

**artasfoundation**



# **Swiss Foundation for Art in Conflict Regions General Overview**

“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. Supported by contributions from members of the general public, it was founded in 2011. It initiates art projects, accompanies their realisation, and investigates how spaces for art can promote conflict mediation and peacebuilding.

This booklet presents *artasfoundation* at a glance.  
Visit [www.artasfoundation.ch](http://www.artasfoundation.ch) for the latest news of the foundation's work.

For further questions, please contact us!

*artasfoundation*  
Swiss Foundation for Art in Regions of Conflict

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Executive Director:  
Dagmar Reichert

## The Foundation

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*artasfoundation* is an operating foundation that initiates its own projects and finances its work through commissions, endowments and private donations.

The foundation has its seat in Switzerland and maintains an office and a competence centre for art in the contexts of conflict mediation and peacebuilding. Through this centre, the foundation has created an international outreach. In addition, *artasfoundation* is establishing the Centre for Art and Peacebuilding together with Zurich University of the Arts.

*artasfoundation* initiates and organises art projects for and with people in regions affected by wars or violent conflicts. Every year, the *artasfoundation* team conducts several such projects in collaboration with artists and local partner organisations.

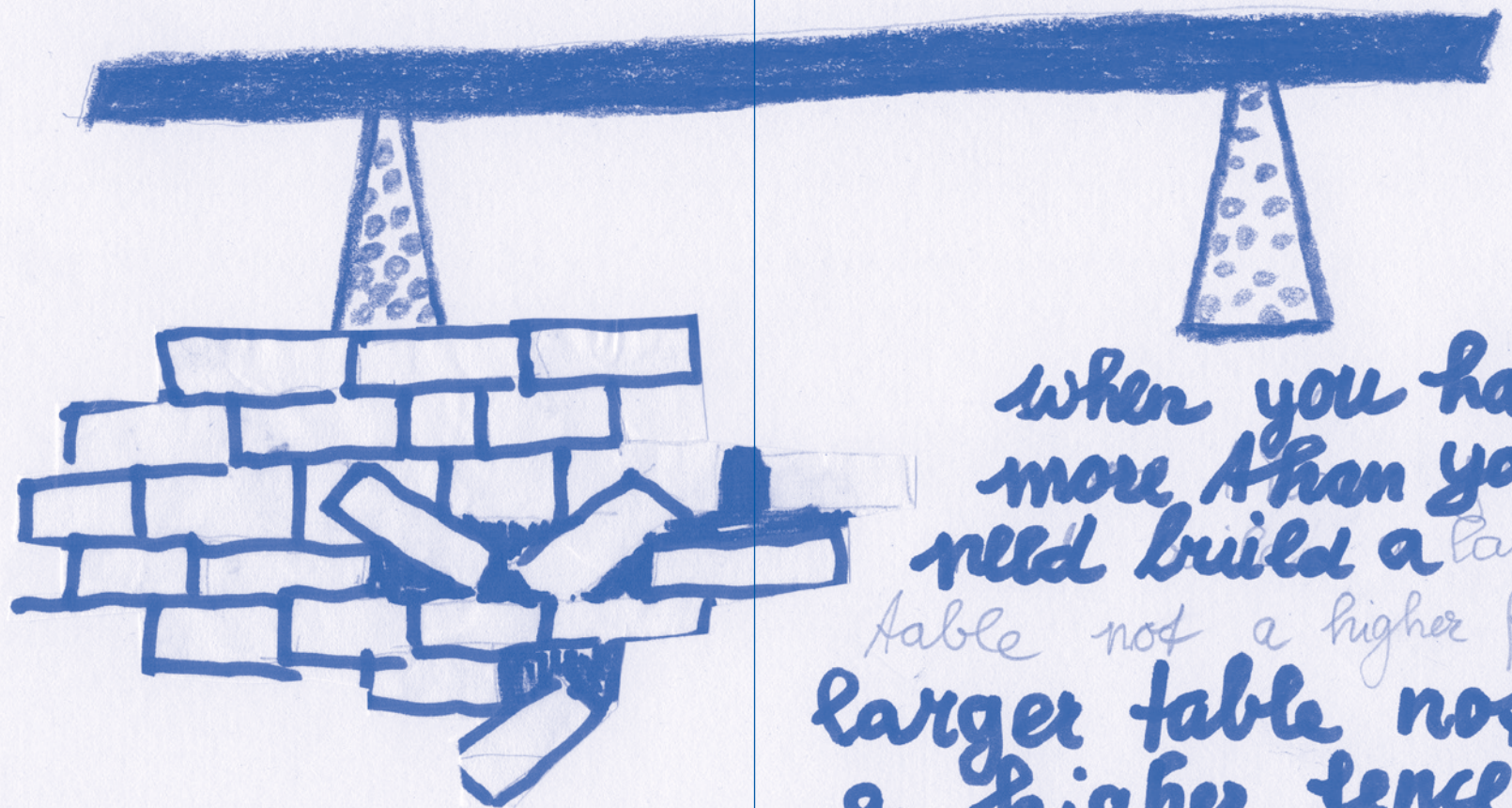
*artasfoundation* also supports diplomatic conflict mediation, and mediation processes of civil society and governmental or international institutions through specific artistic interventions.

*artasfoundation* conducts general research on artistic work in the context of conflict mediation and peacebuilding and thus aims to provide grounded support for its own art projects.

*artasfoundation* networks artistic initiatives that relate to its field of activity and facilitates international exchanges of experience.

The foundation also presents its work outside the narrower conflict regions, fostering public discussion at regular events.





when you have  
more than you  
need build a <sup>larger</sup>  
table not a higher fence  
larger table not  
a higher fence.

# Art Has the Potential to Build Peace

Art is a fundamental element of human existence and social coexistence. Its role should therefore be recognised and valued in humanitarian and peacebuilding operations following violent conflicts.

Art offers a specific way of relating to the world. It invites us to let go of utilitarian calculations, perceive the seemingly familiar with greater subtlety, and abandon familiar categorisations. Accordingly, it creates new perspectives for conflict transformation.

Art allows us to communicate experiences that are difficult to put into words. It can 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 people with different worldviews.

By engaging in art, marginalised and underprivileged people can achieve dignity and personal recognition and can make themselves seen and heard.

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, and to create, without guaranteed outcomes or proven effects.

The above applies to artistic work of all categories and traditions: visual arts, music, dance, drama, film, literature, etc.

# Human Rights Apply Universally

Human rights, with their emphasis on the fundamental freedom and equality of dignity and rights of every human being, are the guiding reference for cross-cultural international cooperation.

Respect for these rights creates the best foundation for the flourishing of any community.

The commitment to human rights is a central area of international cooperation. This involves mutual and respectful engagement where customs and current practices conflict with these rights.

# Cooperation on Equal Footing

In order to overcome global as well as local challenges in a sustainable way, it is essential that people of different origins work together on an equal footing.

Against the backdrop of weighty historical and current relations of domination and exploitation, every contemporary collaboration is faced with the task of seeking new ways of fair exchange and mutual respect.

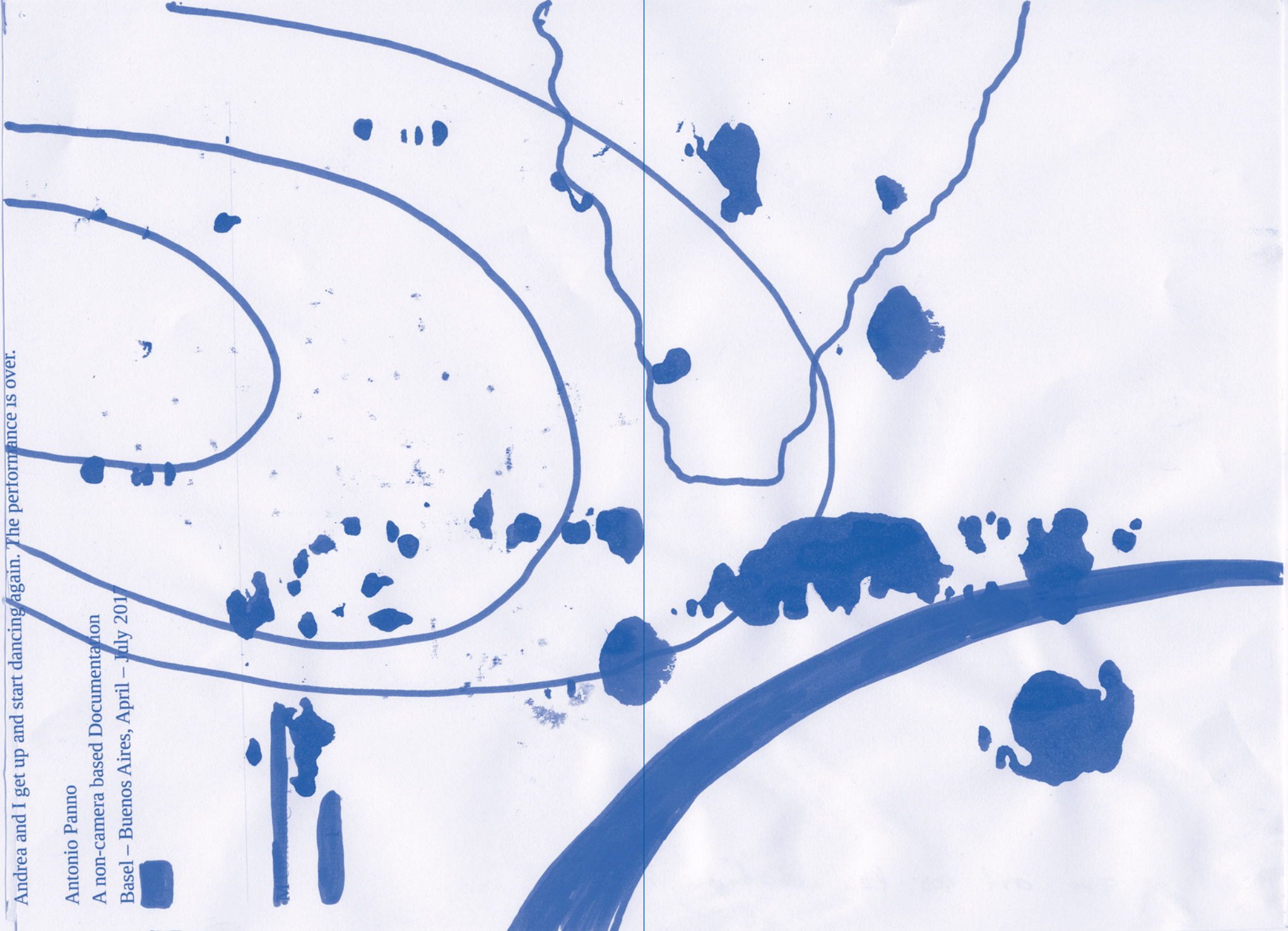


Andrea and I get up and start dancing again. The performance is over.

Antonio Panno

A non-camera based Documentation

Basel – Buenos Aires, April – July 2011



“Not everything that can be faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed unless it is faced.”

James Baldwin

*artasfoundation* is a non-profit organisation. It offers its supporters concrete options for direct, meaningful engagement. It enables people in regions affected by war to have experiences and encounters that support them in overcoming violence. It aims to strengthen those who work for peaceful coexistence in such regions.

*artasfoundation* works independently in terms of politics and content. It is not neutral with regard to the values that guide it; rather, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights forms the basis for its work.

*artasfoundation* publishes its sponsors and ensures that they provide their support without political ties or constraints.

*artasfoundation* focuses on socially-engaged art from various disciplines and regions of origin, and gives artists the freedom they need for their work.

*artasfoundation* cooperates with local cultural organisations in conflict-affected regions and strives for transparent mutual exchange.

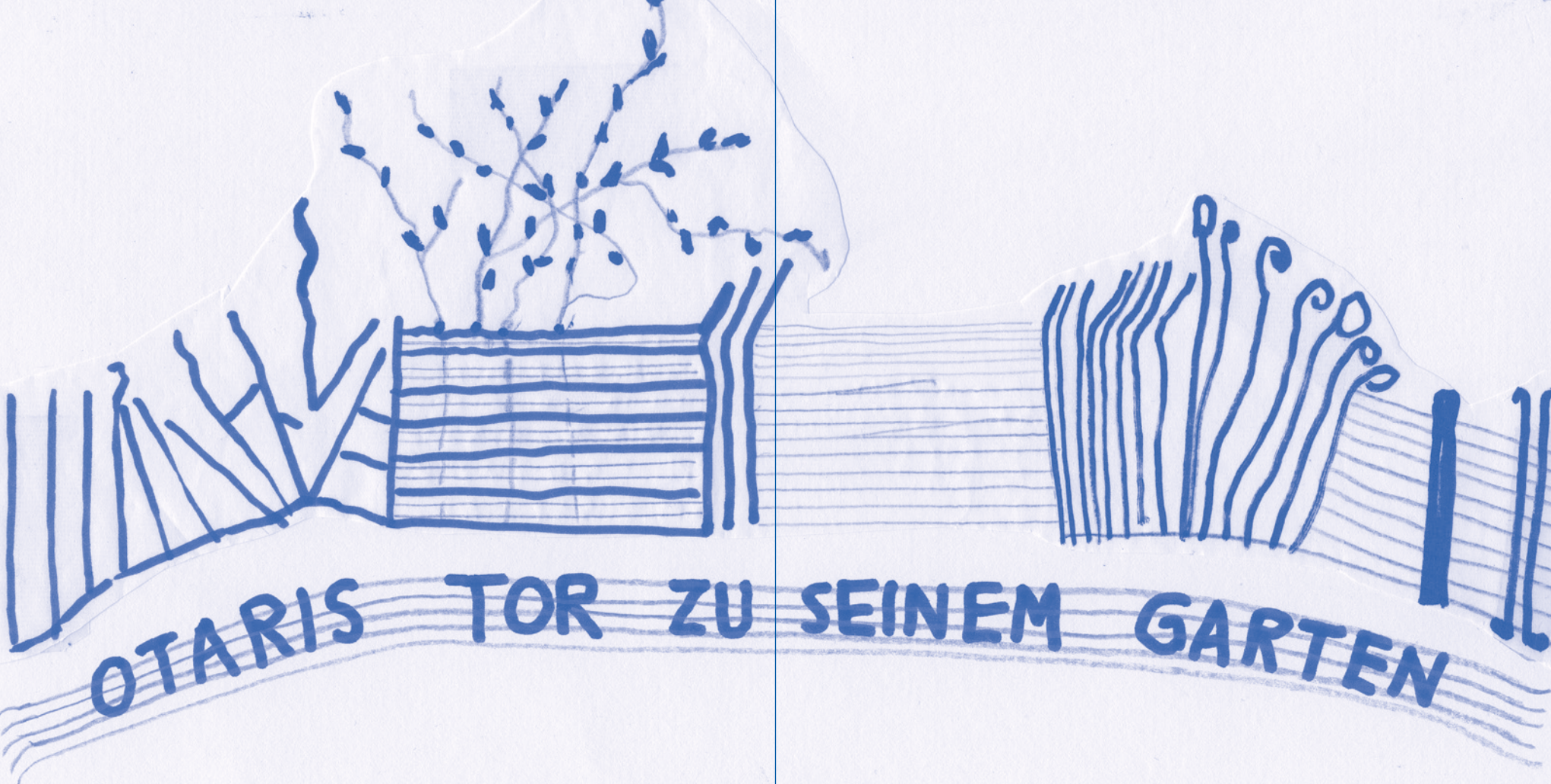
Within the framework of its art projects, *artasfoundation* seeks to promote encounters and exchanges between people from conflict-affected and privileged contexts.

The *artasfoundation* team is directly involved in the foundation's projects on site and reflects on its own work according to criteria of conflict sensitivity.

*artasfoundation* is committed to the sustainability of its projects by promoting long-term collaborations between artists and creating a framework for mutual learning.

In order to establish artistic approaches to peacebuilding in the field of the arts and international cooperation, *artasfoundation* seeks exchange with educational institutions, especially universities.







“Art is about opening doors where no one sees them.”

Peter Weibel

Activities: Our Fields of Activity

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*artasfoundation* is active in three areas within the framework of a variety of projects:

- Art in reconstruction
- Art in mediation processes
- Research and networking

The work in these areas forms the basis for fulfilling a fourth task, namely the institutional development of the foundation and its competence centre for art in contexts of conflict mediation and peacebuilding. To this end, the foundation gathers committed people with different cultural and professional backgrounds and establishes

the necessary institutional contacts. In addition, it invites interested people to regular public discussions on art initiatives in the context of conflict mediation and peacebuilding.

Since 2020, *artasfoundation*, together with Zurich University of the Arts, has been operating the

- Centre for Art and Peacebuilding

which provides an institutional framework to combine the activities of the foundation with the educational and research activities of the university.

## Art in Reconstruction

*artasfoundation* initiates and organises art projects in conflict regions, in phases of social reconstruction after a war, or in crises with the threat of vio-

lence. They include theatre productions, dance projects, the formation of choirs and music workshops and working residencies for visual artists. The projects take place in cooperation with local partners, mostly in peripheral regions, in small towns, villages or refugee camps. Based on detailed preliminary research, they pick up where people are already

engaged locally and occur in close cooperation with local artists. Through the additional involvement of artists from other countries, new incentives and perspectives can be realised for all involved. The respective art projects are carried out with a view to restoring social relationships, overcoming images of victim and enemy, strengthening a proactive attitude or simply expressing joy and envisioning new horizons.

Trauma treatment through specific medical art therapy and the long-term operation of cultural centres are not part of the foundation's remit.

#### Project Example

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##### Complaints Choir in a Refugee Settlement in the South Caucasus

The war over South Ossetia between Russia and Georgia forced many people to leave their homes and villages in 2008. In Georgia alone, their number is estimated at over 20 000, many of whom are still living in makeshift refugee settlements. 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 with barely adequate material supplies.

After *artasfoundation* had become familiar with the situation in these settlements through several "Art Camps", joint working residencies of art students from Georgia and Switzerland, the foundation invited the Finnish artists Tellervo Kalleinen and Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen in 2014 to initiate one of their "Complaints Choirs" on site.

The format had already been implemented in numerous cities around the world, but never before in a refugee settlement.

As a first step, around 35 children and young people from two settlements formulated their complaints: often very elementary shortcomings related to their school or living situation, which were then combined into the lyrics of a song. A local musician composed a melody and rehearsed the song with the young people. The rehearsals took place in their settlements, always accompanied by numerous family members. The Complaints Choir performed in their own settlements and then in public places, including the capital Tbilisi. Their song expressed serious claims and strengthened the young people in their courage and ability to stand up for themselves. The young people of the refugee settlement are very proud of a music video of their song (to be found at [www.artasfoundation.ch](http://www.artasfoundation.ch) under Activities: Complaints Choir).

# Art in Mediation Processes

*artasfoundation* is interested in actively involving artists and their work in diplomatic negotiations or mediation processes, and giving them the opportunity to promote agreement between conflicting parties through specific artistic approaches. What has long been a tradition in various cultures, namely to expect support in

case of conflict from poetry, music, dance or ritual performances, has mostly fallen by the wayside in the cognitive-language-centred processes of today's international negotiations. The importance of communication that can convey holistic experience and express emotions in a differentiated way is by no means denied by mediators, but so far there has rarely been a corresponding collaboration with artists.

#### Project Example

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##### A Colloquium for Artists and Mediators at the Swiss UN Embassy in Geneva

In June 2015, the Swiss Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Alexandre Fasel, invited 14 people from the arts and conflict mediation to an idea exchange. Starting with a presentation of their respective ways of working, the participants explored the possible foundation of a collaboration that could be exciting and meaningful for both sides. This led to further series of talks with artists and

peacebuilding experts in London until 2019, and to the announcement of a research grant by the Swiss Embassy there. The resulting research paper "Art and Artistic Practices in Peace Mediation" was written with support of *artasfoundation*. This forms the starting point for a conference in 2022, with which the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs will make the contributions of art to mediation processes an international topic of interest. *artasfoundation* is involved in the preparation of this conference.



# Research and Networking

This field of activity of *artasfoundation* involves research projects and analyses of art initiatives that have already taken place in the context of conflict mediation and peacebuilding, as well as an ongoing reflection on the projects initiated by *artasfoundation*. An important basis for this is the

collaboration with Zurich University of the Arts – since 2020 within the framework of the jointly founded Centre for Art and Peacebuilding – as well as the exchange in international conferences conceived and organised by *artasfoundation*. The aim is to compare existing experiences in the field of art and peacebuilding, to discuss key questions, and to connect researchers and practitioners from different countries.

## Project Example

### “Art at Risk” Conference

In 2020, *artasfoundation* hosted the conference “Art at Risk – Creative Work in Challenging Contexts” in Zurich. The event, supported by the Swiss SDC and Zurich University of the Arts, addressed on the one hand, the contribution of art initiatives to peaceful conflict resolution in processes

of societal transformation, such as mitigating political/religious fundamentalism and addressing the consequences of climate change; on the other hand, it tackled the issue of the persecution of artists and the restriction of artistic freedom through censorship. 160 people from 42 countries participated in the event and engaged in a lively exchange in a variety of formats.

# The Centre for Art and Peacebuilding

Since 2020, an important point of reference for *artasfoundation*’s various activities has been the Centre for Art and Peacebuilding (CAP). As a platform *artasfoundation* operates together with Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), CAP enables the inclusion of students, lecturers and researchers from ZHdK in *artasfoundation* projects, and generates interactions with the

university’s teaching and research. It contributes to bringing the concerns of *artasfoundation* in the field of artistic engagement in conflict regions into the teaching and learning in different art disciplines, and it provides additional sustainability to the activities of the foundation through an institutional connection.



## Project Example

### Further Education Course: CAS – Arts and International Cooperation

Under the umbrella of the Centre for Art and Peacebuilding, the ZHdK Continuing Education course on Cooperative Art Projects in Fragile Contexts and Conflict Transformation, developed by *artasfoundation*, is now being offered. Participants in the in-service course are artists and representatives of international organisations from the global

North and South. Through theoretical concepts and practical exercises, experienced lecturers from different countries will encourage them to engage in discussions in which the differences between the positions and working methods of the course participants can become productive. A central element of the course is a joint study trip with visits to ongoing art projects. After writing a supervised diploma thesis, the participants complete the course with an accredited certificate.

**The Board of Trustees is responsible for strategic decisions, including the determination of its geographic focus, the selection of its projects, and the staff of its administration. It is supported by an international advisory board with experts from the arts and conflict mediation. The following people, among others, are involved in the Board of Trustees and the Advisory Board of *artasfoundation*:**

Mauro Abbühl (former Co-Director, artlink – Office for Cultural Cooperation), Günther Bächler (former Swiss Ambassador in Georgia), Daniel Baumann (Director of the Kunsthalle Zurich), Christine Beerli (ex. Vice-President of the ICRC), Franziska Burkhardt (Head of Culture, City of Bern), Catherine David (art historian, Vice-Director of the Centre Georges Pompidou), Barbara Ellenberger (dramaturg, consultant, co-initiator KlimaKontor Basel), Maaïke Engelen (Child and Adolescent Psychoanalyst), Angelo Gnädinger (former Director General of the ICRC), Maren Haartje (former Programme Manager for PeaceWomen Across the Globe), Ursula König (independent mediator and consultant for conflict transformation), Sandro Lunin (Artistic Director of Kaserne Basel), Thomas D. Meier (Dean of the Zurich University of the Arts), Nicole Müller (writer and communication consultant), Danielle Nanchen (Head of the Cultural Creation Section of the Swiss Federal Office of Culture), Dagmar Reichert (cultural geographer, lecturer at the Zurich University of the Arts), Meret Schlegel (dancer and choreographer), Dieter Senghaas (emeritus Professor for Peace, Conflict and Development Studies, University of Bremen), Heidi Tagliavini (Swiss diplomat, former Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General), Isa Stürm (architect), Alice Thomann (programme officer SDC), Gisela Ullmann (supervisor and coach for organisational development), Margit Wästfelt (Austrian diplomat).

A current list of *artasfoundation*'s Board of Trustees and Advisory Board members, with descriptions of their professional backgrounds, can be found on the *artasfoundation* website.

***artasfoundation* collaborates in Switzerland and in the project regions with experienced partner institutions. For example:**

Aamta foundation, Sukhum/i  
Adami Media Prize for Cultural Diversity in Eastern Europe  
Artlink, Switzerland  
Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts, Brandeis University, US  
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD Centre), Switzerland  
Center for Security Studies (CSS), Switzerland  
Culture and Management Lab, Georgia  
Ettijahat – Independent Culture, Lebanon  
Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Denmark  
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland  
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Switzerland  
Basel University of Art and Design (FHNW), Switzerland  
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Switzerland  
IDP Women's Union of Tskaltubo, Georgia  
Ilia State University, Georgia  
IMPACT: Imagine Together. Platform for Arts, Culture and Conflict Transformation  
KOFF. The Swiss platform for peacebuilding  
Kunsthof Holm, Germany  
Landscapes of Hope, Lebanon  
norient, Switzerland  
Ochamchyra Youth House, Ochamchyra  
OHCHR – Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Pro Helvetia, Switzerland  
Society Biliki, Georgia  
Armenian State Pedagogical University (ASPU), Armenia  
Swisspeace, Switzerland  
Tanaghom Academy, Egypt and Tunisia  
Women for Justice Foundation, Canada  
Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Switzerland



**Since 2011, numerous private individuals have made the work of *artasfoundation* possible through contributions, including:**

Andreas and Brigitte Albicker, Evelyne Albin, Renate Amuat, Therese Augsburg and Jürg Spörri, Günther Bächler, Daniel Baumann, Barbara Berger Schindler, Martina Bernasconi, Charlotte Bhattarai, Regula Bibus-Waser, Eva Bischofberger, Rezio Blass, Marianne Bleuler-Herzog, Peter Bleuler, Astrid Bodisch, Giovanni Borrelli, Daniela Brunner, Heidi Burkhardt-Hollinger, Jean-Marie Clarke, Catherine David, Jaques Diday-Baumann, Ursina Dorer, Renato Duckeck, Mireille Eberhard, Penelope Eberhart Freeman, Fabio Eiselin Wenger, Johanna Ensinger, Yvonne Fahrni, Silvia Flachsmann, Katharina Flieger, Rita Frey Schuppisser, Doris Füllemann, Christian Fürholz, Patrick Gamba, Bettina Ganz Gorgi, Gianni Garzoli, Simon Gaus, Stefan Gerster, Hans Rudolf Glatz, Ursina B. Gloor Weisskopf, Peter Goop, Mariann Grawe, Dr. Konrad Grimm-Kistler, Thomas Gutmann, Corinne Haffter Schaffner, Regula Hatt-Suter, Juerg and Mirjam Häubi-Sieber, Angela Hausheer, Trix and Robert Heberlein, Thomas Heimann, Claus Hipp, Esther Barbara Honegger, Hermann Huber-Bossert, Helene Esther Huld, Ioannis and Dorothea Iglezakis, Ilya and Marina Karlin, Clare Kenny, Franziska Koch, Heinrich König, Silvia Koenig Koellreutter, Maia and Stefan Kraft, Heidi Kramer, Silvia Kraus-Billeter, Simone Kriesemer, Patrick Kull, Corina Lang, Regula Langemann, Maria Larson, Andreas Lauber, Sigrid Launois-Meyer, Stefanie and Peter Luethy, Sandro Lunin, Francoise Marcuard, Cornelia Markovic-Leu, Philip Matesic, Sandra Mazzoni, Oskar Meyer, Evelyne Monney, Cyrus Mosayebi, Regula Muchenberger, Nicole Müller, Martin Naegelin, Danielle Nanchen, Geneviève Nanchen-Lucette, Beatrice Naville, Nadine Naville, Ursula Peters, Linda Pfenninger, Theresia Elisabeth Pfluger, Elodie Pong, Dorothea von Rechenberg, Nanni Reinhart Schinz, Isabel Roman-Karajan, Hans Roth-Rohner, Eliane Rutishauser, Liliane Ryser, Andrea Saemann, Karin Saemann, Lilian Saemann, Martina Schäfer Löser, Bigna Schaffner, Marina Schindler, Peter Schindler, Meret Schlegel, Elisabeth Schmid Kläui, Barbara Schneider, Doris Beate Lux Schnitter, Marcel Schwald, Markus Schwander, Beat Siegrist, Peter Sprenger, Rudolf Stocker, Robert Strebel, Angela Stupp, Marianne Theis, Alice Thomann, Christine Thomann-Hatt, Tanuja Thuraijah, Ruth Tippe, Oleg Tkatch, Gisela Ullmann-Jungfer, Philip and Verena Urner-Diggelmann, Marianne Vogler, Barbara von Reibnitz, Thomas and Elisabeth von Salis, Brigit Wehrli Schindler, Franziska Welti, Andrea Wolfensberger, Bettina Z'Rotz, Brigitta Züst, Mara Züst, Susanna Züst.

**Since 2011, *artasfoundation* has received commissions or support contributions from the following institutions:**

Human Security Division (AMS) of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Bayer (Switzerland) AG, Caran d'Ache AG, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Drosos Foundation, Fair Future Foundation, Fondation Olympique pour la Culture, Fondation Smartpeace, Gerda Techow Gemeinnützige Stiftung, Guido Feger Stiftung, H.E.M. Stiftung, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Georgischer Förderverein, Gruppenpraxis Paradies, Culture Department of the City of Zurich, Max Kohler Stiftung, MP Amministrazioni Immobiliari, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)-Task Force, Plakatgesellschaft Basel, Pro Concepta Zug AG, Reformierte Kirchgemeinde Erlenbach, RHW-Stiftung, Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Schweizerische Interpreten Stiftung (SIS), Stanley Thomas Johnson Stiftung, Stiftung Corymbo, Stiftung Dr. Jacques Edwin Brandenberger, Stiftung Mercator Switzerland, Thomas Abegg Stiftung für Geist und Kultur, Valüna Stiftung, Verein Stroh zu Gold, Isabell und Dr. Friedrich Vogel-Stiftung, Von Duhn Stiftung, Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK).

A continually updated list of individuals and institutions supporting *artasfoundation* can be found on the foundation's website.

# artasfoundation Needs You

**We would like to give the foundation a broad social base and invite you to give your financial support to *artasfoundation*. Please contact us if you have questions or wish to offer your support in some other form.**

## ***Friend of artasfoundation***

Starting from a yearly contribution of 200 CHF, you will be kept informed of the foundation's activities and receive invitations and free admission to its events.

## ***Donor to artasfoundation***

Starting from a yearly contribution of 1000 CHF, you will receive all the publications of the foundation in addition to current information, free admission to the foundation's events and an invitation to a special donors' event.

## ***Patron for an artasfoundation project***

Support a particular art project and accompany us in the preparation and on-site realisation.

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

**Bank account: Artas Foundation, Raiffeisenbank, 8001 Zürich  
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**Thank you for your contribution!**

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art  
as  
foundation  
for  
peace