

SSSATAFIIIONNS

Places and Acts of Resistance



Congress of Cultural Activists
Nazar Voitovich Art Residence (NVAIR)

The Muzychi Expanded History Project

Open Place

Charitable Foundation for Art Support "Artsvit Gallery"

YermilovCentre Art Kuzemyn

NGO Cultural Traffic

Project Diffusion

NGO TRANSLATORIUM
BAZHAN Residency

Kinozona

Sorry No Rooms Available

Creative Residence MC6

Carpathian Literary Residence

Map of Residencies in Ukraine

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Dear reader,

There's no need to state the obvious, but we do need to remind ourselves to remain grounded in these times of permacrisis. In our everyday lives and work, we constantly face the struggle between losing our minds or losing our hopes. Many of our colleagues internationally are facing a plethora of life-threatening issues, not only professionally but also in many other parts of their lives. Their fights, strength and endless inspiration is what this issue of Station to Station is all about: Places and Acts of resistance, with a special focus on Ukraine.

In the cultural sector, maintaining close ties with our colleagues in Ukraine has been imperative for both sides since the full-scale invasion of Russia on 24 February 2022. Throughout this time, and together with many other cultural organisations, we have supported Ukraine's cultural sector, collaborating closely with its artists, curators, institutions and artist residencies.

Among other things, DutchCulture organised five visitors programmes for our Ukrainian colleagues from different sectors, with the last one focusing on artist residencies. In this issue you can read an excerpt from the conversation with the five representatives from the field who spent a week in the Netherlands. Another contribution is by Zapravka, a collective of residencies in Ukraine that also helped us to update the TransArtists database with residencies that are still operating. They also contributed a text, discussing the current situation of artist residencies in their country and the impact these places have on the local community and the internally displaced artists. Lotte Geeven, artist and a DutchCulture colleague, travelled to Ukraine last year where she visited several residencies to learn about the situation on the ground. In this issue you can read an impression of her visit to Kharkiv and

the Literature Museums' Residency. From the rest of our TransArtists' team, there is a text about the series of events we organised in the past years under the title of Future Hospitalities, and a text offering a general perspective on international networks and their advocacy, solidarity and other attempts to support Ukrainian and other displaced artists. The illustrations in this issue are AI generated and analogue-collaged by Hood Studio.

Although this issue concentrates on Ukraine, their situation is unfortunately not unique. We live in a world where wars, a disregard for human rights and censorship – to just name a few present-day evils – are omnipresent. That is why we invited Mary Ann DeVlieg, a long-time advocate for displaced and at-risk artists, to contribute a text on this topic based on her vast experience. Alma Salem, a curator, wrote a text about the Syrian Political Feminist Movement, offering the perspective from another country that has been ravaged by war for many years.

All the examples, no matter how different and distant from each other, have one thing in common: the hope for change and the dream of a better future. As bleak as it may seem at times, these small acts of resistance do eventually grow into something bigger than themselves and bigger than ourselves. They keep the (resistance) flame burning.

With kind regards,

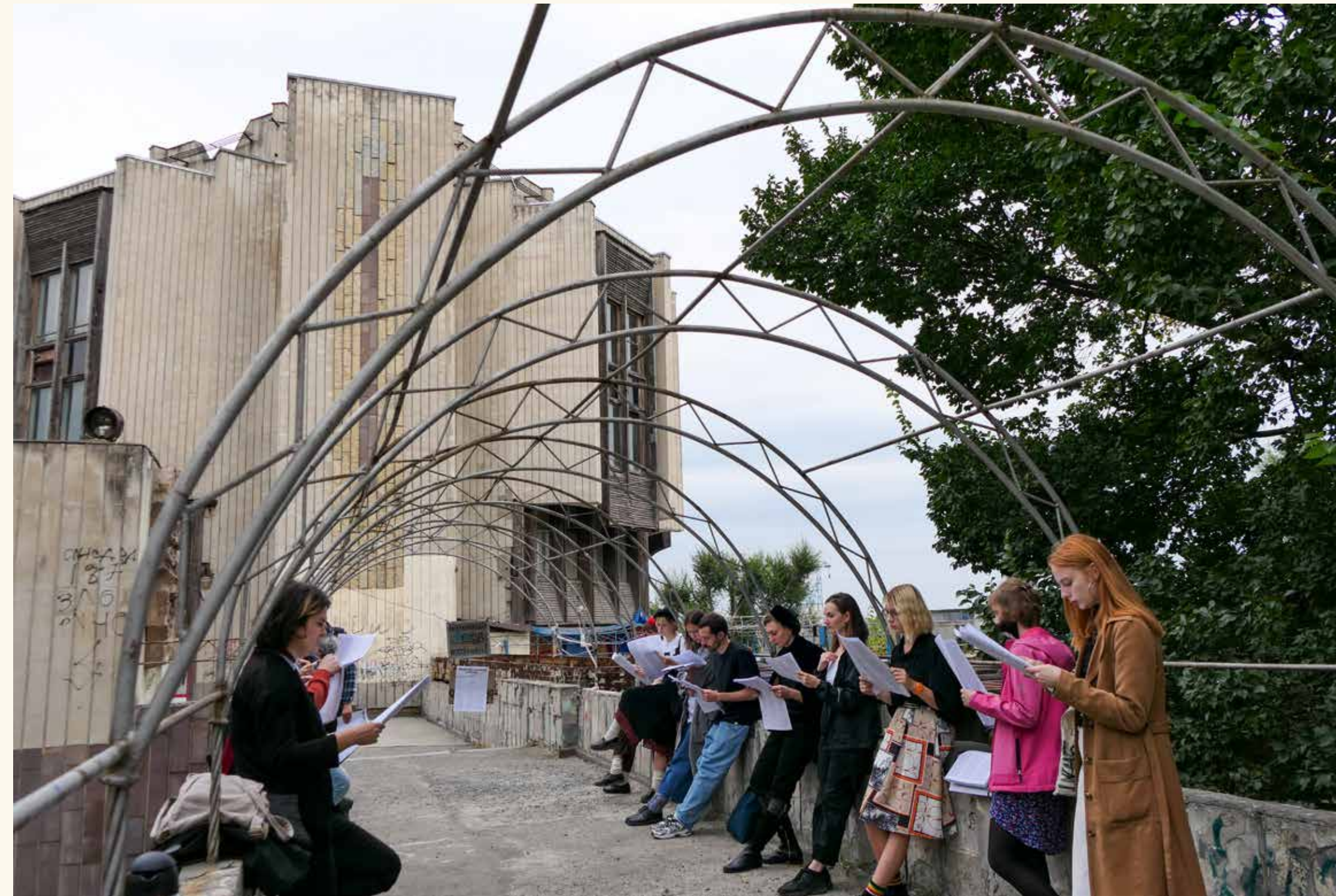
DutchCulture | TransArtists Team

Places and Acts of Resilience

BY ZAPRAVKA



Zpravka is an initiative supporting art residencies in Ukraine operating since 2020, initiated by the Ukrainian Institute, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, and the European Union-funded programme House of Europe, implemented by Goethe-Institut. The organisation name can be translated in different ways: petrol station between destination A to destination B, refill, seasoning for a dish. The main goals of the initiative are: to increase the visibility and systematic presentation of Ukrainian art residencies within the international and local professional field; to raise the professional standards of residency programmes in Ukraine; and to inform both the Ukrainian and international professional community about the opportunities available for artists, curators, and other cultural and art sector professionals. Zpravka has a thoroughly horizontal structure and most of its participants work on a volunteer basis. In 2021 Zpravka started cooperation with TransArtists, helping to update the



Performative reading event in 2021 by Iryna Polikarchuk

list of current [Ukrainian residencies](#) as well as writing an article about [art residencies in Ukraine](#). In this article, Zpravka describes the main trends and changes that have occurred in the cultural scene of Ukraine and how this has affected the art residential landscape.

The war in Ukraine has been ongoing since 2014. The country has lost approximately 20% of its territory during this time. Moreover, Ukraine has lost a vast amount of cultural heritage: immovable monuments, museum collections, archaeological excavation sites, and more. After 24 February 2022, many things in Ukraine changed dramatically, including what once seemed like ordinary things and now became a luxury, such as travelling by airplane, having evening walks in the city after midnight, a steady power supply, a sense of physical safety, mental peace, balance, and long-term planning...

People, territories, and destinies have changed, which inevitably has a bearing on the artistic and cultural scene.

The main space of resistance in Ukraine is undoubtedly the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), where people risk their lives to protect the land, the people, and shared European values. The war in Ukraine is not only about territory but also about Ukrainian identity. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, hundreds of cultural activists have joined the AFU and shifted their creative work to military service. Unfortunately, some of them have died or suffered serious injuries.

State funds that were previously allocated to support culture in peaceful times are now largely redirected to the needs of the AFU. As a result, international donors are among the most significant supporters of Ukrainian culture through grant programmes and scholarships. For example, in 2022 the European Commission allocated 5 million euros as part of the “Creative Europe” programme to support Ukrainian artists and cultural organisations both in Ukraine and abroad. Despite the challenging circumstances and lack of state funding, many state and independent cultural institutions continue their work and organise art events, exhibitions, and educational programmes in the intervals between air alerts, and sometimes even during airstrikes.

Since the full-scale invasion, there has been a new surge of interest in Ukrainian culture, an increase in Ukrainian self-identification (including among the diaspora), and a growing number of people speaking Ukrainian in public spaces. The demand for Ukrainian cultural products is enormous. For instance, tickets for the play *The Witch of Konotop* at the National Ivan Franko Theatre sold out in just 13 minutes. The queues to buy a stamp depicting a sinking Russian warship stretched for several kilometres. The performances of the famous poet Serhiy Zhadan attract audiences of several thousands. Ukrainian artists are using their practice to support the Armed Forces, including financial donations, holding regular fundraisers, charity events, and concerts. A huge number of new Ukrainian clothing brands have emerged.

One of the trends in Ukraine has been the dominance of the war topic. It is now nearly impossible to create a project without touching upon the issue of war or contemplating its consequences.

The full-scale invasion put an end to the narrative of “brotherly nations” that presented Russia as Ukraine’s elder sibling. In seeking a language to describe this historical context to international audiences, awareness began to grow that the political agenda of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union was nothing less than colonial, aimed at the complete assimilation and erasing of any local national identities. Scholarly research from the EU, the UK, the US, and other countries has helped find the necessary vocabulary for self-reflection and to articulate this context to the global community. Interestingly, before the full-scale invasion, most Europeans did not recognise Russia as an imperialist country.

Many museum artifacts have been moved to Russia, and the process of “legalising” the looted items is ongoing through their presentation in retrospective exhibitions, including at the Hermitage. The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam resulted in massive flooding, inundating vast areas, including residential ones. Among them was the house of the artist Polina Raiko in the village of Oleshky. Unique wall drawings were washed away. During the invasion, the mosaics by Ukrainian dissident artist Alla Horska in temporarily occupied Mariupol, *Tree of Life* and *Boryviter*, were significantly damaged.

Sadly, history often repeats itself. The international charitable foundation “IZOLYATSIA. Platform for Cultural Initiatives” began its work at an insulation materials factory in Donetsk. In early June 2014, the cultural space was seized by representatives of the Moscow-backed so-called Donetsk People’s Republic. The foundation’s team moved to Kyiv where they opened the creative space IZONE. Later, the decision was made to resume operations in eastern Ukraine, namely in the mining town of Soledar. In 2022, the dangerous situation in the city forced the team to leave their office once again, continuing their history of relocations. Soledar was completely destroyed and depopulated by Russian forces, who have occupied the ruins of the city since 2023.



The full-scale invasion forced many cultural spaces to transform into humanitarian hubs or shelters. Among them are the Yermilov Centre in Kharkiv, the Assortment Room in Ivano-Frankivsk, Nazar Voitovych Art Residency (NVAIR) in Ternopil region, the “Sorry, No Rooms Available” residency in Uzhhorod and others. Human factors and resource availability play an important role in this process. The Art Kuzemyn residency (Sumy region, Okhtyrka district) continues to function despite its close proximity to the front lines. As the curator and director of Yermilov Centre and Art Kuzemyn residency, Nataliia Ivanova describes: “ART Kuzemyn gathered artists from the city of Kharkiv, which at that time was suffering from Russian missiles flying over the energy infrastructure. The enemy tried to leave us without light, water, heating, and communication. But we tried to create art together in the breaks between blackouts. The works created in such circumstances then became the basis of the exhibition *Personnel Composition*, which was exhibited at the Yermilov Centre in 2023, and the presentation of which coincided with one of the largest blackouts in Kharkiv. Then we showed this project in Poland and published a catalogue.”

According to Asortymentna Kimnata co-founder Alona Karavai, in 2022 everything was done quickly and overcompensated. For example, Ukrainian artist Lesia Khomenko initiated the Working Room residency, which was supposed to last a few weeks but lasted almost three months, resulting in more than one hundred works and six exhibitions. Apparently, the same adrenaline led Alona Karavai and Anna Potiomkina to initiate a residency about the future, which they came up with and organised in the summer of 2022. A year later, they organised one-month residency about the peripheries, as the first international residency of the Asortymentna Kimnata after the start of the full-scale invasion.

After the full-scale invasion, the Artsvit residency programme in Dnipro changed its approach to working with residencies for two main reasons: the importance to support the local creative community – those who decided to stay in Dnipro during the war, and those who moved from more dangerous regions. During this time, several group residencies with a focus on non-formal education took place.



The 2024 residency, implemented jointly with the Solidarity House of Culture and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Warsaw, became a landmark. The theme of the residency was dedicated to integration into new communities as a result of a full-scale invasion and focused on performance and physical practices. Five participants in Dnipro and 5 participants in Warsaw (from different artistic media) had group online meetings with experts in parallel to offline events. They developed the concept of the final event which took place within the framework of Maria Prymachenko's exhibition. In Warsaw, they had group exercises and a public intervention in the exhibition and the space near the museum.

However, the infrastructure of Ukrainian residencies is insufficient to host all the artists who urgently need shelter, especially in the long-term (more than three months). Many residencies have ceased to exist, particularly those in the east of Ukraine: the Platform TU in Mariupol, the DIY space 127 garage in Kharkiv, the international Biruchiy residency in Zaporizhzhia region, Barvinok Art Residency in Dnipro, the land art residency in Mohrytsia, and more. "Since 2022, 127 garage residency has existed as a nomadic organisation. We have suspended work in our space and are focusing on projects related to two themes: supporting self-organisation in art and dialogue with the diaspora. We were also forced to put the residency at Garage on pause and moved the Garage collection partly to Lviv, partly to Austria. Now we have organised *HOME* – a residency for Ukrainian artists in Austria", says 127 garage co-curator Nastia Khlestova.

According to a sociological survey, the psychological state of 55.8% of respondents in Ukraine has worsened since last summer. Air raids, shelling, deaths, and concerns for loved ones have become a sort of routine for Ukrainians, and the horizon for planning has shrunk to a minimum. Various organisations in Ukraine are steadily launching mental health support programmes for artists and cultural managers. For example, the project "Culture Helps," implemented by Insha Osvita (UA) and zusa (DE) with funding from the European Union, has provided 101 individual grants aimed at supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Ukrainian activists in the cultural sector.



Artist Oleksaiy Say at Art Kuzemyn Residency, provided by the curator

Shelter at the Yermilov Art Center, provided by the institution



For Ukrainians, humour has become a sort of emotional shield. Since the start of the war (not only since the full-scale invasion), Ukrainians have created millions of memes and humorous posters. They are full of optimism and reflect Ukrainians' attitude toward the war. Some of them are collected on platforms such as the War Memes Museum website by the Media Centre Ukraine and the art portal "Art of Victory."

Places of resistance also exist outside of Ukraine. Ukrainians around the world unite during support events and rallies under the hashtag #StandwithUkraine, and thousands of blue-and-yellow flags Wave in different parts of the world. The Ukrainian Institute has opened offices in Berlin and Paris and significantly expanded the geography of its projects to include South America, Africa, India, and Indonesia.

Today, Ukraine is present at almost every major international cultural event, reminding the world of its struggle. In 2023, the documentary film *20 Days in Mariupol* by director Mstyslav Chernov won an Oscar. The band Kalush Orchestra, with the song "Stefania," won the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest. In the same year, despite the full-scale phase of the war, the Ukrainian pavilion opened at the Venice Biennale. Curators Maria Lanko, Borys Filonenko and Lizaveta German had to evacuate the installation *Fountain of Exhaustion* by Pavlo Makov from Kyiv. At the same time, Ukraine was represented at Piazza Ucraina with an installation of "rescue bags" by Bogdana Kosmina, and a collection of illustrations and posters by Ukrainian artists.

The war that Russia has waged against Ukraine takes a hybrid form. The main point of resistance is currently on the military front. Other points of resistance can include communities outside Ukraine that provide support to the Ukrainian people, as well as various virtual and informational spaces. Residencies, cultural platforms and international events also offer Ukrainians the opportunity to remind the world about the war that has been ongoing for more than 10 years.

Visitors Programme of DutchCulture with a Focus on Residencies in Ukraine

BY BOJANA PANEVSKA



DutchCulture organises a wide range of tailor-made [international visitors programmes](#) for cultural organisations and professionals. These programmes offer insight into a specific segment of the Dutch cultural sector to strengthen international ties and stimulate the exchange of ideas.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion, a special focus has been placed on supporting our Ukrainian colleagues. So far, DutchCulture has organised four visitor programmes specifically for Ukrainian professionals, each centred on a specific topic. The first programme focused on [heritage protection](#), the second on [cultural policy](#), the third on [regional museums](#), and the fourth focused on artist residencies (AiRs).

In the last week of November, DutchCulture | TransArtists welcomed five organisers of artist-residences: Iryna Polikarchuk, Director & Public Programme Curator at [Artsvit Gallery](#), Dnipro; Alona Karavai, Director at [Asortymentna Kimnata](#), Ivano-Frankivsk; Anastasiia Manuliak, Representative of [Zapravka](#) & Head of Visual Arts at the [Ukrainian Institute](#), Kyiv; Bozhena Pelenska, Programme & Executive Director at [Jam Factory Art Center](#), Lviv and Nataliia Ivanova, Director at [Yermilov Centre for Contemporary Art](#) and the ART KUZEMYN Residency, Kharkiv. [Yuliia Elyas](#), an artist from Ukraine based in the Netherlands, joined the group as a translator and actively participated in the conversations.

During the five days they spent in the Netherlands, with a fully packed programme and meeting a variety of colleagues from the Netherlands, the team of DutchCulture | TransArtists discussed many topics and ideas with them.

I managed to sit down with them for an hour, and here's my attempt to bundle and summarise our talk(s) into a short text.

We started by sharing examples of projects that stayed with them for a long time, or that were very inspiring. It wasn't easy to pick one thing "because all Ukrainian art is now connected to the war, and everything is about that but in a different language," as Alona put it. She continued talking about an exhibition that focused on the Dnipro River, "[The](#)

[River Wailed Like a Wounded Beast](#)", organised by the Dovzhenko Centre. The exhibition took the river as an object and a subject: the history of Ukraine, from the Soviet times up until the recent catastrophes caused by the Russian army, was shown through the history of the river and the people living in its proximity.

Natalia added that everything they are doing is already an act of resistance, but also an act of solidarity and support for the communities that live nearby. There are many examples that are inspiring, and she mentioned a festival that was organised once electricity was restored in the Yermilov Centre (there was no electricity from March until May 2022). Serhiy Zhadan, Ukrainian writer and poet, offered

to organise a rock music festival called Music for Resistance, for which he invited many musicians who now serve in the Ukrainian defence, and are volunteers. Musician Sviatoslav "Slava" Vakarchuk ("Okean Elzy") also joined the festival after he had been on the frontlines. He performed his song about Mariupol "Misto Marii", which he dedicated to the Ukrainian defenders. This was such an important event for the city, an act of support for everyone who stayed in Kharkiv. Natalia also mentioned that the play "Bread treaty" by Serhiy Zhadan was showcased in Yermilov Centre a number of times, staged by Taras Shevchenko Kharkiv Academic Ukrainian Drama Theatre. This was a big task for them, because the centre is not a theatre and they have to reorganise

the whole space, but they did it because it was important for the community of the city, and every time it was sold out.

Bozhena mentioned that a lot of professional artists fled to Lviv, where they organised the "[Navigation](#)" [programme](#) in the Jam Factory Art Center in 2022. This was a rapid response to help relocated artists and at the same time give a sense of purpose to the people who remained in the city. They provided space and bursaries to the participating artists, and introduced them to institutions and people from the local scene.

Anastasiia added that simply the fact that Jam Factory Lviv opened its doors for the first time since the full-scale invasion was an enormous act of resilience. Their first exhibition reflected the current situation in Ukraine. The exhibition was titled "[Our years, our words, our losses, our searches, our us](#)", and it combined contemporary works of art with historical Ukrainian artworks.

Our conversation took more of an abstract turn when I asked what is more disturbing in times of war – is it the absence or the presence.

Bozhena replied that, from her point of view, the absence was the most dangerous. "I'm thinking of practical things, like the international support on which we are relying. Time is very important in our situation, time is something that connects us in a physical and philosophical way, and we have it in a very limited amount. But I believe when there is an absence of something, there is also a space for something to be created and that takes time".

To which Alona added, "An absence of something is very often not an absence, but is something not being spoken about, for example absence of people or the absence of public discussions on certain topics. With the presence is different, it is more frightening in a way, and I'm speaking here about the presence of far-right and conservative politics in Europe and the USA."

Continuing on the theme of absence and presence, the discussion turned to where we position artist residencies within all of this. What is the importance of organising them and how can residencies affect and support the (local) community?



"Music of Resistance" at Yermilov Centre, photo by Viktoriia Yakymenko



Educational practices with children, photo by Bohdan Yemets, courtesy of Jam Factory Art Center (Lviv, Ukraine).

Iryna said that after the full-scale invasion, the institution has mostly focused on local creative communities and artists. They see this as an opportunity to support the artists and communities who decided to stay in Dnipro in these tough times, as the city is very close to the front line. “We are trying to give more knowledge and instruments to the artists on how to develop their practice. In addition to the educational aspect, we are finding ways to offer them mental support through residencies. Therefore, we are mostly organising group residencies, and this is a kind of a therapy where they can support each other.”

Bozhena mentions something similar: “Our institution not only gives place and budget to the artist, but also provides them with a creative community

where they can work together. We also organised for a psychologist to be present and to help out when needed. Artists were given enough time to research a project, but sometimes they just need the time to feel better, maybe talk to others and not work. And we give them the time and space for that.”

Natalia summarised these sentiments very well: “Artists have always been a precarious category, but now in these extraordinary circumstances they need extra support. Some of them stopped making art, while some need support after returning from the frontlines and wanting to continue making art. The residency ART Kuzemyn never stopped working, and it became a space where artists are coming not only to work, but also as a space to rest.”

Anstasiia adds that “From Zapravka’s research and the constant monitoring of the residency landscape in Ukraine, we notice that networking and community are at the core of what residencies are for in these times. There is a strong humanitarian aspect to allowing artists to not only be artists and to work, but also giving them a place to recuperate.”

Alona observes that the Covid pandemic now seems like a preparation for what is currently happening in Ukraine, with the hybrid working in residencies and the need to constantly rethink how residencies are organised.

“Residencies are an important place for people to connect and synchronise with each other in temporary safe or safer spaces. I’m also thinking of residencies as a window for international communication, and last summer in 2023 we opened our residency to international artists. We said the situation is a bit safer, but we cannot give a 100% guarantee, so the applicants need to know this before applying. We received a lot of applications from artists – 70% Ukrainian and 30% international. The exchange in the residency between national and international artists was deeper and more meaningful in this way.

We are also thinking about the options to keep our residency open to international artists, because we do not know when the military phase will end. What if it lasts for another 10 years? We need to find ways of maintaining these international connections, because 10 years is a whole generation of artists.”

Toward the end of our conversation we reflected on the use of humour as an act of resistance and survival strategy. As Bozhena said, “We do have a lot of dark humour, although you can’t really laugh immediately, since there is a lot of personal loss. There is a big absurdity in war, and this is where a lot of jokes are coming from.”

Natalia concludes that art and humour are very interconnected. Humour is an important part of the Ukrainian culture and mentality, and it is helping people a lot in these times, as it always has. On another note, she continues with a story of Ukrainian soldiers who are on the frontline and are planting different kinds of herbs, vegetables and fruit. “I’m convinced that Ukraine is a nation that is planting and growing and aside from humour, this is also what defines the Ukrainian identity and culture: creation and regeneration.”



Exhibition by Olia Fedorova 2023, photo by Oleh Samoilenko

Love Song

BY LOTTE GEEVEN
WRITTEN IN KHARKIV, JUNE 2024



Writers desk at the residency, photo by Lotte Geeven

“I crash my car into the bridge, I don’t care” echoes from the boombox as I stare at the online menu. Hesitating between a poached egg and salad I hint at the waitress but as she turns around a dull loud bang echoes. Everything’s shaking. A missile has struck nearby. The waitress pauses for a second than heads to the boombox and turns up the music.

It’s morning in Kharkiv.

She shuffles through the playlist and as I sip my coffee Lana Del Ray sings “Don’t make me sad; don’t make me cry.”

With no time to look back or to plan ahead all the city’s energy seems to funnel into the present and Kharkiv’s art scene buzzes Institutes like Yermilov Center, the nearby Art Kuzemyn residency, and Kharkiv Literary Museum keep their doors open for

the arts through their residency programs. “Because art reminds us on a fundamental, emotional level who we are as human beings. And in the fog of war, that’s crucial” says Literature Museum’s director Tetiana Pylypchuk. By creating conditions for developing art, the Literary Museums’ residency program wants to support artists in this extremely difficult situation. Writers, artists, philosophers, playwrights and musicians from outside Kharkiv are coming here to help write down the city’s stories says Pylypchuk, “It’s vital for our city to get a wider perspective on this situation. This year we’ve had many residents. Their work contributes to the memory of these times for the future and that’s important. Because people will always start from memory when they want to know something about their identity, and I think art and literature can describe us, our minds and our culture better than any scientific research.”

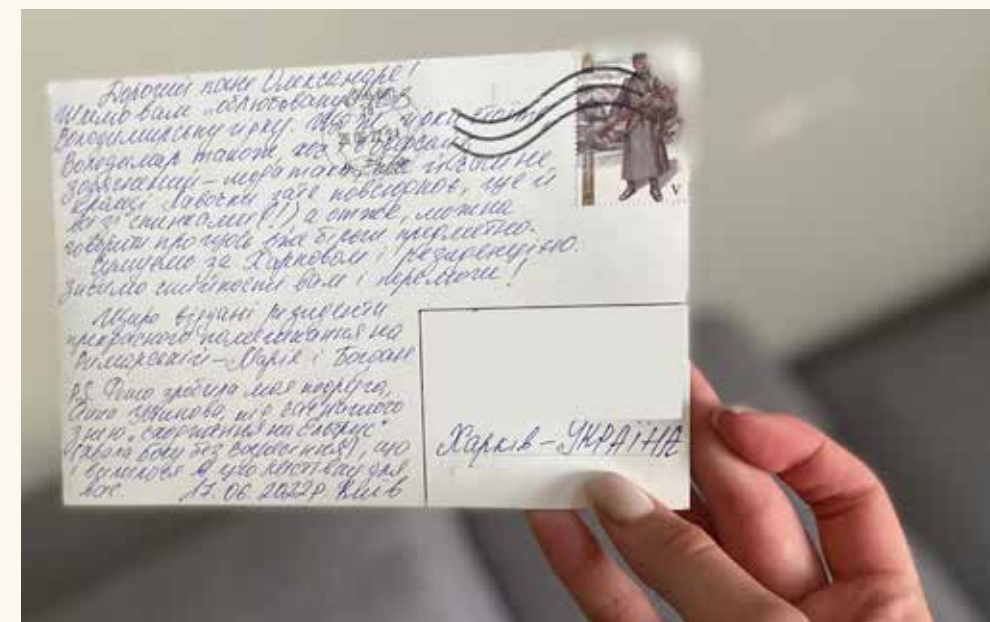
Kharkiv Literary Museum uses flats in the city for its residency program in collaboration with PEN Ukraine.

Tetiana Pylypchuk “We ran over 20 local residencies last year; and all the residents became our friends, We run this place on empathy and friendships and make our own rules based on our values; this is the new institution. The old institution is history.”

Inside the Literary Museum, the Deputy Director Tetiana Ighoshyna and Tetyana Pylypchuk sit at a large wooden table filled with hand-carved objects. The vast collection of books and artifacts is evacuated.



Postcard found in residency, photo by Lotte Geeven



Postcard found in residency, photo by Lotte Geeven

Since the start of the full-scale invasion the staff have devised a form to serve the city in danger. This table we’re sitting on and the wooden objects serve this purpose. “Kostiantyn Zorkin who made the exhibition titled *In the Name of the City* also created several “heroes” (as she names them) which he cut from wood: *death, black hole, a bird, city, man, book & flower*. We try to describe our situation through these seven heroes.” They are fictional characters that serve as talking pieces to make the unmentionable that takes place in the city discussable.

The director grabs all of them. “They’re all important; somebody has to care about our people who died. Somebody has to care about the survivors, and to show why we want to live in this tragic context. Also everybody needs hope for the future. And of course somebody needs to understand what this is,” she says while holding the wooden figure of *death* up.

The museum is open to the people of Kharkiv to help write down the memory of the city while it’s still fresh. Anyone can sit down on this table and share their story. What happens to all these stories? A movie is produced around the characters; comic books are made, songs are written, art is made. Because the team believes history—including that of the war—must be written through the eyes of art; not just by scientists and journalists. “Because right here and right now we need to be creating.”

“This is a new model of care and remembrance. Maybe it will also change the role and model of muse-

ums and residencies in the future.” Tetyana Pylypchuk reflects for a moment. As she picks up a small wooden man on the table, she carefully inspects him before continuing. “We spend our time with the residents as friends, not only as residency hosts; have drinks and very intimate conversations. Others often confuse professionalism with institutional identity, but in fact it’s a horizontal network of care; this network is vast; it is *all of us*.”

Today, a well-known Ukrainian musician arrived at the residency flat in the city. “You should meet him.”

Residency curator Vlada Dermanska takes me to one of the residency flats. The flat is used for popular AiR gatherings between writers and artists in residence and locals; they have discussion nights “a bit like a birthday party. There’s only a place for a few people and it is super popular” says Vlada. And as we close the heavy museum door behind us and step out onto the street, she proudly flashes me a tattoo. It’s a female hand with red nail-polish holding a knife “I had it made one year ago.” The same year she moved here. Everyone called her crazy and ask her what is she doing voluntarily in this dangerous city? “I’ll tell you later why I’m here; first let’s walk.”



Meet Vlada Dermanska from Crimea - curator of the Residence “Slovo” who takes me to the residency flat, photo by Lotte Geeven

We pass a telescope in the park. Through its lens you can gaze at the moon; the only safe space to be seen from here. It's a popular hangout. Vlada strokes the perfectly manicured grass for a moment. We have to keep moving. The neighborhood we cross has been hit hard. Battered facades, cordoned off with ribbons; sized wooden boards where windows once were. In the midst of it stands a snow-white Tesla whose battery ran empty. "What do the residents write about?" I ask. "This year we've had songwriters, dramatists, authors of children's books, researchers and so forth. Our literature is changing because we're talking about war a lot now, even if we're not talking about it. I think the musician we are going to meet will write a love song."

Our walk is abruptly cut off by a fully loaded Lada with a parasol sticking out. Vacation? I ask. She stares at the car. "Yes probably."

While most head west to find a rare moment of relaxation, some head to the de-occupied territories in the east. One of the previous residents visited these areas and is currently writing a book about it.

Sweaty, we arrive at one of the residency flats, a grand steel door opens as we head upstairs. It is a large apartment with broken windowpanes and with a slept-in bed. "During many decades of the 20th century

this place was populated by around 200 notable writers, playwrights, literature critics, translators, actors and actresses, artists, sculptors. Here, in Kharkiv, new publications emerged, numerous literary organizations were created, discussions and gathering were held." explains Vlada. "We need a space to share our emotion, our pain and reflect on it through art. Perhaps in 20 years, we could sit in the theater and learn about these times. This history, even though it's an uncomfortable one, should be remembered."

But today the apartment is empty; we do find large supplies of candles but there's still no trace of the musician.

On a shelf we find a dusty postcard from a publisher. Date: 17th of June, 2022. Vlada translates enthusiastically. "It's half a year since the invasion started. I don't understand from whom is this? But it is telling about Kharkiv from Kyiv. About all the people missing the city. It's to say hi and best wishes; and to keep on resisting."

Outside it's getting dark; a crescent moon hangs over Kharkiv and as we open another apartment in search for the musician we only find his guitar.

"Tomorrow he'll turn up" Vlada believes. "So much for the love song."



Collective Responsibility as the Regeneration of Resistance

BY MARY ANN DEVLIEG
27 DECEMBER 2024



It's up to us to take the space, share what we do and look out for one another.

Shahidul Alam¹

In this very short citation from his address to a global arts conference, renowned Bangladeshi photographer, curator and activist Shahidul Alam does not define 'we' as only Europeans nor highlight that within the 'us' exists a diversity of perspectives on controversial issues, influenced by our upbringings, our cultures, our social media feeds, the standpoints from which we view the world. Yet this – being surrounded by contentious and polarising issues – is where we – the arts sector in Europe – are at. It is to this European 'we', of which I am a part, that I address this article.

In these dark days of killing in Palestine, Israel, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and elsewhere, the arts sector in the West is now at an 'understandings crossroad'. Our colleagues see who provides the weapons that are killing and maiming their families. They see which governments are pushing back refugees and migrants including artists fleeing war, corruption and poverty, discarding them to unsafe third countries for dubious processing, making our Europe more a Fortress than ever. Amongst blatant abuses of international human rights law, our colleagues can also see where we in the arts sector collect sponsorship and public funding. Our marching and demonstrating, petitioning and funding causes is important, but it appears limited to our public squares, not the corridors of power and decision-making politics. We can no longer wonder how ordinary citizens living through past atrocities seemed to look the other way and let things happen. We are now those ordinary people. We in the arts and culture sector have considered ourselves to have a special purchase on intercultural understanding. Do we? In this, our own historical moment, either we

realistically and collectively redefine and enact the concepts underpinning our overly-familiar words – such as inclusion, equity, diversity – or we are our own fake news, betraying our words and ourselves. Although these problems are global and dependent upon elite circles of wealth and politics, it is also true that one can be effective within one's own circles of influence. Our circles include artists, whether at-risk and displaced artists or those who are settled; audiences; public and private funders and politicians and arts organisations. For me, the response must entail collective resistance by embracing shared responsibility.

Feminist sociologist and political theorist Iris Marion Young described a system in which we are all, however much indirectly, complicit in injustice due to the global, interdependent nature of our socio-economic-political era.² She defined structural injustice as:

[S]ocial processes that put large groups of persons under systemic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them.

(Young, 2011: 52)

She determined this as:

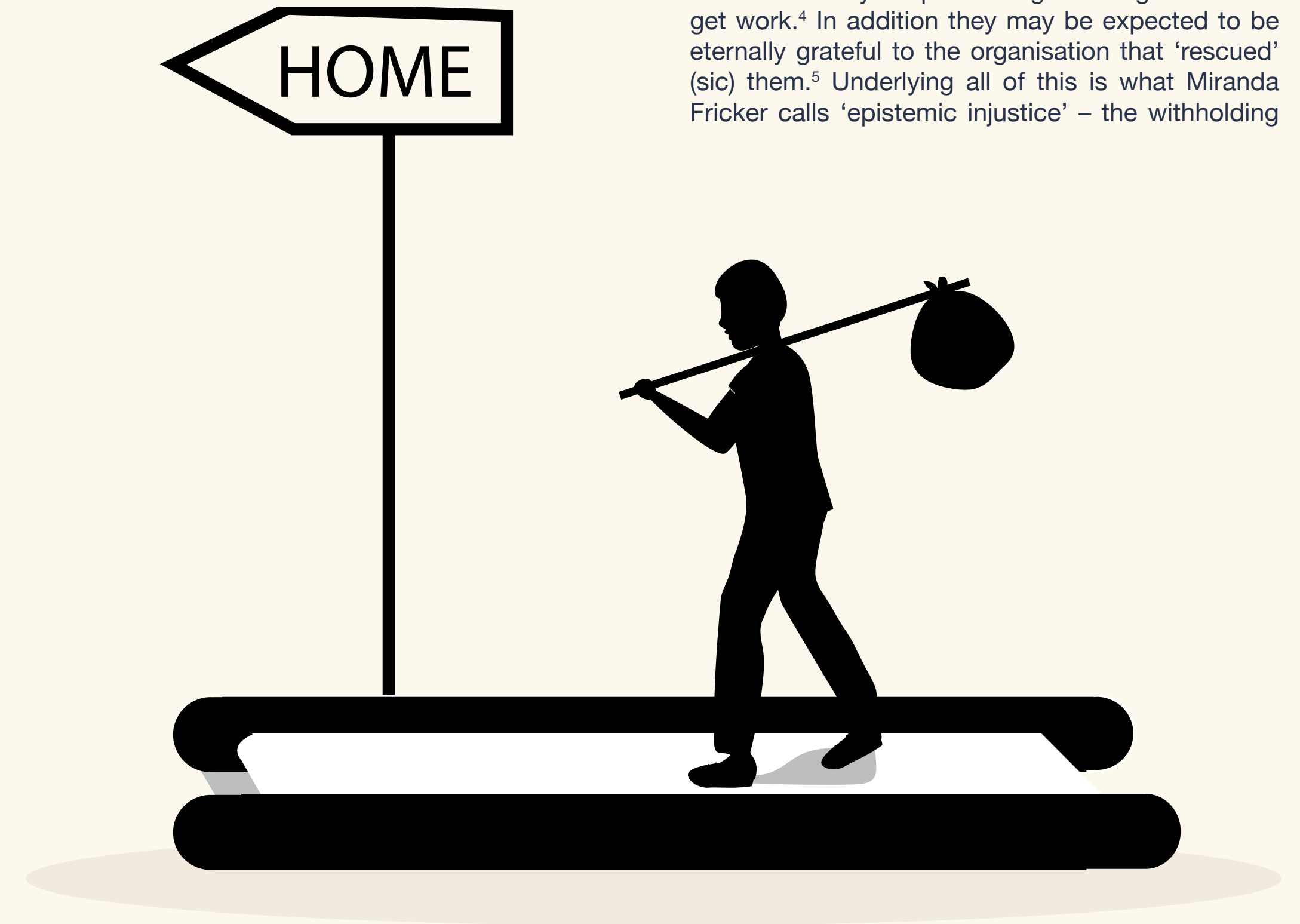
[A] moral wrong, distinct from the wrongful action of an individual agent or the repressive policies of a state... it occurs as a consequence of many individuals and institutions acting to pursue their particular goals and interests, for the most part within the limit of accepted rules and norms.

(Ibid.: 52)

Structural injustice obstructs what philosopher Nancy Fraser calls 'parity of participation'.³ Young accurately observes that such injustice often follows a pre-existing logic, a policy, set of habits, or even legislation. We can (still) see this in the intercultural diverse arts sector in Europe.

My focus since 2009 has been with persecuted, at-risk and relocated artists whom I refer to as *artists impacted by displacement*. They can face challenges to the exercise of their own agency and a barrage of obstacles to participation parity when relocating to Europe, from pre-entry through to the development of their own work once settled. Visa applications are often out-sourced, assessed by those without understanding of the arts (it is unrealistic to expect that all artists can present themselves with the same professional experience of a successful Western artist). Once in the country, their aesthetics can be

disparaged if not aligning with current trends or canons in the host country. Depending on their legal status, they may not be allowed to work, earn fees or accept arts subsidies, denying them of the dignity and right to earn from their artwork. They may face racism in the streets or when looking for housing. Once starting to work, the incoming artist may, on one hand, face the need to understand and be fluent in a heavily bureaucratic context of public subsidy and grant applications or on the other hand, face a competitive environment of arts entrepreneurs already linked to valuable sponsors or politicians. If the artist does not already have a strong international profile, they can be fetishised as victim (or hero), and need to rely on 'performing suffering' in order to get work.⁴ In addition they may be expected to be eternally grateful to the organisation that 'rescued' (sic) them.⁵ Underlying all of this is what Miranda Fricker calls 'epistemic injustice' – the withholding



of credibility to a knower of their own situation.⁶ How far does our empathy rely on our individual emotions and points of view, rather than an understanding of the culture and perspectives of those we host? As Aruna D'Souza analyses in her new book, *Imperfect Solidarities*, our empathy can also ensure our position of supremacy, 'doling out justice as a matter of kindness – or, perhaps, pity' (2014:30).

Derrida described what he called 'hostipitality' as the inevitable hostility inherent in each act of hospitality. Nevertheless, he urged us to seek the 'best possible arrangements...'⁷. And this *seeking for the best possible* is where we may start to work. Writer Rebecca Solnit defines hope not as optimism or idealism but simply as work.⁸ Whether supporting the agency and dignity of the artists in our residencies and our international collaborations, we can identify what needs to be rethought. Our work is clear if we wish to continue working internationally, and it starts with reflection. In her deeply insightful report for On the Move on transforming perspectives on cultural mobility, South African curator Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu exposes an urgency for cultural operators in the West to change their points of view, to enlarge and deepen them with respect to the perspectives of others. She calls for:

A refusal to continue the collective amnesia and selective application of logic in the analysis of the status quo and the action around it. Imagination and re-imagination are the cornerstone of what is needed to continue the momentum of the world's cypher in ways that are regenerative.⁹

(Mlandu, 2023:13)

This leads me to discuss regeneration in the international human rights regime. It upholds many of the rights crucial to the arts, such as freedom of expression and freedom of artistic expression, of mobility, work, education, cultural expression, of assembly, creating and joining unions and so on. However, it is increasingly challenged from two sides. On the one hand, we see countries in the West, and even the European Commission, avoiding the migrant and refugee rights agreed following the movement of populations devastated by World War II, by off-shoring

migrants for processing to Libya, Albania or Rwanda. Apart from a few exceptions (Spain, Ireland...) we also see that national politicians, ignoring thousands of their citizens, continue to sell arms to a government under investigation for genocide, including a head of state under an arrest warrant for war crimes by the International Criminal Court. On the other hand, there is an increasing call for decolonising human rights, not by dismissing them, but by reinforcing them – separating them from the dominance of sovereign nation states that continue to selectively interpret, evade and abuse legally binding rights legislation. This brings human rights away from elitist cloisters of specialist legal experts and closer to ordinary people to discuss and analyse them as relevant to their own lives.¹⁰ Some arts organisations, to a limited extent, have brought human rights discussions to audiences, but it is my contention that the arts sector needs to make strategic alliances with human rights in order to bring our audiences to better understand how arts and rights are mutually dependent.

What then is our work, as an arts sector? Young describes a way forward that she calls the social connection model. It is a *collective responsibility*, as Young explains, that is:

[D]ifferent from the standard conception, which focuses on individual action and its unique relation to a harm... The social connection model finds that all those who contribute by their actions to structural processes with some unjust outcomes share responsibility for the injustice. This responsibility is not primarily backward-looking, as the attribution of guilt or fault is, but rather primarily forward-looking. Being responsible in relation to structural injustice means that one has an obligation to join with others who share that responsibility in order to transform the structural processes to make their outcomes less unjust.

(2011: 96)

As many are now doing, clearly evidenced in this publication, we can first of all listen to our colleagues, both within and outside our countries, to hear how they view the issues in which we are all enveloped.

We can read what they recommend, share our reading, discuss among ourselves and with colleagues as the 'Future Hospitalities' initiative described here has been consistently doing.

We need sustained work to redefine our collaborations and our understanding of solidarity. As Mlandu writes: 'allyship is active, not passive. It requires frequent and consistent behaviours' (2023:7).¹¹ We need to form coalitions with other sectors such as human rights, free speech and migration, developing what D'Souza calls coalitional solidarities based on focused, commonly agreed aims, not on the assumption that others share our own Western perspective; we need 'collective acts', not merely individual empathy (2024:19). To avoid superficial solidarities that hide the privilege of dominant group members, Syrian writer Yassin Al-Haj Saleh offers his conception of partnership as a relationship that: 'has no centre; works in multiple directions; and is based on equality rather than power.'¹²

If we are serious, we are also tasked to demand meetings with our public and private funders – and as coalitions we will have a stronger voice. We cannot rely on petitions; we have to tell decision-makers that, apart from the immorality, it is unacceptable to put us in situations where the same funding that sells weapons that kill our colleagues is the funding that we are obliged to accept in order to continue our cultural work or to host the artists we do.

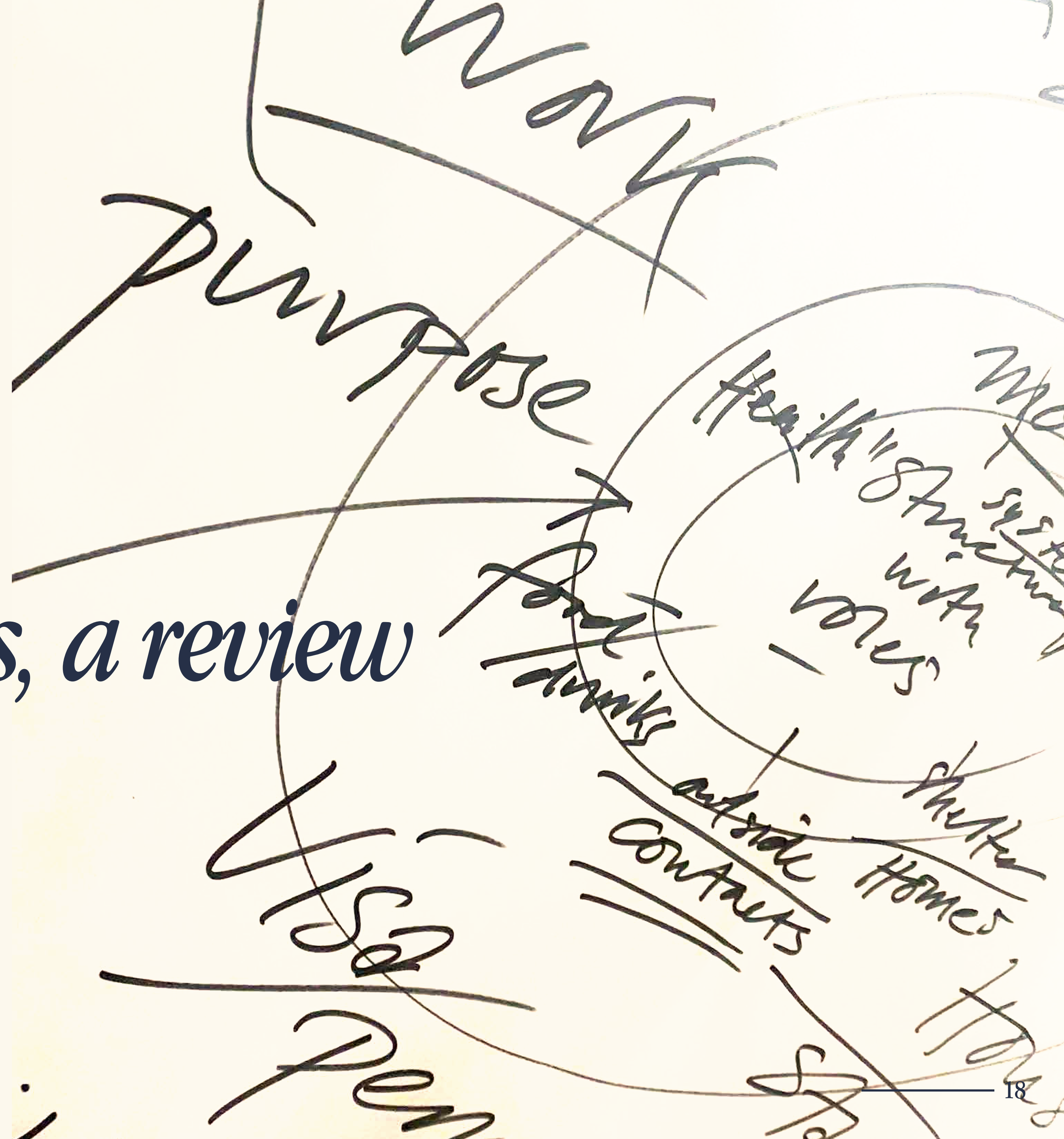
All of this will be work and I do not believe we have a choice.

This essay is based in part on my thesis, 'Artists Displacement and Rights: Citizenship, Care and Advocacy in the Networked Arts Sector in Europe', 2024. Centre for Socially Engaged Research-based Practice, TU Dublin.



Future Hospitalities, a review

BY HEIDI VOGELS



home. They provided housing and guidance to build a future in Japan, while continuing an online residency to support another artist in Ukraine. Many residency programmes, along with art institutions, theatres and festivals, have shifted their focus toward addressing the tragedy of war and fostering solidarity and resistance.

As we confront this new reality of forced migration due to war, persecution or crisis, a question arises: how can the cultural field be permanently open to professionals who are forced to relocate, regardless of their country of origin?



Future Hospitalities II, Amsterdam. Photo by Anne van der Pot

Hosting, learning, changing

To explore this question further, TransArtists collaborated with [Kunstenpunt](#) in Belgium to organise a [peer-to-peer meeting](#) in February 2023 at [Globe Aroma](#) in Brussels and a [symposium](#) few months later at [Brakke Grond](#) in Amsterdam. This gathering brought together professionals from the cultural and humanitarian sectors across Flanders and The Netherlands. The programme in Brussels included working sessions on subjects ranging from protocols for initial crisis response to the interactions between policy makers, refugee workers and art communities. Sharing firsthand experiences among colleagues from the art scene, social workers, and displaced artists proved invaluable. Reflecting together on how to improve current structures and policies allowed to decompress as many of the participants were

“Kindness in welcoming strangers or guests, offering a home away from home.”

While we are familiar with the concept of hospitality, what does it truly mean within the arts and cultural workplace? What forms of hospitality can we envision for a future that seems to have arrived yesterday?

Hospitality is at the heart of residence programmes that offer artists and other creatives the opportunity to work elsewhere. Welcoming artists in a new place, encountering other perspectives and communities, and helping them to focus on the next step in their practice. From an independent artist-run programme to an institutional career stepping stone, for many they serve as places of refuge, learning, reflection, and regeneration. Besides being creative catalysts, some programmes are specifically dedicated to offering a safe haven for artists and creatives fleeing from crisis or conflict.

Over the past decade, the number of such programmes has increased significantly, peaking after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. In response, numerous residences, cultural institutions, municipalities and art professionals joined existing networks like [Artists at Risk](#), to offer displaced artists an ad hoc first line of support. New regional residency networks emerged to address the catastrophic situation in Ukraine, such as [SWAN](#) Swedish Artist Residency Network, which connects Ukrainian artists with Swedish residencies offering short and long stays for individuals and families. Individual cases also highlight this effort; for instance, [Co-iki](#) micro-residency in Tokyo adapted their programme when they learned their guest artist could not return

grappling with reworking their programmes, securing funding, or finding locations to house displaced families while assisting them with trauma relief.

Discussing strategies to enhance access to various circuits within the Western European professional art scene revealed systemic concerns. Cultural worker Milica Ilic, also present that day, noted in her article, [Hosting Learning Changing](#):

“...If we are to become better hosts, perhaps the first step would be to become better neighbours. This implies that, as cultural professionals, we become much more curious and open to non-Western colleagues, and much more attentive to artistic developments and practices that are not our own.”

Extending this argument, the significance of informal and professional cross-border networks among artists and organisations, and cultural policies supporting this, cannot be underestimated. Marjolein van Bommel, financial director at Toneelmakerij, expressed her appreciation for the European Theatre Convention (ETC): “Shortly after the invasion in February 2022, it took one phone call to our colleagues in Kyiv to establish a collaboration and a residency in our theatre’s attic in Amsterdam.”

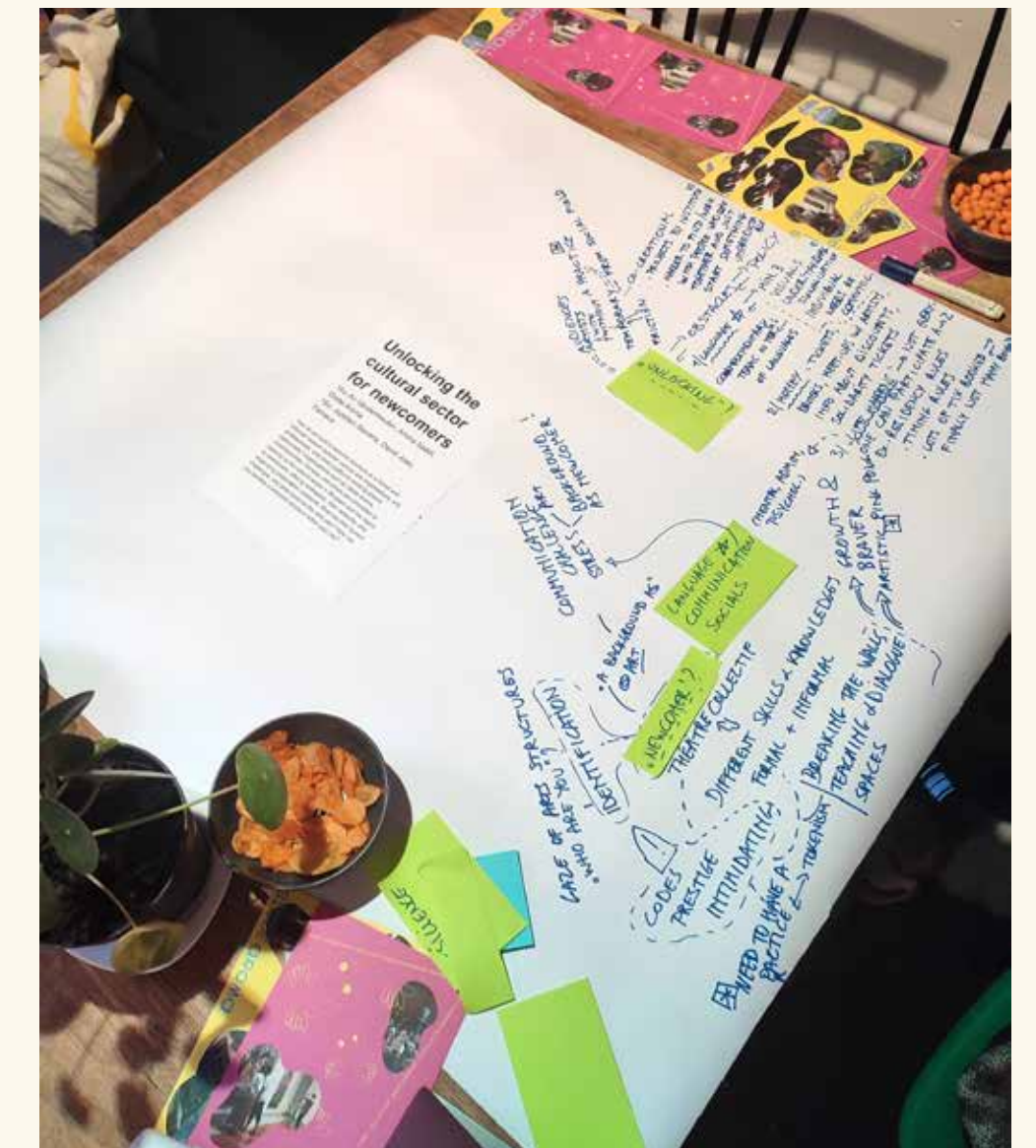
As we know, first crisis response is essential, and there has been a lot of support; but what happens three years down the line? As we’ve seen after other wars and crises, in time the attention wanes. This was also a concern during the meeting in Brussels. Shouldn’t we involve newcomers, their perspectives and experiences in the decision-making processes of institutions and governments, hence learning and building on each other’s competencies?

Tools for change

To enhance accessibility for and to stimulate the engagement of newcomers within cultural organisations, David ‘Ramos’ Joao, artistic leader of Fameus, developed the “[Stop-up Plan](#)”: a toolkit based on their experiences with assisting newcomers in Antwerp. Similarly, Judith Depaule from Atelier des Artistes en Exil in Marseille presented their collective platform “[Exile Lab](#),” which supports

approximately 500 artists in exile across Europe through, amongst other things, an online portfolio database and connections to galleries and art venues.

Bright Richards, theatre director and once a refugee himself, connects refugees with potential employers through storytelling because “the connections made in a new country significantly shape one’s trajectory.” He encourages theatres to collaborate with partners outside the art sector, such as local governments, humanitarian organisations and commercial parties to achieve common goals.



During a collective session in Brussels, photo by Sofie Joye

Regarding the pitfalls of tokenism, and preconceived notions of diversity within art institutions, artist Thais Di Marco comments that “we might need a more democratic approach to subjects such as diversity to dismantle the power dynamics within the visual art sector.” A fair point. How can cultural organisations become more open to otherness? Josien Pieterse, Director of [Framer Framed](#) in Amsterdam, spoke about their effort to transform and gradually inte-

grate the community aspect from within. Initially established as a nomadic platform critiquing colonial history presentations in Dutch museums—and exploring alternative artistic practices—they have since transitioned into curating exhibitions that spark conversations about curatorial choices. In 2016 they opened a community hub in the north of Amsterdam that allows them to host events while facilitating educational programmes and social practice residencies. During the pandemic-induced shutdowns, the organisation embraced new approaches with local groups, such as those focused on cultural psychiatry and refugee experiences.



Natalia Ivanova at De Balie, Amsterdam. Photo by Heidi Vogels

Superpower

A contrasting perspective emerged when Dutch-Culture | TransArtists hosted five residency organisers from various regions in Ukraine from November 25-29 as part of a visitor programme to connect and exchange with colleagues in the Netherlands. They receive displaced artists, facilitate care for the local community, and present exhibitions and events

reflecting everyday reality despite the threats from rockets overhead, power cuts and limited resources. “We operate within the curious combination of tragedy and invention”, said Bozhena Pelenska, Director of [Jam Factory Art Center](#) in Lviv, during a [public talk](#) in Amsterdam. “It is indeed our superpower,” added Alona Karavai, director at [Asortymentna Kimnata](#) in Ivano-Frankivsk: “Our vast networks in and outside the art scene are rooted in shared values that date back to different waves of activism since Ukraine declared its independence in 1991. There is huge trust and solidarity with each other that we can fall back upon.”

Fostering hospitality within the arts—with the aim of creating a more inclusive, diverse and supportive community—requires a two-folded approach. On the one hand we need micro-level solutions; on the other, we must recognise and bolster the myriad grassroots art initiatives that each confront systemic injustices in their own unique ways. Our meetings with various organisations and workers reveal that small-scale alternative systems, networks, groups and communities are already in place. The evolution of these interconnected residency and cultural networks, both private and professional, highlights their immense potential, particularly during times of crisis. To harness this potential, it is crucial to keep connecting them. Through hosting, learning and adapting, we continue to progress towards integrating their impact across borders, sectors, and disciplines.

Natalia Ivanova, director of [CAC Yermilov Centre](#) and founder of residency [Art Kuzemyn](#), located in a bunker in Kharkiv, stated in her presentation at De Balie: “We do not have to make a choice whether to work or not. We have a space where we can create, show, present, and meet – so we *have to* do it. We can help artists and partner institutions– so we do! We can arrange discussions, events, debates on decolonisation, derussification and many other vital issues – so let’s do it! Because everything we do today will affect our future.”



Visit to Framers Framed in Amsterdam, photo by Heidi Vogels



*The Wave Exhibition:
A Collective Art Project of
Feminist Resistance and Renewal*

BY ALMA SALEM

The Wave as a Metaphor for Change

When I conceptualised *Wave*, I was drawn to the symbolism of waves and their natural phenomena: reflection, refraction, interference, and diffraction. These principles mirror the dynamics of feminist and societal movements:

- Reflection represents looking back to learn from history and inform future actions. In *Their Faces*, the first video, Syrian women reclaim their visibility in public and political spaces, transforming memory into strength. This reflection aligns with global movements such as the #MeToo campaign and the feminist awakenings of the Arab Spring, which have amplified women's voices, challenged patriarchal structures, and inspired change. *Wave* builds on this legacy, using reflection to honour the faces of Syrian female politicians and to inspire action.
- Refraction symbolises transformation, turning pain and loss into creative power. This principle drives *Their Moments*, the second video, which connects Syrian women displaced across continents. It weaves their personal experiences of exile into a shared narrative of resilience based on their most powerful moments.
- Interference captures the merging of voices, amplifying their collective impact. In *Their Messages*, the third video, the aspirations and dreams of 51 women come together in a unified expression of solidarity.
- Diffraction illustrates scattering as a source of new connections and resonances. The exhibition itself becomes a diffraction of feminist energy, bridging distances and uniting diverse stories into a cohesive force.
- These principles guided *Wave*, shaping it into an immersive experience where art and activism meet, offering a dynamic framework for understanding and fostering change.

Curating *Wave* has been one of the most profound journeys of my career as a curator. It is not merely an exhibition but a testament to the resilience, creativity, and transformative power of feminist movements. Conceived through a collaborative and interactive horizontal model of creation by 51 members of the Syrian Political Feminist Movement, the process itself embodied a feminist approach to art-making.

Wave reflects a decade-long journey of struggles and triumphs following the Arab Spring, positioning Syrian women at the forefront of the fight for political inclusion and representation. It is not a project about women but by women—a collective act of artistic resistance, solidarity, and hope. I wanted to create an open-source, self-curated exhibition. Therefore, today *Wave* is freely downloadable online.

As both the curator of this exhibition and the Executive Director of the Syrian Political Feminist Movement, I have worn two interconnected hats. On the one hand, I've worked tirelessly to amplify women's political participation in Syria. On the other, I've embraced my curatorial role to create an artistic platform for self-expression. These dual perspectives have allowed me to bridge feminist political advocacy and artistic practice, shaping *Wave* into more than an exhibition—it is a safe space for expression, where stories, struggles, and dreams converge to inspire and empower.

Throughout its journey, *Wave* has accompanied the movement's political events, appearing at annual conferences, sessions at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, and most recently in Albania, where 12 Syrian parties and entities signed a national paper under the Feminist Political Track for Peace.

The Videos: Artworks of Collective Resistance

At the heart of *Wave* are three videos, each a window into shared realities of resistance and hope. Through these works, *Wave* provides a platform for Syrian women to express themselves freely, turning lived realities into powerful artistic narratives that transcend borders.

1. *Their Faces*

This video highlights the visibility and resilience of Syrian women through close-ups and reflective imagery. It reclaims their narratives and asserts their agency in the face of marginalisation.

2. *Their Moments*

Connecting women across 20 countries, this video transforms the isolation of exile into a visual exploration of unity. It weaves individual struggles into a collective tapestry of solidarity and hope.

3. *Their Messages*

Designed as an evolving archive of feminist voices, this interactive video invites participants to share their thoughts and dreams. It captures the ongoing and dynamic nature of the collective journey, ensuring that the movement remains alive and adaptive.

Creating Safe Spaces for Expression

From its inception, *Wave* was more than an artistic project; it was envisioned as a safe space where women could feel seen, heard and valued. Each venue—whether in Paris, Istanbul, or beyond—became an oasis for dialogue, connection, and empowerment.

In Paris, *Wave* catalysed critical conversations about feminism's role in rebuilding post-revolution societies. In Istanbul, it bridged diasporic voices with broader feminist and artistic communities. When *Wave* travelled to Montreal as part of the *Dances de Résistances* event, it found a new international audience eager to engage with its themes of feminist resistance and renewal. This event further amplified the message of *Wave*, connecting Syrian women's stories with global women movements for justice and equality.

Creating these spaces was central to *Wave*'s purpose. I wanted to give the opportunity to every woman involved to express herself without fear of judgment or marginalisation. These environments became living proof of art's power—not only to bridge distances but also to foster solidarity, nurture creativity, and plant seeds of transformation.



Wave exhibition in Paris, photo obtained from syrianwomenpm.org

Legacy and Relevance Post-Assad

With the fall of the Assad regime, the themes of *Wave*—reflection, refraction, interference, and dif-fraction—take on even greater significance. They offer not only a framework for understanding the past but also a roadmap for envisioning and shaping the future.

As Syrian society begins to rebuild, *Wave* stands as a manifesto for change, highlighting the critical role of women—not as participants, but as leaders driving justice, equality and progress.

Combining my roles as curator and Executive Director of the Syrian Political Feminist Movement has shown me how safe spaces for expression can spark transformation. By merging political advocacy with curatorial practice, I have created a space that amplifies voices while also providing a haven where ideas and dreams can take root and flourish.

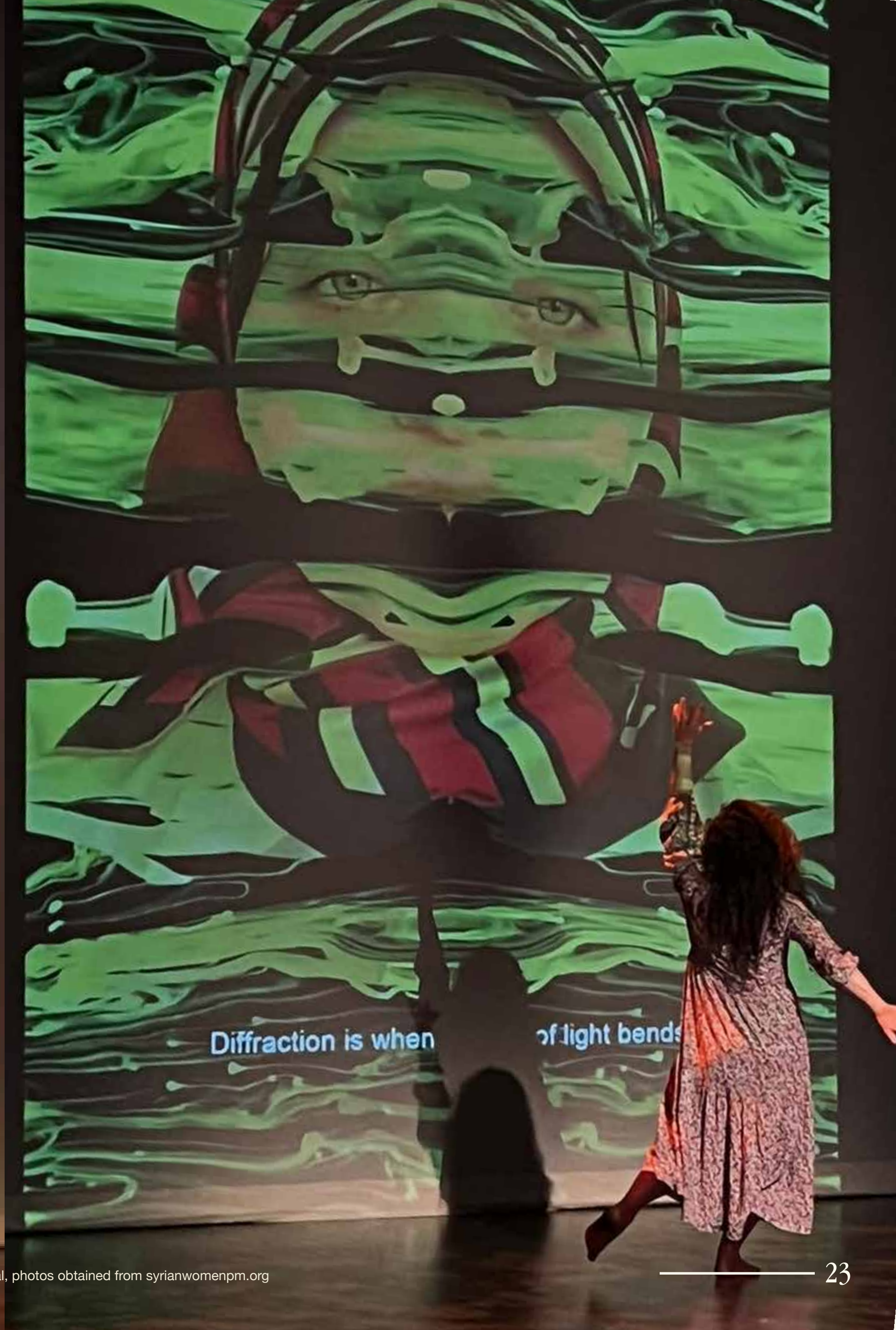
Conclusion: *Wave* as an unstoppable force

For me, *Wave* is more than an exhibition—it is a movement. It transcends borders, carrying the stories and voices of Syrian women to the world. It is a testimonial, a platform, and a shared journey that reflects the profound power of feminist resistance and creativity.

As Syria enters a new chapter, I believe *Wave* embodies the unstoppable force of resistance. Like waves in the ocean, waves of light or waves transmitted in different forms of materials - our efforts flow, evolve, and reshape the world with every motion. It is a vision of hope and inspiration for a future rooted in freedom, equality and justice.

For those seeking to understand this journey, *Wave* offers both a guide and a blueprint for change—a reflection of what is possible when feminist activism meets artistic expression. It reminds us that resistance, like waves, is an unstoppable force, carrying with it the power to transform societies and inspire new beginnings.

Watch the video artworks, read the catalogue and more on the [Wave page](#).



International Networks and Solidarity

BY BOJANA PANEVSKA



Art and culture have traditionally been a place where the politically disposed could turn for solace and support, a place where one can imagine a (better) future, where justice and transformation can happen. Important conversations that develop through and within art and culture very often cannot happen in a different space. And knowing that, internationally, there are like-minded people and spaces is what encourages enables some to continue the fight.

All of this is being threatened by the worldwide rise of right-wing politics, ultra-nationalistic discourses, steadily decreasing public support, complete dis-regard for human rights, climate disaster, to just name a few disturbing developments. And all of this makes the role of cultural networks and working together even more important.

Within the international cultural sector, many organisations and networks have been weaving an intersectional and transnational network of allies, documenting and discussing oppressed histories and promoting solidarity through collaborative practices. There is no better example than what happened after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine: all the sectors mobilised with a speed never seen before, (working) visas for Ukrainians were easily arranged within the EU, accommodation and support was provided.

The [Swedish National Artist Residency Network \(SWAN\)](#) reacted very quickly to arrange funding and provide emergency residencies for Ukrainian artists. They did this together with Artists at Risk, Finland. From March 2022 until the end of 2024, their network of 150 residencies throughout Sweden hosted 98 Ukrainian artists.

Apart from SWAN, there are number of other networks and organisations that have been working with and supporting displaced artists.

Examples

- Since 2013, [Artists at Risk \(AR\)](#) has been building a network of artistic institutions, non-profits, municipalities, state institutions and international organisations to assist, relocate and fund artists who are at risk of persecution or oppression, or are fleeing war or terror. In 2022–2023 alone, AR co-hosted and funded 767 artists and cultural professionals (not counting family and dependents) at 302 partner institutions globally.
- [International Cities of Refuge Network \(ICORN\)](#) offers protective residencies for writers, journalists and artists that face persecution due to their professional activities. Since 2006, more than 80 cities across Europe, the United States and Latin America have joined the network. 300 writers, journalists and artists have found safety and inspiration to continue working in an ICORN City of Refuge.
- In its seven years of operating, [Artists at Risk Connection \(ARC\)](#) has supported over 2,000 artists from 61 countries, disbursing more than \$1 million in direct assistance through emergency and resilience grants. These numbers represent lives transformed, from the Cuban playwright who found a safe haven after months of persecution to the Iranian visual artist who rebuilt their practice in exile in Paris through ARC's support.
- [ELIA](#) is a globally connected European network that provides a dynamic platform for exchange and development in higher arts education. It represents more than 280 members in 54 countries, across all art disciplines. After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, ELIA started the [UAx Platform](#). The platform actively supports war-affected art students who are continuing their degree studies in Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian Higher Arts Education institutions that are struggling to continue teaching during a time of crisis.
- [On the Move](#)'s network counts more than 70 organisations – from national funders to other networks and info points, to centres for creation. The network has established working groups to

connect members around common issues and to bring new perspectives to the question of how to support international work in a way that is fair and sustainable. In 2019 some On the Move members set up a working group on [\(En\)forced mobility](#) to share practices, common actions, and advocacy tools, and, when opportunities arise, to share their experiences in public sessions.

- [The European Union of National Institutes for Culture \(EUNIC\)](#) is the European network of organisations engaging in cultural relations. EUNIC members are national institutes for culture or other organisations acting for or on behalf of a national entity, based in EU Member States. One of the projects worth mentioning here is [European Spaces of Culture](#), initiated by the European Parliament as a Preparatory Action - attributed to EUNIC by the European Commission for the period 2019-2023 - and continuing with learning from pilot projects across the globe. This project focused on collaboration models in cultural relations between European and local partner organisations in countries outside the EU. Another special mention is the [EUNIC Ukraine Fund](#).
- In 2020 [European Cultural Foundation](#) launched the [Culture of Solidarity Fund](#) to support cultural initiatives that, in the midst of turmoil and crisis, reinforce European solidarity and the idea of Europe as a shared public space. Since then they have launched 11 editions ranging from supporting cultural actors in the Corona crisis, regional and thematic editions, via dedicated Ukraine editions to an edition helping to mobilise voters for the 2024 European Parliament elections.
- [Freemuse](#) works with artists, art and cultural organisations, activists and partners in the global south and north, campaigning for and supporting individual artists with a focus on artists targeted for their gender, race or sexual orientation. Freemuse documents violations of artistic freedom and pursues evidence-based advocacy at international, regional and national levels for the better protection of all people, including those at risk.

- [Artistic Freedom Initiative \(AFI\)](#) is led by immigration and human rights attorneys and it facilitates pro bono immigration representation and resettlement assistance for international artists at risk. AFI directly assists artists who have experienced persecution, censorship, or other restrictions on their freedom of expression, and supports artists who have demonstrated a commitment to advancing progressive social change and fundamental human rights.
- [Culture Action Europe \(CAE\)](#) is the major European network of cultural networks, organisations, artists, activists, academics and policymakers. As the only intersectoral network it brings together members and strategic partners from all areas of culture.

To give one last example, in the paper published after the meeting on 16 May 2023 of the [Council of the European Union on At-risk and Displaced Artists](#), Point 14 encourages Member States, at the appropriate levels and through the appropriate institutional and legal frameworks, to “consider taking further measures to enhance the capacity to offer safe havens and so-called ‘cities of refuge’ for at-risk and displaced artists from different parts of the world, and contribute to networking for such artists”.

(No) conclusion, only questions

The above examples, although well known in the sector, need to be mentioned over and over again, especially to justify their importance and relevance toward the funding bodies, and more often than not toward (local) governments. The work of these networks transforms the solidarity of the sector into a more relatable and less abstract level.

That is why, with all the above examples of hard work and support, it is disheartening to see on the [CAE website Gaza Repository: the role of Cultural Networks](#) in times of war, which networks are vocal about supporting Gaza. This repository contains just two projects and three statements. The question arises: What about all the others in Sudan, Afghanistan, and countless examples of censorship

in the Global North...? (With full respect for the few exceptions that are loud and clear in their messages).

Perhaps, in the social media age, we have become too expectant of immediate statements all around in the arts and in politics. Perhaps art and culture work on different timelines, at odds with the immediacy of social media and how historic events are responded to there... And yet, a lot of time has passed and the persistent silence in the sector feels eerie. The sector seems unable to reconcile reality with art/culture, or to deal with certain difficult subjects, and so it ends up inventing a variety of ways of saying nothing.

But we know we can do better, and we can do more, if only we have the courage to name things as they are. Until then, only questions:

- How can we come together and support one another in retaining a basic sense of humanity?
- How do we see the future of international collaboration?
- How can our sector help each other and the others?
- What do we tell each other for comfort, instead of what we are secretly telling ourselves?
- Where does help end, and propaganda start?
- How can we maintain strong, radical and uncompromising positions?
- What does it mean to create in times of war, and how can it shape humanity’s future?
- Where do we go from here?



Biographies of Contributors

Mary Ann DeVlieg is an independent consultant. She was a case worker for artists persecuted and at risk since 2009, and holds a PhD concerning policies and practices regarding artists impacted by displacement. She works closely with the Council of Europe on artistic freedom initiatives, curates and consults for trainings and conferences, including the annual Safe Havens conference. She founded the EU working group, Arts-Rights-Justice; and was a co-founder of the Arts-Rights-Justice Academy, University of Hildesheim.

Heidi Vogels is a visual artist and filmmaker. She is also the coordinator of TransArtists' AIR NL, a platform for the mutual exchange of information and experiences between AIR organizations in the Netherlands and abroad. Here you find also practical advice concerning AIR programs for art professionals, funders, and policymakers.

Lotte Geeven (1980) creates monumental recordings of phenomena that exist beyond our daily perception. She often collaborates with scientists to develop technologies and methods that allow us to listen to a world we have yet to discover. Her work is driven by collectivity and engagement and has been shown in a.o. Museum Voorlinden (NL), Taubert Contemporary Berlin (DE), Point B New York (USA), and The British Museum (UK).

Bojana Panevska is a researcher and writer with over 15 years' experience of working internationally in the cultural sector, with a focus on strengthening the position of artists in society and freedom of expression. Bojana works as an advisor for DutchCulture | TransArtists, and is part of the Advisory Board of TransCultural Exchange - a non-profit organization based in Boston. She is also the president of On the Move, the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility.

Alma Salem is an independent curator and cultural advisor with 22 years of knowledge and expertise in producing hundreds of cultural projects across all art forms, ranging between International Cultural Relations, Heritage protection, Visual and Performing Arts; Cultural leadership and Entrepreneurship, Arts in development and in conflict. She is the Founder of Alma Salem Bureau for Curation and Cultural Advisory, and Syria Sixth Space Contemporary Arts Touring Curatorial platform.

Zapravka is an initiative supporting art residencies in Ukraine operating since 2020, initiated by the Ukrainian Institute, the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, and the European Union-funded programme House of Europe, implemented by Goethe-Institut. The main goals of the initiative are: to increase the visibility and systematic presentation of Ukrainian art residencies within the international and local professional field; to raise the professional standards of residency programmes in Ukraine; and to inform both the Ukrainian and international professional community about the opportunities available for artists.

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Contributors

Lotte Geeven, Zapravka, Heidi Vogels, Alma Salem,
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Website & Contact

transartists.org

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

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