

Mapping  
e

NON

---

# ART NEIGHBORYOUTH

---

DIVERSE

---

group of participant

---

UNIFIED HOMOGENEOUS



# ART NEIGHBORYOUTH



Erasmus+



# **ART NEIGHBORYOUTH**

Tobias Frenssen (eds.)

Authors:

Tobias Frenssen

Rares Augustin Craiut

Nicky Cionoiu

Ivaylo Demidov

Slobodan Perunicic

Zeljko Loncar

Boris Miletic

Laura Tavormina

Wouter Elen

Radost Nikolaeva

Sofija Vuckovic

Stefan Simoncic

Graphic design:

Zeljko Loncar

ISBN: 9789082568417

© Tobias Frenssen

## INTRODUCTION:

# Towards a roadmap for youth art work

- Tobias Frenssen

Within the field of youth work there is a high demand for a framework that youth art workers can use for the organisation and guidance of youth art communities in public spaces. This question was formulated by the participating organisations in this project. As a response to this we developed a generic European 'roadmap'. This roadmap is presented as a poster around the bookshelf. This is one of the outcomes from the process we created in four youth art communities, located in Belgium, Slovenia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Each community was formed by youngsters, youth art workers (in education) and educators of youth art workers. This publication offers some background to youth art workers (in education).

In September 2016, we began this two-year project. In the first semester, we prepared and guided the local youth art communities in Belgium, Slovenia, Serbia and Bulgaria. The first local communities became active in the second semester and during those months, the youngsters, youth art workers, youth art workers in education and educators of youth art workers worked together at least five times (in each period). The major difference concerns the local context where the community was organised. In Belgium, we worked with a heterogeneous group of youngsters. In Bulgaria we worked with youngsters from a Turkish minority in Dazhdovnitsa village. In Slovenia, it were mostly young females with a passion for art, while in Serbia, we worked with youth art workers in education. This diversity in local contexts was a clear observation during our transnational project meeting, also called transnational youth art community, after the first semester in Slovenia.

We then also created a first version of the roadmap, based on the initial experiences. The difference concerns the power of the project, because it proves that the generic roadmap is functional and useful in very different contexts.

In the third semester, we again organised local youth art communities in each country for which we used the first version of the roadmap. After these experiences, we met in Bulgaria during the fourth semester to evaluate our youth art communities and we then also created our final roadmap.

In the fourth semester, we took time to document our project and to organise our final conference, in addition to the organisation of two international conferences about youth art work during the second year of our project. On each occasion a project partner was the speaker during such a conference.

As previously mentioned, a generic European roadmap paying special attention to the local context of the various aspects constitutes an important result of this project. This is a graphical map presented in the form of a poster. Youth workers can use this poster when they organise and guide a youth art community in public space. The data for the map was derived from the four youth art communities that we organised in Belgium, Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovenia. There were also several transnational youth art communities connecting these various communities in the different project countries. These took place in Hasselt, Maribor, Kardzhali and for a second time in Hasselt. During the project, we shared the local contexts among the different communities using various media. This sharing not only took place during face-to-face-moments, but also by using our project blog. Some contributions can be found in this publication.

Art Neighboryouth delivered a major contribution to youth art work in Europe. In youth work, there is a limited scope for working with youngsters and art in public spaces. The roadmap which was developed will provide youth art workers with the guidance they require for this kind of project. The method will be widely distributed and embedded. This embedding will be done at the level of youth organisations and education for youth workers. The project results are open source and can also be found on the site.

This publication is intended to inspire youth art workers. The map around the bookshelf is the framework for this document and is meant to provide a dynamic framework. We do not believe that there is one correct recipe for youth art work practice. Rather there are ingredients that vary according to the different practices currently at work in Europe. In this way we are looking to build a dynamic map, where multiple types of youth art work practices can be found and by which youth art



workers can also explore (new) ways to further develop themselves. For this purpose we have named the following seven youth art work development axes on which youth art workers can position their practice.

- young person
- artistic focus
- space
- group of participants
- education
- involved youngsters
- audience

Based on these seven axes we have collected texts and images from youth art workers, youngsters and researchers that were involved in the project, which provides a broad overview of the project. For this reason this publication is more of a general impression from the involved parties about themes, activities and experiences that can be connected to the layers on the roadmap. It is not our intention to explain the roadmap. We will connect the local contexts with the map in an open manner. It is our intention that the reader can fill in the road map with his or her own experiences!

## Table of Contents

---

### INTRODUCTION:

- Towards a roadmap for youth art work**  
by Tobias Frenssen . . . . . 5

---

### ARTISTIC FOCUS

- How performance art can be an effective youth work tool in preventing violent radicalisation of young people**  
by Rares Augustin Craiut . . . . . 13

- Education to become a youth art worker**  
by Nicky Cionoiu . . . . . 27

- Ivaylo, a Bulgarian youth art worker**  
by Ivaylo Demidov . . . . . 32

---

### EDUCATION

- Youth art worker education in Serbia**  
by Slobodan Perunicic and Zeljko Loncar . . . . . 37

- Boris, a Serbian youth art worker**  
by Boris Miletic . . . . . 73

- Congress: performance and informal arts education** . . . . . 76

---

### YOUNG PERSON

- Identity development in youth art work**  
by Laura Tavormina . . . . . 83

## Table of Contents

---

### INVOLVED YOUNGSTER

#### JUNGLE...

by Wouter Elen . . . . . 99

**Congress: emancipation and arts education. . . 106**

#### **Communication as a piece of art**

by Gabriela Gavrailova . . . . . 107

---

### SPACE

#### **KRUG as a Bulgarian Youth Art Space**

by Radost Nikolaeva . . . . . 112

#### **CITY AS SITE:**

#### **Social Interventions and Public Performance**

by Radost Nikolaeva . . . . . 116

---

### GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

#### **Bulgarian group activities organised by KRUG**

by Radost Nikolaeva . . . . . 119

#### **A Serbian youth art worker in education**

by Sofija Vuckovic . . . . . 127

---

**AUDIENCE . . . . . 132**

---

### A RETROSPECT AS OUTRO

by Stefan Simoncic . . . . . 147



MARIBOR  
NE BODI  
SOT  
SODAR

G. ŽUPAN!  
KJE SO BRATJE  
KITAJCI IN NJIHOV  
KAPITAL V MARIBORU?

Maribor  
die Leit wüde  
GUAD  
schkatzelstward

BU SEHIR  
BIR HARIKI  
DOSTLIMI  
UMARIM VENI  
BASLANGICLAR  
YELKEN AÇAR!  
MAYI

LETTER

PREMALO  
RESAVRACIJ  
GLEJ NO,  
TOTI MB  
RABI VEC  
NASMEJANIH  
OBRAZOV!  
POSITIVENESS  
is MISSING

♥ vse  
jev s  
17 9





it would be  
WONDERFUL  
if the banks of Dnava  
were illuminated  
during the night.

SLABI  
KLUBI

AKTIVIRA  
OZIVIT  
MESTNO  
SEBRO

VEČJE ZAVZEMANJE ZA  
KULTURNO DEDIŠČINO V AB.  
MIR: DVA EARNICA V AB.

NE PREUREJAJ  
CEST PO NEPOTREBNOSTI

MANJKA KAK  
FESTIVAL ELEKTRONE  
GLASBE,  
FESTIVAL ZA MLADE!

PROSIM ZA  
OBNOVO  
CEST

VLAGAJMO V  
KULTURO

IZDAVA  
MESTNO  
OBČINA

SPOKEN  
WORD  
TAKE THE STAGE  
RESISTANCE

Markers and other small items on the rug.



# How performance art can be an effective youth work tool in preventing violent radicalisation of young people

- Rares Augustin Craiut

A while ago I told a friend of mine, working as a performance artist, about my idea on how performance art can be an effective youth work tool in preventing violent radicalisation of young people. She said: “No offence, but this sounds like a really looooong stretch”. And I thought: “Hmmm, that’s funny... because to me it sounds like a very strong, small, convergent working point”. Through my practice as a youth worker and performance researcher I have learned that performance art can enable young people to acquire or enhance factors that foster resilience. And building resilience is one of the main points that youth work should try to get right. When I talk about ‘performance art’ I do not mean theatre but something more like ‘an ephemeral event which shares characteristics with a nexus of activities including play, game, sport, and ritual.’ (Pearson & Thomas, 1994, p. 133).

But how do I explain this performance art - youth work connection in a simple way? And why do we not engage more performance art as a youth work tool in preventing violent extremism of young people? These are two questions that I have in the back of my mind ever since this conversation ‘put down’ moment. And it has been quite a while now that I have been ruminating on these questions.

## **The ``youth work – performance art – prevention of violent extremism`` connection**

I think the best and shortest way to put it, is: performance as a youth work practice encourages deep reflective processes that lead to transformative learning and resilience with young people preventing violent extremist behaviours. There!

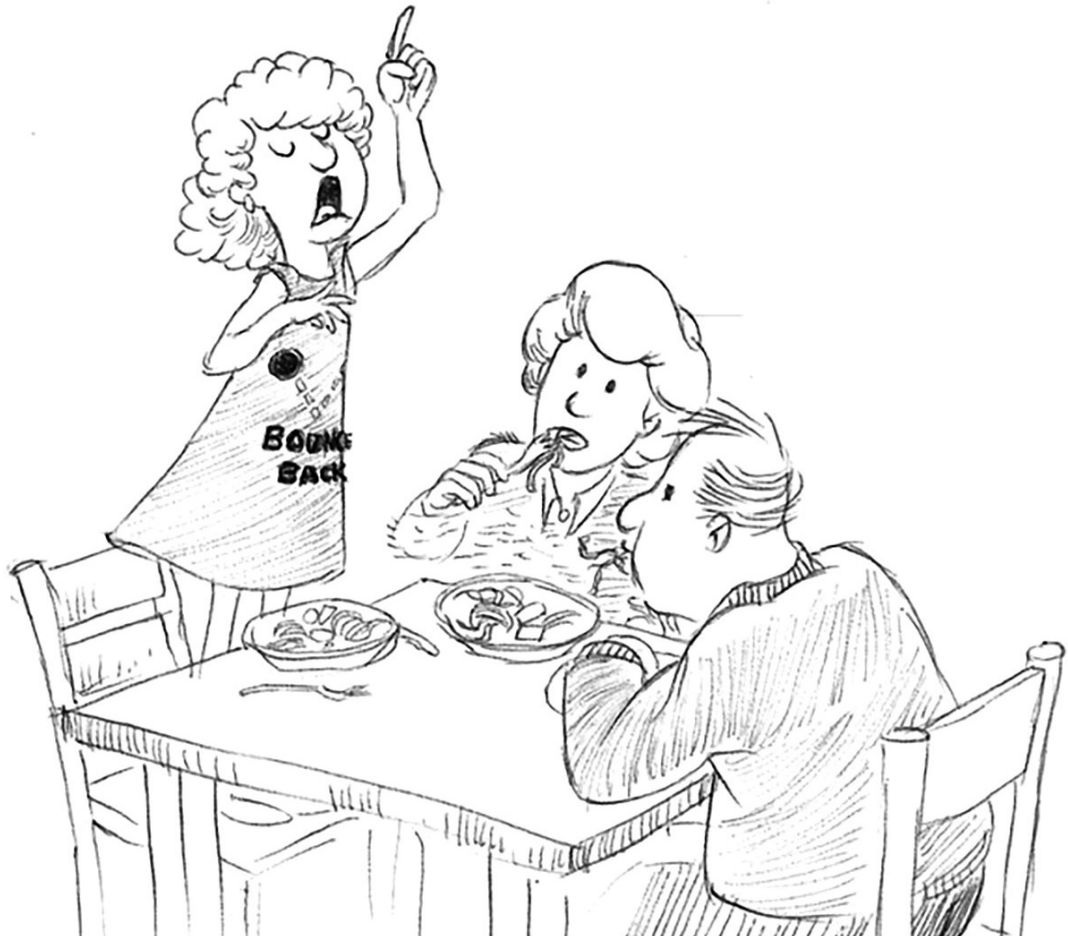
Young people might turn to acts of violent extremism, not because of their personal understanding of contemporary societies and their urge 'to do something about it', but rather when they act on purposes, beliefs, judgements, and feelings of others. Even when you are frustrated with some challenges, young people must be resilient and have some critical understanding of the meaning of problems that are challenging contemporary societies. In this way, you will also be aware that there are a multitude of ways to address these problems. And some of these solutions can be as 'radical' as some of the great performance pieces of the 20th century have been, but not necessarily turn to extremist violence. With reflective processes and resilience, as a young person, you will know that there are numerous solutions sustainable and more substantial than violent strategies.

Resilience can be defined as 'a process, capacity or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenges or threatening circumstances... good outcomes despite high risk status, sustained competence under threat and recovery from trauma' (Kumpfer, 1999, p.181). This ability to cope positively or to be resilient is key to the emotional well-being in young people, because 'resilient children are better equipped to resist stress and adversity, cope with change and uncertainty and to recover faster and more completely from traumatic events or episodes' (Newman & Blackburn, 2002, p.3).

Unfortunately, resilience is not a personality trait we are born with. It is the result emerging from a struggle with various adverse factors such as poverty, disability, poor and inadequate schooling and teaching, dysfunctional family relationships or unsupportive family structures.

We all have hardships, of one kind or another, sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller. Why are we all not exceptionally resilient? The ability to overcome these hardships is a skill that can be acquired and learned, so it is not innate. And the resilience learning process is always facilitated by self-reflection contexts. So, we are all not exceptionally resilient (also) because in relation to life adversities we do not engage in





**“When you were my age you did not have to worry about catastrophic climate change, post-truth media or right wing populist politics!”**

*Resilience is a skill that can be acquired and learned, it is not innate.*

reflective processes that allow for our personal change and betterment. Where the experiences are not enough, processes of reflection must be built into youth work to turn experiences into learning. And good youth work find ways of encouraging young people to be self-reflective and self-challenging.

### **So what would be a concrete example of practice?**

How could performance art do this? Or what is a concrete performance art piece, supported by youth art-workers leading to prevention of violence with young people? What could it be? Well, one of the best pieces of example might come from Suzane Lacy, who coincidentally (or not) is one of the founders of another art worker declination, that of... feminist art worker. Throughout her career in performance art, Lacy has produced a substantial body of work around the topic of violence. This was mainly

concerned with violence against women or with youth and violence. Many of her projects on youth and violence can be considered as best practices in youth art work, the most prominent being the Oakland Projects (1991-2001), series of performance art pieces dedicated to youth violence in the Oakland, California area. Among these the performance “Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!”, that involves all the elements of an exemplary youth art work piece, instituting how performance art can be an effective youth work tool in preventing violent radicalisation of young people.

“Over one hundred red, white or black cars converged on the rooftop of Oakland’s City Center West Garage. In the glow of their headlights, about 100 police officers and 150 young people, divided in small groups, confronted urgent issues: crime, authority, power and safety. Named after the police radio code to clear the radio waves, the three-year project explored ways to reduce police hostility toward youth, provide youth with a set of skills to participate in their communities, and generate a broader understanding of youth needs. Production teams of young people produced video portraits of safety and fear in Oakland neighbourhoods; these played continuously on thirty video monitors perched on the walls overlooking the city. An audience of 1000 community members roamed freely between cars, witnessing the spontaneous but carefully moderated dialogue between youth and police. (...) Groups of people from eight different neighbourhoods sat on grass-covered platforms, reminiscent of front yards, and discussed what they had heard between youth and police, while the previous ‘performers’ listened to community residents discuss their roles in the confrontational relationship between police and youth.”

Besides many merits and strengths of this performance art piece, there are two features worth evidencing: the trust building factor and requesting contemplative participation of young people.

For the first item, it is important to mention that the piece was built over a three-year period. Trust building is time consuming! To reach significant participation and meaningful responses to youth violence as a topic, from young people, time is a key element. If it is too short, there will be little trust. Creating a two-way connection is not something that can be done suddenly. It is something that can and should be done spontaneously, but not in a generalized sense of haste.



### **“Carefully planned spontaneous interaction”**

Building trust is not something that can always be done rapidly but it is something that can be done spontaneously.

As to the second point, a lot could be said as reflection and self-reflection is a main point for performance art. But, also for youth work: in engaging with young people, youth workers or youth art workers are also requested by young people to provide their personal responses to challenging issues. So, both youth work and performance art are mostly reflective and self-reflective practices.

### **Self-reflection as a key component of the practice**

Most performance art pieces are critical or engaged in some way, and are built entirely, or partly, on personal engagement. And this self-reflective process, in youth work or performance art can often lead to a transformative learning, which if we are brave enough, can challenge the foundations of who we are. Or as Jack Mezirow puts it: ‘Transformative learning involves a particular function of reflection: reassessing the presuppositions on which our beliefs are based and acting on insights derived from the transformed meaning perspective that results from such reassessments’ (Mezirow, 1997, p.5).

One very precious result of the reflective component of youth art work through performance art is that through a larger body of multiple live performance art works, we could create a youth problems mapping process conceptualised and delivered by young people. And one that can engage responses from other young people and generate and open dialogue that is not so common today. The fact that most often we are so out of touch with the online/offline problems of youth is a big part of the structural forces that lead to violent behaviour in youth. Most often when youth creative work is concerned, not much conceptualisation and problematisation is done by young people themselves. So, we end up with all kinds of live events with a lack of effect because the finishing is prioritised over the reflective content. I am referring here mostly to pieces where young people are 'gathered' and asked to present messages of 'peace' in the form of a live event, that is so obviously, an official version of what young people should or can say. That kind of live performance, even if not performance art itself, but live none the less, I find it 'dead'. It has no transformative power over the young people involved or the attending audience.

A youth club hosting a performance art program (not just theatre!) seems to me like a space that enables localised risk-taking (at least), creative improvisation and critical thinking. This could provide an appealing initiative even for the large population of teenagers who prefer to stay indoors, and many are highly dependent on gaming and social media for entertainment and social interaction. Of course, there is no opposition to online/offline, but a performance art program could provide an alternative for the online space where young people can feel more comfortable exposing aspects of themselves and their lives; it would be a space for self-expression and reflection and where they can find a sense of achievement.

### **Why are we not engaging more performance art as a youth work tool?**

But if performance as a youth work practice could encourage deep reflective processes that lead to transformative learning and resilience with young people preventing violent extremist behaviours, why is there so little research and virtually no existing practices?

In the first place, I think because of the kind of critical thinking that performance practice proposes is most often self-reflective and self-challenging and this can be potentially 'inflammable'. What if the young people want to investigate something that is considered risky

and they want to do this in a very direct way, the same way that their older peers, the autonomous-adult-artists do. Topics like body, nudity, violence, playing with physical risks, etc. Also self-reflection can sometimes turn into problematic or 'flammable' situations.



**‘Marina Abramovic did it better!’**

What if the young people want to investigate something that is considered risky and they want to do this in a very direct way, the same way that their older peers, the autonomous-adult-artists, do.

No matter how complex these challenges can be mitigated, over time, if we do not give a chance to transformative learning there will be no autonomous thinking. On the one hand, youth workers would like to safeguard young people from, for example, the dangers of group thinking and peer pressure, but sometimes this is done without the risks and efforts of facing fundamental complex questions that young people might want to ask to understand the meaning of our experience. It is easier to reach explanations given by authority figures and engage in a formal process that is less open for deep reflection. And for some youngsters this gets the job done. But it fails a lot of other young people who find themselves in very challenging and complex situations, who are in dire need of developing resilience and autonomous thinking skills.

In investigating cases or recent violent extremist behaviour of young people we find that if we are not ready to open up to deep listening and reflection and to engage in transformative learning, like a performance art practice would do, others will engage with young people with other types of practices. Although not with the same intentions that youth work or a performance artist would. And the argument could go on, but the one answer here would be: it is easier, safer and less energy consuming to provide readymade knowledge than to open up for reflection on sometimes risky topics that are challenging young people.

### **Performance art and youth work are corroding practices**

Why is there a general feeling that performance art is not suitable for young people? As if painting was?! And most often, from my experience with discussions about performance art as an ageless practice, people often mean that performance art has a bad, often poorly understood, reputation.

About the bad or poor understanding of practice, this is also familiar to me from the side of youth work. Both performance art and youth work are corroding practices. Meaning that both practices come often under scrutiny concerning the kind of results they are producing and funding for them is disputed. Both youth workers and performance artists are often asked to provide evidence for the social impact they have. And to make matters worse, sometimes the most visible results of their production is creating an unwelcome stir.

However, did any youth work professional say in a conversation: “Ah, yes, I understand this youth work... thing... is a specific practice underpinned by a set of established principles, politics, skills and values that relate to the social and personal development of young people.”?! No one. Ever! But in my experience, some are quite ready to confuse everything. “Ah, youth work... this is social assistance for young people, no?” or worse to deny value to youth work in general, or the knowledge and preparation needed to do good youth work.



**“So, you’re a youth worker?! Do you like... have an MA in Ping-Pong?”**

**“You’re a performance artist?! I understand you so far... but I might have to leave early today.”**

*Some are easily ready to devalue youth work or performance art practice as professions with no concrete or relevant outputs or that require no professional requirements.*

But the same is valid for performance art. Except some practitioners, you rarely have a discussion about how a good performance is a performance that changes you as well as produces some change in your audience. Most often people will just ask you how you can make a living out of performance art or if you want to cause a public scandal any time soon.

If you can find some youth work and art practice combinations, the youth work performance art practice is so rare because the incorporation of the arts into youth work training is predominantly grounded in practical applications, rather than the more discursive, experiential opportunities presented by interaction with art work. So not just performance art but also other forms of artistic expression need to prove their worth and practical outcomes before being considered as viable for youth work practice.

Even if performance art itself would be well understood, where would the youth workers train as performance artists/pedagogues? When performance art itself seems to be unteachable!?

Another argument, directly or indirectly expressed by those who say that performance art is not suitable for young people, refers to the fact that young people are adults in training and should not/could not engage in complex topics or risky topics as... conceptual art or other such adult like complex/marginal processes dealing with controversial or inflammable topics. And on this there will always be issues coming from the institutional or grant giving level. So... what job steadiness is there for a critical youth art worker? Performance art pedagogue, or not.

If we are honest, young people's cultural production in a youth work setting is most often simply reproducing institutionally endorsed contemporary art forms and problematics. There are not so many resources, intellectually, financially or time-wise, given to the critical tools that could be used to produce young people's works. A big art institution might be concerned with loss of risk, authenticity and autonomy as values of artists' work, but most often a youth club might be more interested in the final production and presentation and display of positive messages. And most often it needs to look good. Or the parents and sponsors might think that the young persons and subsequently the youth worker have wasted their time and money. But with performance art it is not as simple as teaching some skills to the young people and then actually finishing the project (i.e. video edit, painting, writing piece).





**“The kids did it! ... euhm... I was also surprised”**

Artists sometimes execute the work, because if it does not look good the parents and sponsors might think that the young persons, and subsequently the youth worker have wasted time and money

So, performance art is problematic in the fact that mostly the end presentation is up to the young people who are indissociably for the art work, no matter how immature or critical this may be. Work that looks like a finished piece may start changing because of audience interaction. You never know. It is a live learning experience. All that the youth worker can do is offer supportive mentoring. Supportive mentoring requires investment. Time and money. And it does not look like youth work is getting much of that at this point. On the contrary, I feel there are even less resources to develop a youth art work practice preventing violent extremism of young people through performance art practice. Grant givers and politicians want youth entrepreneurs and civic participants. Not critically engaged, self-reflective, sometimes weird looking, young art practices.

## So, what now?

Well, besides time and money, we need more research. And definitely more documentation about youth work engaging performance art practices to tackle youth violence. Because another reason we are not seeing more youth work through performance art is the lack of research and the lack of meeting spaces on the topic. For the few initiatives that are happening in this respect, combining successfully youth work and performance art, there is little to no documentation to be found. And none communicated outside. There is, of course, the constant question of how to effectively and sensitively capture and communicate the value of this work. But the social and creative benefits of the programme can be articulated through various means, including photography, film, observational data and testimonies or short interviews. Of course studies are needed, between projects to understand the relationship between performance art and young people's self-development, as well as studies that explore the impact of change beyond the life of a project.

Well, at least now we have an article to support conversations on how performance art can be an effective youth work tool in preventing violent radicalisation of young people.

Kumpfer, K. L. (1999).

*Factors and processes contributing to resilience: The resilience framework.*

Mezirow, J. (1997).

*Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice.*

Newman, T., & S., B. (2002).

*Transitions in the lives of children and young people: Resilience factors.*

Pearson, M., & Thomas, J. (1994).

Theatre/Archaeology'. *The Drama Review* (38), 133.

<http://www.suzannelacy.com/the-oakland-projects/>,  
accessed Wednesday, August 09, 2017

(sd). Accessed on August 9, 2017,

from <http://www.suzannelacy.com/the-oakland-projects>

A big thank you goes to Xavier Jean-Luc Gorgol for landing his talent in illustrating this article.





# Education to become a youth art worker

**-Nicky Cionoiu**

*First, I will tell you something about myself. My name is Nicky Cionoiu, half Romanian and half Belgian but living in Belgium. I am 22 years old and currently studying to become a teacher of arts and social education. My interests are mostly in the areas of music, youth work and politics. I would describe myself as a creative centipede.*

*I know it's a weird comparison, but I have thought about this one. The centipede is not a thorough expert in every discipline of art, but he has knowledge of each discipline. The legs are a metaphor for the various types of art. I love to write, draw, create music and perform theatre. I have studied professional theatre and last year I received my degree at the conservatory in Hasselt. For me, the two most important things about art are the connection with 1) education and 2) society. When you realise a project or something similarly integrated with these connections, you will have an interesting mix in my opinion.*

*I must tell you that the whole story of Art Neighboryouth was an extraordinary experience for me. To develop myself as a person, teacher and youth worker in this way was such a great and momentous part of my life. I really cannot describe how much knowledge I gained from contributing to this project.*

*It all started when I was in my last year of my Bachelor in project arts and project social education. Tobias Frenssen introduced the Art Neighboryouth project during one of the lectures. Immediately I was very intrigued and captivated. Combining youngsters, art, society and public space is a remarkable and interesting mix with which to work. In my opinion there should be significantly more of those projects because this is a win-win situation. You develop youngsters and at the same time you contribute to society in general. Youngsters are our future, this we cannot ignore. It is therefore our task to invest time and energy in youngsters and their environment.*

*Tobias told the class that we had to organise a public project in pairs that would fit within the framework of Art Neighboryouth. My colleague for this project was Julie. We carried out considerable research about the problems*

of youngsters in the city of Genk, Belgium. This process of creating a public art project was very educational for me. To see yourself grow in a process through overcoming obstacles and entering discussion is remarkable. In my opinion, everyone should try this once in their lifetime because you can find enrichment in so many ways.

I am very grateful to have been able to participate in Art Neighboryouth. This experience was very important for my self-development. Due to this experience, I truly know at this moment what I want to achieve in life. Working with youngsters and art to educate them is my job, but also my passion. Thanks to Art Neighboryouth I not only see the problems, but also, more importantly, I see the solutions. Helping youngsters in their self-development while they are looking for solutions is the most wonderful job in the world and I am happy to be a part of this.

### **The youth art community project in Genk**

To create a project, we carried out extensive research regarding the problems in the community of Genk. One of the things that we noticed was that the different neighbourhoods in Genk did not feel connected, especially when you ask this of local youngsters. For example, if you were to ask them where they are from, they would simply answer by mentioning their neighbourhood and not their city, Genk. The reason behind this is that they do not feel connected with Genk society and they stay in their own neighbourhood. We wanted to show the youngsters that in fact they ARE connected with each other and there is a feeling of community in Genk.

Of course we asked ourselves the following question: how are we going to show them that they are connected? Naturally, this was not an obvious question for us because we were not from the city and we did not have enough knowledge. However, after some time and research we could create some concepts of potential projects. Out of these multiple potential concepts, we had to make a choice. Finally, we chose the concept to connect literally the different neighbourhoods in Genk through a visually contemporary artwork that would be created by the participants during the project.

The project took place on March 2, 2016, with a kick-off from 2 p.m. till 5 p.m. in the afternoon. Julie and I created the life-size map with all the neighbourhoods of Genk. We hung the map on the wall of the library in the city centre. From this point, we could start the project. While people were passing by, we stopped them and asked if they were interested in participating in our project. Even out of curiosity, people spontaneously stopped of their own will. This was a good sign. We explained to them what the goal of the project was so they

could participate. The participants started to connect their neighbourhoods with others because of the connections and relations they had. For example, when somebody had a relative in another neighbourhood he or she had to connect the two places with each other with the help of nails and ropes. We noticed that the youngsters were very enthusiastic while participating in our project and the collaboration between everyone went smoothly. During the process the formation of the artwork was made visible with the final result: a spider's web of connections and relations in the city. Immediately the unity in Genk was visible and people were very surprised because they proved themselves wrong! People were even asking if this artwork could be permanently installed over there!



A year after this interesting experience in Genk, I choose to follow an internship in the Slovenian Youth Art Community from Art Neighboryouth. Here I have done a lot of youth art work. I will share two blog posts to give an impression of this.

### **Blog post 1: the dirty laundry of Maribor, project day**

Dear followers,

Last Tuesday, February 21, I had my project 'The dirty Laundry of Maribor'. Some weeks ago, I already posted some information about the project on this blog, so in case you have forgotten, have a look at the previous post.

I must say that the project was really a great success. There was a tremendous response and people were extremely enthusiastic. Because of these facts, we received many different opinions, all of them expressing their true thoughts about it. It was also picked up by the local media and they were very intrigued by the idea that a young, foreign student actually tried to help the city of Maribor.

With this project, we have shown the people of Maribor that there is still active citizenship present in their city. The one thing that caught my attention was that people were very curious about what was happening. People were not participating all the time by writing their opinions on the dirty clothes, but on the other hand they were reading all the opinions and they started a public discussion. This was my goal: to create an open, public discussion!

With all the different materials, photos, videos and opinions that I have collected, I will make my own exhibition @EPEKA Gallery. This exhibition will already open this Saturday. It will not be a normal exhibition, but an interactive one. What we did during the project day, we will also repeat during the exhibition. People will receive a great deal of input from the present opinions on the clothes and after they have read them, they can form their own opinion and write them down on the dirty laundry.

Afterwards, we will again have an open, public discussion during the exhibition. Finally, when I have all the opinions, I will collect them in the form of a document. This document will be communicated in the Facebook group 'The voices of Maribor' and to the municipality.

Let's hope it will be crowded during the opening of the exhibition!

Peace out,  
Nicky





## **Blog post 2: opening exhibition: 'The dirty laundry of Maribor'**

*Dear followers,*

*Last weekend we opened the exhibition of my project 'The dirty laundry of Maribor'. The exhibition is about the public project I carried out last week. The project was a big success and people can still participate during the interactive exhibition. Let's all hope it will get a lot of response!*

*During the opening of the exhibition the goal of the project was reached: people really started to discuss all the different 'dirty' opinions that were written on the laundry. Afterwards, the visitors could write down their 'dirty' opinions like we already did on the day of the project. There were some interesting debates! In the successive weeks, we will communicate all the 'dirty' opinions to the municipality.*

*Peace out*

*Nicky*

*I'm proud to inform you that I graduated after my final internship in Slovenia. I am now working as a youth art worker in a Belgian closed institution for young people.*

# Ivaylo, a Bulgarian youth art worker

## TAKE YOUR BROKEN HEART, MAKE IT INTO ART

*My name is Ivaylo Demidov, but I am better known by my nickname Ivashkin. Frankly, I am not a Youth Art Worker (YAW) literally, i.e. I have not received such a statute from any institution. I am a professional musician with my own music production company and I have always worked with young people (and sometimes children) - members of different musical teams with me.*

*The names of my different music groups are 'Mephisto', 'Project Dimitar Voev' and 'Light Vocal Group-LVG'. LVG is the last art project with 3 very young girls and many guest singers and musicians from across the country. I have also made some common projects with team of KRUG art movement, for example a series of so called 'Secret concerts' (2014-2015), night evening in Dazhdovnitsa art village and we together collect and present music archives and recordings of new wave groups from the 80's, worked in the late socialist period.*

*A few years ago, the team of KRUG and our LVG young band were presented materials and lectures at a one-day discussion in Sofia University dedicated to the heritage of one of the most vanguard Bulgarian rock star since the end of the socialism - Dimitar Voev, musician and poet, founder and vocal of the Rock band 'New Generation' - who died at the age of 27. 'New Generation' was one of the most magnetic and vibrant rave band from the 90's in the end of communism in Bulgaria. As tends to be the case, times of economic and social turmoil are fertile grounds for music culture. While things were looking particularly bad for the nation, the roots of a rave music scene were taking hold. KRUG's team issued a book including lyrics of his songs, his drawings, notes, interviews, etc. which are very interesting and exciting with their message for today's young audience. You know, music is a universal language, music is much more than just music. Music is an object 'outside us', that we can observe and describe without necessarily being particularly involved; one can be completely 'neutral'. By contrast, in terms of how to react to music, we are not neutral observers; rather, we are affected by the music. Music absorbs us, it triggers thoughts, feelings, movements, perhaps makes us forget time and space, become one with the music. Briefly, based on my music experiences I can act as a mediator between youth and art, art and social context, social context and participation.*

*In my work, I have worked with students on various programs in music (music education, practice, records of music, etc.), with young people with prefer-*

ences for rock music, as well as with special groups such as choirs, senior secondary school students and students from colleges and universities. With our music band 'Light Vocal Group-LVG' we participated in different activities focused on youth development. We have worked in general in non-traditional spaces with our programs.



With a series of our 'Secret concerts' with KRUG art movement our players and our new publics acquired substantial experience in working with non-art communities and in non-traditional context across the country (on the streets in small towns, on underground scenes in different cities, in outside settlements for free night music evening, etc.). Our concerts and presentations are always alternative and free, and every project in the open air has a unique content and a unique character. The experimental music with different video-art presentations and literary performances gives rise to previously unknown feelings and leads to thoughts about what music can mean, perhaps even to a desire to devote oneself to music. Many young people receive experience to identify themselves with the music and art thanks to our performances. Organised together with KRUG's team, Artist-in-Residence programs (AiR) and other residency opportunities allow staying and working here (Dazhdovnitsa art village) 'for art's sake in a real environment'.

There are experiences from childhood that illustrate such aspects and the individuals' reflections that have come about much later when the person has acquired a perspective on the experience.

*Youth art experiences with music during one's teens can mean encountering music that one is already very familiar with, for example at big concerts when one at least gets to meet idols that one has previously only heard on records or seen on TV. Other experiences however, mean encounters with new, unknown music that can be totally revolutionary and leave its traces for a long time to come, perhaps even the rest of one's life. The teenage period*



is generally characterized by great sensitivity and vulnerability, and music can then come to function as confirmation, support, consolation and even therapy. During one's teens, one might perhaps also perform in front of an audience with all that can mean; on the one hand, nervousness (before), and, on the other hand, elation, pride, and strengthened self-confidence (after), an experience that can spur one on to continue making music. Real experiences with music during childhood and adolescence make up the identity of the young person. Being completely absorbed – 'devoured' – is a typical reaction in connection with youth art experiences. Therefore, in our art events we strive for this audience to be more of a participant than an observer.

Many community or voluntary organisations are facing significant challenges, not only responding to austerity, but also developing new relationships with public or private sectors and with each other. We want to use theories of social art practice to explore what these organisations 'do' – attending to the complexities of everyday work in fields including education, multicultural and intergenerational communication and other community actions. In particular, we want to explore how 'practice theory' might offer new ways for organisations to think about their activities. This year Meryl Streep's Powerful Golden Globes Speech ended with the words: "Take your broken heart, make it into art". I would like to end my statement with this.

**Ivaylo Demidov** is a musician and a content manager, digital video editor and vocal trainer. He has an own music production company.





## EDUCATION

# Youth art worker education in Serbia

- Slobodan Perunicic and Zeljko Loncar

## INTRODUCTION

A two-year international project, Art Neighboryouth is the first Erasmus+ project in which the College of Fine and Applied Arts from Belgrade has participated. Before this we didn't have enough experience in youth work. We would especially like to thank the University Colleges Leuven-Limburg for the invitation. This was very important experience for us. The College of Fine and Applied Arts entered the project Art Neighboryouth as an associated partner.

In the period September 2015 - February 2017 College of Fine and Applied Arts has realised two projects, Bricolage1 and Youth BricArt, for the purposes of Art Neighboryouth. During this time the school was in permanent contact with other participants in project Art Neighboryouth (University colleges Leuven-Limburg - Belgium, youth work organisation Villa Basta - Belgium, youth work organisation Krug - Bulgaria, youth work organisation EPEKA - Slovenia), especially with University Colleges Leuven-Limburg, coordinator of the project. Furthermore, the school project Youth BricArt is largely defined by suggestions and guidelines received from partners during the working sessions.











As a part of Art Neighboryouth project, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Belgrade, tried to explore possibilities for their ex students and youngsters from various fields to find their place in future, more creative society. This was the excellent opportunity for our students to widen their perspective of youth work and to get connected with influencers in youth art field as well as to find possible engagement in youth art work. For that purpose, College of Fine and Applied Arts made a partnership with youngster organization Urban Incubator, to help in creation Bricolage 1, an experimental Design Camp initiated by multidisciplinary youthworker Emily Radosavljevic. Professors were strongly engaged in organizing lectures, workshops, while our ex and present students participated in this one month program.

The Bricolage 1 was organized in September 2015. This event was a month-long program, conceived as a course, happening in a mobile classroom at various locations throughout Belgrade. The program was the Experimental Design Camp, a mixture of theoretical lectures and discussions mixed with hands-on based workshops that explore how people find and make creative opportunity within limited resources.



## BRICOLAGE 1 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN CAMP

- A community-based mobile classroom and an immersive learning experience to investigate and inspire the creative use of resources.
- An introduction to various artistic divisions, material media, emphasizing inter-cultural perspectives in the world of design, materials and society.
- A platform to engage in the investigation of social, economic and environmental issues.
- A forum to open up neglected and timely themes connected to production and use.
- An inspirational think-tank to generate, develop and support new ideas in the space between design, society and industry.

**BRICOLAGE LAB**  
EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN CAMP

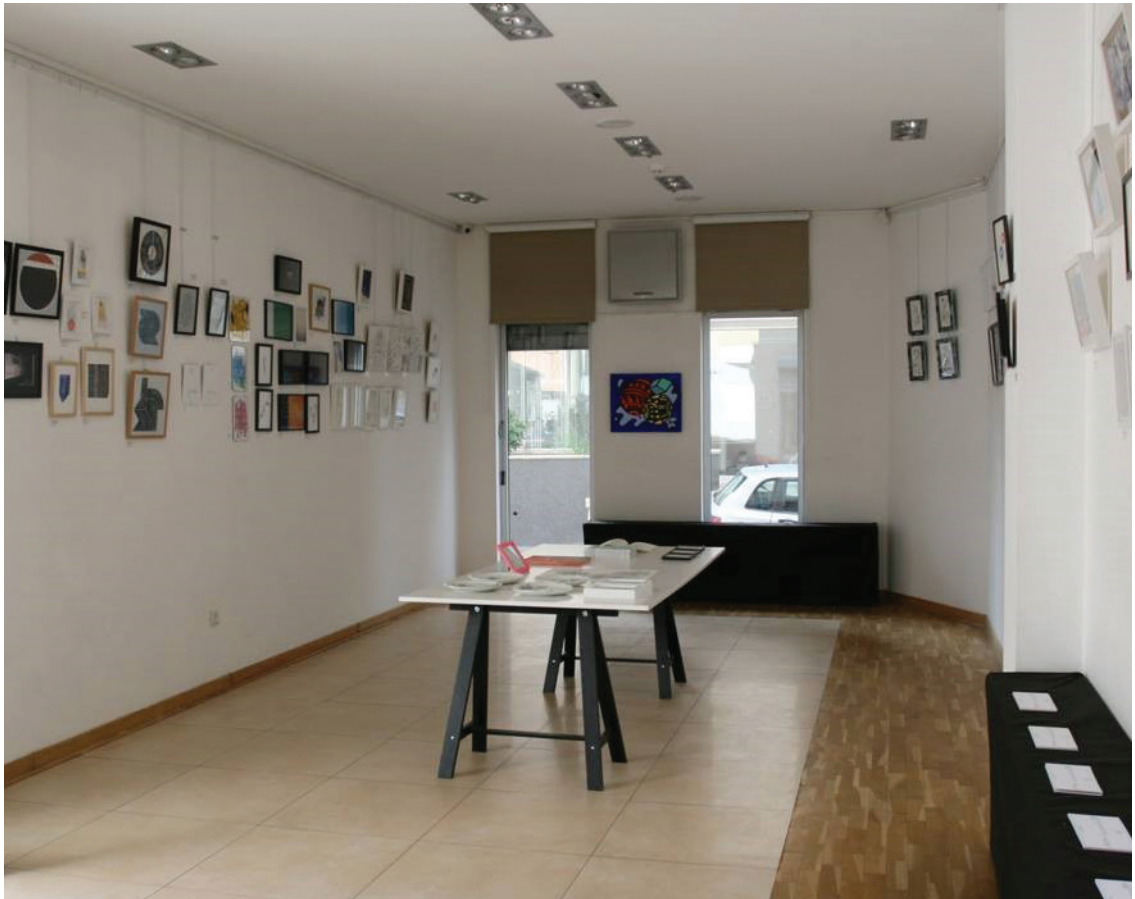
urban incubator

**Locations:**  
**NOVA ISKRA**  
**KULTURFORUM**  
**PRAKSA Makerspace**  
**KM 8**  
**VŠLPU**

**Sept 28 – Oct 23 2015**

# BRICOLAGE LAB





Kulturforum ODKR 25.09 - 02.10. 2015.

**DAVOR GROMILOVIĆ**

WRONG TIME WRONG PLACE  
promocija knjige i izložba grafika

Kfodkr AMES & P.L. 2.0/















# EPEKA WORKSHOP

- MARIBOR, APRIL 2016

In April 2016, we received an invitation to visit and participate in the Slovenian part of Art Neighboryouth project. This was the first time we had the opportunity to meet and see projects our partners are working on. During this time our students were participating in two graffiti events at two city locations. In the first session, our student created graffiti with famous Slovenian graffiti artists.

The second session was a graffiti colony in a passage next to the city market. It was a mix between professional graffiti artists and inexperienced young artists. Our student worked on existing graffiti i.e. he reworked existing graffiti and gave it a new sense in a postmodern manner.









# INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

- MARIBOR, JULY 2016



In Maribor, we participated in a work session together with our partners from Belgium, Slovenia and Bulgaria. We had the opportunity to exchange our experiences as well as to correct our work by getting valuable suggestions from each other. We received so much useful advices for our further work.

## INFORMAL LEARNING AND THE ARTS

The conclusion is that there could be a kind of overlap between educational arts and open youth artwork. Educational artists use informal learning processes as a basic ingredient for their creations. Their artistic practice offers a lot of parallels with the youth art projects that we are realising. This gives us a chance to learn from each other. It could be interesting to see youth art work as a beautiful accident between the arts and youth work. Thus, ingredients, from the world of arts and the world of youth work are represented in youth art work. Since this is the case, youth art workers need the skills to act as youth workers and as artists.



## **YOUTH ART WORK, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DOCUMENTING**

During this session, the participants had to take note of the main principles of open youth art work for their organisation. These were the results:

- Opportunities
- Curiosity
- Openness
- Empathy
- Volunteers
- Art & community
- Open work
- Reflective environment
- Each one teach one
- Contribution new city spirit
- Connection
- Complementary learning
- Spread of knowledge between youth workers
- Self-initiated







## REFORM THE ROADMAP

During the work session, each partner had the opportunity to combine basic elements of the realised youth art projects with the basic principles of open youth art work from the participating organisations. The results were a starting point for the creation of a roadmap that would be used by the (students) youth workers that will create a youth art project in the upcoming semester.

## REDEFINING THE PROJECT

After the workshop in Maribor where we created a new roadmap, in September 2016 we redefined our project, i.e. we started to raise our youth art project in a more focused way than before. The experience and guidance of our partners meant a lot to us, so we started to prepare new project Youth BricArt.

# Youth BricArt

Youth BricArt project was the continuation of our work in Art Neighboryouth. For Youth BricArt we chose the Belgrade Children's Cultural Centre and company Oracal Polikarbonati as our partners. The Children's Cultural Centre is the cultural institution founded by the city of Belgrade, with traditions spanning six decades. The Children's Cultural Centre realises contemporary, creative and interactive programs that follow social phenomena and trends in accordance with interest of youth and children. We chose the Children's Cultural Centre as a partner because this institution uses education and networking as key instruments and creates knowledge and productive art activities. Especially interesting for us was their readiness to transfer the knowledge from other environments to their own, and their openness for new solutions and new cultural and artistic areas.

To realise this mutual project, we asked company Oracal Polikarbonati to help us. This company, with their pallets of services, machines and materials, represented an ideal partner in the creation of innovative artistic and technological solutions. Oracal Polikarbonati owns a wide assortment of printing, machining and shaping machines, as well as high quality materials such as forex, lexan, acrylic, foils, LED, etc. For this project the College of Fine and Applied Arts decided to produce objects that could be usable for the next generation of youngsters, and to teach that new generation as well. For that purpose we decided to produce 3D-animals in cooperation with the company Oracal Polikarbonati for theatre shows at Belgrade Children's Cultural Centre as a part of project Youth BricArt.

First step of this project was lecture in our school made by people from Oracal Polikarbonati company. During this lecture, they presented various materials (paper, acrylic, aluminum materials) and possibilities of creation 2d, 3d objects. During this training course, our students have acquired the necessary knowledge about this materials and possibilities of their use.



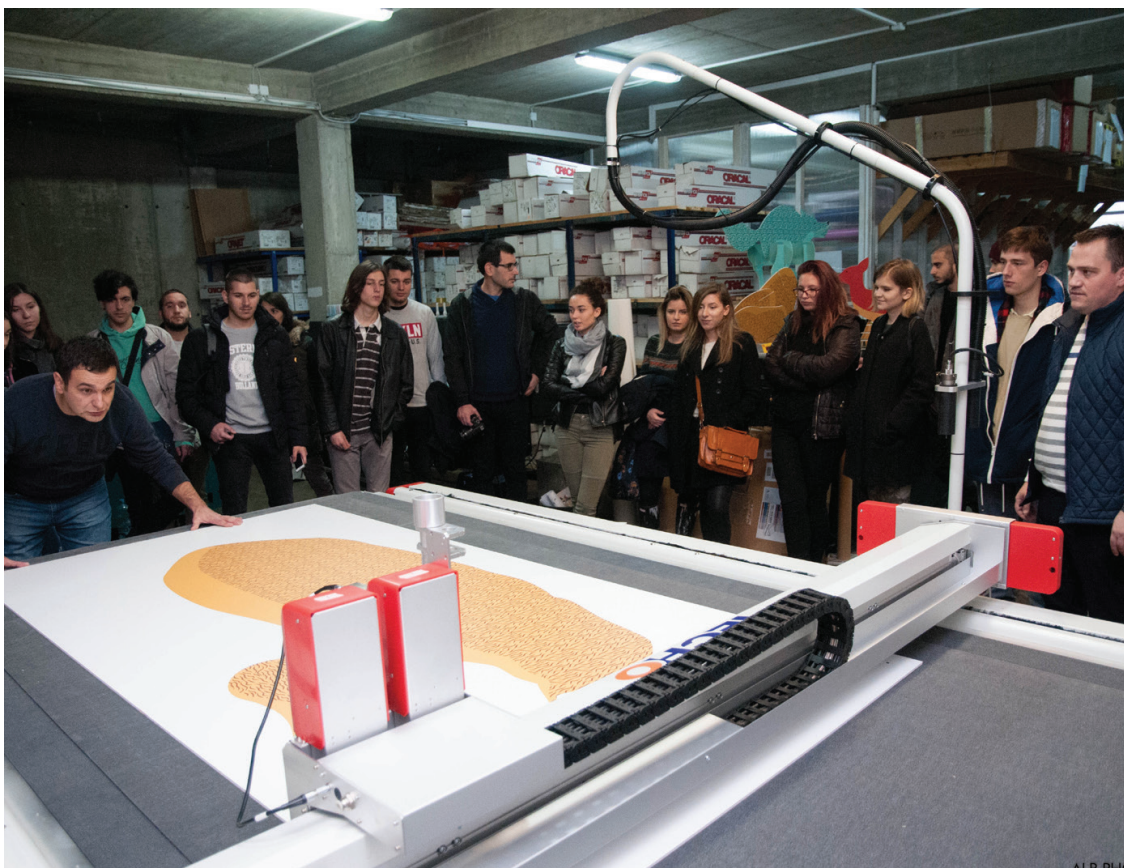
Next step was a work session organised at school where our students worked on the design of animals for the needs of the Children's Cultural Centre. During this session, the creativity of our students and their ability to implement modern technologies in artistic expression, came forward.

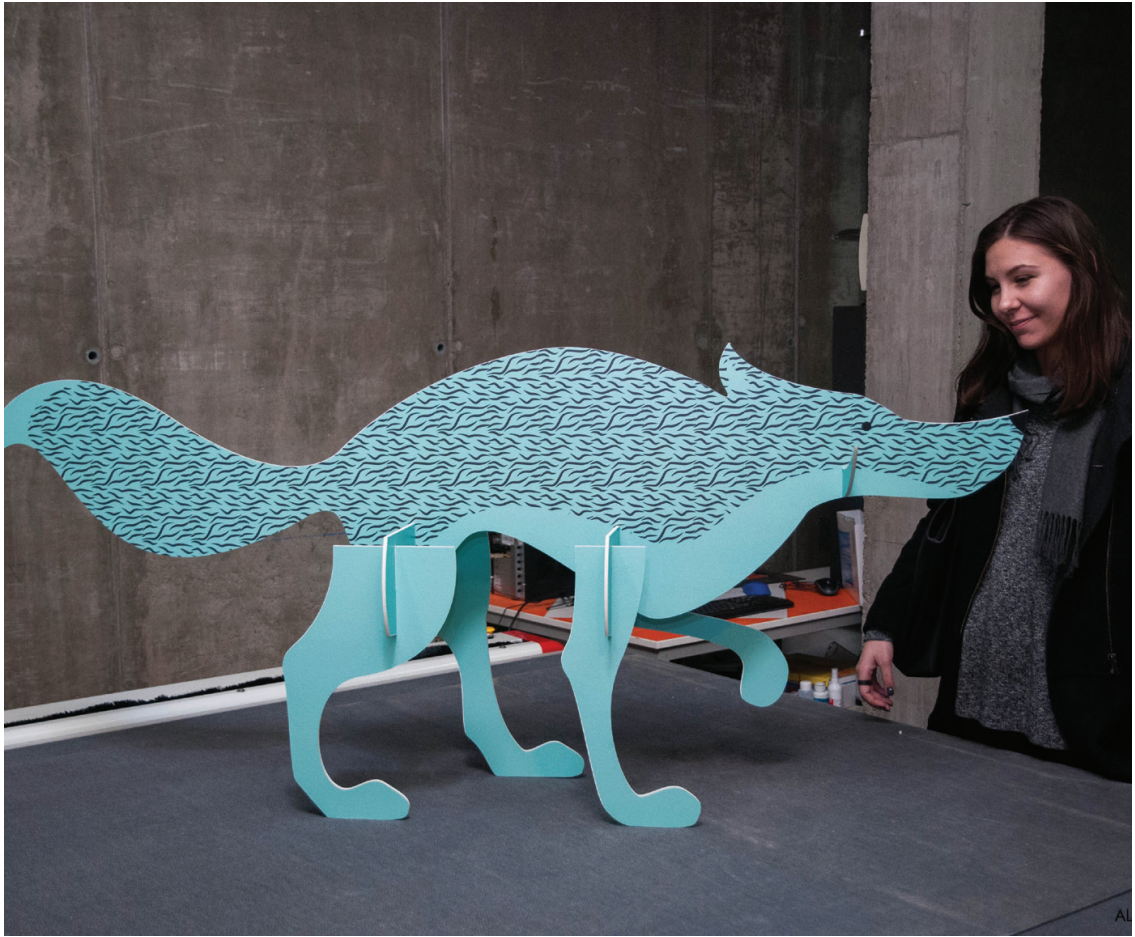






After this work session based on these designs, the engineering team of Oracal, together with our students, produced and assembled these objects at the Oracal production facility. Our students spent several days in Oracal, creating animals for the show together with their employees.



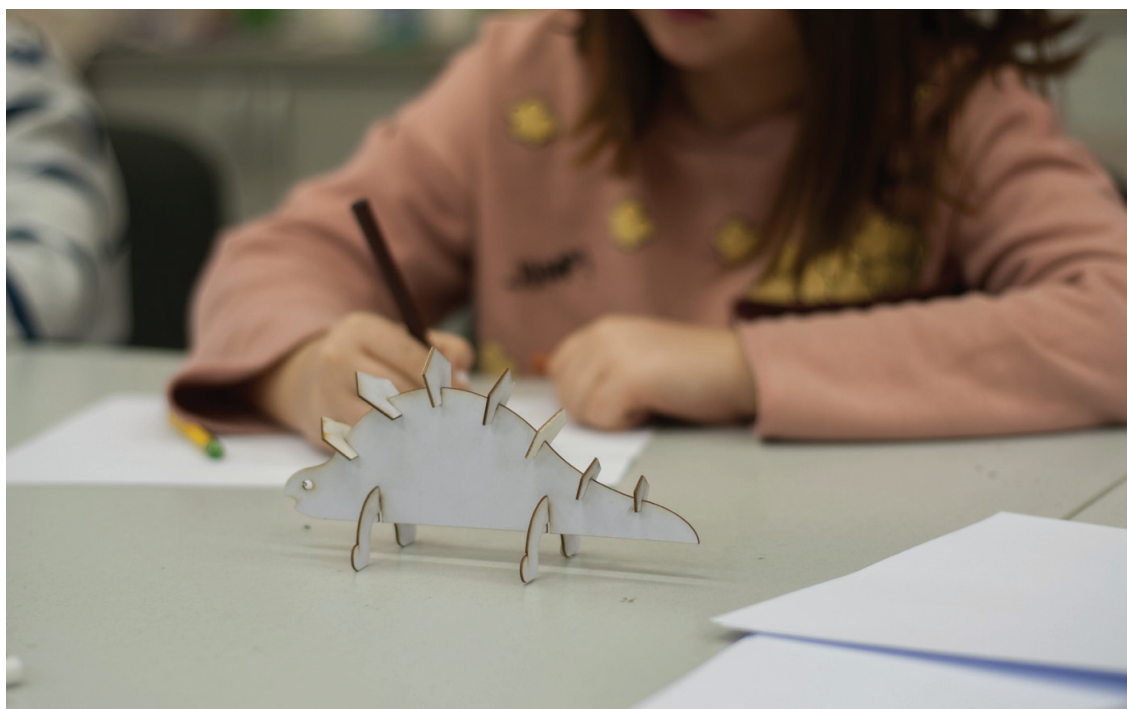




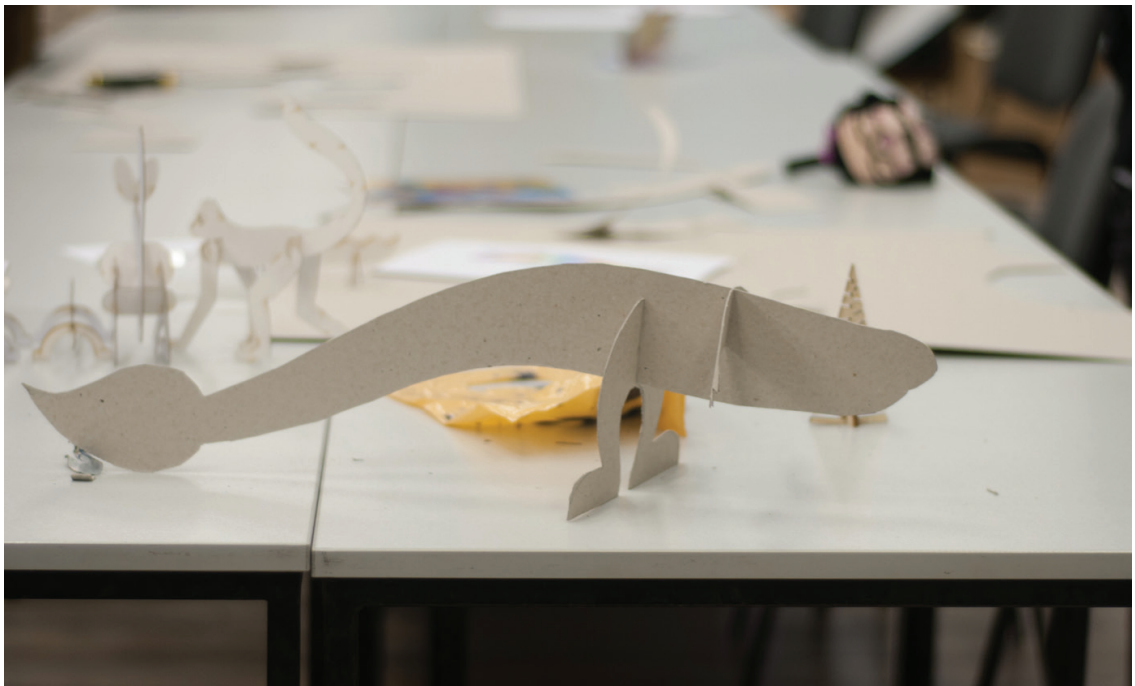
The most successful 3D-animals were displayed at the stand of the College of Fine and Applied Arts during Belgrade Furniture Fair, November 8-13, 2016.



The next step of the project was that students of the College of Fine and Applied Arts organised a workshop for children at an atelier in Belgrade Children Cultural Centre in the second half of January to teach them basic principles of creating 2D and 3D-animals. The idea was that students transferred knowledge, gained in this process, to the next generation of youth workers. This workshop was held on 17.01.2017 at the premises of the Children's Cultural Centre. Children were absorbing these designing techniques from inspired students with great curiosity. With this workshop, we fulfilled the basic objective of Youth BricArt - the transfer of knowledge through productive artistic activities.

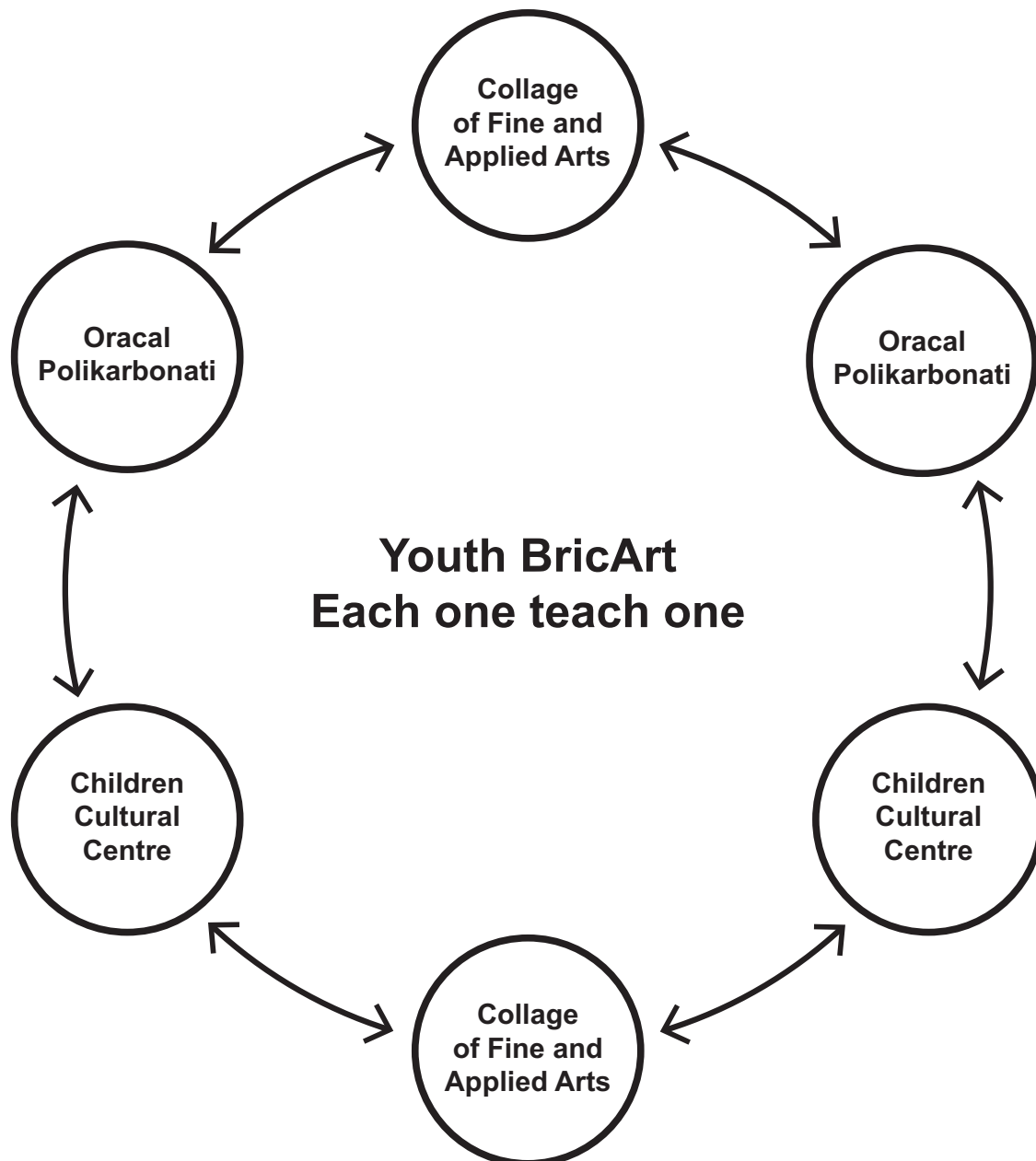






## CREATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW IDEAS

In this project, we successfully implemented main key words that were defined during Art Neighboryouth workshop in Maribor in July 2016. Our main goal was **“Each one teach one”**. We reach this with triple **connection** of learning and working process. Through guidelines from Oracal engineers our students get valuable knowledge and skills to use in everyday design practice as well as to teach and open new **perspectives** to younger generations. **Openness** of school toward various external partners from **diverse** fields (companies and state institutions) resulted with a lot of **energy** among students and participants in this project. **Connectivity** of various partners created **reflective environment** and great synergy.





## TWO RELEVANT POSITIONS

Bricolage 1 and Youth BricArt represent two relevant approaches to the problem of youth art work. Bricolage 1 with its approach of ‘creating something from nothing’ was focused on the problems of design at a specific moment and with locally available resources. Participants of the course had the opportunity, through relevant lectures and workshops, to locate a space for their future activities. This ‘world in which there is no waste’ gave them a sense of proportion and necessary engagement in youth work.

Youth BricArt observed the teaching process itself as ‘perpetuum mobile’. Students had received technical knowledge from experts at the Oracal company, which they enriched through artistic process and transferred to the younger generation in the Children’s Cultural Centre, at the same time opening a new perspective to the Oracal company.

Both approaches are relevant and have their values. For us, the second one was an opportunity to improve Bricolage 1 with experiences from participation in the broader, Art Neighboryouth project, which resulted in multiple partnerships with various and mutual benefits.

The path that our students passed during this two-year project was a path of maturation. Art Neighboryouth was an excellent opportunity for them to bypass contradictions between artist and youth work and find themselves in the future in that potential niche called youth art work.





# **Boris, a Serbian youth art worker**

## **Story of an education trajectory**

*The first time I heard of the this project was at my professor. He told us that we could enrol in a project where we would bring our design ideas together with materials we owned at school and make something useful for the students.*

*Before this, I was also asked to help by photo-documenting some of the Bricolage 1 design camp, and of course it is an opportunity you cannot afford to miss, so I accepted. It was certainly one of the most theoretical and practical uses of design I have ever seen. Everything, from the thinking process to the workshops, was focused on reusing materials that had fulfilled their intended use, and were then used in conjunction with similar objects to create something new from old. These objects, these design theories, where leaving the aesthetics of the materials and objects in a sense that they were not painted or made beautiful, they were just smartly put together and made into this beautiful ready-made mix of old useless junk that was created into something new. Something that has a new use. Like a collage, where you take parts of paper, magazines, books that have been read or thrown out. You cut out the pieces that you see, then you just glue it all together in a manner that suits you and voilà!*

*If you have thought about it, you would have made something that is a mix of useless things and your own input, that now has a new purpose. It is a craft as well as an art, I think. Like painting, like sculpture, it requires you to have immense skill and technique to be able to express yourself. Furthermore, it makes you improvise the entire time because you never ever know what kind of junk you are going to find and how the pieces will fit until the last second. This vibe was what kept me wanting to document it all and of course work on something too!*

*Photographing the first week mostly comprised of theoretical and some hands-on workshops. The first couple of designers that brought a new view on design for me were 'A Parede'. Their way of thinking about design was totally different to what I could have imagined. Going into such economic and social depths, trying to explain and find connections everywhere. Connections between shapes, colours, patterns and people, their emotion, where they live, their income... Everything! It was a show of most efficient use of theoretical knowledge in practice. After they discussed it, they played a few*

games and performed a few tasks as a team and as individuals. They had a problem they pulled out of the hat, written on a small piece of paper. Then they had to try and solve it, write a plan and have a presentation on how they could solve it with the least impact on people, nature, and economy. And all this help was just from design! The solutions were brilliant, some elaborate, and some quite simple. But what I got out of it, is that it is very important to look very closely at all aspects of where we live. What kind of time we live in, all really matters in good design.

The next workshop that really took me by surprise, is the hands-on workshop where participants had to go to a junkyard and find parts for their 'whatever' they were building. After they came to the shop, first we photographed all the objects separately, before any work was done. They looked so sad, old, used, beat up or dented, like no one wanted them. Then through the next couple of days they worked, worked, worked. It was a game of trial and error. With just some quick sketches to guide them, designs were often changed and that brought a sense of excitement because nobody knew what these objects were going to turn out to be. At the end, they were all designed with a new purpose, a new look and a new vibe. Because, when you think about it, we have so much scrap, so much garbage that can be reused for free. Made into art, homes tools... everything!

It really brought out the reuse-recycle part of me. I had to make something small and of course, no one knew! Now it was the week I was waiting for. We were going to use our old-school benches to make something new for our school yard. The first topic of discussion was: 'what should we build'. It was an easy decision. Because we had a lack of seating in the yard, benches were the ideal solution. Then came the part of trying to find the appropriate shape. We had limited resources and time, not much was on our side. First, we started sketching, then after discussing what were the ones we would use, we all made models out of cardboard. That is the moment we could have a glimpse of what the result would look like. After the final selection, we went to work! Disassembling old benches was a hard job, a metal frame required cutting and boards were riveted to the metal frame. This took quite a while. But when we were finally done, we started measuring and cutting. Because these creations would have to remain outside in severe weather conditions, we had to coat them in waterproof paint and lacquer. Putting them together was seamless, it all went really well. We left them to dry and at our group lunch we felt like we did something really important. We reused and made new out of old, function out of decay. For me and for the others it was quite satisfying. You could see it in everyone's eyes. It was the teamwork, the smallest amount of money and materials and tools that made for the most satisfaction.

*As a youth worker, I excelled a lot. From sucking up so much theoretical and social knowledge to upping my hands-on work as a craftsman. Working and being in such environments is extremely stimulating. This should be mandatory between all colleges around the world. Large international global workshops connecting young people and designers, helping exchange their knowledges, hand-to-hand work and everything that goes with it.*

*We are a group. Humans living on this planet together, and of course we work better together. We are smarter, stronger, more efficient, more capable. Youth is the one element that brings change and we must make sure that the change we bring is the right one. So let's get together, let's REUSE, RECYCLE and RETHINK!*

*And what about the future, well in it I see myself doing more things related to youth work. I think that educating the youth is really one of the most important things that needs to be done. By doing that we insure that their future is better, connected to each other bound by their knoweladge of working together. Doing youthwork together really is something special, someting natural. In todays world encaged by our phones, social media, huge amounts of expectations from everyone, fast paced life... People get lost and when they join another group of good inteligent people they feel so alive. People feel alive when they work together they feel like they can build the world and they can. I will definitely be doing more youth work. When some good projects come up and I am around i will give it a go. All my experiances from youth voloonter camp to youth work were great, what can I say, prehaps I use luck to make oprotunity and then I take it and out of it a great story.*

*Boris Miletic*

# Congress: performance and informal arts education



**20-09-2016**

**PERFORMANCE AND INFORMAL ARTS EDUCATION  
ART NEIGHBORYOUTH ENCOUNTER**

**PROGRAM**

- 18.00 workshops >>>
- 19.30 picnic
- 20.00 lecture A. Dudek
- 20.30 lecture R. Craiut
- 21.00 questions
- 21.30 drinks

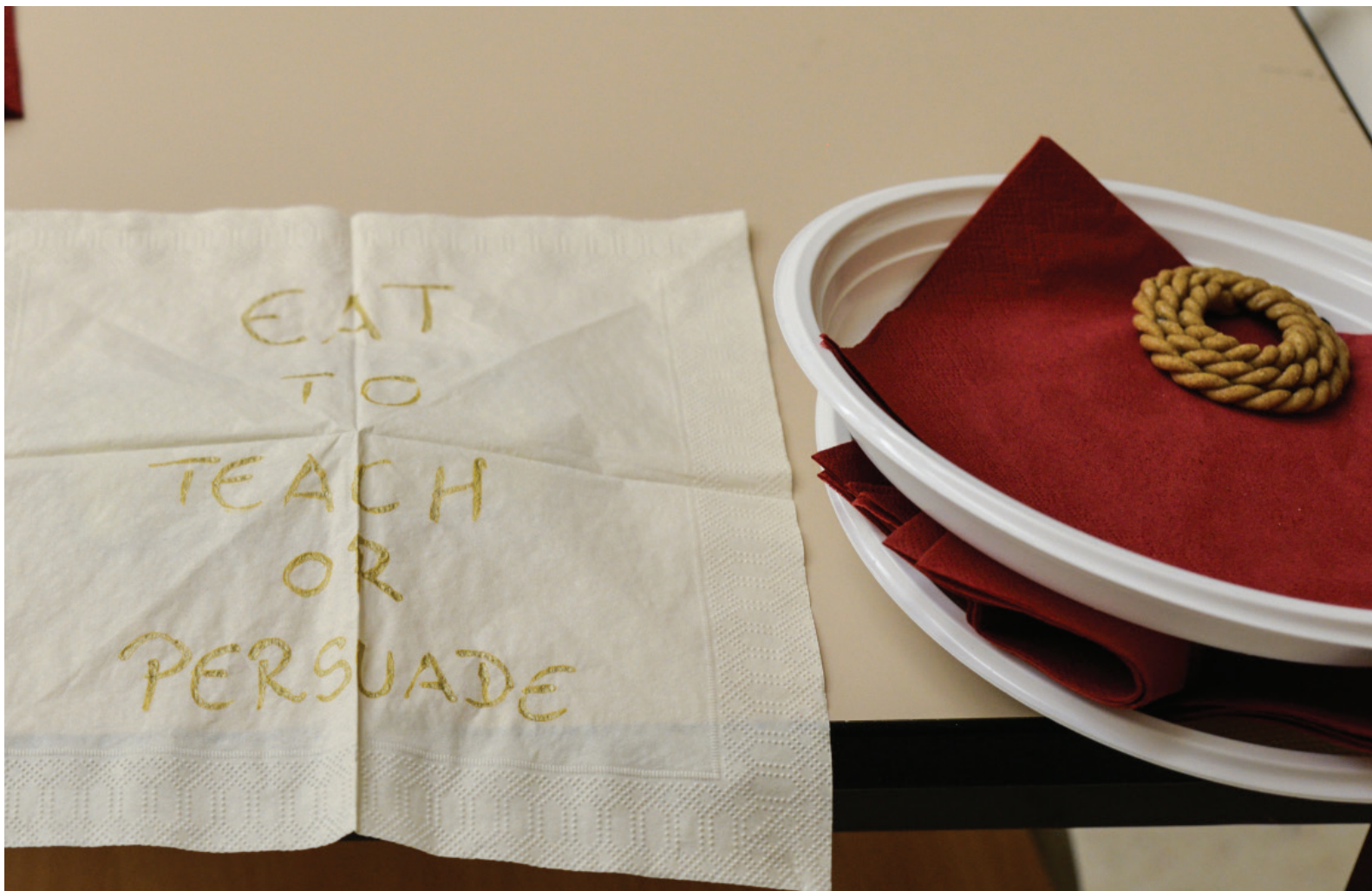
**Maastrichterstraat 98  
3500 Hasselt**

**®** [www.artneighboryouth.eu](http://www.artneighboryouth.eu)

**@** [tobias.frenssen@ucll.be](mailto:tobias.frenssen@ucll.be)

**€** 10,00 | free for UCLL'ers















# Identity development in youth art work

– Laura Tavormina

**How can SACA's working method contribute to the emotional, cognitive and social development of disadvantaged young people as part of their identity?**

## Introduction

*Society is not always a harmonious whole, but it is structured along a series of social splits (Verschraegen et al, 2014).*

This sentence appealed to me during the search for a Master thesis topic. It is a powerful and beautiful sentence describing social injustice in our society which now unfortunately appears to be an actual fact. Because of this I wanted to explore what arts education can offer to alleviate these fault lines, specifically through social artistic projects. Moreover, I worked in a social and artistic project with disadvantaged children myself. It was nice to see that children were developing more confidence by playing an instrument or that some looked very focused at the conductor whereas they were usually very uneasy in the classroom. Because I have seen what kind of influence this musical project had on the children's identity development, I wanted to immerse myself in other projects in my city and I wanted to explore what effect these projects can have on the identity of a socially vulnerable group.

I grew up in Genk, a city where many different young people live in a disadvantaged position. SACA (social artistic and cultural workshops) is an organisation that is socially artistically active in Genk. SACA also notes that there are organisations in which the members do not feel at home because of their background, and this also affects their identity. While working on identity development, it is crucial to be attentive to each individual.

With the study 'Use or ornament' (1997), Matarasso investigated the influence of culture participation on the quality of life. In his analy-

sis, he established the positive impact of participatory arts programs, as community arts, in the following domains: personal development, social cohesion, empowerment, self-determination and imagination. I use the conclusion of this study to show why I preferred arts as an instrument to stimulate the identity development among young people in a disadvantaged position.

In response to this problem, I created a main question for this study, “How can SACA’s working method contribute to the emotional, cognitive and social development of disadvantaged young people as part of their identity?”. In this qualitative study, I examined how arts education in social artistic projects has an impact on identity development among youngsters (12-18 years). The group I specified consists of socially vulnerable young people.

The purpose of the study was to get an idea about SACA’s contribution to the identity of vulnerable social youth and more specifically about the internal effects, such as identity development, self-confidence and self-image, of social artistic projects on the youngsters. Based on this study SACA develops an idea of what they are already doing well, what can be improved or what the potential of their organisation is for the personal development of young people. The aim is to increase the understanding of the success factors of these social artistic projects.

### **The term ‘identity development’**

The concept of identity is defined as a composite of characteristics, behaviour and what individuals show while interacting with themselves and others. Our self-image and our personality are part of our own identity, which changes with time. During the identity development of the youngsters, we can distinguish three intrinsic developments: the emotional, cognitive and social development.

The selection of these components is based on a classification of Berk L.E. (2009) in which the author categorises all phases of life in several developments, such as the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. I opted for the intrinsic developments to investigate identity. These components bring more structure to the analysis of identity development among young people. An explanation of these components can be found in the following sections. Moreover, the three components are linked to the specific life stage of young people between 12 and 18, because they are the target group of this investigation and this is a specific life phase with associated features. These features are linked to the three components.

The period between 12 and 18 years, adolescence, is important for the development of identity. According to Erikson's eight stages of life, these young people are in the phase of identity versus identity confusion. At this stage, young people are seeking their own personality and they feel the need to find answers to questions like: "Who am I?", "What can I" and "Who do I want to be?". Identity is a discovery process for young people, they are looking for new opportunities and push boundaries (Feldman, 2007).

To find out how a social artistic organisation can contribute to the identity of the chosen target group, it is important to check in advance what is going on in the minds of young people, what they are mainly doing and what effect it has on their being. This study examines identity from the three selected components.

### **Emotional component: self-esteem and self-confidence**

The emotional component relates primarily to self-esteem and self-confidence of youth. How they feel about themselves and how they value themselves and see themselves, has to do with the emotional development.

### **The cognitive component: worldview, mindset**

In this section, the cognitive development theory of the Swiss psychologist Piaget has been applied. According to the four stages of cognitive development, young people belong to the formal operational stage. Then he examined the consequences of this stage in the cognitive development of young people. He studied their self-consciousness, their critical thinking and how young people make decisions.

### **The social component: behaviour in relation to peers**

A social artistic organisation is central in this study, therefore the social component. The organisation SACA responds consciously on the social component and they work mainly with this. The social component, and especially groups of friendship, play an important role.

## **The theory of Paulo Freire**

*'To learn is to recreate the way we see ourselves, our education and our society' - Paulo Freire (Mclaren, 1992).*

The essence of Freire's ideas is contained in this quote. It says something about the way of learning and how it is related to ourselves. The elements 'yourself', 'education' and 'community' are three elements that are strongly involved in social artistic work.

Paulo Freire's ideas are not directly related to this study. However, he has some theories about education and teaching that are applicable to arts education in social artistic work. This theory has also a clear link with identity.

Paulo Freire developed the concept of critical pedagogy. He and other critical educators believe that humanities pedagogy is too focused on the pedagogical relationship between individuals and that it is thereby detached from social cohesion (McLaren, 1992). In their understanding of education they want to involve society. If adults are not satisfied with merely reproductive education and teaching, it is necessary to apply society's critical thinking.

Paulo Freire translates his concept of critical pedagogy also to the artistic and cultural world: he argues that linking artistic and social goals is a process in which people develop their skills and strength, because culture is created by man, in which man acts as a conscious creature. Freire sees culture as a liberation that leads to humanization (Hammen, 1975). In the following paragraphs we will elaborate on this.

Freire also has two visions of the man who influenced the development of his liberating education, implying the human being as subject and the human as object. He puts it, respectively, as the humanization and dehumanization of man. The dehumanization takes place when the human being is seen as an object, it means that the human is mouldable and producible. Man adapts to lead to reality and let his life be lived. The human as a subject does not live his life, but can engage itself in reality. This means that the man grasps the environment and the living conditions, whereby he is an independent being. Man as a subject leads to growth, to humanization (Janssen, Poelemans & Schepens, 2006).

*The people must strive according to Freire to the 'subject-being'. Every human being is capable do to this and nothing herein shall prevent him (Janssen, Poelemans & Schepens, 2006).*

In addition to his critical pedagogy, Freire often talks about critical consciousness. Freire describes this consciousness also as having four grades, namely consciousness of power, critical literacy, self-organisation or self-education, and finally recognizing values in a community. He tries to develop his consciousness within his pedagogy.

By entering dialogue with students about problems in daily life, events in the community and academic subjects, he encourages critical aware-



ness. His pedagogy is a good way of working with young people to make them more confident. His theory is not very innovative for the year 2017, but his theory is a good basis to stimulate the development of identity among young people. This is certainly useful in social artistic work where welfare works with disadvantaged young people.

### **Known effects of social artistic work on identity development**

Before answering the main question of the research, another question must be answered first. “Do social artistic projects affect young people and their identity?” In the next section, there are some findings and results from existing studies on this issue and answered this question.

The study ‘Use or ornament’ saw that use of art initiatives to address socio-economic problems was increasing in England. These art initiatives range from small local participatory projects and larger investment projects. The independent research, Comedia, examined the first initiatives around 1996 as the social impact of art programs. This study shows that participation in art activities provides social benefits for individuals and communities. On a personal level, confidence is growing among the people and they are more involved in local affairs. Art projects can strengthen the commitment of the people and increase their involvement in tackling problems.

Art projects encourage people to develop creative approaches and offer them opportunities to take risks in a positive way. Art offers us, as individuals and communities, a broad and dignified range of benefits (Matarasso, 1997).

From experiences ‘Word is bond?’, an exploratory study of the relationship between poetry, activism and education with young people and social justice, it appears to be important to affirm the identity of young people. To confirm the uniqueness of young people’s identity, they offer a working platform for and by young people. Often, confirming the uniqueness is necessary to ease them out of their comfort zone afterwards. It gives them a base to deconstruct their identities based on colour, zip code or bold behaviour. That is how they connect diverse offers and various groups of young people (Verschraegen, De Olde, Oosterynck, Vandermoere, & Dierckx, 2014).

It is important to encourage young people and to guide them to express themselves and their environment in an artistic way. That is how they can create a meaningful platform by allowing them to act, for example, in front of an audience. The development of a cultural identity as creative, artistic and critical is a key for young people.

The aim of the study 'Engaging adolescents: building youth participation in the arts' was to increase the participation of young people in art by improving the effectiveness and the scope of existing initiatives and to speed up the development of new initiatives. Through this study, they sought answers to questions such as 'What does the youth want?', 'What do they need?', 'How do we reach them?' And 'How do we ensure that they remain involved?' This study showed through social artistic work that the artistic skills of young people were developing more, as well as their self-confidence. At the same time, they had a sense of oneness (Hirzy, 2011).

Moreover, they wrote about the positive effects of social artistic projects to explain how the participants converted their life story into a win-win situation. The short report showed that these young people had the opportunity to develop their own power and such a theatre made them more assertive. This shows that art challenges and connects. Art allows people to engage in a developmental process. The welfare sector and the cultural sector are clearly cooperating in this case (Grinsen, 2014).

Finally, in this study you get an idea of the social cohesion in people's own living environment created by social artistic projects. The contribution of art was used to enhance people's imagination. When the participants were in a creative process, the power of art was best expressed. That is how you can create a pleasant atmosphere in neighbourhoods so that every resident feels safe and respects each other.

Briefly summarized, social artistic projects have an influence on a personal and social level. These are two elements which are usually related to each other. Social cohesion will be increased by social artistic projects, because people develop a relationship of trust. As a result, their engagement also increases. Art can be seen as a binding agent between people. Self-confidence increases on a personal level, this goes along with the involvement of the participants in a group. People are going to push boundaries because they are challenged on a social and artistic level. The creative development is logically co-promoted.

## What is SACA?

GIGOS is the collective name for all youth welfare in Genk. Their main goal is to create a social infrastructure for young people where the youngsters can be involved. The organisation for disadvantaged children works with children from 3 years onwards. It is important to them everyone is approached equally, even though they are all different. For this study, we only looked at teenagers (10-15 years) and older teenagers (16 years). The range of youth work responds to the individual needs of young people, offering them opportunities for personal growth and responsibility and supports them in their identity development and social integration.

In a social artistic and cultural workshop (SACA) they offer disadvantaged young people the opportunity to grow in social, artistic and cultural processes for children and youth. Each workshop has a different location. This is because the studios grew spontaneously in different districts in Genk and later they began to work together under the umbrella: youth welfare organisation in Genk, named GIGOS.

The purpose of these workshops is to open up the concept to a social artistic process. The various workshops of SACA are: Yawar (mainly theatre, but also circus techniques, screen printing and ceramics), ZWIEP (photography), BLIK (video) and Colour of the streets (dance). The last studio is not a part of this study, due to the absence of a permanent SACA employee.

## Target group: disadvantaged youngsters

*The term social vulnerability is used to denote a condition of a population group which is vulnerable in regard of social settings (Walgrave, 1996).*

This target group often has contact with social institutions in a negative way. Therefore, they will make less use of the regular offer of social services. This term is also used for people belonging to a lower social class. The difficulties or problems arise from the interaction between individuals or groups and social institutions. Examples of social institutions are schools, work, employment agency, justice, youth clubs, social services, hospitals and banks.

Social vulnerability is difficult to see on a person's face. It is important to not simply appoint someone as socially vulnerable. Prejudices play a major role, since it is thought that mainly immigrants are socially vulnerable because of integration difficulties, language barriers and

cultural differences, but it is not like that (CMGJ, 2012). It is a fact that certain groups are more likely to find themselves in a disadvantaged situation, namely the poor, immigrants and persons with disabilities.

Because people see situations from their own context, they are quickly engaged in interpreting and judging someone besides observing the facts. People interpret in their personal way according to their own environment. This also applies to people in a socially vulnerable situation, and the interpretation of the situation can vary from person to person (CMGJ, 2012).

It is important to ensure that young people feel good about themselves, can fully develop themselves and that their disadvantaged position is no obstacle to their identity development. Awareness of the target group situation is important, as well as exploring what art can offer to boost their identity development.

### **Youngsters and youth art workers' interviews**

To find out about the approach of the various workshops in terms of identity development, there were individual discussions held with the youth workers themselves. It is important to know what their vision is and how they work in the context of identity development of young people. Below, you can find some concrete examples of the youth workers and quotes from conversations that are also linked to the theoretical framework.

The different views of the SACA employees are very similar to each other in general, besides some little nuances that differ because the workshops work in a different way or because of the art form that is practised in the workshop.

### **The three components of identity according to the SACA-workers**

In the theoretical framework the description of identity is defined by three components. These three components are explained during interviews with the youth workers at SACA. They were asked to give concrete examples for each component that illustrate the theoretical classification, such as dealing with the self-esteem of young people and how they participate here. In the following paragraphs, these examples are arranged by component to draw conclusions on the impact of SACA on the identity of young people in each case and this from the perspective of youth workers.

## **The emotional component: a boost in the confidence of the youngsters**

Youth workers tell that when young people create something, this process already gives a boost to their confidence. It stimulates strongly due to the pride that arises after having created something, and this pride is also a part of the development of a person. Youth workers also state that the youth encounters another layer of society, such as people with a cultural centre, through SACA. The youth's pride is growing even more by the positive feedback they receive on their artistic work. In this way, they discover their talents.

Otherwise, this process can cause a drop-in confidence because of the uncertainty of the youngsters, in which case they doubt about their abilities. Above all, a growing self-confidence ensures, possibly with some obstacles, that young people flourish and thereby gain a broader view of themselves and society.

From these responses it is inferred that the confidence of the youngsters mainly grows by showing the artistic product where their self-image is held in a positive light.

Evolving their skills at the SACA workshops also ensures more confidence. The artistic aspect has a bigger role here than the social. This is a confirmation that practising and producing art affects the identity development of youngsters.

## **The cognitive component: the youngsters create a vision through art**

An example to illustrate how the SACA workshops enrich the way of thinking of the youngsters, is about religion: during a visit to a church there were a few Muslim youngsters who did not want to go inside. In this situation, the youth workers explained to them that the visit to the church would allow them to see the architecture and that they would do nothing wrong if they would visit a church while having a different religion. That is how the youngsters were finally convinced to visit the church.

At Zwiep they share the same opinion: religion cannot give you restrictions. Yet they notice that certain themes, like nudity or being veiled, are sensitive themes for some Muslims. The underlying reason is, that some young people have encountered difficulties in progressing in such

issues, because they are afraid of what their community would think. The social pressure from the outside can be high.

*Art and culture are important in the development of a human being, so you can fully share in the company and can participate. And if you don't have that, you miss a lot. There is so much art and culture around us... It is the fact that you want to learn or want to participate that enriches you as a human (Müller, January 7, 2016).*

Finally, mainly due to talks with the youngsters about certain subjects or activities in which they participate, a vision is developed and they learn to think differently. In this part, the social aspect of the term social artistic plays a stronger role. Through the art form they learn to take a different approach or adapt elements in their own vision. It is striking that the social pressures outside the studio create a certain limitation in terms of forming an open vision for the youngsters.

Therefore, it is important that young people are given the opportunity to grow in this context as well. In this way, the young people work in an informal way on their vision.

### **The social component: a balanced vision thanks to the social mix of the youngsters**

The big difference between the basic working of GIGOS and SACA is that boys and girls are separated in the basic working of GIGOS. In SACA, on the other hand, boys and girls work together, even if they have different ages. When a particular group of the basic operation of GIGOS participates in SACA activities, there is no mix. Youth worker Bram (BLIK video) confirms that the mix of boys and girls has a positive effect. Moreover, this mix is convenient to work with video, because of course there are roles that are better reserved for a girl or boy.

At Zwiiep there are some adaptation phases to the social mix, because not everyone is familiar with this and it is sometimes considered as 'strange'. Youth art worker Benny tells me that this uneasy feeling disappears after a while and that the social mix finally works properly. Ralph says that group influence on young people is high. The groups usually contain smaller groups of plus or minus ten young people, to have a tighter connection. The groups share their experiences by making photographic reports and peer pressure can be high. The interests may change in this way.

The social mix between young people is an important factor for the SACA employees. In this way, young people learn to develop an open mind and learn to create less prejudice. The social mix appears sometimes awkward at the beginning, the young people feel uncomfortable, but after a while this feeling usually disappears.

### **Social vulnerability among young people: strictly defined in policy, nuanced in practice**

In the theoretical framework, a clear definition of disadvantaged young people was given, but in practice, this study finds that the SACA employees are not so much concerned with the term 'disadvantaged young people'. They will not measure how socially vulnerable a person is, but they consider young people as young people, no more, no less. Everyone is equal and that is why it is important to young people, whether they are socially vulnerable or not, to take part in their story. However, social vulnerability in the neighbourhoods is still a fact. It is less present than before, but the SACA workers still see it in some districts of Genk.

The director of GIGOS states that the term social vulnerability can be sensitive from time to time, because in the end the young people are labelled and that is stigmatizing. According to the director of GIGOS, 'deprivation' is a better term, but this term was depreciated because of the negative connotations. For example, young people who are poor have opportunities, but are not socially vulnerable. Someone may have no material shortage, but will not have the opportunity to encounter art. The term 'social vulnerability' is primarily intended as a definition within policy and thereby demonstrate the specific target group SACA works with. Important for SACA is that they work in a very approachable way, so that all young people have the opportunity to participate.

Art should be accessible to everyone and not just for the people who can afford it or have the opportunity to participate, according to SACA. In urban areas, financial and/or social shortcomings within certain families are daily reality and this is a recurrent observation made by SACA employees. There is also a difference between the districts themselves, like 'Sledderlo' and 'Winterslag'. Sledderlo originated as a social housing neighbourhood in Genk and still has a negative reputation because of high crime in the past. Winterslag, on the other hand, is not subject to such negative prejudices. As a result of these nuances, there are different levels within social vulnerability.

We can conclude that the term ‘social vulnerability’ creates mixed feelings for SACA employees. There are ‘two sides of the coin’ for the term ‘social vulnerability’, because this term has a formal side and a physical side. There is a formal way in the sense that they do not like using the term when dealing with young people, but they must use the term to refer to a specific target group. There is a factual side, because there is social vulnerability or deprivation in Genk districts, but this is less pronounced in the present. The main idea is that the SACA employees take this into account when working with the youngsters and they want to give them as many opportunities as possible to grow, whether they are socially vulnerable or not.

It is noteworthy that the SACA staff puts welfare in the first place. The artistic part is seen as a means to achieve the welfare goals, but they are also working on an end product of high quality. They work with an art form because they see the creative development of young people as a part corresponding to the overall development.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

We can observe that SACA has several ways to make a positive contribution to the identity formation of the youngsters. It should be added that this contribution is particularly apparent when the youngsters took part for a longer period of time (at least one year) in the studio. In the short term, an effect is less visible. Because identity development is also a lifelong process, a workshop has logically more influence on young people when they come over to the studio. The final conclusion of the investigation and recommendations are discussed in this final chapter.

## **Identity through informal learning in a relaxed and intimate atmosphere**

One of the positive contributions of SACA is informal learning. Young people learn in different ways about a particular art form in the workshops. Because they are learning in an informal atmosphere, they learn a lot in a non-school way. The fact that there are no tests with given scores or that they should not fail to go to a ‘higher’ year, largely ensures the informal atmosphere. The studios can easily adapt to the young people themselves, because young people do not get scores and do not have to meet rigorous learning goals. Of course, there are basic elements that the employees retain, but the young people have their say in what they learn and this is how young people become more intrinsically motivated. In a school context, young people are often extrinsically motivated because they just want to achieve a high score or because they receive



a reward from their parents after having achieved good scores, but in SACA you do not have this. In SACA everyone learns at his own pace. Intrinsic motivation is good for identity formation of young people, as they participate out of their own interests and want to play their part in the workshop, where they can experiment in safety. By expressing themselves creatively and with passion, young people grow as individuals and they can develop themselves in freedom.

A second element that contributes to the identity is the casual atmosphere of informal learning. On the other hand, it is a pity that the youngsters don't attend the workshops for several times or arrive too late. This can be detrimental to the continuity of a project where they want to work during few weeks and each time build on previous achievements. When young people arrive too late, they also have less time to work. In addition, young people are sometimes working independently and without a specific assignment. This is not always efficiently, if the youngster lingers or does not really work towards a goal. On the other hand, it could be observed during the observations, that the youngsters cared for the concrete tasks and performed well. Sometimes young people need a little more guidance in the casual atmosphere, but this should be determined for each youngster separately.

The third element that contributes positively to the identity of young people is to work in confidence. If they want to borrow something or if they want to do something, this is often done trust-based, nothing else. This is a positive element for the identity of the young people, because they have a sense of responsibility and a feeling that people dare to rely on them. Learning about responsibility plays an important role in identity development during adolescence.

Finally, it is established that the social artistic organisation SACA puts welfare in the first place, while also looking at a quality art product. This statement claims that they meet the characteristics of a social organisation in which the artistic process is very important and the quality of the product is high. The above factors contribute to the identity development of these young people by discovering their talents, developing an open mind through discussions and conversations, working trust-based, increasing their self-confidence and by making art that provides them with a boost for the development of their self-image.

## **Socially vulnerable or not? That's not the question**

“Is the problem of an unjust society solved then?” No, but organisations such as GIGOS and SACA certainly contribute to a socially just society. Because the identity of young people is developed in a positive way because of SACA, their vulnerability is again decreased. The young people receive equal opportunities and can develop in a creative way to be more part of the whole society. The young people learn to stand on their own two feet and are increasingly developing an open mind.

Within the research, you can see that the disadvantaged position of young people is not an important part of SACA's method. They work in a very accessible way, making the activities more accessible for this target group, but the workshops are not specific for this target group. Indeed, there are also young people who do not live in this position and prefer to work in an accessible way. The only difference is that this way of working offers the disadvantaged young people in the neighbourhoods more opportunities, because the studios often originate within this group. In any case, SACA certainly does not distinguish between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged young people. SACA enjoys working with young people, as mentioned before, and everyone is equal.

## **Recommendations for the future of SACA: connection between the workshops and more reflections of the youngsters**

A working point of SACA is the connection between the workshops. There is little correlation between the studios, because the studios work in different areas, and that can clearly be concluded from interviews, observations and shows or exhibitions that are often organised at each workshop separately. There have certainly been cooperations or shared representations, but the studios remain separated. A collaboration between the different workshops would also be good for the identity of the young people, would motivate them to push their limits and to look for new or hidden talents. It is certainly positive that SACA recognises this working point and is looking for a common platform to stimulate each other and to work together. Within the dream of the SACA-staff and the youngsters, they spoke of a kind of art house where they can work with the different workshops under one roof.

While developing a joint art house, disadvantages may also arise that could reduce the positive contributions of the workshops. Disadvantages can result from cooperation with other partners who have a slightly different approach, or do not share the same vision and mission. By partnering workshops SACA could lose its individuality. It is important

to keep in mind that the individuality of each workshop is preserved. By this I mean that the social artistic way of working must not be lost and that the young people can experiment in a homely atmosphere and in a safe environment, because these positive contributions stimulate the identity development among young people.

In addition, it remains important to stay active in the neighbourhoods of Genk, it would be unfortunate if the origin of each workshop would be abandoned as it is located in a kind of epicentre.

A second working point concerns the reflection with young people. During the observations, I noticed that there are regularly reflections on a performance or activity that they performed that day and that is certainly a positive element. However, I noticed, while conducting the interviews, that the interview itself was a reflection for the youngsters and that some young people only gained an insight at that specific moment regarding what influence the studio had on them. Such profound reflections could also be valuable for promoting the identity development, because the young people acquire a better picture of the impact of the workshops on them as individuals and on their behaviour. I would definitely initiate such in depth reflective conversations and afterwards also respond more to the elements that are being revealed by such reflections.

## LITERATURE

Addison, W., & Berk, L. (2009). *Development through the lifespan*. Pearson Education.

CMGJ vzw . (2012, november 29). *Dag toegankelijk jeugdwerk*.

Hammen, R. (1975). *Paulo Freire – Oskar Negt. Methoden voor bewustwording*. Bloemendaal: Nelissen.

Hirzy, E. (2011). *Engaging adolescents: building youth participation in the arts* National Guild for community Arts Education. New York.

Janssen, P., Poelmans, E., Schepens, K., & Van Gilse, J. V. (2006). *Art & Empowerment – maak er een drama van*. Geel: Departement Sociaal werk, Maatschappelijk Assistent, Sociaal Cultureel werk, Katholieke hogeschool Kempen.

Laren, P., & Leonard, P. (1992). *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. Routledge.

Matarasso, F. (1997). *Use or ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*. comedia.

Van Grinsen, S. (2014). *Position paper, De maatschappelijke waarde van sociaal artistieke projecten, Social art lab*. Utrecht: Movisie.

Verschraegen, G., De Olde, C., Oosterlynck, S., Vandermoere, F., & Dierckx, D. (2014). *Over gevestigden en buitenstaanders*. Leuven: Acco



# JUNGLE...

**-Wouter Elen**

... is an artistic work space in all kinds of artistic disciplines for creative young people in Genk in which enthusiasm to meet, to be inspired and to experiment are the main reasons. The youngsters themselves are Jungle's owners in terms of content, they write the program themselves and are largely self-supporting for the supervision. This approach was inspired by the Art Neighboryouth-project.

In March 2016, Villa Basta, Gigos (youth work with socially vulnerable children and youngsters in Genk) and the Youth Service of Genk organised a brainstorm with young people, interested in arts, whom we had met through personal contacts in our activities, at festivals and on the street. We asked them to come up with ideas about a new art youth house and we probed the enthusiasm to cooperate in this. This turned out to be the first step towards what later became the 'work group youth culture'. Meanwhile, this group is the core of Jungle.

## Why a 'Jungle' in Genk?

Young people with a love for arts find each other at Jungle, the creative hub in Genk of Villa Basta, the Youth Service and Gigos, and represent a community. Together they realise artistic projects and productions that captivate youngsters.

For many teenagers, the classroom is more important than the class itself. It may sound strange, but creative learning also implies hanging out with peers, thinking quietly, being bored together. By slowing down, we make time for reflection and things can mature. In Jungle, the ultimate goal is not only the development of individual talent, but especially the development of 'long-term relationships' with and between other creative spirits, artistic networks and an audience. These are the creative communities that may eventually become independent creative associations, institutions or companies.

Young people see this creative youth house as their own local brewery where they can meet up and party, where stories and ideas rise and slowly develop and where they can release their work into the world.



Youngsters in creative youth work prefer friendship to mere success, experiment to perfection and responsibility rather than compliance.

In young people, we see a growing need for small scale, local and informal initiatives. They like to move in small groups for which they feel responsible. Jungle is an open urban youth house where there is room for a casual encounter, education, experiment and creation. What youngsters connect is their love for art, not so much their age or origin. We make the hub a place where barriers are broken through. This is possible by peer-to-peer learning, learning from each other. The supervisor provides a clear, safe environment with many facilities.

The young person himself fulfils the main role in the educational process: he is the curious one, the one who experiments, explains, presents... The members come up with the creative ideas and stories. The supervisor provides structure to the activities and determines the minimum expectations for the group. As a leader, this is expected of him. He invites artists the group looks up to, people who are inspiring to the group.

The hub is also a place to chill, in response to the rat race of many youngsters. Besides the provision of responsibility, ensuring moments of rest, thinking and chilling is an educational duty.

### **How Jungle became Jungle**

Fifteen years ago, a group of 50 enthusiastic volunteers brought Villa Basta into the world with a launch party for one hundred young artists and 700 young culture lovers. It was a success because it was allowed to go wrong. We only had ourselves to thank for.

We want to give the core groups of our creative hubs in Genk the same responsibility and freedom. In Genk, this group consists of 30 young people from our network, transforming the old town hall of Genk into a creative home. They have a strong sense of autonomy and see our supervisor as a co-member and facilitator, not as the one who always has the last word. If wrong choices are made, he allows people to fail. He does not intervene, because it would bring down the sense of responsibility enormously! We hope to launch more creative hubs because our region



needs initiatives that become lasting artistic organisations. We chose Genk because of the present, multicultural talent and the absence of an art scene. In addition, Genk is a city with a relatively poor population and many teens and youngsters with a great learning disadvantage.

### **No mayflies in Jungle?**

Jungle is an open art house with rehearsal rooms, a sound studio, a theatre room, a work space for visual arts and a bar. A permanent supervisor ensures the permanence and support of the various individuals and groups we want to attract and hold on to for a long time. The hub in Genk is interwoven with other sociocultural organisations in the city. In this way, we realise a growth opportunity for creative minds.

We create connections with the neighbourhood by being active in streets and squares. The core group and members are largely recruited near the hub. Together with the various core groups we create a program for the meeting place, the bar, etc.

The core group also sets up a program for trips to concerts, performances, exhibitions...

Together with the core group we create and maintain the different work spaces, theatre room and studio with various possibilities. Some examples are Lego robot workshop, sewing-class, home recording, audio studio, rehearsal rooms, dance hall with installed DJ equipment... We count on an average of 20 attendees a day when the work places are open.

The theatre room in Hasselt, the music studio in Genk (Studio Crescendo), the work spaces of Jungle in Genk, the ateliers and rehearsal rooms in youth centre 'Rondpunt 26' in Genk and the work spaces at the Plinius Park in Tongeren are available to the youngsters who belong to the Jungle collective.

In addition, the core groups set up an annual program for master classes with artists.

There is an individual support program for creative individuals and groups in the development of their own creative production or operation. They don't need to have a link to the city or the creative hub. This means the community is not closed, but consists of different groups, some of which develop their own activities in their own name. In doing so, we create a creative humus layer in our region.



Every year, Jungle organises several large and small parties and festivals for the community and for those who want to get to know Jungle.

Everyone can work freely in Jungle. We ask a contribution at those who can afford it. We work with a credit system. For example, whoever attempts to bar for 10 nights, can earn enough credits for 1 day in Studio Crescendo.

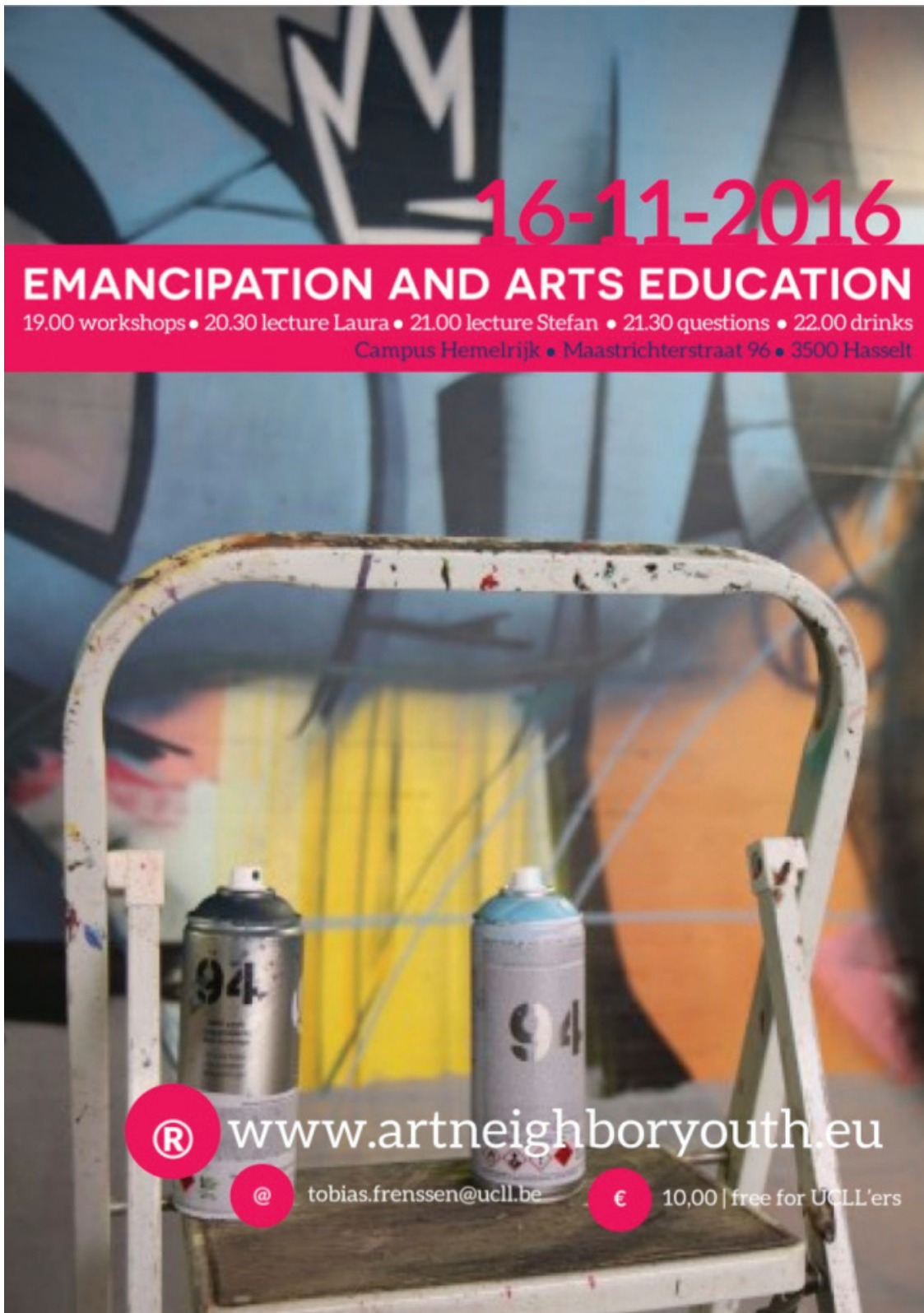


# JUNGLE





# Congress: emancipation and arts education



**16-11-2016**

**EMANCIPATION AND ARTS EDUCATION**

19.00 workshops • 20.30 lecture Laura • 21.00 lecture Stefan • 21.30 questions • 22.00 drinks  
Campus Hemelrijk • Maastrichterstraat 96 • 3500 Hasselt

® [www.artneighboryouth.eu](http://www.artneighboryouth.eu)

@ [tobias.frenssen@ucll.be](mailto:tobias.frenssen@ucll.be) € 10,00 | free for UCLL'ers

# Communication as a piece of art

- Gabriela Gavrailova

Communication is connecting people. There are a lot of different forms of communication – business communication, family communication, communication between friends, but there is one very special kind – communication in art. In art, where every person has his very own and specific view about creating something, communication is very difficult. It doesn't matter if it is a teacher to a student or a group of artists that should create a piece of art or organise an event together, every conversation is a challenge.

For me, communication is by itself an art. I've been studying Advertisement as a Bachelor program and Drama as a minor program in the New Bulgarian University. During my education I realised once again how important communication is and how many different techniques there are to reach your goals with a correct way of leading a conversation.

Advertisement is the modern art. It contains design and message. Behind every ad there are a huge number of specialists who make different research projects of the market, the products and the potential clients and at the end they connect every piece – design, message and proposal to build a successful communication with the target. Ads are the connection between the business and the customer; some of them are also a modern multifunctional art.

While I was studying advertising, I realised that no matter what you do and how good you are, you need to master the art of communication. It appears that a conversation between partners or colleagues or a commercial conversation between a seller and a customer is just normal talk, but it's not. Every kind of dialogue like this has its goals – to present yourself, to present a product, to make a contract or to start a project, and to reach these goals, no matter what kind of education you have, the only important thing is to be prepared for communication!

Enough about advertising and business communication – it is a real art, but just imagine this kind of art in a real artistic area. As a member of

KRUG Art movement, I have been a part of many projects such as 'Art vs. Hate speech', 'Draw me, understand me, inspire me', 'Drama & Theatre for Youth Emphasis', 'Art Horizons residency program', etc.

At the beginning I was a volunteer for 4 years at KRUG's process of activities but now I can manage youth art actions myself. Every time we organise something with KRUG Art Movement, we work with different artists. Every one of them has his own vision and in every case we need different methodologies to realise efficient dialogue.

As youth art workers we meet very different artists every day. When we organise a project with them we need to explain the conception and have to present what we need from our new members, but we have to do it in a way that won't reflect on their own specific way of creating art. It turns out that sometimes it is very difficult to explain an artistic project, to put it into words and to make other artists see it in your way, so they can fit into the whole idea. And just as every country in the world has a different language, in a group of artists every artist speaks a different language. For me, the only way to reach this effective dialogue, is to listen first. Even though in most of the cases it is difficult, you need to listen and try to understand the person and his way of thinking so then you know how to present your idea in a proper way. That means individual treatment of almost everybody, but it's worth it.

The significance of a youth art worker in Bulgaria is not such a clear notion and what this person is supposed to do is not clearly explained. This kind of job is usually a thing that art teachers and leaders of NGO's do as part of their job. For me, working with young and positive people is a pleasant addition to the projects that I participate in. The biggest motivation for me is to see how young people create; how they expose themselves through art and how they view our conceptions in KRUG art movement. The project 'Art vs. Hate speech' gave me a lot of inspiration, because it affected a lot of modern topics such as hate. With the communication that we had with these young people about this project we had the opportunity to present our statement and to show how we fight the haters with smiles and art. Together with KRUG and the students, we made a unique street art performance that showed problems which aren't widely discussed in the public area, but should be! And because of our clear communication we managed to realise an effective dialogue with these young artists. Once again, communication turns out to be a very important part of a youth art worker's job.

Another art area where communication is of great importance, is theatre. Acting is not only a hobby and a graduation degree - it's a passion

for me. Every actor on the stage has the power to give the audience a message. No matter what kind of role he has, in the way he feels about his mission and in the way he looks at his audience, he can provide his statement to every person in the room. As a student in drama class I have not had a lot of roles, but every time when I go on stage I think about the meaning of the character and what I can give to the audience as an emotion and a message. This kind of communication between the actor and the people in the room makes a special connection.

I wish I could see the influence that I and my colleagues have on our audience. I wish I could follow our communication with them even outside the doors of the theatre. However, even if I do not have this opportunity, I hope that we succeed in providing our audience with all the emotions and truths that we want. Acting seems to be a monologue of actors to audiences, but actually it is not. It is a conversation between these two sides, but the audience replies silently and in its soul and mind. That makes this type of conversation sacred and I am extremely happy that I can be part of it as an artist.

A few days before the premiere of 'Trojan Women' of Euripides on the stage of the theatre in Kardzhali, in which I play a major role, I participated in the KRUG workshop 'Draw me, inspire me, understand me - a strategy against addictions'. On May 14 and 15, KRUG Youth Centre held this workshop in Dazhdovnitsa Art house for volunteers from City Council Drug and alcohol action team-Kardzhali. The rich experience of KRUG to work with young people became a two-day event in an open space to exchange ideas, to acquire new skills applicable in various contexts. Young people became acquainted with innovative communication patterns and the impact the experience of young artists had who have worked in Dazhdovnitsa and witnessed the inspiring effect of implementing innovative tools and new models of influence at the expense of traditional circuits in the prevention of use and abuse of psychoactive substances. Face to face, the new dynamics of designer drugs - they appear, will keep standing for a while and then disappear, and in their place come other new chemical groups with new chemical formulas - the outcome, is to be developed, as well as new strategies and methods for prevention and the impact on vulnerable groups and individuals.

In one of the working themes - 'Unmade beds are for happy people' - KRUG team and participants in the workshop developed a full code of 12 positions for bringing happiness to the young person under the slogan 'Happiness is a mission possible - learn to be happy'. Time was made

available to create concepts for radio emissions for potential audiences in competition with thematic initiatives, a commercial enterprise with the conditional naming 'New Romantics Ltd.'. In the final presentation of the 'race for the sincerest letter to addict teenager Natalie' even they appeared to show genuine tears of empathy with the performers. The activities ended with a flash mob 'Proud to Be Drug Free' on the street in Dazhdovnitsa that held the occasional automobile to the cave womb and gathered children and adults, proving that art has a wide range of tools for intervention and influence.

Young artists and a team of KRUG youth workers work with young people putting emphasis on the education by performance and presenting of models based on art and creative methods: art in the open air, author projects in the context of the modern city life, art communication methods to meet new audiences, exhibitions outdoors, billboards with images of local cultural research, etc.

All activities are oriented towards respective groups and are realised in partnership with them. Another important topic in KRUG' youth policies is the development of literary works devoted in generally to the topic 'How to become an artist: career roadmap', useful for the professional orientation of young people. The debut exhibitions of young artists as a part of their social lives are a real instrument to create new audiences for performing arts.

Communication in its every form is an art, but this art in a real art area is a challenge. As youth art workers, we learn every day how to use the techniques of this art and to create a dialogue full of meaning with them.

Youth work has the following characteristics and values:

- a voluntary relationship;
- an informal educational process;
- the value of association;
- the value of young people participating democratically.

This is just a matter of Context; Relationship; Sensitivity; Empathy.

The team of youth workers of the KRUG team has been working in the city of Kardzhali (urban 'zone') and on the rural 'zone' – non-traditional ethnic context in the villages of the Kardzhali region where Turkish communities live in general. We have worked with many young artists from across the country as well. This September / October we will 'move' a part of the project activities in 3 high schools in Sofia ('capital zone')



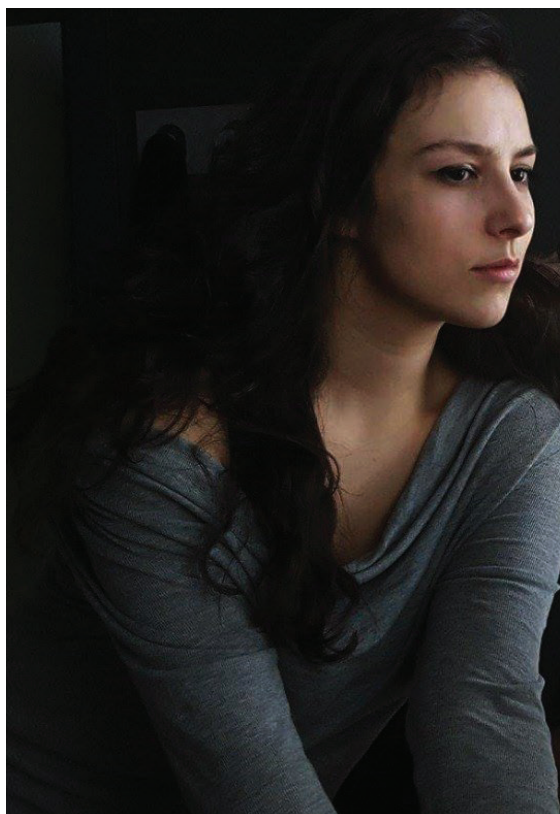
and will prepare them for a great street art performance against Hate speech widespread in the media and society. In this multicultural and diverse social context, successful methods are only interdisciplinary.

The important topic of KRUG activities is the International Artist-in-residence program ('international zone') in Dazhdovnitsa art village. Artist-in-residence programs (AiR) and other residency opportunities allow staying and working here 'for art's sake in a real milieu'. They offer conditions that are conducive to creativity and they provide for working facilities, ready to be used by individual artists.

For quality youth work in these 4 'zones' the most important pre-conditions are:

- a strong youth organisation;
- good governance and transparency;
- explicit aims and theoretical basis which focuses on young people's development;
- trained youth workers (Paid or Volunteer);
- adequate funding.

***Gabriela Gavrailova is a Bachelor of Arts and advertising, actress and youth art worker on voluntary basis for a team of KRUG Youth Centre (KRUG Art movement), Kardzhali, Bulgaria.***



# KRUG as a Bulgarian Youth Art Space

- Radost Nikolaeva

## MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

The village of Dazhdovnitsa is situated in the East Rhodopes Mountain, close to the town of Kardzhali, which is a district centre. 160 Bulgarian Turks live there, the settlements in this part of the Rhodopes Mountain are especially interesting with their multi-ethnic population. For decades Bulgarians and Turks have lived together preserving their festivities, traditions and folklore. Most of the villages were deserted because in the eighties hundreds of families left for Turkey when during the so-called 'revival process' the forced name changes of Bulgarian Turks began. The consequences of this process are an especially painful topic from recent Bulgarian history. Many of the deserted public and private buildings in the region are in ruins - as a metaphor for the dramatic past and the economically tough present. Valuable objects of the family and cultural memory - albums, tissues, texts, music, jewels - have been scattered. The need to reawaken cultural initiative and to breathe life into the villages should be the subject of a strategy, which would give a new meaning not only to the representation of diverse cultures but also of different villages, even families in the cultural map of the region.

Situated at the border with Turkey and Greece, the region has a remarkable historical past, a great number of undeveloped archaeological monuments, poorly researched local culture and folklore. Ages, ethnicities and languages live together but sometimes more in parallel than in harmony.



## **THE ART HOUSE IN DAZHDOWNITSA**

(Speech during a press-conference, March 2005)  
*Radost Nikolaeva, art director of 'Krug'*

***What aims did you set with the construction of the Art House in the village of Dazhdovnitza? How did you manage to do something so un-traditional in comparison with your main activities - exhibitions, publications, festival programs...?***

The ambitious aim to build upon the ruins of the former school in the village of Dazhdovnitza a youth cultural house, which connects the place and the region with the world exchange of information, people, and ideas, was set by 'Krug' during the international action held in the village of Duzhdovnitza three years ago. Then the people from Dazhdovnitza gave us a hand to 'place' this building in the centre of one big performance attended by youths from all around Europe. The ruins are now only photos of archive value. The traumatizing remains in the centre of the village are now a focus of hopes! The Art centre is already mentioned in the world internet networks as an alternative space for art residence and training.

The young team of 'Krug' in collaboration with the local people, with the assistance of volunteers from all over the world, with the support of the Swiss Cultural Program South East Europe and Ukraine and of the Municipality of Kardzhali showed that there is no past, which cannot be transformed into a link to the future. We are sure that contemporary arts are something more than an entertainment in your free time. They are a means of development and personal wealth, means of finding new forms of social communication.

***How will the Art House function?***

It will provide a basis for art actions of independent authors and art groups. It will provide opportunity for the local children to work with some of the world-famous authors, to be trained in the field of culture and arts. In perspective there will be an art hostel as well. Our aim is together with the municipality to make this spot attractive to the world – of course by the means and methods of art. After all, this is an undeveloped field, an experiment, an absolutely different responsibility for our team from the previous ones.

## ART ZONE

The KRUG Art Gallery (96m<sup>2</sup>) in Kardzhali provided shelter to a Youth club and Studio '4x4', but also provided space for exhibitions. It was a multifunctional space for experimental work of young Bulgarian and European authors, for literary programs and ateliers. Most of the activities were a mixture of visual arts and literary texts. A visual art class was held in the Studio (14 children x 6 hours a week).

The Studio was the creative centre of 'Krug', where ideas were developed, some of which were later exported to the open space: in 2004 – 'Alan kaya performance', in the stone city of Perperikon<sup>1</sup> at moonlight; in 2003 – 'Old space performing arts' (performance in the half-ruined houses of the deserted villages near the border); in 2002 – cultural expedition with festival accents 'From door to door', connecting contemporary art with family albums, etc.

In the specific practice of 'Krug' besides the tendency to export art outside the Art Gallery there was also the opposite tendency – to import (villages under the form of unusual expositions, of art installations of live materials, collected from the daily life of the communities) inside the exhibition space (2004-2007).

These two tendencies broke up the concept for an art 'hall' and sought their recognition. Within the present project this mobile approach easily transformed the Art Gallery from a city exposition space into a *Pro-zone = Laboratory*, and the new Art House in the village of Dazhdovnitsa – into a *Live zone = 'Playground'* for arts. From ordinary buildings these two centres were changed into two multifunctional art zones.

The model of an art zone is characterized by:

- Entertainment & creativity;
- Contact & conceptual partnership with the audience;
- Inspiring renovation of the cultural agenda;
- Mobility;
- Balanced management.

---

1 Perperikon is an ancient Thracian settlement.

**CITY AS SITE:**

# **Social Interventions and Public Performance**

**- Radost Nikolaeva**

To transform the city spaces into a public laboratory and to define a City with the aim of creating context - specific public performative works is a goal of many KRUG activities. City spaces as a site for open art performances are a constant adventure to unify students, artists and citizens for reconstruction of social spaces as cultural landscape.

Artists who have participated in our programs develop in a real time experimental models for an artistic practice that combine methods from art, activism, and performance practice to cultivate innovative approaches to the construction of social spaces as a cultural landscape.

Here we present a few experiments made by young Bulgarian artists in the time of KRUG art events, residencies and art programs under a general name 'City as Site: Social Interventions and Public Performance'.

Interventions can be:

- tactical and site performance,
- temporal installations,
- video or sound projections,
- digital platforms,
- community involved projects,
- peer-to-peer platforms,
- print or online publication,
- or a street event.

Tactical and site performance and temporal installations are an important part of performance art activities and open youth work presented in a non-art context, traditionally interdisciplinary. Performance may be scripted or unscripted, random or carefully orchestrated; spontaneous

or otherwise carefully planned with or without audience participation. The performance can be live or via media; the performer can be present or absent. It can be any situation that involves four basic elements: time, space, the performer's body, or presence in a medium, and a relationship between performer and audience. Performance art can happen anywhere, in any type of venue or setting and for any length of time. The actions of an individual or a group at a particular place and in a particular time constitute the work.

Performance art is generally experienced live, but photography is what documents and ensures its enduring life. Photography, however, plays a constitutive role, not merely a documentary one when performance is staged explicitly for the camera (often in the absence of an audience), and the resulting images are recordings of an event but also autonomous works of art.







## GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

# Bulgarian group activities organised by KRUG

- Radost Nikolaeva

### TAKE YOUR PENCIL AND COME OUT ON THE STREET!

Members of the youth art community (YAC) of Art Movement KRUG took to the streets on International Earth Day, April 22, and showed their works dedicated to Earth in one-day performance. During the day, the youth were joined by parents of young children, passers-by and citizens who brought with them pencils, paints and/or their artistic ideas presented on hardboard with primed canvas. At the end of the day the street was presented with a marvellous composition in which images of flowers, animals and human portraits were equally. 'The earth is our mother, we must take care of her' is the message of young artists that sounds from the roadway in Kardzhali – the message that can be found in hundreds of preserved folk songs worldwide.

### What is 'the street', anyway?

Is it just a logistical space that facilitates travels by car and foot, or is it a richer sociocultural space, perhaps one that promotes public interaction? There's also a range of questions street art raises in philosophical aesthetics. Is there anything distinctive about street art power as art — or does it achieve no more than can be achieved by painting, sculpture, installation, and so on? Is street art a postmodern art form, or is it something new, perhaps a distinctive response to problems that arose with modern art?

Team of KRUG art movement has considerable experience in working in public spaces, in non-traditional context and with non-art communities as well. We all carry biases and prejudices and we will discuss ways to (self)reflect on this. Furthermore, we give valuable advice on methods and tips on how to balance the project idea with the interests of the intended participants, taking into consideration the ethical and structural aspects of collaboration.



## **NINE STREET ART IDEAS 'IN SITU' MADE BY KRUG YOUTH ART COMMUNITY**

Every day the art innovation challenge for KRUG Art movement is: art is looking for new ideas by bringing young people together to be involved in active and participatory arts activities in public space. The public space offers the ideal social laboratory for such a project.

KRUG Youth workers were trained also to organise Artists in Residency (AiR), namely: how to motivate international and national young artists to work on the thematic scope, how to manage the selection process, how to provide conditions for art innovation activities by contacting artists' initiatives, galleries, museums, music distributors and publishing houses.

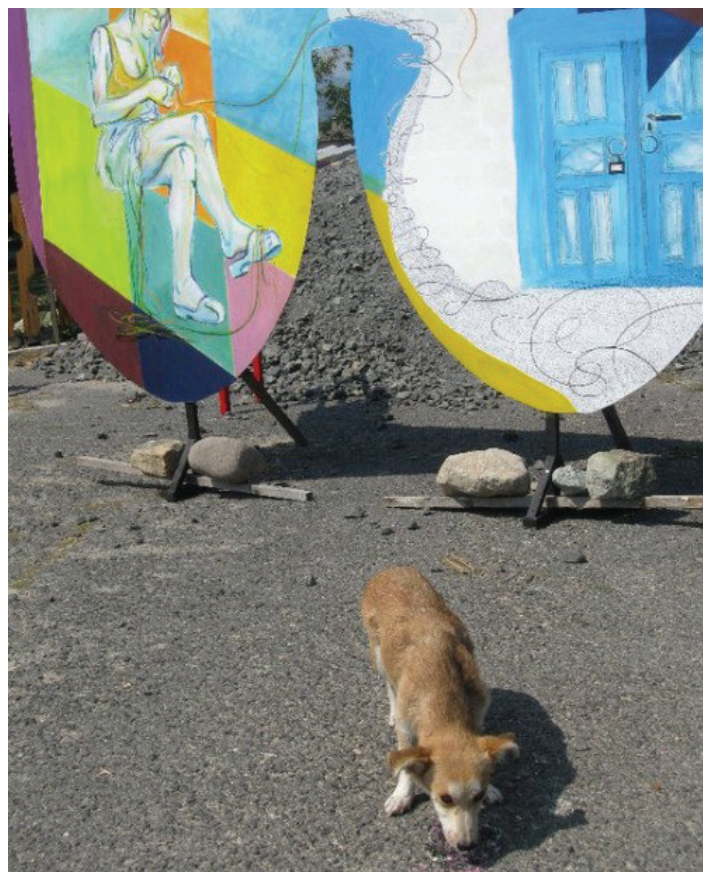
You can see below how some ideas to work in public spaces are transformed by specific young participants in personal projects in accordance with their experience, expertise and selection.

After the workshop on art history in modernity, organised by KRUG' team, a little Sinem Mehmed from art village Dazhdovnitza just has learned the story of Mona Lisa, La Gioconda - a half-length portrait of a woman by Leonardo da Vinci, which has been acclaimed as 'the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world'. Here is her spontaneous version of the self-portrait performance presented on the road. You know: group sharing of the path towards reaffirmation of the individual encourages people to open up; powerful bonds are forged between participants, enhancing interaction and personal behaviour throughout the local community... The self-portrait performance 'in live' produces a deeper awareness of personal and group identity and encourages the integration and growth of the individual within the team.

After the intervention of several young artists from Plovdiv, Rousse, Varna and Kardzhali, the old walls of City Hall, the rural shop and the open-air toilet in the village of Dazhdovnitsa are already art works.



The dog is a real 'part' of the street art works...



The oldest building is the best background for your performance:



... but the floor is the best background too:



We are looking for alternative locations to present our exhibitions. The easiest place for an art project is the gallery. It is hard to situate an art project on the street or in an abandoned building, or in the suburbs of the city, or between rural houses and get him to 'talk' to people about their lives:



Hansel and Gretel (Hänsel und Gretel - Little Brother and Little Sister) went to the mountain and created a new design for social orientation:



If you do not have an appropriate scene, you can share a construction of KRUG team to create a stage for young artists:



How many kilometres apart are Dazhdovnitsa Art House and the British Museum? Only 2213! This is an art signboard, created by two artists in Dazhdovnitsa village:







# A Serbian youth art worker in education

**-Sofija Vuckovic**

*When I first heard about the workshop idea of using our old-school benches and desks to make new furniture, I immediately liked it. I always loved the idea of crafting from already existing materials and transforming them into something new and better. It was a really great chance to improve the look, and use of our school yard. The idea was presented by our professor, Zeljko Loncar, who was with us every step of the way, supporting and helping us.*

*The first day we all came to our school, the College of Fine and Applied Arts. We sat together and started exchanging ideas. We thought about how we could combine the rectangular wooden parts of our old-school desks and make new ones that will stand in our school yard so that students would have more seating and enjoy the outside.*

*It was really great to see how everyone was thinking. We made suggestions to each other, and then started working on our sketches. The goal was to think of a simple, but effective solution, that does not need the use of bolts, bars, glue and things like that, just those wooden boards. Later, we made small models from cardboard to help us understand our design better, see if there were any flaws, and then improve it. It was really fun. We started to understand the possibilities of the used materials. What was realisable and what was not.*

*Finally, some really great ideas emerged, and together, we came up with some great solutions and picked the best ones to materialise.*

*On the second day, we took things outside, and divided the work so that we could be as effective as possible. Some of us cleaned the boards, because they were old, and had all this stuff written on them over time, and some of us assembled the pieces. When I think about cleaning something, joy isn't my first reaction, but we were doing it together, like everything else in that workshop, and that made it really easy and fun to do.*

*The ideas slowly came to realisation and we were happy to see it. It's always great to see something that was, at first, just an idea in your head, then a sketch on a piece of paper, and then you finally get to see it being made.*

*After some parts were assembled, we could start painting them. We picked the colours, red, blue and grey. They really worked well together, and it was such an improvement from the way it was before.*

*Time flew by, we had a lot of work done, and a lot more to do, but it was time to finish up for that day, as it was starting to rain.*

*The final day, we finished all the work that was left. More people came to help. We painted the rest of the boards, that were now a very cool bench, and assembled more pieces into some fine standing furniture and then painted that too. We were so pleased to see it all coming together. There were some concrete benches outside that were a dull grey colour, so we decided to paint them over in shades of yellow. That really brightened them up, and made them more desirable to use. Lastly, we took the metal construction that was left from different school desks and moulded them together. It was one arrangement assembled from multiple boards that were left, and that turned out to be an awesome place for us to sit together outside the school, during our break.*

*When we were all done, we were so happy to see that our working together went so well, and that we made all of those things that were going to be of great use.*

*When we were beginning with the whole process we were motivating each other, and later on, the work itself motivated us. It was a very important thing to see and experience. The workshop was organised in a way that everyone had something to do, everyone worked together, and it made it easy to accomplish.*

*Our creations were then displayed at the Belgrade Furniture Fair 2015.*

*I realised that there are endless possibilities regarding what could be made from old objects and materials and although, our resources may have been limited, what really matters is that we took what we had, and improved it with minimal expense.*

*In the second workshop, it was time to apply the knowledge we gathered during our first one. The idea was the same: assembling something by combining elements in the simplest way.*

*First, we had a lecture from the company Oracal Polikarbonati about the possibilities of the materials we were going to use. It was an interesting lecture with a lot of examples of materials from their company – paper, acrylic, aluminium etc., the way they could be assembled and shaped, and what was their main use.*

*The idea was to design animals for use in a children's play, that was organised by the Children's Cultural Centre. They needed the animals to be a part of the scenography for their play, and we worked together with Oracal Polikarbonati company to achieve that.*

*The process of coming up with a solution for the design of the animals was pretty similar to that of the process of designing furniture for our school, because again, our task was to think about combining panel shaped elements and then assembling them into the final version. Only this time, instead of plain rectangular shapes, we were working with a little bit more complex shapes, like the torso of the animal's body, head and legs. I loved doing all that because it was not just the design that was important, but the whole process of thinking about all the possibilities of combining the elements, how they would fit in, and if it was going to be achievable in the end. It was a bit more challenging, and required thinking through and that really intrigued and motivated me. One more important thing was to make sure the animals are stable when assembled, and do not easily tip over.*

*The elements were going to be cut industrially, by machines, in the Oracal Polikarbonati company. When we finished our designs and the files with the designs were sent, we went to the company and they showed us the whole process of creating the panel shaped elements.*

*It was quite fascinating to see. By giving the machines a simple command through the computer, they recognized the path they are meant to cut, and we were all watching, carefully, how our animals were 'coming to life'. I could not wait to see how my design, and the design of my colleagues, was going to turn out.*

*When they were all cut out, we assembled them with the help of the employees of the company, and our crew, at that point, grew larger by one bear, wolf, doe, and a turtle. They really looked great, we were all very pleased with how they turned out, and pretty amazed by the simplicity of the production of sawed elements.*

*After that, they gave us a tour of the company, showed us the rest of the machines they had, and more of the cutting procedures. It was an important thing for us to see and a great opportunity to learn a lot of useful information that we may need in the future.*

*The materials that were used worked out great, because they are easy to carry. There is no fear of the elements falling, and in that way hurting anyone, because they are essentially very light, and harmless, and therefore great to use around children.*

*After all this experience gained, we were completely ready to transfer that knowledge to a new, younger generation. We had a new workshop organised at the Children's Cultural Centre's art atelier.*

*With a cheerful spirit, we all went to the atelier, curious to see how the children would react to our plan, and if they would be willing to cooperate. When we came in, we were greeted by about fifteen smiling little faces, all sitting at their tables. I could see how curious they all were to see what we were going to do together, and I was curious to see if everything was going to turn out successfully.*

*We explained the plan to them. They were first supposed to draw something that they liked, and then together we would work to make those things from cut-out elements from the cardboard, and they would then decorate them however they wanted. We made sure they understood what we were trying to do. It was important to explain to them the use of the materials available. Everything we told them, they picked up really fast and we could see that they could not wait to start drawing.*

*When they started, we were always around watching, and if anyone needed any help, we were there. If, for example, someone did not know what they would draw, we helped them choose. If someone did not quite understand the task, we explained it to them again. That process was very satisfying because it meant working with youngsters, where we could see how they were thinking. It was very fresh and as a result we got a lot of really, really good and inspirational drawings. They drew all kinds of animals, airplanes, dragons, and there was even a robot that I particularly liked.*

*In the second phase, together with them, we started thinking about how we could make those drawings realisable. I was helping a boy with his robot drawing. He was so cheerful and immediately agreed with everything I suggested. I could see he was so willing to learn, and at the same time, having a great time. Then together, we started drawing the elements on the cardboard, and I explained why every part that we drew was there, like all the additional elements we had to draw, to be able in the end, to make a robot from the cardboard so it could stand on its 'own feet'.*

*I took over the cutting of the cardboard for him, so he wouldn't get hurt, and as time passed by I could sense him looking over my shoulder to see how far along I was with the cutting. He was so inquisitive. He would come up to the table, and he wouldn't say anything like: "When will you be done?", or "How much more?", he would just stand there smiling curiously, and mutter words like: "Mmm, ok.", or, "Yes, yes, I get it now." It was really inspiring for me,*

*to see him so curious, and it made me all the more excited that I was helping him. At that moment, I realised how important it was to take the knowledge I gathered so far and pass it to someone else, someone that would benefit and take joy from it.*

*When I was finally done with the cutting, we sat together to see if we could make the robot stand. We gathered all the elements and started assembling them, and with a few extra adjustments, we finally succeeded. He was so happy. He put his hands in the air, and then he gave me a high five while cheering. That was my biggest reward, seeing him so happy and knowing that I had some part in it.*

*The children then happily took their creations home, or left some of them in their atelier as a decoration, and a reminder of the workshop. The rest of us were very pleased that we got to work with them, and I think that after that experience, we are fully capable to successfully organise such a workshop on our own.*

*I honestly hope we will be doing it again sometime.*

*We must always remember to keep trying to expand our knowledge and experience as youth art workers, and help others achieve the same thing.*

## AUDIENCE

















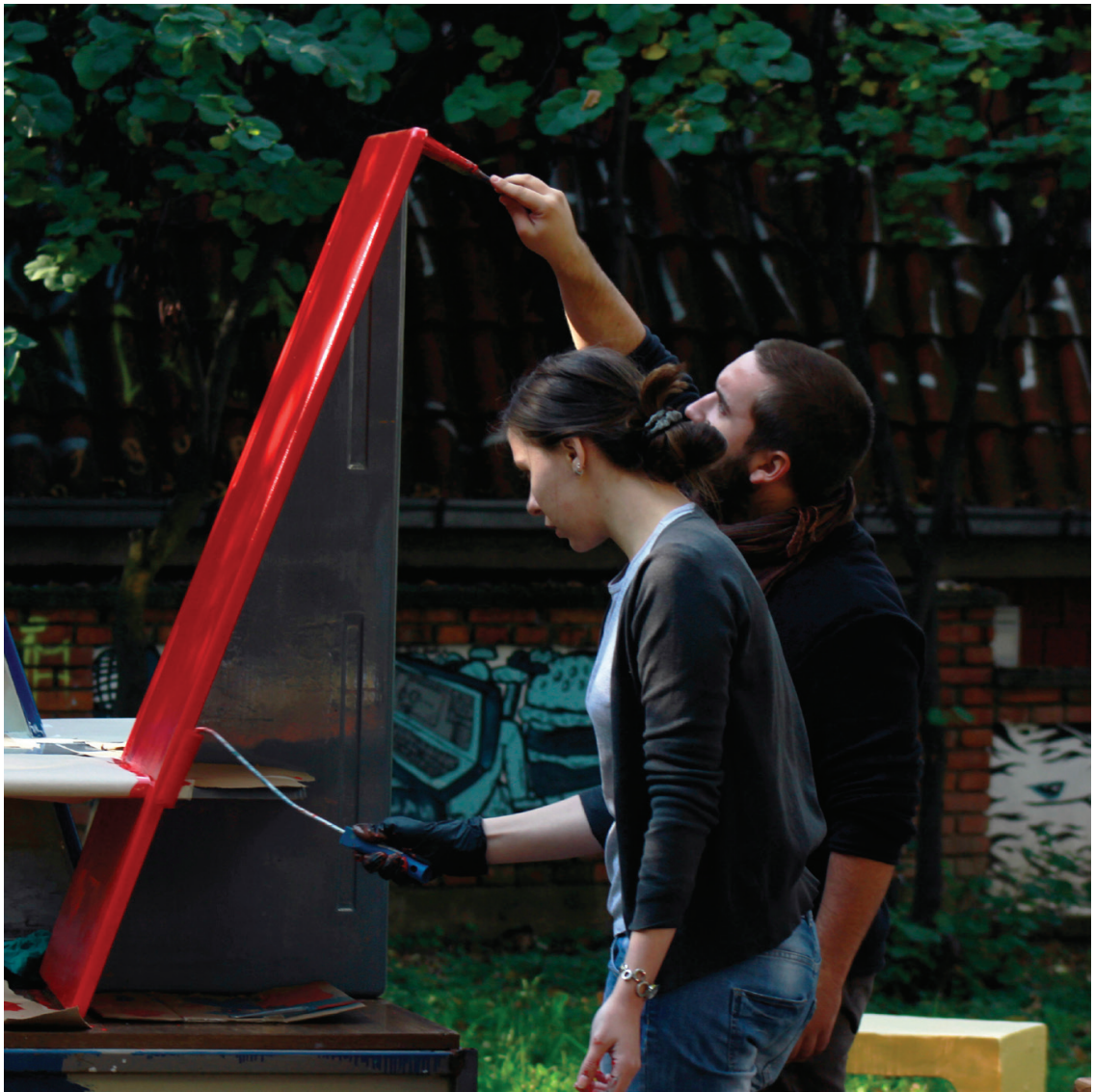






















# A RETROSPECT AS OUTRO

## Art Neighboryouth project for EPEKA

–Stefan Simoncic

Art Neighboryouth, part of the Key Action 2 of the Erasmus+ program, is nearing its end. The coordinator, University Colleges Leuven-Limburg, together with the other project partners made a huge impact by sharing good practices and implementing them in urban areas and also by building a productive network of youth and art organisations working towards a greater level of youth engagement with social issues. In our opinion and by judging the impact the project activities have had on the local area — i.e. Maribor, Slovenia — we must say, that Art Neighboryouth was indeed among the most meaningful youth projects we have been involved in. It left an impression both on the youth involved in the project, those involved with other related projects and on the general population of the city, where you can still admire the tangible results of the project activities.

A very important indicator of success is the external evaluation given by people, who are professionally engaged with youth work or work in fields closely related to it. During our implementation of the project activities — e.g. workshops, exhibitions, lectures, public performances, etc. — we worked with young people both in our primary venue EPEKA Gallery, in the social enterprise and cultural event venue Romani Kafenava (Roma restaurant) and in public urban spaces that offer the most direct engagement with the general public and with prevalent social issues.

We also included other youth workers in these processes and they often acted as advisors or impartial observers, who communicated ideas for further improvement of future activities.

Another key for young people to gain new skills and knowledge through investigating social issues with artistic processes was mobility, which enabled the participants to research new social contexts, detect social issues and address them in innovative and creative ways. Even though a lot of young people, who participate in such activities, often have some difficulties in judging the progress they made and the competences they gained, we strongly believe that one of the most crucial tasks of a youth

worker is to guide the participants through the learning process and to highlight often overlooked achievements.

As youth workers it is not enough to just design activities for young people — we must mentor them, show them the progress they are making both in gaining new knowledge and in acquiring crucial soft skills. Often the first thing is to engage them in ‘learning to learn’. This is, in our opinion, the best way to make a quality ‘youthpass’ and to facilitate a process that leads to actual results in the personal and professional development of young participants.

But Art Neighboryouth has also led to an increase in the capacities of our organisation, which enables us to work better in the fields of youth and art. The most obvious benefit was being part of a consortium of highly competent and visionary organisations, with which we plan to carry out new projects in the future.

However, we have also gained more intangible benefits, which are even more important for our long-term work. The foremost of these is an advancement in skills related to work with vulnerable social groups — ethnic minorities. In our local context, the Roma are the most numerous, as well as refugees and youth not in employment, education nor training. These are groups that few cultural institutions in our area address and they are not often visitors to cultural or educational events. We have a history of working with them and including them in various activities. In the project we transferred this knowledge to our partners and also developed new ways of addressing these vulnerable groups.

During Art Neighboryouth we have had a well-planned outreach to these groups and we can already see the results of these efforts in an increase in their attendance. EPEKA has always planned its events in such a way that we achieve a relaxed and casual atmosphere different from the majority of cultural events.

We have developed this strategy further during Art Neighboryouth. They met guest artists and youth workers and were also shown ways to express themselves through art — e.g. making a hip-hop video, learning how to use music creation tools, working with artists to prepare exhibitions, co-authoring and co-designing urban artworks, etc. These are means, with which we empower them, bring ways of artistic expression closer to them and build their confidence, which they often lack because of negative feedback from the mainstream society and often difficult situations at home.



Furthermore, in these processes they gain many new skills — language, computer skills, ICT knowledge, interpersonal skills, etc. — in an informal but very effective way. They also gain substantial cultural knowledge and a deeper understanding of working together with people with different ethnic, religious or other formative backgrounds. EPEKA acts as a ‘second home’ to them and involves them in a myriad of activities well beyond those in Art Neighboryouth. A crucial part of this process is bringing out their creativity and then enabling them to express it in the medium closest to them. Therefore, we grant them access to our equipment and also teach them how to use it. Their contribution to Art Neighboryouth was very important because they were, perhaps surprisingly, very open to working in the public space, and on the other hand they gained many opportunities through the project.

Besides those, who were actively engaged in Art Neighboryouth and associated activities, the broader local public has also gained through the project. The most obvious improvement came from the public-oriented events realised within the project. To just state two very well received examples — creating new graffiti together with artists, volunteers and youth in the formerly drab underpass leading to the Maribor Farmers’ Market; creating a public performance and later an exhibition designed to enable the local public to creatively express their concerns and solutions related to the problems Maribor and themselves are facing. With these and other similar activities, the local populace has gained a lot and they have also expressed their positive opinions with many comments. Because of the knowledge we gained and the extremely positive attitude of the locals we also plan to implement similar socially oriented and publicly (i.e. outside enclosed gallery spaces) implemented projects in the future. This is the best way to address common problems and needs and to engage the greatest number of people possible thus raising general awareness and active participation both among the youth and other social groups.



European Confederation  
of Youth Clubs



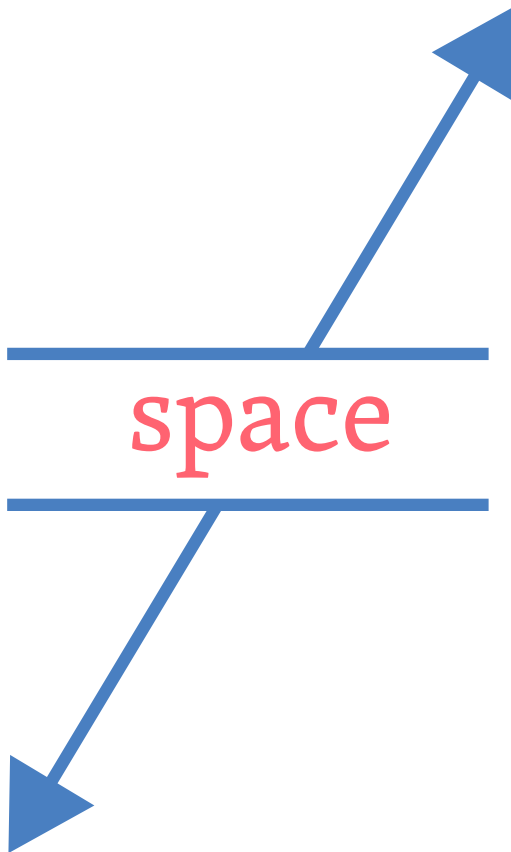


**WORK**

as dynamic n  
practis



**OPEN**



**ART NEIGHBORHOOD**

**CONTROLLED**