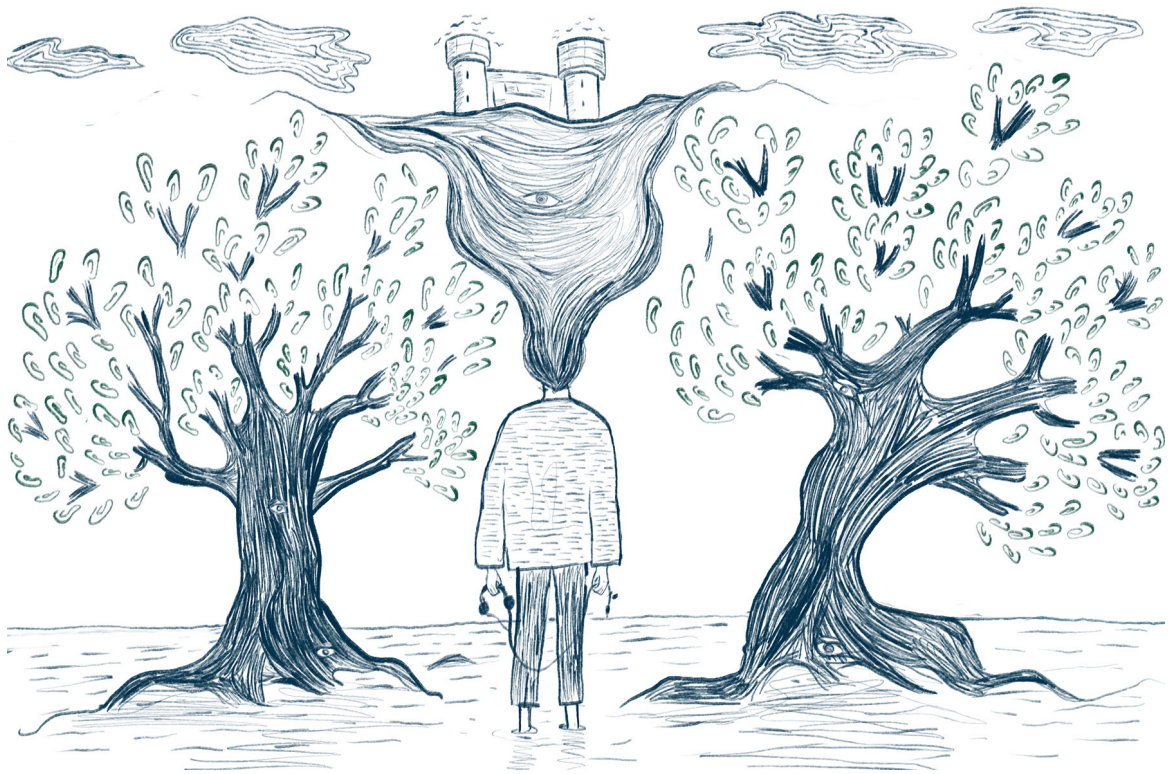


artasfoundation Circular
May 2026

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- Sociopoetic Encounters at Labyrinth Square
- On Art and Sheep
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- Welcome to Our Community!



Drawing: Nini Gabritchidze

Dear Friends of *artasfoundation*

Twice a year we send out a circular to share what we have been working on. This one is no different: it brings together artworks, stories, relationships, and a poem. Our circulars often pose open or challenging questions, an invitation to act, reflections on art in peacebuilding, and at times a statement on our political positioning in response to global developments.

We live in a violent world, despite the peaceful efforts of millions of people gathered within communities, collectives, institutions, activist groups, political movements, and among citizens everywhere. The image of a peaceful existence is fragmented and challenged in many ways. We want to come together again and reassemble this image from its fragments.

We invite you to save the dates 11.-13. February 2027 for *Frontlines of Engagement: An Assembly on Art in a World Shaped by Conflict.*

The assembly brings together artists, researchers, peacebuilders, and development institutions, including participants from conflict-affected regions, to explore how art operates within and across divides. It creates space: not for simple answers, but to trace the complex relations between art and peacebuilding, how artistic practices shape relationships, engage with ethics, and carry political weight over time.

Through panel discussions, workshops, presentations, and collective dialogue, *Frontlines of Engagement* aims to build relationships and forms of knowledge that help us shape concrete responses to today's fractured world.

The assembly is a collaborative project with Artlink, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), and other partners. We hope you can be part of it and join us in this conversation.

We send you our greetings,
The *artasfoundation* team

The Invisible Labour of Holding the Space



Photo: Areg Balayan

On 8. October 2025, fifteen people arrived in Goris, in Syunik, a border region of Armenia, to launch the project *Archaeology in the Presence*. Each of us came with our own artistic practices, as well as personal histories from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Germany, Georgia, Pakistan, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, and Syria. So many different imaginations, artistic approaches, and individual motivations gathered at Arvestanots, the town's only art space for youth. There we waited for our host families to come and pick us up. These families became our space holders in everyday life, offering food, comfort, and sharing with us their daily struggles and stories.

Eight art and community spaces served as our points of connection to the different communities in Goris. But the streets also became vital spaces for unexpected encounters. Together, all these environments held the space for the artists to create and to engage with the community. Every morning, an artist would lead the group in what we called a "morning ritual", a way to start the day together. Holding the space was also practised in this ritual and in each artist's individual practice.

The project connected all space holders in a shared effort to create a temporary, autonomous, and egalitarian space, held and shaped through collective imagination of what the future can look like.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/archaeology-in-the-presence

Sociopoetic Encounters at Labyrinth Square



Photo: Sandra Suter

It was a beautiful Sunday in March 2026 at Labyrinthplatz in Zurich, a more than 30-year-old feminist project that describes itself as “a place for reflection and reorientation, as well as a cultural model for forms of interaction and encounter in a public space”. 15 people gathered there. Lera Lerner, an artist and curator born in St. Petersburg and based in Paris, combined her artistic practice with her doctoral research in plant genetics and shared her knowledge of the plants found around the square. A gathering of people and plants. A meeting dedicated to the exchange of experiences and knowledge, but also to inspiration and relaxation through artistic expression. It unfolded into discussions about the appearance and uses of selected plants for food, as tea, for printing, or as a shared sensory experience.

To deepen exchange and knowledge transfer around socially engaged art practices in Switzerland, with a focus on sustaining connections to fragile contexts, we launched the new format *Art in Conflict Practice* at the end of 2025. The idea is to step beyond conversations with practitioners about their work within the *Art in Conflict discussion series* by adopting a more tangible, practice-based format: At Labyrinthplatz, people drew and took notes, exchanged ideas, weaving together networks of knowledge and shared experience.

www.artasfoundation.ch/en/project/art-in-conflict-practice

On Art and Sheep



Photo: Tamara Janashia

The development of *artasfoundation* projects encompasses a wide range of involvement for project managers. Alongside the conceptual work, which defines the project's approach and is developed within the team, the building of trust relationships with a community forms a core element of the project design. This is accompanied by practical tasks such as organising accommodation and visas.

In the second part of the second cycle of the *Sharing Stories* project in Val Müstair, the artist Esther Schena, who grew up in the valley, played a central role in creating connections with the community. Together with her, we conceived conversations with local people, which enabled the artists from Switzerland and Georgia to enter the project in an inspiring way: a philosopher who works with projects in sustainable development, a hairdresser who grew up in a family-run hotel, a student who enjoys working with her hands, a nun who tells stories, an artist responsible for exhibitions and a residency ... Yet the constant, alongside the artistic work with stories, were our host Augustin's sheep. Who would have thought that sheep could play such an important role in transcultural work!

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

A Space Grows Beyond Itself



Photo: Yana Avanesyan

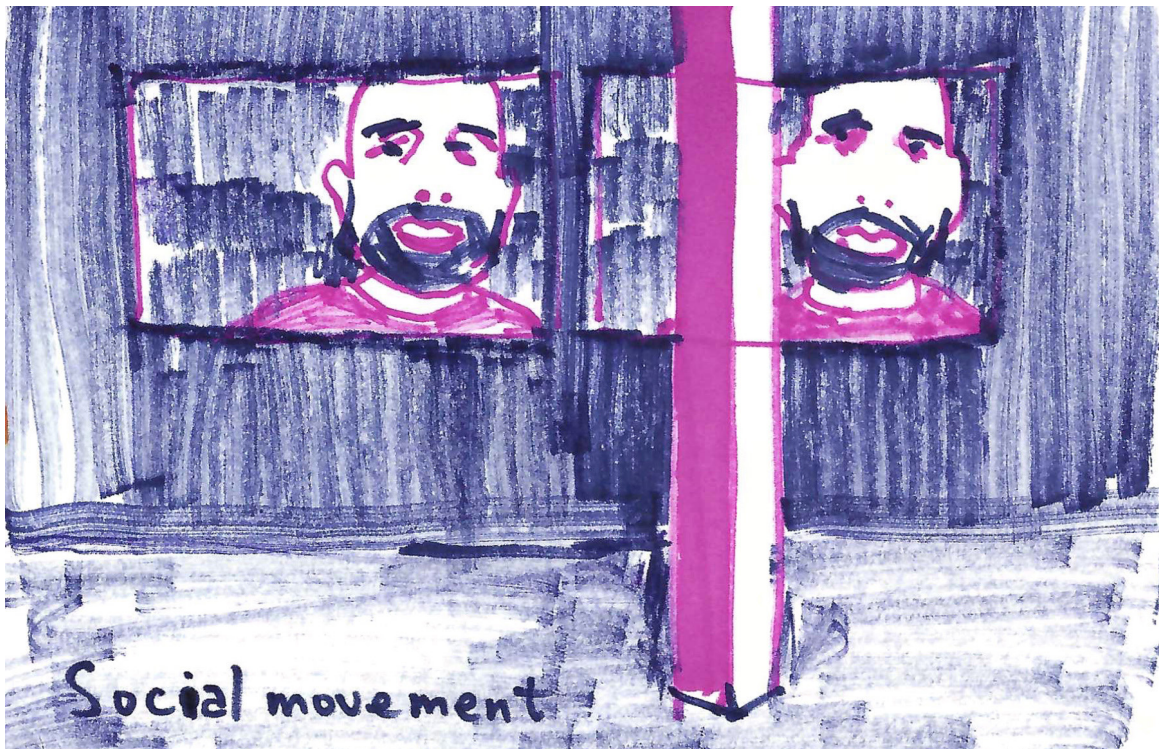
The art space *Living Room*, run by *artasfoundation* in Yerevan, has become more than a project for the community, slowly shifting from a simple gathering space into a socially engaged, artist-led meeting point. This is actually the case with many *artasfoundation* projects: They evolve beyond their original project framework and remain significant for those involved. What we have been able to offer artists with the *Living Room* is a safe space, a place where they could step out of their routines and begin asking more focused, more uncomfortable questions.

A similar shift happened with the therapy sessions. What started with children expanded to include women, and now we are working with widows and their sons, addressing the loss of their husbands and fathers in the war. The work touches on memory, love, grief, and hope. Another emerging layer is making the *Living Room* more community led. We held our first meeting with the community, during which we also established a connection with an artist-run space in Mumbai and Zurich, bringing a welcome shift in perspective. Even though the space itself is quite small, it has also become a permanent exhibition space for photographers from Nagorno-Karabakh.

Now, the *Living Room* is never empty...

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

Exchange at the Intersection of Art and Conflict



Drawing: Anna Cherepanova

How can more open forms of exchange be shaped in a world marked by colonial legacies, through dance or literature, for example? What might collaborative photography look like? Which strategies are possible when visa processes complicate project work? And how can art create hope and open spaces for action in a refugee camp or in mediation processes between conflicting parties? What is the potential of digital exchange formats? And which experiences are helpful when dealing with authorities? These questions, along with insights into projects from Bangladesh, Georgia, and China, have shaped *Art in Conflict* since last autumn.

The discussion series continues to be hosted at Gessnerallee Zurich. Curating the programme remains an ongoing challenge: although planned well in advance, it aims to stay current while ensuring a balanced inclusion of diverse artistic, cultural, and academic practices, as well as different regions. On the one hand, we draw on *artasfoundation's* network, built over fifteen years; on the other, the format is shaped by the curiosity to discover new inspirations. Since the beginning of this year, *Art in Conflict* has also been artistically documented on site by guest contributors.

Will you be joining the next event?

Welcome to Our Community!



Photo: Christian Bechtiger

Our community meets annually for exchange. The last meeting took place on 29. November 2025 at the Maxim Theatre. This time, we were not only able to watch, listen, and engage in informal conversations, but also to experience a short artistic, participatory format led by Chimène Costa, a performance artist from Mozambique.

For the *Community Event*, we meet in institutions that, like us, are active in the field of socially engaged art. The Maxim Theatre is a transcultural theatre that understands the stage as a space for collective action and artistic co-creation. As in the projects of *artasfoundation*, radical participation, regardless of origin, experience, or profession, is a central practice. The event also provides space for discussions about recently completed projects by *artasfoundation*. The presence of several participants from the *artasfoundation* study trip to Armenia in October 2025 further enriched the exchange.

The next *Community Event* will take place on 24. November 2026 at Tanzhaus Zürich. We warmly welcome you there! Information and invitations will follow shortly before the date.

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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