

artasfoundation Circular October 2025

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Photo: Julien Fehlmann

This fall season has been an intensive one for the *artasfoundation* team, collaborating artists and regional partners. Over recent months, our projects have taken place across different regions, and while only some are included in this circular, you will be able to read about others in our next spring edition. Like many of you, we continue to shield ourselves from despair, in a world shaped by conflicts and inequalities, not by turning away but by consistently engaging and creating safe spaces where people can act with autonomy.

We would like to invite you to carry out a small exercise. Take a piece of paper and a pen. Close your eyes and look back at your own history; recall three moments that shaped who you are today, the person now reading this text. These moments don't need to be grand or visible to others: just concrete happenings, not ideas or events that mattered to the whole world or to an entire people; perhaps a book, a conversation, a sentence someone said to you, a beginning or an ending. Write them down, just three. Now look at your list. Most likely, these moments are small incidents, perhaps unnoticed when they happened, but with the distance of time you can see how profoundly they shaped you. This is also how we understand our projects. Together with people in mountain or border villages, cities, or post-conflict regions, we create such moments – seemingly modest, yet quietly transformative. These moments matter, for individuals and for communities.

We send you our greetings,
The *artasfoundation* team

Community in Progress...!



Photo: Olivia Jaques

In the *Tbilisi Crossroads* project, fifteen artists from Belarus, Russia, Poland, Georgia, Ukraine, and Switzerland came together in September to exchange ideas and activities among themselves and with other communities in a city where protests have continued for over 300 days. Among them were seven participants from the residency programme in Racha, Georgia, held in August 2024. The artists have been working on an experimental media exhibition, an artzine, presentations, workshops, guided city walks, a zine workshop for young people, and courses on various physical and dance practices. After an intensive week together we will continue the interventions in a variety of forms that include a ceramics workshop for children and an artistic publication. In solidarity with all those who, even after 300 days, continue to reclaim the streets, and demand for their rights, justice and democracy, we want to offer the artists moments for recharging, critical discussion, and coming together.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/tbilisi-crossroads

Building Bridges Through Art



*Lichtensteig, 2024 (Photo: Hanes Sturzenegger) / Arasadzikh*i, 2025 (Photo: Elena Brühlhart)*

It was pouring with rain, the internet was down, but nevertheless, the material made its way and we were “Sharing Stories”.

One year ago, we were in Toggenburg with a group of artists from Abkhazia¹. On the first day's working together with the local children, we had created a 10-metre-long collective drawing. Now, we scanned the picture and sent it digitally to Arasadzikh*i (Abkazia) where it was printed in 410 pieces. The local community, including the supportive mayor, assembled the puzzle, which then served as an even larger surface for the children to paint.

Due to current difficulties in entering Abkhazia, for this second phase of *Sharing Stories* in mid-September, the artists worked with the children from the local schools in parallel, one group in Arasadzikh*i and the other in Degersheim. Even across the distance, they found ways to connect. The children wrote letters, designed surprises, and in videos they assumed each other's roles and thus introduced one another; mountains from both regions were reassembled to create new, imaginary hybrid landscapes. The outcomes of the exchange and the circulating materials were finally presented in an exhibition in Sukhum*i, in two zines and via a website: <https://sharing-stories.net>

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/sharing-stories

Figures, Stories and a Giraffe in Georgia



Photo: Claudia Barth, Mara Züst

For the second edition of the *Sharing Stories* project, we gathered for a workshop in the Georgian mountains of Tusheti in July. Although the area attracts tourists in summer, it remains a peripheral region in the Greater Caucasus, bordering Dagestan and Chechnya. Our group consisted of artists from Omalo, Tbilisi, Wetzikon, and Zurich, along with two project managers from artasfoundation. Midway through the week, we dedicated a period of time for reflection, recounted here as a diary excerpt:

Z. opens the discussion with a question about the schedule for the coming days. She explains that A. would like to see more active collaboration among participants – a wish that B. immediately seconds. But what could collaboration look like in concrete terms? T. suggests not only collecting stories together but also experimenting with different forms of representing the protagonists as figures. P. emphasises how important it is to her not to reproduce stereotypes such as “the beautiful woman”. Y. suggests that we should let ourselves be surprised by the children, and perhaps even weave a giraffe crafted by one of them into the stories we tell.

Urban Visions From the *Living Room*



Photo: Shoghakat Mkrtchyan

The *Living Room* is located at the border of Yerevan's southern city centre, surrounded by industrial wastelands and newly erected, large-scale real estate complexes. And it was to the *Living Room* that the artist Mara Züst came for three days in March to conduct the project *Urban Talks*. An exhibition titled *Moon, Drops, Keys, Socks* that included works by Swiss artist Tomas Baumgartner was installed in the space.

The project also included children and youth who fled Nagorno-Karabakh and have since found a new home in Yerevan. They came to explore the neighbourhood, gathering their impressions of it and transforming them to their own zines, in a publication they could take home with them. On the last evening there was a screening titled *Cinematic Visions: Urban Spaces and Stories*, showcasing four films by Swiss artists. All dealt with questions related to urbanism, architecture and city development. This prompted a conversation about the broader role of art in society and its potential for meaningful impact. Once more, the *Living Room* became a space for dealing with open questions through practice and new connections.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/living-room

From Collective Futures to Private Family Photos



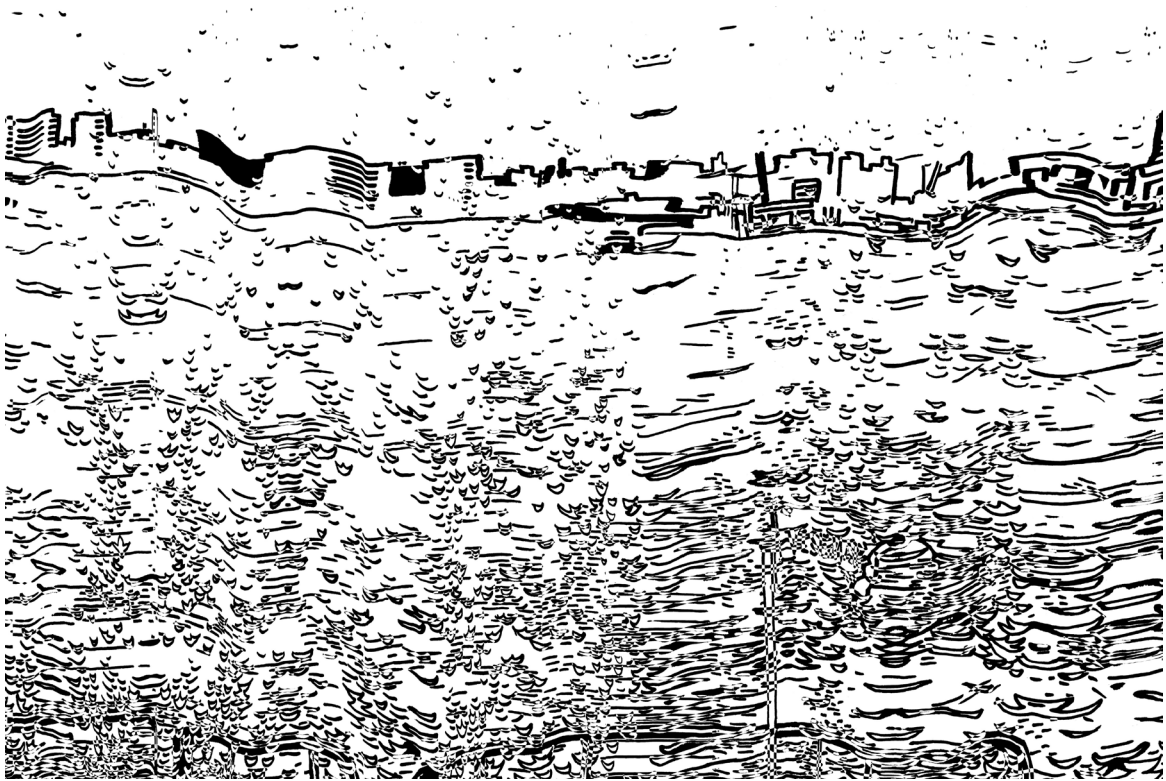
Photo: Milena Movsesyan

The *Art and Social Transformation Lab* in Yerevan has been a space that allows movement from imagination to action through a collective artistic exchange culminating in the creation of art practices engaged in building communities. At the end of the five-day practice-based lab, three socially engaged art projects were developed by the groups and implemented by artists from Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. They worked with photography, exhibitions, sound installation, storytelling and visualisation, music and movement, to deal with individual and community wealth as well as with continuing issues in Yerevan, Lori, and other regions.

In working with people who survived the military invasion of Nagorno-Karabakh or who were directly or indirectly impacted by the conflict, different artistic practices come into play. An exhibition titled *Look, this is my grandpa* invites people to delve into their family archives and share photographs in which they no longer know who is depicted. Visitors will be invited to carefully examine these photos to find a familiar face. This project is both a tribute to the stories of relationships from the past and a way to build relationships in the present. The very act of searching for familiar faces in photos of strangers becomes a kind of act of unification. In this way, the artist Asmik Aleksanyan transitions from portraying disconnection to bringing people together.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/living-room

New Dialogues on Art and Peace



Artwork: Ingo Giezendanner

Art in conflict transformation often begins on a small scale, within a familiar circle of artists, in encounters with a community, in a school or other place that brings people together. However, this does not mean that such locally specific work is not sustained by the (moral) support of countless allies. The discussion series *Art in Conflict* explores this idea: the *artasfoundation* team initiates an exchange that allows the multitude of perspectives and work methods within the field to come together.

With experts such as Abdullah Alkafri, Chimène Costa or Tiffany Fairey, we discuss peacebuilding in the performing arts or photography, and we show, with examples from Syria, Serbia, Colombia, Mozambique, Armenia or China, how art can open spaces for dialogue, resistance, and new perspectives around the world. The series began in September with a conversation on initiatives at Europe's borders between Jennifer Steiner from the WAV research collective and social anthropologist Kübra Zeynep Sarıaslan. Now, alongside the event at Gessnerallee, the talks will also be live-streamed to the Mediathek of the Basel Academy of Art and Design – and, of course, still on Zoom.

Space for Resonance: Art in Conflict – Practice starts in November



Photo: Bettina Holzhausen

*In our work, the space for encounter is central.
A space where listening is the first step, where people move towards one another.
With the aim of feeling part of this world –
not as observers, but as co-creators.
For those who feel connected
may also be ready to take responsibility.*

In November we will test a format, the *Art in Conflict – Practice*. For the opening, we have invited artistic director and performance artist Chimène Costa to share her approaches with us in the workshop *Connecting Communities & Cultures* in Zurich. She works with dance and traditional songs that change through time, bodies, and voices, and are passed down, translated, carried forward. “Before experiencing these artistic practices, my body was like a rock. Today I feel free, I can finally sleep and be a person and no longer a rock,” reports a person displaced by the war in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, who took part in Chimène’s work.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/news

Invitation to the *artasfoundation* Community Event



Photo: Evan Ruetsch

We warmly invite you to our annual community gathering in Zurich! On the evening of 29 November 2025, we will meet at the MAXIM Theater to give insights into the work of *artasfoundation*, share developments of our projects, exchange ideas, and get to know members of our growing community.

This year, we are connecting the event with the first *Art in Conflict – Practice* workshop mentioned above, led by Chimène Costa. The artistic director and performance artist from Mozambique will share her experience and present the outcomes of the workshop with the participating artists and activists. She will also guide us into the heart of the *Art in Conflict – Practice* by letting us experience for ourselves what it means to be a participant. Of course, there will also be plenty of time for personal exchange with other artists, supporters and members of the *artasfoundation* community.

29. November 2025, 18.00 h, MAXIM Theater, Ernastrasse 20, 8004 Zurich

We very much look forward to seeing both familiar and new faces! Feel free to bring interested friends and share the invitation within your circles.

Registration: info@artasfoundation.ch

We kindly ask you to register, though spontaneous visits are welcome too!

Support *artasfoundation*

The work of *artasfoundation* is only possible thanks to the generous support of donors and friends. We ask for your continued help and would like to thank you very much for your support.

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¹*artasfoundation* would like to underline that its use of names and titles particularly in regards 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.