



Photo: Olivia Jaques

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Dear friends of artasfoundation

As a part of our daily life in *artasfoundation*, we are continuously learning how to deal with the uncertainties in today's world. This summer, we have run a number of different projects, including a new edition of the *Teachers' Training* course in Armenia, the *International Summer School for Socially Engaged Arts*, and *Impulse Days in Music Therapy*. At the same time we were preparing for the third workshop of the project *Art Education – inter-culturally* in Armenia. However, at the time of writing this text, we have decided to postpone this workshop to the start of 2024. This decision has been made due to the escalation of the war around Nagorno-Karabakh and its impact on the whole of Armenia. The gravity of the events required us to slow down and listen attentively to the emotional capacities of our partners in the region. It is not the first and will not be the last time that war and conflicts affect our activities, but this is precisely why we believe that social transformation is site-specific and only possible when actions are contextualised and international organisations act and react in alignment with the ever-changing context, especially in regions affected by conflict.

In the work of *artasfoundation* we celebrate the strength that art introduces into in our communities, even into those experiencing severe losses. To this aim, we are in constant dialogue with collaborating artists and cultural workers. We sensitively design our social transformative art projects, experimenting with various art practices and forms as a vehicle towards a more equitable future where communities creatively lead their own transformation.

As we understand the challenges in the political, cultural and social contexts in which we operate, we also look at, and continually reflect on, our own internal structures, adapting according to the changes and learning we experience. After months of researching, building and rebuilding, experimenting and weaving together affinities, we are now able to open our kitchen to friends and colleagues to inform you that *artasfoundation* is transforming to become a geographically decentralised structure involving seven members from art, management and research backgrounds, who share the fundamental belief that the only way for all of us to live together is through the peaceful, long-term transformation of our societies. We look forward to sharing more with you soon and to seeing you at our next *Artas Event* on Saturday, 11. November.

Rana Yazaji, on behalf of the whole Artas team
Theresa Ackermann, Shoghakat Mlike Galstyan, Tamar Janashia,
Olivia Jaques, Dagmar Reichert, Sandra Suter, Mara Züst

Invitation to Our Community Meeting



Elene Chantladze, untitled, undated, courtesy of the artist and LC Queisser

Elene Chantladze is a Georgian artist we first met in 2013 during our cultural festival in Tskaltubo. At the time she was a relatively unknown local poet and painter, but she has since gained international recognition, and her work is now being shown in the solo exhibition *As in a Melody or a Bird's Nest* at Kunsthalle Zürich. We invite you to join us on this occasion when we will also take the opportunity to inform you about the latest developments at artas-foundation. After the meeting, we will be given a guided tour of Elene's work by Otto Bonnen, the curator of the exhibition.

Saturday 11. November 2023, from 15.00 CET, Kunsthalle Zürich, followed by an aperitif

Questions in the Vegetable Patch – Social Art in Regional Contexts



Summer School participants meet their new friends from the camps for asylum seekers with denied status at Hegnerhof. Photo: Olivia Jaques

At the end of August, an international *Summer School for Socially Engaged Arts* took place in Zurich around the theme *Divided Societies – Exploring the Dialogical Potential of Art*. An open call was responded to by a wide variety of artists, all of whom create spaces for coming together through socially engaged art – and are interested in doing so even across ideological differences. Over seven days, the 13 participants presented their artistic projects and explained the interconnected political contexts. In addition, various forms of input and workshops took place to frame the topic theoretically and to give examples for working with groups. The Albisrieden neighbourhood was a central element in this endeavour. The participants explored it in search of possible points of reference for artistic projects. They asked questions in a vegetable patch, drank coffee in a “men’s refuge” and had discussions on a wasteland that functions as both a playground and a space for all forms of self-expression. Throughout the week, the participants came together again and again in the “Schopf” project room to exchange ideas and to ask the question “Could you sit down at a table with ...? And if so, what would the conditions be?”

Small Human Dimensions – Artists in Exile



An artist-in-exile taking a language course in the artasfoundation office. Photo: Dagmar Reichert

The upheaval we are currently experiencing in Eastern Europe with the collapse of Russia's imperial power has a historical dimension compared to which the dimension of a human lifetime seems rather small; negligible, one might say, if it were in any way negligible for us humans.

Since the beginning of the year, we have had the opportunity to support not only Ukrainian artists but also individual cultural workers from Belarus and Russia who have left their country for political reasons and are living in exile in Switzerland. In addition to the four artists to whom we were able to offer residencies of three months, we are now also supporting the work of two artists that come from a mining town in the Middle Urals where they curated an art space.

As conversations arise, they give us insights into life in a town in the margins of Russia that is wholly dependent on a single industry. The power of the empire, we realise, was always also a power of the capital over the resource-rich regions within its own country, and it was the power of one nation over numerous other nations and language groups in the vast expanse of the Russian territory.

A Space to Express Emotions – Art as School Subject



Photo: Julien Fehlmann

In the border villages of Armenia, art teachers do not only serve as educators. They bring creativity to the lives of their students who face war, financial hardship, and emotional crises even before they reach their teenage years. Children from these villages strive to become “useful” members of their families, and often regard happiness being related to productivity. Art is generally undervalued in schools and not considered an important subject. As a result, its teaching has been assigned to non-specialists such as history and maths teachers. Our previous experience in the border villages has revealed a clear need to contribute to the professionalisation of art teachers so that art lessons can achieve their potential as a space for students to freely express their emotions.

The Teachers’ Training project combines the knowledge we have gathered through our work in Armenia. International and local educators are imparting new tools and skills in art and helping teachers to rediscover their initial motivations for teaching and to recognise their importance in their communities. The first part of the project took place in August, before the start of the school year, enabling participants to incorporate changes based on the new knowledge. The second part will be conducted in late fall this year.

With each project, we establish a network of teachers who continue to communicate with each other, creating a new platform for sharing and supporting one another even after the projects conclude.

More Info: www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/teachers-training

More Than the Intersection of Music and Therapy



Insight into music therapy at the University Hospital for Geriatric Psychiatry Zurich for Ukrainian musicians. Photo: Sandra Suter

A pianist, a guitarist, two singers, a music teacher and a conductor meet in the entrance hall of the Zurich University of the Arts. They all have something in common: they are participants in the *Impulse Days in Music Therapy*, an introductory course for Ukrainian musicians seeking to show them new perspectives for future work. Most of them have fled to Switzerland because of the war in Ukraine; one has been living here for some time. In various workshops and presentations, they gained insights into professional practice as well as training opportunities in music therapy here and in Ukraine. They were supported by the Ukrainian music therapist Tetiana Chernous, who has travelled from Romania for the introductory workshop. Questions arise as to whether psychological knowledge is more necessary than musical knowledge; whether the patients themselves make music in therapy or whether music can simply be the subject of conversation in the therapy session. It becomes clear: music therapy is far more diverse than simply being the intersection between music and therapy. The participants must now ask themselves: What does this have to do with me? Can and do I want to go in this direction?

Based on the Paradigm of Reciprocity – Further Education



Photo: Rana Yazaji

In early September, we started a new CAS course *Arts and International Co-operation*. It is the fourth time that we organise this course for Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). 14 participants from Abkhazia¹, Brazil, Syria, Switzerland, Palestine¹, Armenia, Lebanon, Greece and Germany, started the first part of a year-long journey of learning and exchange – discussing sample art projects, describing their artistic relevance and their intersections with principles and methods from the fields of international cooperation and peacebuilding. Under the direction of experienced practitioners, the group analysed institutional practices and artistic approaches, while also examining the criteria for collaborative work in an international and fragile context, based on a paradigm of reciprocity.

In the second half of November, participants will come together again in Tunisia where they will study the local artistic and political context, and understand the role(s) Tunisian artists identify for themselves through a sensitive moment in their country's long struggle for democracy and freedom of expression.

More Info:

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/cas-arts-and-international-cooperation

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

New Event Series *Jour Fixe – Art in Conflict*



Participants in discussion at the conference *Art at Risk* in 2020. Photo: Evan Ruetsch

In our work at *artasfoundation*, we are constantly confronted with fundamental questions: How to navigate carefully in conflict-affected societies? What role can the arts take in peacebuilding? What are the specific qualities of art in conflict regions and where is the limit of what is possible? To discuss these and other questions the Centre for Art and Peacebuilding CAP – a joint initiative of *artasfoundation* and the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK – invites you to the new event series *Jour Fixe – Art in Conflict*.

Every *Jour Fixe* event starts from a question, either being explored through a lecture that provides approaches to arts and peacebuilding or laying the foundation for a text that the participants prepare individually and discuss with invited experts – or the authors themselves.

Wednesday 15. November 2023, 17.15 CET, Lecture and Discussion

What does peacebuilding mean and is there a role for the arts?

Speaker: Dagmar Reichert, *artasfoundation*; Co-presenter: Dana Landau, senior researcher in mediation, Swisspeace

Location: ZHdK, Toni Areal, Kaskadenfoyer 5.K04 & Zoom

More Info: www.artasfoundation.ch/en/news

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