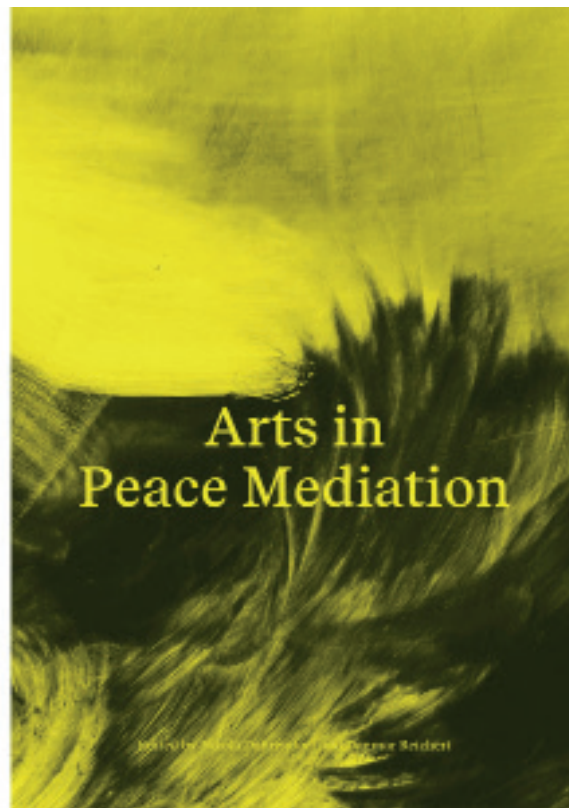
Just out! See the following link for a short movie about the training in art therapy conducted by *artasfoundation* this winter for practising women teachers in Abkhazia¹. It was produced by a local team led by Nasta Agrba.

-> vimeo.com/702888527

Abkhazia is a *de facto* state recognised internationally only by a handful of countries after seceding from Georgia in a war in the early 1990s. The unsettled status of the region makes professional further education difficult for its inhabitants, an issue from which the demand for this course emerged. Two workshops were held on-site, led jointly by a Swiss and a Russian expert. For the first time, we tried to supplement the teaching using online tools, conducting supervision sessions and exams via Zoom. Although the frequent power cuts in Abkhazia tested everyone's flexibility, the positive aspects prevailed. We will further explore the complementary use of such tools.

¹ *artasfoundation* would like to underline that its use of names and titles, particularly regarding conflict regions, should not be construed as implying any form of recognition or non-recognition by the foundation or as having any other political connotation whatsoever.

Book *Arts in Peace Mediation* published



A book has resulted from a series of conversations on whether artists and artistic works can positively contribute to peace negotiations. Edited jointly by Nicola Dahrendorf and *artasfoundation*'s executive director Dagmar Reichert and published on behalf of the Swiss Foreign Ministry, the book summarises the state of discussions between experts from the fields of mediation, diplomacy, and the arts.

The book can be ordered directly from us. We hope it lays some ground-work for testing the potential of artistic approaches to political conflicts in a real mediation process soon!