

OPEN ART METHODOLOGY TOOLBOX

Democratising Art Commissioning by Involving Local Communities



DemArt
International
Institute of Community
Commissioned Art



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PROLOGUE



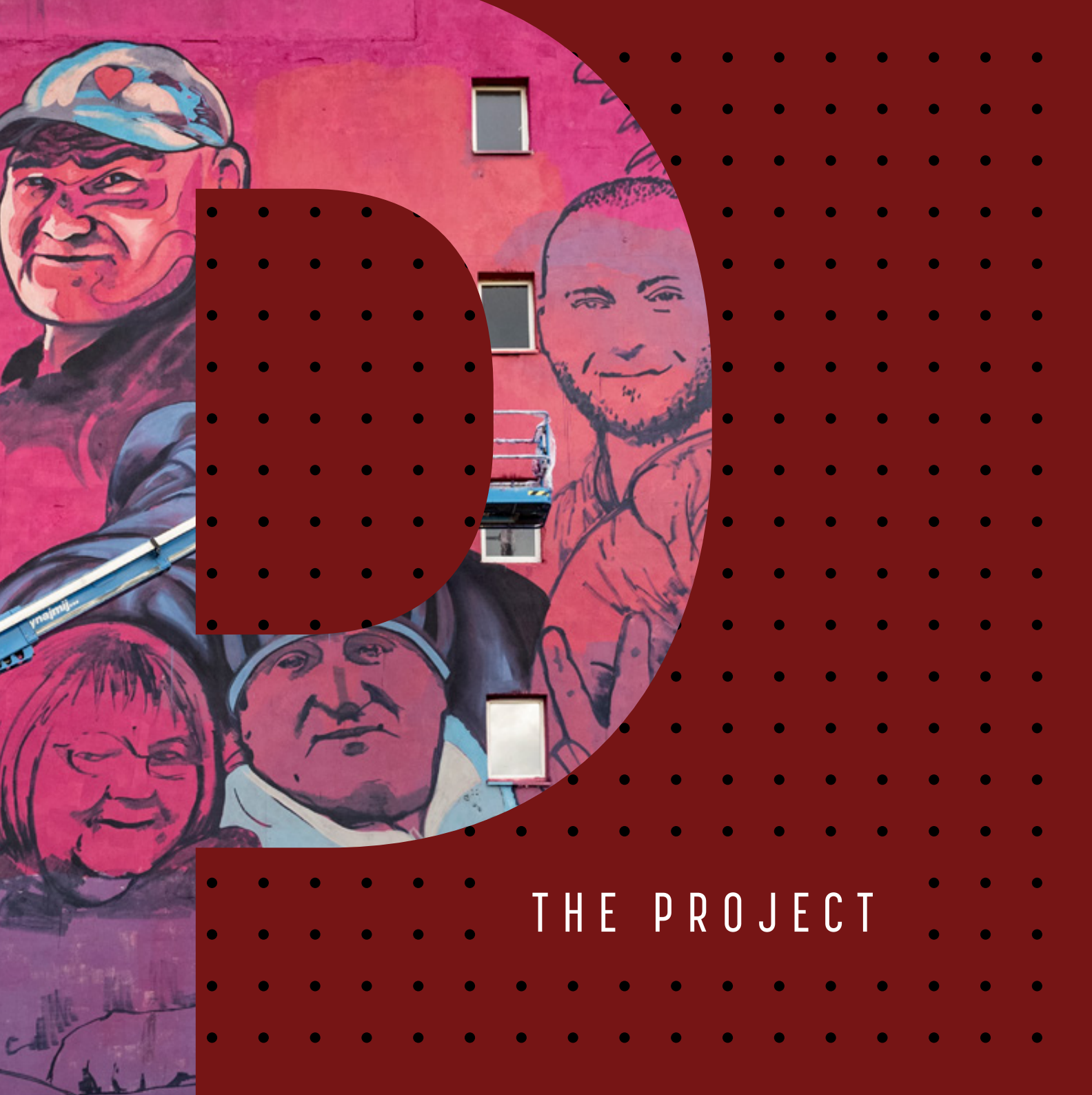
Prologue

In a world marked by increasing social polarization and the erosion of democratic values, the DemArt project strives to stand as a beacon of hope and transformation. Combining the power of artistic expression with the principles of democracy, this innovative initiative seeks to empower individuals and communities to engage with pressing societal challenges through creativity, dialogue, and collaboration. At its core, DemArt believes in the unifying and transformative potential of the arts to foster inclusion, build understanding, and inspire action.

Launched by Bethlen Square Theater and its international partners, DemArt bridges the gap between cultural innovation and democratic engagement. By harnessing the talents of community members, artists, cultural managers, and municipality representatives, the project cultivates safe spaces where diverse voices can come together, exchange ideas, and address complex issues that affect communities. From workshops to public art installations and storytelling, DemArt uses a wide range of creative methods to foster critical thinking and community empowerment.

The program also prioritizes reaching marginalized and underrepresented groups, amplifying their perspectives and experiences. Through its activities, DemArt not only endeavors to spark individual growth but also invites to nurture a collective sense of responsibility for building equitable and inclusive societies. This approach resonates deeply with its vision of a culture-driven democracy, where active participation and shared experiences become the foundation for positive societal change.

As you explore the outcomes and reflections outlined in this document, you will gain insights into how DemArt has successfully combined art and democratic engagement to leave a hopefully lasting impact. This prologue serves as an invitation to embrace the potential of creativity as a force for societal transformation, encouraging us all to reimagine the role of arts in shaping our shared future.



THE PROJECT

What Is DemArt?

Project Background and Summary

Democratising Art Commissioning by Involving Local Communities, DemArt hereafter, is a small scale project funded by the European Commission program Creative Europe led by Hungarian organizations Bethlen Square Theater and Pro Progressione, Polish organization Art Transparent, and Latvian Organization New Theatre Institute of Latvia which ran between 2023 and 2025.

The aim of this project was to involve local community members in the art commissioning process in order to produce meaningful artworks for the communities they lived in to show how art can serve as a powerful tool to foster social change.

This project was inspired by the experience of the Queens Council on the Arts' Artist Commissioning Program in New York when former ACP Manager Daniel Valtueña presented it at the IETM Satellite Girona in November 2021.

The Queens Council on the Arts is one of the five arts councils in the city of New York. It was founded in 1966 and its mission is to foster and develop the arts in Queens County and to support individual artists and arts organizations in presenting their cultural diversity for the benefit of the community.

In 2017 thanks to The Scherman Foundation QCA inaugurated the Artist Commissioning Program (ACP) which aimed to democratize the traditional commissioning process by enabling local community members, or "art commissioners", to fill gaps in US culture by awarding commissions to Queens artists and art organizations. ACP was implemented between 2017 and 2022 and was shaped following two different models: a neighborhood-based model between 2017 and 2020 and a discipline-based model between 2021 and 2022.

For the first three years, QCA selected a group of art commissioners, or local Queens community members, to award a total of four \$10,000 art commissions each year. Every year, art commissioners and artists belonged to two underrepresented Queens neighborhoods: in 2017-2018, Jackson Heights and Jamaica; in 2018-2019, Jamaica and Flushing; and in 2019-2020, Flushing and Maspeth/Ridgewood.

As the funding for this program was not renewed by The Scherman Foundation after a 3-year contract, new funding was provided by the Mertz-Gilmore Foundation whose focus on dance oriented ACP to a discipline-based model. In 2021-2022 a new iteration of the program took place now involving a total of 5 art commissioners who awarded 3 \$10,000 art commissions and 5 \$2,000 individual art commissions in the fields of dance and choreography and open to all neighborhoods in Queens.

The DemArt project was built on this model but incorporated different features. First, local organizations shared an open call for art commissioners which in this case had an age restriction. Second, once art commissioners were selected they evaluated the artists applications and selected a total of 3 finalists who were awarded 1,000€ each to develop their project. Then a final project was selected and received a total of 12,000€ in order to be developed is used earlier in the context of develop the prototype by the 3 finalist. On top of these main changes, the project ran for two years instead of just a few months and incorporated an international component all project participants benefited from by attending meetings and sharing good practices.

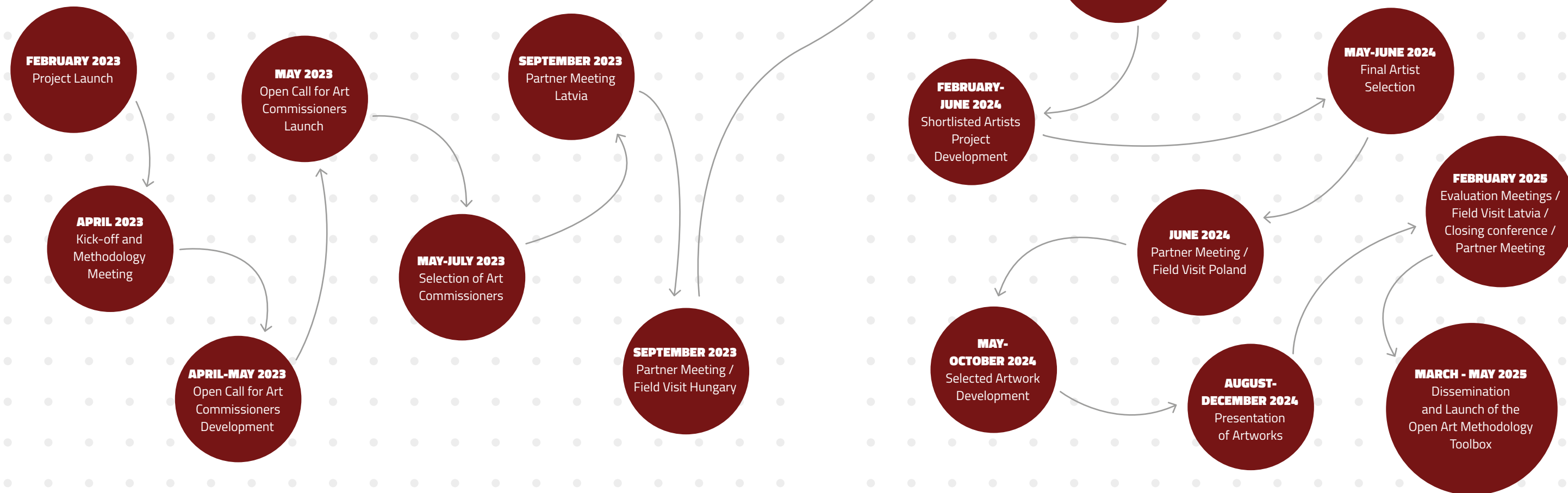
The result was a transnational community both local and international which developed three wonderful artworks selected by community members and developed by local artists which strengthened the communities they created for by unveiling unseen features from the spaces and people that inhabited them.





When Did We Do All This?

Project Calendar



How Did We Do it?

Project Methodology



Community commissioned art is a challenging task for organizations, artists, and community members. The positive outcomes of a transparent and participatory process are endless while the obstacles also multiply. This methodology aims to be an open resource to support local organizations and community members during the process of the replication of the project. The guidance is built upon the experience of the Queens Council on the Arts' Artist Commissioning Program and the DemArt project.

First, this guidance includes its own reading guidelines to make the most of the resources it comprises so it stays useful and easy for people to use it.

Second, this guidance explicitly calls on the Queens Council on the Arts's experience to orient the methodology, replicate its successes, and learn from its mistakes.

Third, this guidance includes a step-by-step structure including all project phases. In order to make the most of each phase, all of them will be structured following the same logic: description, do's, don'ts, and tips.

Lastly, this guidance includes a section of general conclusions to kick off the implementation of the art commissioning process for local organizations and community members to own the method in dialogue with their respective art commissioners and artists.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THIS GUIDANCE

1. Read the whole guidance before publishing the Open Call for Art Commissioners.
2. Include all phases of this guidance in your individual and organization calendar.
3. Identify stakeholders you will interact with for the whole process and each phase.
4. Set up a list of tasks you will have to complete for each phase of the methodology.
5. Read carefully each phase of this guidance before implementing it.
6. Brainstorm possible challenges before each phase in the partner meetings.
7. Come back to each phase of the methodology after completing and add learnings.
8. Incorporate feedback from art commissioners and/or artists in the learnings.
9. Exchange learnings with international partners to strengthen this guidance.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE QCA MODEL

Based on the two different models QCA implemented between 2017 and 2022 and the lessons learned by ACP managers Kelly Olshan (2017-2021) and Daniel Valtueña (2021-2022) here is a list of lessons learned to be considered before the implementation of this methodology:

1. Define all processes from the beginning to avoid misunderstandings.
2. Sign contracts and agreements with everyone involved including as much information as possible about tasks, calendar, commitments, honoraria, etc.
3. Adapt your communication strategy, language, and tools to the people involved.
4. Give more time than usual to complete simple tasks such as completing doodles, submit work samples, or schedule meetings.
5. Be understandable about what we define as “professionality”.
6. Involve everyone in the process from the very beginning to create a sense of belonging with the project.
7. Be transparent about the process and incorporate everyone’s feedback.
8. Establish a decision-making method that respects the project while including the stakeholders involved.
9. Do not trust normative and preconceived aesthetic ideas about quality or beauty.
10. Understand that community priorities might not be art professionals.
11. Be aware that simple project management tools such as emails, doodles, or shared folders are also structures of power which might not suit everyone.
12. Be prepared to address language accessibility issues in terms of actual different languages but also register and style.
13. Be prepared for artists or community members to disagree with project management principles and do not be afraid of changing them.
14. Be realistic about what can be accomplished by the project and do not try to solve structural issues with just an artwork however impactful it is.
15. Take care of art commissioners, artists, and community leaders after the artwork is presented to consolidate the achieved goals.

A STEP-BY-STEP METHODOLOGY GUIDANCE



Following the success of the QCA booklet [How You Can Commission Art: A Step-by-Step Guide to Developing New Culture](#) here is a step-by-step internal methodology guidance which aims to serve local organizations and community members to implement the project.

Each stage will be structured in 4 sections: description, do’s, don’ts and tips. This shape aims to facilitate the easy implementation of the project by setting up the basic needs to achieve each milestone as well as to easily draw everyone’s attention to the major tasks and also risks each phase entails. Special attention in each section will be given to involving local communities to empower citizens to commission art.

OPEN CALL FOR ART COMMISSIONERS

The Open Call for Art Commissioners serves as a tool for partners to select the community members or art commissioners who will select the artists whose artworks will be commissioned in the frame of this project. It must include a project overview, a job description including tasks and benefits, and eligibility and selection criteria.





Open Call for Art Commissioners Do's

- Be as specific as possible in the required commitment
- Include a project calendar if possible with specific dates and travels
- Host an info session for people to better understand the role of art commissioners
- Encourage applications from non-professionals and "amateurs"
- Circulate the call among key venues and people to connect with your target groups

Open Call for Art Commissioners Don'ts

- Do not expect applicants to understand what an art commissioner is as you do
- Do not circulate the call only among art contacts and arts organizations
- Do not use vague language or words only understood by art professionals
- Do not expect applicants to be interested beforehand and target them through a marketing strategy

Open Call for Art Commissioners Tips

- Map the community leaders in your community and reach out to them to disseminate the call among community members
- Combine both digital marketing channels with in-person and analogical techniques for dissemination
- Highlight important information in the call including travel dates, honorarium, etc.
- Use local examples related to art commissioning for prospective applicants to better understand the process
- Make the application phone friendly
- Leave an extra week for a deadline extension if needed

SELECTION OF ART COMMISSIONERS

The process of selecting the art commissioners will consist of gathering the applications, reviewing and scoring them, selecting the applicants who will be interviewed, conducting the interviews, and making a final selection. The selection of art commissioners is a key moment in the process as the nature of the selected applicants will determine the future of the project.



Selection of Art Commissioners Do's

- Set up a clear calendar for applications reviews, preliminary selection, interviews, and final selection
- Rate applicants following the selection criteria and rank them for the interview
- Elaborate a list of questions before the interview for applicants to build on their application answers
- Prioritize questions that has to do with community work
- Select a diverse group of applicants that is representative of the community (i.e. gender, race, class, etc.)
- Follow up to non-selected applicants and keep them involved in the process through updates, communications, and/or events

Selection of Art Commissioners Don'ts

- Do not prioritize art professionals just because their applications seem “stronger”
- Do not conduct interviews as if applicants were applying for a job but encourage them to demonstrate their connection to the community
- Do not think that just because an application seem “weak” the applicant might not do a great job as an art commissioner
- Do not assume people understand the role of the art commissioner even if they applied for the position

Selection of Art Commissioners Tips

- Gather key information about the community to formulate the interview questions
- Interview a maximum of 5 applicants per day to avoid burnout
- Have more than one person interviewing the applicants
- Consider including a community member in the selection process at least as an observer

ART COMMISSIONERS TRAINING

The Art Commissioners training is an opportunity for selected art commissioners to understand and commit to the values of community commissioned arts.

Art Commissioners Training Do's

- Set up a curriculum for art commissioners to embody community commissioned art
- Build the program on the QCA booklet and this methodology toolbox and lessons learned from the ACP program and the DemArt project
- Combine group reflections with individual work to address general and specific issues depending on the country

- Assist art commissioners in understanding how an art project application works and be open to their feedback to modify if necessary
- Draft a preliminary version of the open call for artists

Art Commissioners Training Don'ts

- Do not assume previous knowledge on the art application process by the selected art commissioners
- Do not censor art commissioners' impressions, taste, or criteria just because they do not align with traditionally assumed definitions of “quality” or “beauty”
- Do not limit the training to art concepts but expand the curriculum to notions of diversity, inclusion, social impact, etc.

Art Commissioners Training Tips

- Consider the variety of backgrounds the art commissioners will have
- Set up the duties art commissioners will have by exposing them to the project methodology and calendar

OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS

The Open Call for Artists aims to recruit artistic proposals to develop a community commissioned artwork. The call will be designed between project managers and art commissioners and drafted during the Art Commissioners Training. This call must include the project description, the eligibility and selection criteria, the benefits, and a calendar including all program dates.

Open Call for Artists Do's

- Follow most of the guidance provided for the Open Call for Art Commissioners
- Support art commissioners in building the open call
- Give extra context about the scope of the project
- Prepare artists to work in a community-commissioned art environment
- Decide the materials to be included in the application (i.e. work sample, video, etc.)
- Circulate the call among non-traditional art spaces
- Reach out to community members to expand the impact of the call
- Take advantage of art commissioners' role in the community to disseminate the call

Open Call for Artists Don'ts

- Do not intervene but orient art commissioners in building the call
- Do not limit prospective applications to “artistic” proposals but remain open to cultural work that might translate into original pieces



Open Call for Artists Tips

- Follow previous examples such as ACP or DemArt calls to build your call
- Host an info session for artists to express their questions and doubts beforehand
- Consider using a language register and/or more than one language depending on the characteristics of the community you want to engage with
- Partner with local people, centers, and/or business to get to prospective applicants who might not be in the radar of your organization
- Be open to artistic projects that go beyond artistic disciplines but challenge traditional art forms



SELECTION OF SHORTLISTED ARTISTS

Once the Open Call for Artists is closed, art commissioners will choose a total of 3 artists to develop a proposal for the project. The aim of this preliminary selection is to see which proposal might work better for the purpose of the project, especially in terms of involving local communities through art.

Selection of Shortlisted Artists Do’s

- Set up an evaluation and ranking methodology for art commissioners to make their selection based on the selection criteria listed in the open call
- Orient art commissioner when necessary without interfering in their decisions
- Decide if the selection process will include an interview or not
- Leave at least two weeks for interviews if necessary and do not interview more than 5 artists per day to avoid burnout like in the selection of art commissioners
- Consider incorporating the input and/or feedback from community members for the selection of artists during the selection or afterwards

Selection of Shortlisted Artists Don’ts

- Do not interfere in art commissioners criteria and priorities
- Do not trust your “expertise” when looking at artists proposals
- Do not expect community-commissioned art to follow the same aesthetics and/or trends
- Do not disregard applications just because they don’t meet the “quality” minimums you would require in a traditional open call for artists

Selection of Shortlisted Artists Tips

- Develop an intuitive tool for art commissioners to evaluate and rank artists proposals (i.e. Submittable, Excel Sheet, etc.)
- Decide beforehand the tie-breaker method you will use in case there is a conflict while ranking the artists proposals
- Establish a conflict of interest protocol for art commissioners to sign before evaluating the proposals
- Be open to consider artistic proposals that would fall in other definitions such as mediation, social work, or community engagement

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

The three selected artists will develop a proposal during an artistic residency to be presented to art commissioners for them to decide the project that will be finally commissioned. The aim of this period of work is to allow artists to elaborate the submitted application to see how it fits within the project.

Proposal Development Do's

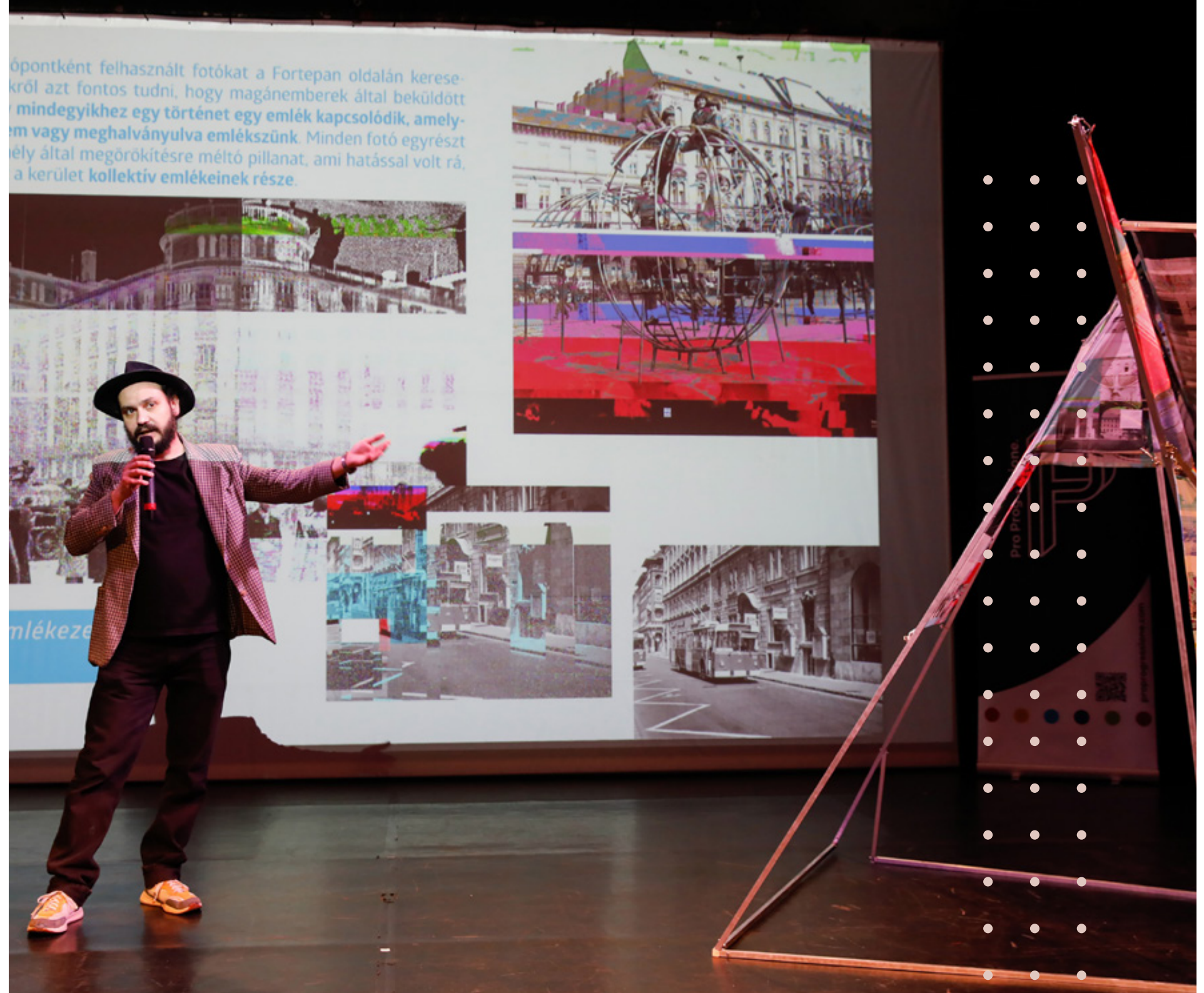
- Collect artists' needs beforehand to make sure their workspace is prepared for their proposal development
- Make artists sign an agreement including all necessary information about the proposal development (i.e. rules, stipend, schedule, deadline, etc.)
- Provide support for artists to develop their project, specially from the art commissioners
- Create opportunities for artists to interact with each other as well as with organization workers, art commissioners, and community members
- Foster a sense of conviviality among the artists

Proposal Development Don'ts

- Do not expect artists to understand how the project works
- Do not keep the proposal development process closed to community members
- Do not frame the proposal development process as a competition between the three preselected artists
- Do not match each artist with one art commissioner to avoid conflict of interest and lack of agreement in the final selection

Proposal Development Tips

- Read artists' openness to receive feedback by art commissioners and community members and design your internal communication accordingly
- Be prepared for artists to do not feel comfortable with the art commissioners role and input and develop a strategy to mediate in case there is a conflict
- Make the space of the residency as open as possible from the very beginning so it doesn't feel like a closed process but an open space for community members to drop by
- Give art commissioners the freedom to perform their role, but remember them about the artistic freedom artists must have as well





FINAL SELECTION

After artists have worked on their proposals, these will be presented to the art commissioners for them to decide the piece that will end up being commissioned. Local organizations and art commissioners should decide the format in which these proposals will be presented and how they will be evaluated. This phase will conclude with the announcement of the awarded commission.

Final Selection Do's

- Follow the advice given in the Selection of Art Commissioners and Selection of Shortlisted Artists phases.
- Develop an evaluation and ranking methodology tool for art commissioners to objectively evaluate each proposal
- Agree on the selection criteria for the selected commission which might or might not be the same as for the selection of the three finalists
- Decide the format in which the proposals will be presented and consider including community members in this presentation

Final Selection Don'ts

- Follow the advice given in the Selection of Shortlisted Artists phase
- Do not try to tackle all community needs just with one commission: each project will address specific issues

Final Selection Tips

- Provide useful feedback for all three artists
- Try to keep non-selected artists involved in the project through meaningful ways
- Involve community members by inviting them to the proposal presentation and paying attention to their priorities when building the selection criteria

ARTWORK PRESENTATIONS

After the artistic processes conclude, commissions will be presented to local audiences. These artwork presentations aim to be opportunities to honor artists' work and celebrate art commissioners and community members' engagement throughout the process.

Artwork Presentations Do's

- Partner with community members to let the community know about the premiere
- Invite community members to attend the event considering providing a limited amount of free tickets for interested people
- Credit everyone involved in the process including international partners as well as non-selected artists
- Provide context before and after the piece is premiered and do not limit its presence in the festival to just the performance

Artwork Presentations Don'ts

- Do not expect art commissioners to engage in project management roles when planning for the production of the artwork presentation
- Do not put additional financial burdens to the production because of the premiere

Artwork Presentations Tips

- Think about an original format for the artwork to be presented where community members', art commissioners', and artists' work is honored
- Elaborate a list of guests before the presentation takes place and reach out to them beforehand
- Coordinate the presentation with international partners to make the most of the experience

EVALUATION

Once artworks have been presented, an evaluation must be conducted to learn from the experience.

Evaluation Do's

- Develop a tool (i.e. Google form) to collect inputs from all stakeholders: art commissioners, artists, advisors, community members, audience members, etc.
- Gather information and inputs through different media including online and in-person methods and systematize that information to be shared with partners
- Come back to this methodology guidance and check the evolution of the project as well as the useful advice
- Encourage people involved to be honest about their experience
- Be prepared to receive negative feedback

Evaluation Don'ts

- Do not always trust people's feedback and track the outcomes of the project both anonymously and including names
- Do not make long and/or complicated forms or evaluation forms to avoid lack of responses

Evaluation Tips

- Collect information right after the artwork presentation to avoid lack of responses
- Organize a celebratory event to honor people's work after the premiere and include a feedback session within the program
- Develop a tool to cross feedback from different countries and build a coherent report that tracks information both nationally and internationally



NEXT STEPS

1. Gather all information and build the final report
2. Return the feedback to the community
3. Develop a strategy for the community members to stay connected with the organization, project, and art commissioners after the project ends
4. Consider applying for more funding to strengthen the created connections
5. Disseminate the methodology
6. Foster the replicability of the model

Who Are We?

Project Team



DemArt landed in the form of the International Institute of Community Commissioned Art (IICCA), the umbrella that hosted all project participants and initiatives. This framework allowed the project to go beyond its limiting project version and expand its actions in the form of an institutional form.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



Bethlen Square Theater - Central European Art Network

Innovative, Contemporary, Collaborative

With a legacy spanning over 95 years, Bethlen Square Theater has been operating in its current form since 2012. Through a public service contract with the local government, the theater receives essential funding that enables it to fulfill its public service commitments and provide district residents with access to high-quality theatrical and cultural experiences.

Bethlen Square Theater plays a unique role within the city as the sole cultural institution serving the residential areas of the district, addressing a significant gap in local cultural offerings. Its mission is to be a multidisciplinary, experimental, and talent-nurturing center for contemporary performing arts, where artists from the region can bring their ideas to life and develop professionally within a supportive environment.

Through community programs, workshops, and collaborative performances, Bethlen Square Theater actively engages local residents, offering opportunities for collective creation and participation. As a regional hub, the theater facilitates cross-border collaborations, interdisciplinary festivals, and artist residency programs, thus providing a shared platform and creative space for Central Europe's diverse artistic community.

Bethlen Square Theater is dedicated to fostering an equitable, inclusive, and accessible environment for all audiences. To this end, it offers affordable and accessible performances to ensure that every community member, including those from underserved backgrounds, can experience and participate in its programming.



Pro Progressione

Pro Progressione is a Budapest-based artistic hub that connects people, professions and ambitions by designing international collaborations in the field of culture. From this combination, creative ideas emerge — artists, cultural activists, scientists and experts of various fields meet and give cutting-edge answers for the questions of our age.

The organization focuses its capacities on the fields where it aims to have a positive long-term impact, thus it is built up on six main pillars: PP Social, PP Cult, PP Arts, PP Sound, PP Green and PP Plus. Pro Progressione is active in the field of socially engaged arts (PP Social), cultural & natural heritage interpretation (PP Cult), music as tradition (PP Sound), productions of unique performances (PP Arts), environmental & social sustainability (PP Green), and projects that develop and improve methods and methodologies combining theoretical knowledge and practical experience (PP Plus).

It has been implementing numerous international projects supported by the European Commission, believing in interdisciplinary creation, in a mutual exchange between disciplines, art forms and actors of social and artistic fields. Pro Progressione's overall objective is to create an international network of artists, institutions and audiences by helping the communities to find their path towards arts.

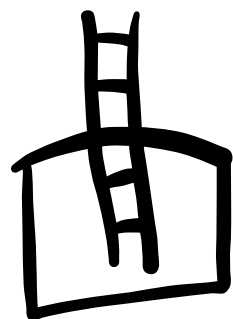
Pro Progressione is active in a wide range of cultural associations and programmes: Culture Action Europe, IETM, MitOst, Voices of Culture, Association of Independent Performing Arts in Hungary. In 2021, Pro Progressione has been selected as an official partner of the European Commission's New European Bauhaus Initiative in which it teams up with a wide range of inspiring networks, associations, and organizations across Europe. In this new European movement, Pro Progressione acts as community managers, sounding boards and key interlocutors to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future.

TRANSPARENT

Art Transparent Contemporary Art Foundation

The Art Transparent Contemporary Art Foundation was established in Wrocław, Poland, in 2005. It organizes the SURVIVAL Art Review, operates the Gepperts Apartment contemporary art gallery (since 2007), and also the Szewska gallery (since 2021).

The Foundation is also involved in publishing activities. Each year, Art Transparent's catalog of events includes festivals, artistic interventions in public space, exhibitions, as well as a rich social program. Each year the foundation co-finances and is involved in the production of dozens of art works. Art Transparent pursues its goals through local, national and international projects. You can learn more about the foundation's activities in the online archives: archiwum.arttransparent.org and archiwum.survival.art.pl.



New Theatre Institute of Latvia

New Theatre Institute of Latvia (NTIL) is a project-based organisation working in the field of contemporary performing arts. Since 1995 NTIL has been organizing the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre "Homo Novus", which is the largest performing arts platform in Latvia. NTIL also produces and presents projects and long-term collaboration programmes together with local and international partners, strongly believing in the necessity to explore the contemporary performing arts field together with artists and audiences. NTIL has been long engaged with the topic of community engaged and led projects, running residencies and art programmes related to this field.

PROJECT LOCATIONS

BETHLEN SQUARE THEATER & PRO PROGRESSIONE - 7th District, Budapest, Hungary



Erzsébetváros is the smallest district in Budapest, yet the largest in terms of population density. It boasts a rich history and appeals to everyone seeking a unique atmosphere and interesting places due to its diverse character. The 7th district also plays a crucial role in the city's history. Its development dates back to the mid-1700s when construction began towards the east due to the city's expansion. It was named after the Austrian Empress, Queen Erzsébet, in 1777. Officially founded in 1873, the district is traditionally divided into Inner, Middle and Outer Erzsébetváros within which three sub-areas have been named: the Jewish Quarter, the 'Csikágó' and the Ligetváros.

Erzsébetváros is a densely built-up district with few parks and leagues in Budapest, but also at national level. It has the least green space per capita, less than 1 m². Its location, bordered on all sides by other districts, makes it the heart of Budapest. In recent years, the touristic value of the district is outstanding, given the history and fast urbanization of this culturally colorful area. Since 1980, its population has been steadily decreasing, and is currently estimated at around 54,000 people. The age distribution of the population shows a picture of a district that is aging to a large extent. Outer Erzsébetváros is marked on the district map by color blue. The three distinctly different areas reflect the uneven distribution of cultural and artistic activity –may it be independent or government initiatives.

The Jewish Quarter

In the inner part of Erzsébetváros, close to the city center, it began to be referred to as the “Jewish Quarter” in the 2000s. This designation is partly based on the fact that since the 19th century, it has been the main center of religious life for Budapest’s Orthodox Jewish community. Additionally, in 1944, the so-called large ghetto was established in this area, where tens of thousands of Jews were crowded together in inhumane conditions, while the non-Jewish population was simultaneously evicted. During that time, only Jews lived in the area, and the largest population of the ghetto was 70,000.

Our focus is to investigate Outer Erzsébetváros, the “Csikágó” area. The name “Csikágó”, was coined in the late 19th century, and was not a reference to the later public safety or lack of it, but to the regular street network and square layout planned when the district was built, similarly to the city of Chicago. Between the Grand Boulevard and Dózsa György Street, a chessboard-like street system of rental houses rapidly emerged by the end of the 19th century. Even today, it remains the most densely populated area in the capital. The goal was to create as many apartments as possible, often resulting in one-room apartments with just a single window. The area faced an increase in crime due to its metropolitan transformation, and with the traffic around the Eastern Railway Station, Csikágó quickly became a hotbed of crime and poverty.

In addition to crime, poverty reached unprecedented levels. Many apartments designed for 2-3 people housed up to 20 people for the sake of lower rent, and the poor conditions and overcrowding facilitated the spread of various infections and diseases. As a result, the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic also did not spare those living here, with many succumbing to the illness. After the 1990s, Erzsébetváros slowly but gradually revived. The emergence of ruined pubs, art galleries, and places favored by young people contributed to the formation of the district’s new identity. Due to its architectural heritage and unique atmosphere, Erzsébetváros is increasingly visited by both tourists and locals to enjoy the cultural and entertainment opportunities offered by the 7th district.

Social context and themes to address through art commissioning process

In a social context, the 7th district, or Erzsébetváros, faces numerous challenges and opportunities. The district’s uniqueness lies in its rich historical and cultural traditions, yet it confronts the specific social challenges of an urban environment. Erzsébetváros showcases diverse communities, with residents from various social and cultural backgrounds. This diversity can create excellent opportunities but may also result in social inequalities. Several social assistance and support programs operate in Erzsébetváros. Both the local government and civil organizations participate in efforts aimed at supporting those in need. However, homelessness and social vulnerability remain significant challenges. Artistic and cultural initiatives in Erzsébetváros could provide opportunities for community participation and building social connections.

These social aspects collectively impact the daily lives of Erzsébetváros residents and the development of the local community. Collaboration between the municipality, civil organizations, and the population is crucial for addressing social challenges and promoting positive changes.

Housing aspect and overtourism. Due to overtourism in recent years, similarly to many European capitals, Budapest is facing major problems in terms of affordable housing for locals with district 7 showing a huge increase in rental and property prices. Access to social housing offered by the local government is limited, which is also a systemic, country-wide issue. As the service sector blooms in relation to tourism, district 7 is slowly losing its once famous cultural and intellectual profile, turning into a standardized touristic hotspot. Initiatives should be promoted that focus on the usage of public space, or the usage of empty government apartments / shops for cultural activities. This vision is also prompted by the local government. We hope to see bottom-up initiatives by groups of artists and cultural workers to reclaim these spaces and offer them back to the community. By these initiatives, not only the community benefits, but also artists, who wish to implement social engagement into their practice. We hope to support projects that offer long-term vision for filling empty and unused spaces for artistic and community-focused activities.

Ecological aspects: sound pollution and lack of green area. Budapest locals would commonly associate district 7 as an area that lacks green space, parking spots, good air quality or a warm residential feeling. Being a historical district, this area was not built as a functional residential quarter. Although the city park is near, many communities face to problem of lack of access to green spaces between the concrete streets. The scope of this issue may reaches higher than the capacities of commissioned artistic projects, yet we can think of the first steps to make this area a better place to live. Projects that raise awareness of the sound and air pollution should benefit the inhabitants. Ideas to bring locals together who wish to contribute to the cleanliness of our home can be a great start. Therefore, we also look for projects that deal with the ecology of our home.

Cross-cultural and cross-generational melting pot . Uniquely, district 7 is one of the most multicultural areas in the capital. Moreover, the mixture of historic buildings and the overflow of newcomers and passerbys create an interesting labyrinth of the inhabitants’ backgrounds. However small this district is, generations, identities, or ethnic backgrounds do not meet each other. With some communities only existing within the boarders of 3-4 streets, we can easily feel alienated from the people who live next to us. We would like to support artistic initiatives that focus on discovering who lives here, how these communities can connect in joint cultural activities.

Lack of access to cultural activity. The cultural institutions, spaces or initiatives centralize more in Inner Erzsébetváros, leaving the “Csikágó” quarter only a few options. According to the local government’s report of cultural activities in the district, our area is out of focus.

ERÖMŰVHÁZ Nonprofit Kft. is an umbrella organisation responsible for many cultural and community initiatives in the district 7, however, their activities are modest in Outer Erzsébetváros. The report also speaks of low attendance which is the result partly of the lack of outreach, partly of the lack of access certain communities have for cultural activities. By access, we mean the necessary socio-cultural background and sense of belonging when it comes to arts and culture. Other institutions, such as the Studio of Young Artists Association (FKSE) work in a relatively closed manner without offering access to a diverse community. We feel that many cultural initiatives in the area lack the audience necessary for their survival, yet they do not offer the type of open access that would invite different communities to participate. Projects targeting this gap would be a huge asset to both the community and the cultural institutions working in the area. We hope to see initiatives that prioritize the involvement of communities of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Involvement should mean the act of joint creation and invitation to co-produce artworks either inspired by their stories and voice, either by physical involvement.



As the 7th district, Erzsébetváros faces several challenges and issues that pose a challenge for the local community and the municipality. Some central problems include: Homelessness and Social Vulnerability/Consequences of Tourism – overtourism, which can pose problems such as excessive tourism burden, rising property prices, noise and environmental pollution, and the displacement of the local community/Safety/Public Security/Real Estate Market Pressure/Nightlife and Noise Pollution/Transportation Challenges – parking

- issues and the lack of pedestrian areas can pose challenges to the district’s transportation infrastructure. Collaboration between the municipality, local residents, businesses, and civil organizations is crucial for achieving sustainable and positive changes.
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- The Erzsébetváros, or the 7th district, encompasses numerous values that contribute to the district’s unique character and charm. These values are also articulated by the local government, which is a mosaic-like, inviting nature. Foreign communities also arise in recent years, to which certain community spaces have already started to react to. A unique cultural center called Szendvicsbár offers a variety of cultural and artistic events from local emerging artists through immigrant communities.
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- Artistic interpretation of the local communities will hopefully result in long-lasting effects. We articulated three major components to guide us through the commissioning process. Firstly, we wish to support projects that have a lasting impact. Lasting can mean tangible or intangible outcomes within our district. The longevity of the projects are essential, given the identified themes. Secondly, accessibility is key. Lastly, the project should address a local topic and/or is relevant to the local community and/or involves the local community. By maintaining these goals, we hope to engage underrepresented groups in cultural production (residents of lower-income, ethnic minorities, other vulnerable groups), generate new connections between residents of the area, and support the reinvention of refreshment of public spaces or unused spaces where communities can come together in cultural activities. Specific effects could include higher attendance in local cultural activities, visibility of underrepresented communities within the district, public engagement for improving the ecology of the area, new opportunities to participate, spectate and understand artworks that previously had no connections to the actual lives of the residents.
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- Examples of previous artistic interpretation of the themes:
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- **NEW KOLODKO MINI STATUE AT KELETI RAILWAY STATION, 2023**
This time, a small car with an openable roof has found its way to the Eastern Railway Station. Mihály Kolodko, following his earlier, retractable Trabant on Margit Boulevard, has now placed a similar car at the Eastern Railway Station. The uniqueness of this small car lies in its movable roof, which can be opened and closed, reminiscent of the DeLorean from “Back to the Future.” It has become inevitable that every Kolodko statue’s placement in the city’s life becomes an event, and it also holds a prominent position in our city’s beloved trivia list, collecting its charming details.
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- And this is regardless of the artistic value attributed to the statues; the audience adores them. Fanatics wake up early to be among the first to photograph the new creation with the best lighting. Others stand in line throughout the day to capture their own picture, and for some, visiting and “collecting” the statues becomes a family event. Unfortunately the statue has since disappeared.
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- **ROTH MIKSA FIRE WALL DECOR, 2015**
On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of master glass painter Miksa Róth, Neopaint Collective painted the mural of his work titled “Tiroli fiú” (Tyrolean Boy) on the wall at Garay Street 4 in the 7th district. Fire wall decor. Budapest, 2015.
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- Miksa Róth (26 December 1865 – 14 June 1944) was a Hungarian mosaicist and stained glass artist responsible for making mosaic and stained glass prominent art forms in Hungarian art. In recognition of his talent, he was honored by the Emperor and King and became a Royal Court artist. In 1911, he established his own studio at Nefelejcs Street 26, which is now the Memorial House where he and his family resided.
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- **THE GHETTO WALL INSTALLATION, 2015**
In front of a vacant lot on Dohány Street, the ghetto wall installation was built by Péter Sugár and the ’39 Group Alliance. In a narrow street with limited visibility and heavy traffic in the middle, tourists and shopkeepers’ merchandise loaders attempt
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to outmaneuver each other on the narrow sidewalk. Towards the less cheerful end of Dohány Street, approaching the boulevard, an installation of a ghetto wall was erected in front of a vacant lot by Péter Sugár and the ’39 Group Alliance. Those who simply hurry down the street may not even notice why the straight lines drawn by the facades suddenly break here, what the purpose of the two large rusted steel plates is, or why it appears as if the concrete wall has been attacked by mold.

The last section of the original ghetto wall was demolished in 2006, and the wall of the Budapest Ghetto Memorial once stood during the dark days of the Holocaust. During this period, 70,000 Jews were gathered within less than a mile. They were forced to occupy 4,000 apartments, with an average of 14 people per room, and many had to live on the streets.

The map carved into the concrete depicts the exterior of the ghetto, highlighting some of the most significant entities. The map features small, circular openings reminiscent of bomb craters on its surface, allowing visitors to view historical scenes of the area. The memorial is made of stainless steel plates engraved with religious texts and is accessible in Hungarian, English, and Hebrew, providing a summary of Jewish life in Budapest. It commemorates not only the Holocaust but also signifies the renaissance of Jewish life in the surrounding area.

STREET ART: ORBAN AND THE LITTLE TRAIN, 2018
On Monday 2018. June 25 morning, Banksy stirred up Budapest. On the wall of a building in the 7th district, graffiti depicting Viktor Orbán appeared in the style of the British street artist. Although Banksy’s name was sprayed next to the image, the artist’s team informed Index that the Orbán graffiti is the work of an impostor.

ART TRANSPARENT - Brochów, Poland

Brochów was a separate town until 1951, and its history dates back to the Middle Ages. The first documented mention of Brochów took place in 1193. It can be found in a document signed by Pope Celestine III.

Brochów – once an agricultural village, later a German town with a well-developed railroad network, theater, town hall, school, police station, and after World War II the point where the State Repatriation Office was located where Poles from the Eastern Borderlands were transported and separated for further transports. Legends say that pineapples and extremely valuable bitter oranges were grown in the garden of the now defunct canon palace from the early 18th century.

It was the railroad that was central to Brochów’s development. It was here that the largest marshalling yard in central Europe was located. Coal from Silesian mines passed through the local networks.

Until 1945, Brochów was a thriving town with its own infrastructure and two newspapers. In many aspects, especially urban planning and organization, it was a model workers’ settlement.

World War II changed much of Brochów’s architecture, as well as, as a result of border changes, forced the exile of the autochthons deep into Germany and the settlement of the newly arrived Polish population mainly from today’s Ukraine and Belarus. After World War II, the Roma community was also located in Brochów in large numbers, and they came here with their culture, customs and animals. In conversations with older residents of Brochow, one can hear that some Roma kept their Horses in Brochów’s Tenements.



This cultural “mish-mash”, the mingling of different nationalities and social classes heightened the mysteriousness and distinctiveness of Brochów, even though this settlement is only 8 km from the city center.

Green areas, parks, a historic villa estate, as well as old post-German tenements and now new blocks of flats build an ambiguous and interesting landscape. The railroad houses as well as the tracks themselves can evoke associations with a bygone era and remind us of the estate’s former German residents.

Brochów is a place full of contrasts, a cluster of diverse social groups, numerous cultures, which pass each other every day, knowing little about each other. We would like to get to know these people and bring them together. To ask questions about identity, about the values that unite and build the local community.

The railroad is Brochów’s main industry. Over the years it has grown a lot. It was a source of work for many people. It was where the transit of important goods for the country, such as coal, for example, took place. Brochów was an important connection on the map. It is associated by everyone with trains, especially freight trains. Kilometers of railroad tracks and old wagons impress the local residents. To this day, a large part of the buildings located in Brochów belong to the railroad.

For many years, there was a perception in the mentality of other Wrocław residents that Brochów was a very dangerous neighborhood and people were reluctant to visit the place.

To this day, Brochów still shows a bit of fear. When “locals” encounter strangers strolling freely they can jump in. But it is not as dangerous as it was years ago. Nevertheless, it takes time to acclimate to the local community. This may require a lot of patience. However, there have been institutions in Brochów for quite some time (the “Made in Brochów” Foundation) that can help in all activities with the communities and improve familiarization with the locals.

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An important problem we identify is the increasing marginalization of the Roma community, which based on conversations we have had with them feels excluded and left out of many local initiatives. An additional few years earlier, the building of their cultural center was taken away from them, and a mural by Roma artist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, who is representing Poland at the Venice Biennale in 2022, was painted over. All of this leaves this community with a lack of trust in public institutions, exacerbating their isolation. Which in itself is already a challenge due to cultural differences and still existing prejudices. Addressing this issue and initiating discussions on it is one of our goals.

Our idea as art commissioners is to merge these different layers and social tissues and commission art that works for the community, is about the Community, and created with the Community. So that whether one is a Roma, Pole, German, Ukrainian does not contribute to social divisions in Brochów, but that a common identity as Brochow residents and joint socio-cultural activities build a new and strong identity for the local population. An example of such action from previous years can be the installation “Fotoplastykon” on Koreanska Street by Robert Pludra, which was created during the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016 as part of the project “Wrocław – entrance from the courtyard”.

The installation today is neglected and out of order. Another example of neglect on the part of public institutions, which affects the overall climate and social fabric of the neighborhood. It is important to us that through our action, Brochów increases its subjectivity and draws the attention of local authorities to the challenges facing the community.

Currently, the Brochów neighborhood is one of the fastest growing urban enclaves in Wrocław. More and more new blocks of flats are being built here in Brochów, which encourages an influx of people and a break from the unfavorable stereotypes about Brochow’s gloomy aura. In recent years, a lot of local initiatives have been happening here, thanks to the opening of the Center for Local Activity, where you can go to Yoga classes or ceramic workshops, and the opening of a swimming pool called Aquapark. Cafes and restaurants make Brochów vibrant during the day and revive its pre-war potential.

It would be worthwhile to start weaving neighborhood contacts anew and work on the identity of the local community. A 4th post-war generation is already being born, for whom Brochów will no longer be a “post-German town” but their home and small homeland. It would also be good for the various groups living in Brochów to live in greater cultural integration (Roma, Poles, Railroaders, Africans or Ukrainians and Belarusians who came here in 2022). Today, these groups live at a certain distance, on the one hand passing each other off as neighbors, but there is a lack of community or joint activities. Space to meet, get to know new people, exchange views, build relationships.





NEW THEATRE INSTITUTE OF LATVIA - Kuldīga, Latvia

The origin of ancient Kuldīga can be explained by its location on the crossroads of waterways and routes. Today the town is popular with tourists, known for its restaurants, landscape and cultural offer, the picturesque urban environment has been appreciated by artists for many decades. Families also move here from the capital, as various social services are available to support various vulnerable communities. Kuldīga has the widest waterfall in Europe –Ventas Rumba with a Blue Flag beach and nightly open-air cinema in summer.

The number of inhabitants in Kuldīga is 10,710, however the population has decreased by 12,5% in recent years. In the age group 16-18 years, the number of inhabitants decreased by 35%. It is expected that by 2040, the number of inhabitants will drop by 30%. At the end of 2020, the proportion of long-term unemployed people in Kuldīga county was 28%. The proportion of people of pre-retirement age who were unemployed was about 17%.

Employment sectors: Manufacturing (23.4%) (production of wood products, food, clothing), Retail and wholesale trade (20.9%), Agriculture, forestry and fishing (15.9%), Construction (8%).

Priorities of the municipality of Kuldīga county: well-being and safety of the residents, business development, sustainable living environment in the city and parishes, quality education, culture and heritage. The cultural and entertainment priorities provided by the municipality are oriented towards the involvement of families, promotion of tourism, and celebration of holidays. The operation of the library and the museum is ensured.

The education of interests is mainly related to 64% of the cultural sector. In 2022, a branch of The Art Academy of Latvia was opened in Kuldīga with a new international study program in service design. NGOs have been organizing the Democracy Festival for several years, and an artists' residence provided by the municipality also operates in Kuldīga.

Local values and untold stories

The communities of Kuldīga would need to create a new environment where they can come together, create a place where local communities would have the opportunity to meet contemporary art. The cultural activities provided by the municipality of Kuldīga are aimed at involving families, promoting tourism and celebrating national holidays. The activities include events such as the city festival "Feast in Kuldīga", spring show "Flying fish in Kuldīga", family car adventure "Dullā maijvabole", Kuldīga picnic by Māras pond; Duke Jacob city fair, art kaleidoscope "Fire and Night", Bee Day, Independence Day of the Republic of Latvia, etc. Only a small part of this touches the quality and diversity of contemporary art, and it could be significantly improved.

One of the most promising initiatives is the Kuldīga Artists' Residence, where art exhibitions of various genres are held periodically. The artists' residence was established in 2013, and yearly around 20 international, professional artists, as well as more than 40 art students can participate in various residency projects. In general, this project is a good example of successful cooperation between the municipality and the non-governmental sector. Artists' Residence supports the process of creating works of art and residency programs in cooperation with Latvian and foreign art academies, characterized by professionalism, creativity and the philosophical message. It attracts new talents and energetically strong ideas, which are reflected in the exhibitions in the gallery of the Artists' Residence, with possible far-reaching national and international resonance. They focus on visual art projects and art gallery activities, as well as creative industry (design, architecture) projects. The selection of artists for the residency programs currently is by invitation only.

PROJECT MANAGERS AND ADVISORS

BETHLEN SQUARE THEATER & PRO PROGRESSIONE as associated partner

Anna Némethné Molnár

Anna Némethné Molnár is a project manager at Bethlen Square Theater, a cultural manager and the Head of PP Social, committed to unlocking the transformative potential of the arts in addressing societal and environmental challenges. Drawing on her academic background in history, geography, environmental education, and cultural management, Anna designs projects that bridge disciplines and foster innovative solutions to contemporary issues. At the heart of her work is the conviction that culture is not only a tool for personal and community well-being but also a driver of democratic renewal and social resilience. Bethlen Square Theater and PP Social have evolved into a space where artistic expression and social responsibility converge, engaging marginalized communities, amplifying diverse perspectives, and catalyzing systemic change.

Anna's initiatives reflect a commitment to fostering participatory processes and strengthening cultural ecosystems. She prioritizes interdisciplinary collaborations that address inequalities, embrace environmental sustainability, and empower individuals to become active agents of change. Inspired by the interconnectedness of culture and civic life, her work aligns with broader European efforts to position the arts as a force for dialogue, innovation, and sustainable development.

Barna Petrányi

With an academic background in economics, Barna worked as the controlling director for Sziget Ltd., the organizer of the most important outdoor festival of the region. After becoming the manager of Cie Pal Frenak, a well-known Hungarian-French choreographer's company, he founded Pro Progressione a decade ago and in 2020 he became one of the owners of Bethlen Square Theater. The socially engaged creative hub has become the most important link between Hungarian independent art organizations and artists and international collaborations. Our focus is on cooperation and collaboration between artists coming from different artistic background and having an interdisciplinary approach.

We are working with both emerging and established artists as well as small scale independent organizations and recently with bigger public institutions also, in order to foster their international relations and implement new types of contemporary artistic projects together.

Personally active in the art community, he served already as board member of the Association of the Hungarian Independent Theatres and as the advisory board member of the IETM, the most important European network for the independent performing scene. Since 2019, he has been the board member of MitOst e.V., one of the most important German NGO in the field of culture and civil fields.

Dr. László Vácz

As Managing Director of the Bethlen Square Theater and Artistic Advisor of the DemArt project, I play a role in the project. My responsibilities include the organisation and management of artistic and cultural events aimed at deepening the relationship between democracy and the arts. My role as an active participant in the theater as a venue is key, as this is where the events related to the DemArt initiative take place. This allows me to promote democratic values and ideas through the arts, contributing to cultural dialogue and social development. In this way, my role and my contribution have an impact not only on theatre life but also on the wider cultural and social context, which is an extremely important and responsible task for me.

Márton Csuzi

As a professional advisor and mentor, I try to help the project, the curators, representing my own company, OneTwoMany Collective, which I co-founded and run with my colleagues Sophie Zoletnik and Lennart Paar. I'm a dancer and choreographer at heart, but for a while I've been working more with circus. In addition to my work as a performer and creator, I organise festivals and other cultural events, do research in the field of performing arts with the support of the Hungarian Academy of Arts and study at the Budapest University of Technology. DemArt is a challenging but very important project for me. I believe in bottom-up organizing, horizontal structures and democratic principles. I try to incorporate all these into my own organisation, but I can explore a broader spectrum of them within the DemArt project. I am lucky to learn from this project.



ART TRANSPARENT

Dr. Małgorzata Miśniakiewicz

Art historian and freelance curator, focusing on inter-local perspectives in her research of socio-political contexts of contemporary art and the legacies of the east-central European post-war avant-gardes. In her curatorial practice she works mostly with neo-avant-garde and contemporary art, focusing on video and photography, as well as interventions in the public space. Her PhD thesis (Courtauld Institute of Art, 2018) analyses networked art of the 70's - focusing on mail art in Poland - through the ideas of political dissidence, and social and geopolitical transformations. She was an associate lecturer at the Courtauld, has written catalogue essays, edited publications, and organised conferences. She holds a postgraduate diploma in Management of Art and Culture from the Warsaw School of Economics. She was the collections' curator at Wrocław Contemporary Museum (2017-2019) and has curated exhibitions and programs in collaboration with ArtTransparent Foundation, ArsCameralis Festival, Wrocław European Capital of Culture 2016, at Venice Biennale. Some of her recent projects include: Gelderland Biennale 2022; Survival Art Review (since 2019); Artifake (2021), Deconfining (since 2021), Cursed (2021) and States of Focus (2019) at Wrocław Contemporary Museum.



Dr. Karolina Bieniek

PhD in social sciences [political science, African studies] scientific interests include research on culture, peace, foreign policy and culture in international relations. She has over 20 years of experience in the non-profit sector and coordinated over 30 national and international projects. She co-organized events as part of the European Culture Congress, co-authored Wrocław's application in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture 2016. She coordinated a number of projects as part of the European Capital of Culture 2016, the UNESCO World Book Capital and Creative Europe. A graduate of the international program for cultural managers "TANDEM".

Scientific and project experience in countries of the Global South (including the Republic of Guinea, Namibia, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Senegal). She has conducted research on Rwanda's foreign policy, security in East Africa, and peacebuilding and regional cooperation in the African Great Lakes Region. Author of a number of scientific articles published in Poland and abroad. Expert of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the area of Polish aid.

Core group member of the large project "Deconfining Arts, Culture and Policy in Europe and Africa", supported by Creative Europe in 2022. Winner of the "30 Creative Wrocław 2017" competition. Graduates of Basecamp Eastern Europe and Central Asia implemented by the School of System Change. Regional Coordinator of the Central European Group of the



Bosch Alumni Center. Delegate of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum 2024-2026. Awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit by the President of the Republic of Poland for services to the promotion of culture in Poland and Lower Silesia

Michał Bieniek

Artist and curator, President of the Board of the Art Transparent contemporary art foundation. Initiator and general curator of the SURVIVAL Art Review, head of the Mieszkanie Geppertów contemporary art gallery. He studied at the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław and at the Royal College of Art in London. From 2013 to 2016, he was the Visual Arts Curator for the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016. In 2011, he ran the Polish edition of Thierry Geoffroy's Emergency Room format as part of the European Culture Congress in Wrocław. In 2012, he curated the exhibition and symposium Active Poetry. Art in Public Space in Poland at Shoreditch Town Hall and the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Curator of the exhibition The Germans Did Not Come at Wrocław Contemporary Museum (2014) and Kunsthaus Dresden (2016), as well as Dispossession, shown as part of the 2015 Venice International Art Biennale. During the ECOC Wrocław 2016, he was responsible for more than a hundred projects – exhibitions, educational activities, interventions in public space and others. He organized the Wrocław presentations of such exhibitions as Eduardo Chillida. Sounds at BWA Wrocław (2016) or Summer Rental. Marx Collection in Wrocław at the Four Domes Pavilion, a branch of the National Museum in Wrocław (also 2016). Curator of the project Wrocław – Backyard Entrance, i.e. a series of dozens of large-scale artistic and social interventions in the public space of the city. Two-time recipient of the scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage (in 2006 and 2010), winner of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship Marshal's Award in 2004. In 2010, he received the WARTO award from the Gazeta Wyborcza daily. Winner of the "Young Poland" scholarship in 2011 and the "Emotions!" award from Radio Wrocław Kultura (2016). In 2017, the F5 magazine ranked him first among cultural activists who change Wrocław for the better. Winner of the Merito de Wratislavia award, presented by the Mayor of Wrocław in recognition of his meritorious service to the city. In 2022 he was awarded the Bronze Cross of Merit by the President of the Republic of Poland for his achievements in the field of Polish culture and art.



Paweł Rogowski

Paweł Rogowski is a professional producer of artistic and cultural events for companies, non-governmental organisations and cultural institutions; graduate of MA studies at the University of Wrocław (political science, specialisation: political marketing) and postgraduate studies at the University of Economics (human resources management). Since 2012, he has been executive producer of events during the International Storytelling Festival in Wrocław. From 2016 to 2021, he worked at the Ossoliński National Institute, where he was first in charge of the Audience Services Department and then of the Events Organisation Department at the Pan Tadeusz Museum. He was also responsible for the production of the SURVIVAL Art Review (2012–2014, 2021–2024), administrative issues at the English-language internet radio station RadioWroclove.com (2009–2010); production of the exhibition Active Poetry. A Sketch for the Transformation of Art in Public Space in Poland in Shoreditch Town Hall, London; production of the exhibition Dispossession (Accompanying Event of the 56th Venice Biennale, organised by ECoC Wrocław 2016); production of exhibitions as part of the Drawing Triennial 2019 in Wrocław (for the Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław).

NEW THEATRE INSTITUTE OF LATVIA

Santa Remere

The newly appointed Artistic Director of the New Theatre Institute of Latvia is responsible for the artistic direction of the organisation and curation of the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre “Homo Novus”. Santa has a background in Visual Communication and Cinema Studies, MA, Arts and Technologies, from Waseda University in Tokyo and completed a research program at Tama Arts University. Santa has regularly translated theatre plays from French, English, and Japanese, and her translated works include authors such as Roland Topor, Albert Camus, G  rald Sibleyras, Kunio Shimizu, Eric-Emannuel Schmitt, among others. Since 2015, Santa has been working regularly as a dramaturg, researcher, and producer for the festival “Homo Novus”, mainly working with youth artistic participation projects, focusing on the visibility and agency of young people and underrepresented groups in society.

Santa also actively works as a publicist and literary critic for Latvian and Baltic magazines, mostly with a focus on youth culture, contemporary theatre, and feminist topics, and was one of the editors of Culture magazine “Satori”. Santa has been nominated three times for the Normunds Naumanis’ Annual Art Criticism award and has written a book of feminist tales for children entitled Our Sisters (2020) – a captivating book for readers who are inspired by the stories of strong and accomplished women, and are eager to learn about the history and culture of Latvia, as well as for those who appreciate biographies, art, and children’s literature.



Bek Berger

Bek Berger is an artist, curator and dramaturg originally from Australia, based now in Riga, Latvia, where from 2021 to 2024, she was curator of the International Festival of Contemporary Theatre, “Homo Novus”. Bek’s practice binds curiosity with innovation in order to design new models of connection, collaboration and reciprocity between artists and communities, across borders and art forms. Her expertise lies between festival making, dance dramaturgy and karaoke. In the last years she has instigated a number of large international collaborations such as Baltic Take Over Helsinki (LV, LT, EE, FI), The Shake Down with Rosendal Theatre (LV, NO), The Festivals Path with ANTI festival (LV, FI). As an artist she is currently concerned with exploiting magic, making new conditions for togetherness and improving the performing arts with pleasure centred design. Alongside her curatorial practice Bek works as a Dramaturg for Australian Dance artist James Batchelor. Working together since 2017 they have premiered four works and toured to more than 22 countries. The works have been presented in such places as Centre Pompidu (FR), Tanz Im August (DE), Dance Massive (AU), Spring Forward/Aerowaves19, Impulstanz (AT) and DIG - Dance International Glasgow (UK). Bek has previously held producing positions at American Realness (NYC, USA), Fierce Festival (UK), Forest Fringe (UK), Dance Massive (AU), Artshouse (AU), La Mama Melbourne (AU) as well as numerous independent artsits. Bek currently serves of the board of IETM and was an ISPA fellow (2021–2023). In 2020 she was awarded the Australia Council HIAP residency and in 2023 she was granted a Kone Foundation SARRI residency Fellowship.

ART COMMISSIONERS

HUNGARIAN ART COMMISSIONERS

Dorottya Ács

I am Dorottya Ács, 27 years old, an enthusiastic representative of community and cultural movements. I currently work in the civil and cultural sector. Growing up in a family of musicians, I am most passionate about supporting the performing arts and trying to explore ways to bring arts outreach and support to a wider audience.

As a district resident, the DemArt project is very exciting to me because of its uniqueness and the values it represents. I would like to see the selected artists really connect with the residents, our stories reflected in the artwork.

Dominika Gergő

I am Dominika Gergő, a 21-year-old woman and I've dedicated my last 10 years to elite sport. Past tense by now, because I got to the point to realize that this sports bubble doesn't make me satisfied anymore. I wanted to become more than an always tired athlete with the triangle of training, eating, and sleeping. So I began to open to the world of art. That was a huge step out of my comfort zone, but at the same time it really showed a new slice of myself.

This new artistic place allows me to be connected better with myself and I believe it can also provide a platform to revive community relationships.

At the beginning I felt instantly called out with this project, cause I just freshly moved to the 7th district. On one hand I absolutely love the location, but the community really needs some changes. I believe that projects like this can become a good link in our social bonds and make bridges between generations. Starting dialogues, acting as a catalyst for re-forging the community.

In my mind this is the ultimate long term goal of the project, to help to create the atmosphere where we could live together in balance.

Juda Jelinek

My background is in international development, city planning, real estate development and business administration. I am trained in urban design, ArcGIS Spatial Analysis, ArchiCAD and SketchUp 3D modelling. I have experience in socio-economic research analysis and report writing, public relations (PR) management. I am a sustainability assessor green growth advocate and as a local patriot the development of my community is of importance to me. Besides social, political and economic affairs, I am also interested in philosophy and art history. During this DemArt project, we will bring together democracy, politics, philosophy and art, in a unique constellation. The process will manifest in a yet unknown form.

POLISH ART COMMISSIONERS

Arleta Gosławska

Arleta is a photographer, intermedial artist. Lives and creates in Wrocław. She is a member of MIGAWKA group in Przedmieście Oławskie. Arleta graduated from the University of Fine Arts in Poznań, specializing in Intermedia Photography. Her art is rooted in everyday life, characterized by conceptualism and minimalism, it delves into themes related to humanity, nature and the essence of existence. Arleta's creations often take physical, tangible form such as books, objects or installations. Observing and meditating on the mundane and everyday life serve as the primary inspiration for her projects. As a result, her art pays tribute to the significance of the seemingly trivial aspects of life.



Małgorzata Tutko

Gosia is a vocalist, song-writer, music teacher, doula. On a daily basis, she conducts music classes for infants and toddlers according to Professor E.E. Gordon's method, leads ensembles and vocal workshops for adults, prepares women for childbirth during the "Creative Birth" classes, works with women as a doula and sings at various concerts and artistic events. Privately, she is a mother of two sons and a wife.



Hubert Sulima

Hubert was born in Bielawa, Poland in 1989 into a working-class family. Sulima works in the fields of theater, performance, dramaturgy and writing. In 2017, he graduated from the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Krakow. He co-created a number of performances, which were praised for their search for new theatrical qualities, languages and topics, as well as for their "extraordinary sensitivity towards characters, actors and viewers". In 2020 and 2021 he was nominated (together with director Jędrzej Piaskowski) for one of the most important Polish art awards "Paszport Polityki". In 2020 Sulima was awarded the scholarship by Nowy Teatr in Warsaw "for outstandingly talented young artists". Since 2022 he is a lecturer at the National Academy of Theatre Arts in Wrocław, where he lives.

LATVIAN ART COMMISSIONERS



Ieva Štro

Ieva is a resident of Kuldīga, who loves this town where she grew up in all its glory. Her educational background includes Cultural Management with a specialization in Public Relations. Currently, she applies this knowledge in her professional endeavors while curating beautiful environments, embellishing weddings, and organizing various social events in the charming town of Kuldīga. Ieva likes to create beautiful performances and organize gatherings that evoke happiness and excitement. She also leads flower arranging masterclasses and facilitates various other creative workshops.



Elīna Beitika

Elīna loves people, nature, sound, and the beauty of movement, colors, and words, along with the interconnectedness of it all. Her journey has taken her down various paths to discover what truly resonates with her. At this point, she can honestly say that she is passionate about creating environments that foster deep reflection and creativity. Together with her husband, Elīna runs a family tourism business in Jūrkalne – the country house "Lūķi." A place that offers people the opportunity to rejuvenate in the midst of nature and silence. Her joy lies in creating interiors, rituals, and programs that encourage people to open up to self-discovery, the world around them, and their innate creative potential. Elīna firmly believes that mindfulness and creativity will play a pivotal role in shaping the next century.



Vendija Bakanauskaite

Vendija is a person full of ambition and goals. She has always felt right at home wherever she went. She could be described as a one-person circus –can do anything and everything. She started out as an interior designer but now has a degree in International Business Management and Economics. She is passionate about many things, but her biggest passion throughout her life has been art.

ARTISTS

HUNGARIAN ARTISTS



Metrum Ensemble, selected artist

Metrum Ensemble is a prominent player in the Hungarian music scene. Since its debut in 2012, the ensemble has been realizing its artistic vision with a distinctive and consistent work ethic. Their motto is “playfulness and responsibility”.

Under the DemArt project, they explored the musical past and present of the 7th district. Its diversity is well-known. The project aims to make various cultural traditions accessible to the public, including Jewish traditions, cabarets, gypsy and salon music in the boulevard cafes, workers’ choirs in Csikágó, church music, and concerts in the party district.

The district’s rich heritage will be reinforced through public music and visual installations. The music will also be available online via QR codes and will be incorporated into public artworks.

All stages of the project will be developed in collaboration with appropriate professionals; reporters, composers, performers, craftsmen, web designers, music historians, technicians and authors will all be involved in the creation process. To ensure a long-term impact, they also want to work with local history walk organizers to bring the project’s results to a wider audience.

The *Musical Walls* project was realized in the spirit of working in harmony between individual and community efforts.

Szabó Kristóf

Szabó Kristóf was born in Győr in 1988. Since 2016, he has consciously used the term “KristofLab”, referring to interdisciplinary and media art activities as a kind of brand. As he often works in teams or creates joint works with other artists, he experiments with the permeability of boundaries between artistic genres. He obtained his degree in graphic arts (2012) and later in fine arts teaching (2013) from the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. In 2011, he studied in Dresden with an Erasmus scholarship (Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden). Between 2019 and 2020, he participated in the Budapest Art Mentor program, which provides training to fill gaps in Hungary’s education system. With the Ziggurat Project, experimenting with various interdisciplinary collaborations, he regularly worked until 2023, mainly in experimental performances from Norway to the V4 countries. His visual art, mixed media, video installations, and paintings have been exhibited in the Műcsarnok and the Godot Gallery, both in the countryside and in the capital.

Dorottya Márton

Dorottya Márton has recently completed a Master’s Degree in Documentary Filmmaking (DokMA) at the University of Theatre and Film Arts. Dorottya’s student films have been screened at the Zsigmond Vilmos Film Festival (ZSIFF), the National Independent Film Festival (MAFSZ), and the Fresh Meat International Short Film Festival. She often works as a one-man crew, shooting and sitting in front of the camera, blurring the line between documentary and experimental film. Her work incorporates abstract and diverse elements, such as mobile recording, photography, and home video. Dorottya is currently developing her first feature film and working on a photographic project called “Ecstasy”, alongside the DemArt residency.

POLISH ARTISTS



Filip ‘Skont’ Niziołek, selected artist

Born in 1983 in Wrocław, Poland; he is an artist who began his career by creating graffiti as early as 1997 to focus mainly on mural portraits since 2009. His body of work includes about 100 large-format portraits and many other murals. Much of his work is non-commercial in nature and is an important contribution to promoting a positive image of the city of Wrocław. Filip Skont’s works can be seen, among others, in Psi Pole, Tarnogaj, Downtown and, more recently, in Brochów. In 2014 he began a fruitful cooperation with JW. GROM in Warsaw, creating 6 murals on their grounds. In addition, in collaboration with Bibliopolis, in 2016 he realized in Wrocław a series of portraits of poets placed in the blind windows of tenements. In 2020, he was selected as one of Wrocław’s 30 Creatives. A year later, he defended his diploma at the Wrocław Academy of Fine Arts in the painting studio under Prof. Janusz Jaroszewski and in the multimedia studio under Prof. Paweł Jarodzki. Currently, in addition to murals, he is involved in easel painting, bas-relief and amateur filmmaking. As he says himself, the most important thing in his work is a person and his life.

Jagoda Dobecka
Graduate of the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław, PhD student at the Doctoral School of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. Her works have been presented in solo and group exhibitions at, among others, the Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw 2023), Kode (Bergen, 2023) Central Museum of Textiles (Łódź 2023), Zachęta National Gallery of Art (2022), Garage Gallery (Prague 2021), Galeria Łęctwo (Poznań 2021), Galerie hlavního města Prahy (Prague 2020). Participant of Kem School (2023), MeetFactory residency programs in Prague, KAIR Košice Artist in Residence, Goyki3 in Sopot, ssesi.space in Brno. Finalist of the 13th Geppert Competition, scholarship holder of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Mayor of Wrocław. Nominated for the WARTO Award in the visual arts category (Wrocław 2021).

In her practice she is concerned with initiating opportunities for collective participation in the process of loss through participatory strategies. She is interested in utilitarian methods of art that give rise to spaces for establishing and expanding relationships and changing social hierarchies.

Julia Tkacz and Mikołaj Tkacz
Julia Tkacz is a poet, translator, rapper, menstrual educator. She debuted with a poetry volume “Algorithms set to local accidents”, her second book is coming out in 2024. The lead singer of the band TRUE, whose first album will be released this year. She graduated from Intermedia at UAP defending herself with a diploma on humor and wit. She is a certified menstrual educator from the Pink Box Foundation, as well as a certified storyteller. She is an amateur in lepidopterology.

Mikołaj Tkacz is a cartoonist, comic artist, experimental musician. Co-founder of the comics group “Maszin”. Currently co-founder of the website “Really unfunny drawings”. Since 2015, he has played dozens of concerts at, among others, the Zachęta National Gallery of Art, the Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, the Carbon Festival stage, the New Muse Festival, the cult clubs Eufemia and Pogłos, as well as during the Krakow Fringe. Since 2014, he has regularly conducted comics workshops for children, teenagers and adults.

LATVIAN ARTISTS



Jurgis Spulenieks, selected artist

Jurgis Spulenieks is an actor and stage director from Kuldīga, an acting teacher at the Riga Ballet School, and expert of amateur theatres in Latvian National Centre for Culture. He has worked as an actor in several independent theaters and in The Latvian National Theatre for 7 years. His acting career has been varied, with roles in plays such as “Indrāni”, “Skozerdienas Silmačos” and “Blood Wedding”.

As a director, Jurgis is known for his work at the Democracy Festival in Kuldīga, where he staged the play “Deķis”, based on the Latvian Constitution. His work as a director is characterized by a strong presence of social and political themes, as well as by careful attention to details and management of actors. In 2013, Jurgis was awarded the main Latvian theater award “Spēlmaņu nakts” in the category Young Stage Artist of the Year. He is appreciated for his ability to move from comic roles to serious and dramatic performances, often combining tragedy with comedy in his performances. Jurgis Spulenieks continues to be an important figure in Latvian theater, working as a freelancer, mostly playing roles in movies and TV ads, and initiating projects related to public participation in theater and cultural processes.

Gundega Evelone and Laura Feldberga

Gundega Evelone is an interdisciplinary artist, currently specializing in performance and installation. She also works as a curator of independent art projects and as an art critic. Interested in social and political issues in art. Has created community-engaging art projects such as the “Last Picnic” cycle (urban ecology, 2015), “Christmas Mail to the Russian Empire” (performance-protest action at the Russian Embassy, 2022), “No Borders” (performance-protest at the Latvian borders of Belarus, 2023.) Often works as an artistic medium, playing the voices of others in the language of art.

Laura Feldberga graduated from the Graphic Arts Department of the Art Academy of Latvia. At the moment, she mainly works in the field of installations and objects, as well as art performance. The themes and imagery of the artist’s works are related to personal and collective experiences, relationships with nature, landscape, belonging, place, identity. She has participated in exhibitions and art projects in the Baltic States, Scandinavia, Germany, Russia, Iceland, USA, Japan and other countries.

Kristīne Botros and Aiga Vaitkus

Kristīne Botros is a music producer, composer, sound producer, as well as a musician with more than 10 years of experience in various music genres and fields. She has a Bachelor’s degree in Music and Sound Production from the Royal Swedish Academy of Music and is currently studying for a Master’s degree. She specializes in surround sound and 3D audio, as well as the development of a brand new genre – neo classical chamber pop music. Kristīne has been actively involved in various light installation projects and exhibitions for several years.

Aiga Vaitkus is the creative director of Ltd. ROYAL KEY, chief designer and one of the founders of the company. She holds a Master of Humanities degree in Art/Design/Functional Design from the Latvian Academy of Arts. Aiga has been working as a professional designer in Latvian and international projects for more than 20 years. She is also an active member the Old Town Environmental Commission of the Kuldīga County Council.



EXTERNAL EXPERT

Dr. Daniel Valtueña

Daniel Valtueña is an independent researcher, professor, and consultant. He received his PhD in Cultural Studies from The Graduate Center, City University of New York in 2022. His research focuses on contemporary performing arts, queer theories, and environmental humanities. He teaches humanities and arts management courses at IE University and CIEE Madrid. He has extensive experience in the field of arts management. In New York, Daniel served as a Program Manager at the Queens Council on the Arts between 2020 and 2022 and as an Artist-in-Residency Program Curator at NYU KJCC between the same years. He is currently based in Madrid and works as an arts and culture consultant in the fields of strategy, internationalization, audience development, professional development, and participation for a variety of cultural organizations.



THE COMMISSIONS

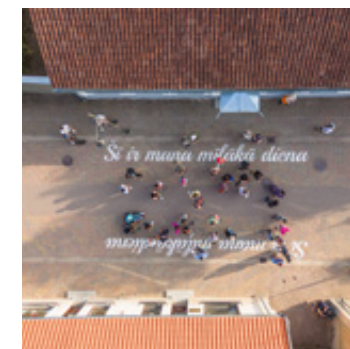
The DemArt project facilitated the commissioning of three community commissioned art pieces in each of the partner countries and chosen by the local art commissioners. In Hungary, interactive sound installations at 7 sites in the 7th district of Budapest were developed by the art collective Metrum Ensemble under the title *Musical Walls*. In Latvia, the audio story project *Upside Down Kuldīga*, inspired by the facades of Kuldīga's historical buildings and the stories of its residents was developed by theatre director Jurgis Spulenieks together with his team. In Poland, the multidisciplinary, artistic, and social project *Four Seasons* was developed in Brochów, Wrocław by artist Filip Skont Nizioł Niziołek in the form of a community mural.

In this section, the reader will be able to know more about the commissions and the artists through descriptions, pictures, and interviews conducted by the art commissioners with information given by the actual artists.



Musical Walls

by Metrum Ensemble



Upside Down Kuldīga

by Jurgis Spulenieks



Four Seasons

by Filip 'Skont' Niziołek

Musical Walls

by Metrum Ensemble

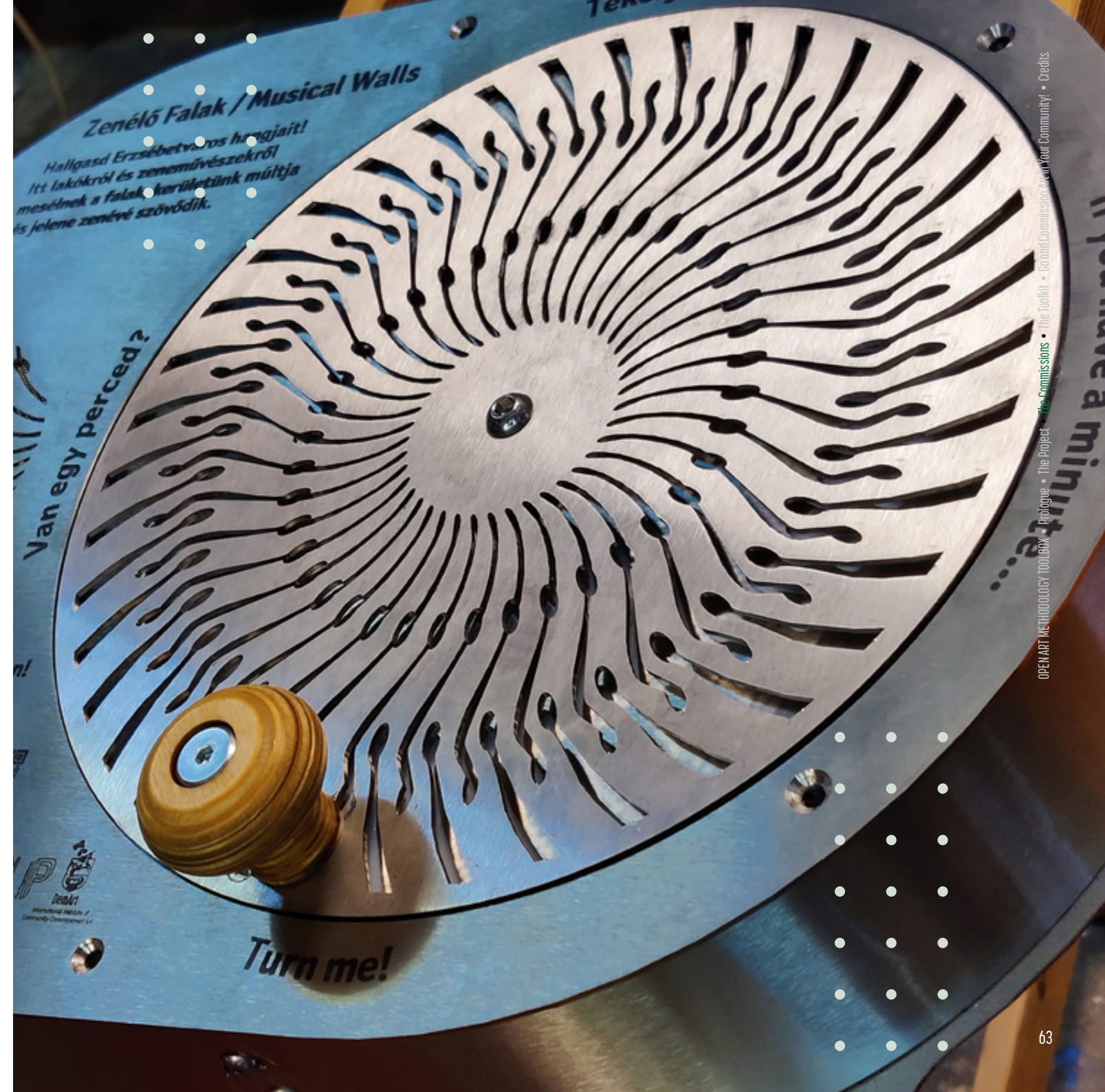
Interactive Sound Installations at 7 Sites in the 7th District of Budapest

The *Musical Walls* project is a unique interactive sound installation guiding us through the rich musical past and vibrant present of Erzsébetváros, across various sites in Budapest's 7th District. The aim of this project is to bring residents and visitors closer to the district's musical heritage through public artworks, linking past and present in harmony. For this purpose, the renowned art collective, Metrum Ensemble, has been chosen as the creative force. Since their debut in 2012, Metrum Ensemble has been a distinctive presence in Hungarian music, reviving the memories of Erzsébetváros through their unique artistic vision, with a special focus on Jewish traditions, cabarets, and coffeehouse music, as well as the district's working-class and religious musical heritage. Through interactive Sounding Memorials this rich legacy becomes accessible to all, with QR codes allowing people to access the curated musical selections on their mobile devices.

"Be the Seventh!" - A Performative Procession Along the *Musical Walls*



At the premiere of *Musical Walls*, a performative procession titled "Be the Seventh!" took place, unveiling the interactive sounding memorial plaques across the 7 designated locations, each a historic site in the district. During the community walk, participants visited all seven locations, where the artists inaugurated each installation with a brief flash concert, introducing an unique musical motif to every location and deepening the experience at each site. The walk culminated with a closing event





at the Bethlen Square Theater, where the artists shared insights into the project with the audience. This included an inside look at the application process, the development of the concept, and the implementation stages, followed by an informal reception and celebratory toast.

From the Artist's Perspective: The Most Positive Experience

Two of the main creators, Anna Rákóczy and Lajos Rozmán, shared their personal reflections on the project's unique aspects. When asked about their most positive experience with *Musical Walls*, they said:

Anna Rákóczy's view:

"During the inauguration, the most positive moment for me was the music playing in the streets of the district, which, due to their historical context, carry multifaceted meanings. As we sang "Szól a kakas" together, as we played a Sándor Vándor melody, I felt that we were present as a community, one that does not merely observe the memories of the past with curiosity but forms a personal relationship with them. Thus, in an instant, what we originally longed for was born: that the district's unique, complex cultural tradition would provide inspiration and vibrant energy to those present. We hope that the sound-based memorial plaques will continue to serve as tools for this."

Lajos Rozmán thought:

As creative people - performers doing their work in a creative way - the joy at the unveiling of the Sounding Memorials came, as always, from the sheer fact of the happening. All the more so, that we treat these - seemingly mechanical - structures as artistic works, and therefore the question of "never being perfect and never being completely finished" is truly familiar. So, in the work we experience every moment as a single step towards an unattainable goal. The experience is that nothing is ever really finished - just there is a certain point, where you start working on something else. The fact that many people, understandably expected or would have liked to see a more finished piece of work is almost sympathetic - as the Lupa Island ferryman's almost enjoyed flood housing rescue. In other words, it is a kind of joy if there may be some tension arising from this, because it inspires one to do or even just think things that one would probably not be able to be done without the energy of this. There is a flow, a breaking out of the usual channel, and that is good."

Today and Testing Mode

Though *Musical Walls* is now open to the public, the technical aspects of the project continue to demand attention. The creators are continuously monitoring the systems, ensuring that any issues are quickly resolved to maintain a seamless musical experience for the residents and visitors of the district. Come closer, listen to the stories hidden within the walls, and join us in experiencing this remarkable musical journey through Erzsébetváros!

Written by Art Commissioner Dominika Gergő

Upside Down Kuldīga

by Jurgis Spulenieks

Upside Down Kuldīga (Ačgārnā Kuldīga) is an audio story walk inspired by the facades of Kuldīga's historic buildings and the stories of its residents. Many places in Kuldīga are different in the minds of the locals than they are in reality: furniture is sold in the "Talsu meat shop", the shop called "Bread loaf" is home to a bar, the wind really whistles in "Windy", and the Kuldīga Culture Centre is currently located in a supermarket.

Latvian theatre director Jurgis Spulenieks together with his team, has created a guide and a story walk that from September 2024 is available in Latvian and English on the mobile app IZI Travel for anyone who lives in or visits the city of Kuldīga. During the "Homo Novus" festival the creative team, authors, community members and festival guests also walked the short version of the excursion together and met some of the authors and storytellers. The walk started near the Town Hall and ended at the Culture Centre, where the participants attended the screening of the animated film "Upside Down Kuldīga", made by local children in a workshop facilitated by animator Dzintars Krūmiņš, followed by a Kuldīga-style culinary feast and more exchanges between the community and the visitors.

Information about the excursion is permanently available at the Kuldīga Municipality Tourism Development Centre and the [IZI Travel](#) application

The project involved community participation at multiple levels. About 100 stories were collected using various methods. In the beginning, the involvement of the local community was low, so the strategy was changed - not to focus on social networks, but to go directly to different communities and address them. Communities of seniors, students, young people, representatives of different professions were addressed. Stories could be submitted anonymously or obtained in the form of interviews. The stories were divided into adult stories and children's stories. The adult stories were prepared for the audio guide



and the children's stories for the animation. Stories that were too short, contained unethical content or were aimed to defame a specific person were screened out.

The children's stories were collected while speaking to the students. They were different from the adult's stories with a flight of imagination, so they served as the inspiration for the animated film "[Upside Down Kuldīga](#)". After collecting the children's stories, it was decided, together with the animator Dzintars Krūmiņš, to make an animation using the stop-motion technique. Then an animation master class was organized. 20 children and young people aged 6-25 participated in the master class. The participants of the master classes together with the animator created a plot based on the reflections of the collected stories. The participants then created their own characters and learned animation techniques. The master class was followed by post-production, and the movie was posted on YouTube. The premiere of the film took place during the performance.

The performance was created as a walk from the fountain near the Kuldīga Town Hall to the Kuldīga Culture Centre, where the animated film was shown. Aware of the fact that the old town of Kuldīga has different types of pavements, the walking route was designed together with the accessibility expert Liba Bērziņa. Since one of the criteria of the project was to increase joy in Kuldīga, appropriate props were found. For example, soap bubbles were distributed to the audience or an inflatable crocodile was used to enliven the stories. Audio recordings of several stories were played during the performance, but local storytellers also were met during the walk, who told their stories in person. The finale of the performance took place at the Culture Centre where the film was screened. The screening was followed by a feast of local delicacies. During the event, a TikTok dance was filmed, essentially using music created by artificial intelligence, which is the soundtrack of the film.



Once the adult stories were collected, it was decided to create the stories in audio format. In order to keep the stories authentic, it was decided not to record the stories in a professional studio, but to use the original interview recordings. However, not all stories had these available. For example, stories that were submitted anonymously or in text form. In such cases, the stories were voiced by professional actors or representatives of the local community. For these recordings, background noise was deliberately created to match the aesthetic of an interview. After post-production, the stories were placed on the IZI Travel app. The stories are placed on the map at their corresponding locations or the locations are chosen for aesthetic reasons.



After the performances, an open-access audio guide and animated film were given to the local community. "Upside Down Kuldīga" has also reached beyond the borders of Kuldīga. For example, a Los Angeles based choreographer came up with a TikTok dance that she danced with her students. The performance theme has also been appreciated by other communities. For example, a local school decided to dedicate this year's calendar to this topic.

Journalist Ketija Jurčenko talks to Ieva Štro, community art commissioner who grew up in and currently lives in Kuldīga, and Jurgis Spulenieks, theatre director who spent his childhood and high school years in Kuldīga, about community involvement and the realization of this project:

Ketija: Why this name – *Upside Down Kuldīga*?

Jurgis: Despite the fact that Kuldīga may look like a glossy postcard on the surface, life there sometimes has a completely different zest. If you look at the old town, there are hardly any right angles to the houses. There is a certain wrongness, but it is wrongness in an absolutely positive way. Of course, the weirdness also comes from habit – what people call places and things, for example, people of my generation still remember places like "Kosmoss" or "Progress" (the former shops in Kuldīga). The more I think about it, the more I see these absurdities. For example, I think that Kuldīga is the only place in Latvia where the cultural centre is located in a supermarket. In Kuldīga, everyone knows that if you want to buy furniture, you have to go to "Talsu Meat Shop". I came to the conclusion that we have a lot of cool and interesting stories that should be collected.

And so one by one we collected about a hundred stories. I am hardly able to share them, because in Kuldīga it is not easy to break the ice, especially if you have to be persuaded to share. Usually the answer is: "Where are you going to show this? Somewhere else? Yes, then I'll tell the story. In Kuldīga?? No, no, no, no, no... Then I will not participate".

Ketija: Ieva, had you noticed any of Kuldīga's quirks before working on this project?

Ieva: Yes, I think it's cool that there are such things in life. Everything that is wrong is actually imperfectly perfect. I believe that's the taste of reality in this collection of stories. As Jurgis said, to step out of the UNESCO cliché frame and see life and authenticity in the city. Maybe I hadn't noticed such small details, but I accept Kuldīga as a living organism with all its positive quirks.

Jurgis: Even our watchtower is crooked!

Ieva: Yes! And the way people love it – they come and stand in line! I think everyone longs for that authenticity.

Ketija: Talking about authenticity, Jurgis, you have already outlined the difficulties that arose during the collection of the stories. Maybe you can share this process?

Jurgis: We had the first announcements, which we sent to different communities in Kuldīga – seniors, teachers, young people. I have to say that in the first calls we collected several stories, but they were small miniatures, so we realised that we had to change the strategy and go to the people themselves. We went to the communities, we talked, we collected stories. After filtering them, we realised that we should go directly



to the people and interview them. So I think it's cool that you can hear a lot of different voices in the audioguide. Of course, knowing that not all stories are ready to be shared, we gave people the opportunity to submit them anonymously. The stories are being translated into English, so they will also be available to foreigners. One of the schools borrowed this theme for their school calendar. I think it's cool because it's turning into a kind of movement rather than one event. In fact, this community involvement has gone almost international. A former choreographer from Kuldīga, who now lives in California [ed.: Gunta Liepiņa-Miller], also got involved. With her Californian students, she is creating a TikTok dance for us, using the music created for the animated film [ed: music created using artificial intelligence]. I am very happy that this work has not yet been released, but its cheerfulness transcends borders and oceans.

Ieva: The topic is so positive and cool that the positivity spreads. I think this happiness is missing in everyone nowadays.

Jurgis: Yes, I agree. And the kind of joy can be very different – that's why the stories are so different. The main condition was that if they bring joy to the storyteller, then there must be a cool hook or key to it.

Ketija: This "joie de vivre" seems to be contagious. I cannot stop smiling while listening to you both. I understand that joyfulness was one of the curators' selection criteria. What else was important to you?

Ieva: We had a training in Budapest, where other community art commissioners from Budapest, Poland, America also shared their experiences. We had a wonderful opportunity to choose the criteria for the artist open call. We wanted to give as much joy and cultural dose to people as possible with the funding of this project, so joie de vivre was the main selection criterion. Other points included previous experience in art projects.

Jurgis: I would like to add that, in connection with the methodology of this project, I was positively convinced by this summer's Democracy Festival in Kuldīga, where open call artists repeatedly presented their ideas. My conclusion was that all of them should be executed, because they are like a huge ball of joy. It actually also shows how hard it was for the curators to evaluate all the submissions.

Ieva: There were a lot of applications [ed: almost 30 authors responded]. Each of them had a video, others had presentations, or visuals. We had a lot to choose from. We worked very hard for two days and made a table with the criteria.

Ketija: The task sounds very responsible – essentially, three people have to represent the interests of the Kuldīga community. The word "community" has come up quite a lot in our conversation. How did you define it in the context of this project?



Ketija: Why is community-commissioned art so important? After all, there are experienced curators, public institutions that do it.

Ieva: The other girls and I had an inner feeling that we, the people from Kuldīga, know what we want to create for our city. We know what is happening here, what is missing, what is needed. The contemporary art movement is so creative and diverse that it was a great platform for us to give people the opportunity to be creative. This process itself is very interesting, the community commissioning for themselves. It's amazing! Rather than some outsider thinking they know what's best for us. That is not always the case. The community project is wonderful because it is co-creation – for ourselves, for our city, with a kind of aftertaste of sustainability.

Jurgis: I consider this to be a very democratic approach. It allows us to get something that we ourselves have initiated. There is great power in that. One is community research, where professionals come, collect local stories and put them into a show. I think a cool example of this in Latvia is Lubāna Applied Theatre, where Jānis Balodis has collected more than 300 stories and put them together in a wonderful composition [ed: Lubāna Applied Theatre Group's performance "Pieaugšana"]. The other kind of community theatre is when the local community commissions a local theatre, whether amateur or professional. There is a kind of synergy there. Like in this project, where the commissioning is done by curators chosen from the local community. This kind of collaboration is also possible. I am a little bit sorry that in Latvia this is not usually the case. Latvians have a kind of inertness to get involved, but if you get over that, the potential that can be achieved is very impressive.

Ketija: Yes, definitely! I think it's a wonderful opportunity to give the locals a place to express themselves and also to see themselves from the outside, while people from other cities can come and see what the people of Kuldīga have to say about themselves. I myself am from Riga. How would you describe the community of Kuldīga, the people of Kuldīga to me?

Ieva: Kuldīga is very colourful, vibrant and proud. These are my first associations. The community of Kuldīga is very creative and strong.

Jurgis: Two words come to mind. Now I'm thinking how to say it in a nicer way, so that everyone in the world doesn't get offended and kick me out of Kuldīga.

Ieva: I thought of that too! (Laughs) They're just our personal feelings.

Jurgis: On behalf of myself and my community of friends, I would describe Kuldīga as generous, but stingy. That first impression when you speak to a person from Kuldīga is like a wall. There is an emotional stinginess, a closedness, but when this wall breaks down, there is generosity, hugs...

Ieva: Yes! Very typical!

Jurgis: ...and kisses. Emotional generosity in joy and everything else.

Ieva: We have this Nordic mentality – when we love, we love for real. That first step is harder, but after that comes true generosity, openness, love. You have to prove a little bit that you are worth it.

Jurgis: Exactly. What fascinates me is that somehow in these stories, things that are specific only for Kuldīga appear very vividly. For example, the fact that Kuldīga may not have billboards, because the best advertising is gossip. The stories will be vibrant, colourful. There will be a love triangle, a story about ordinary people from Kuldīga, a story about neo-Kantians. There will be plenty of room for expansion! Of course, the legendary Naked Run [ed: the annual Midsummer Naked Run in Kuldīga] will also be mentioned. There will be something to feast your ears and everything else.

Ketija: It really sounds vibrant and colourful. Maybe there is something I haven't asked yet that you would like to share?

Jurgis: I would like to say a huge thank you to the New Theatre Institute of Latvia, the three fantastic curators and everyone involved! I think that if we had to make end-titles for this project, they would last for about two hours. I'm really surprised that such a spider's web of this one thing, this idea, has gone off in different directions.

Ieva: Not only the end product, but the process was wonderful. International encounters, two trips, the Homo Novus Festival experience. I think it's like a new path and a wonderful opportunity to bring contemporary art to Kuldīga, because there is relatively little of it here. To be part of this process – my daughter took part in this animation masterclass. Children have the opportunity to watch, to create. The process is, as Jurgis said, like a spider's web. That's the most beautiful contribution of this whole project – from human to human.

Ketija: I think that the spider web that you mentioned, which is spreading, is also a reflection of the unity and strength of the community itself. It can be so extensive because of the responsiveness and willingness of the local population to participate. It is wonderful that you have succeeded in getting them interested. I think that the same interest will be there for the performance itself.

Ieva: Yes, we had a challenge. I've managed several projects, but this is the first time I've been involved in a project like this. I had an internal challenge – I wanted to do an open call so that artists would want to apply, so that there would be that interest. We had a responsibility to our city and it's cool that the result has been successful. Everyone is warmly invited to the launch of the audioguide in Kuldīga!

Jurgis: And after the premiere of the cartoon, get ready to do the TikTok dance!

Four Seasons

by Filip 'Skont' Niziołek

Four Seasons is a multidisciplinary, artistic and social project, realised in Brochów, Wrocław. It consists of two artistic productions - a film and a mural and an exhibition of drawings - which complement and result from each other.

The project is centred around a social housing apartment block on Koreanska Street. The centrepiece of the project is a large-scale mural occupying the two gable walls of the block of flats, on which portraits of its residents are painted. The creation of the mural is accompanied by a film in which Skont records conversations with the people he meets and the process of creating the mural over the course of a year. A presentation of sketches and drawings created for the project will also be made in Brochów.

The artists' aim is to create a large-scale work about the lives of people he has met in Brochów. He focuses mainly on the tenants of the social building on Koreanska Street because it is said to be a scary building. The other residents of the neighbourhood try to avoid it, and you can see the neglect with the naked eye. Scratched walls, plywood in the windows, an unpleasant atmosphere. With his actions, Skont wanted to change this image and turn it into a work of art, the likes of which Poland has never seen!

Film - this is where Skont has started his activities in Brochów. He walks around, talks to people, observes places, tries to find out something interesting but also simply make contact. He filmed in winter and spring before his project was selected in June for the realisation, and has continued to film in summer and autumn. Ultimately, the film will comprise four short stories about each season he had spent in Brochów.

Mural - Painting the social block is the centrepiece of this project. This vision is where it all started. Skont drew inspiration for the mural from his film. He has mainly focused on portraits of people interested in talking to him. The artist wanted to give them a memento of that time and an awareness that they are remembered. In the future the mural will hopefully consist of four images - Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. Accordingly, there is to be one painting on each wall. In this project Winter and Spring are painted on the two opposite walls



The Four Seasons Block aims to turn the unfriendly image of the block of flats on Koreanska Street into a showpiece for Brochów, but also for Wrocław. Such a project has not yet been seen in our country. As the artist himself says: “I want to make the residents of the social housing happy with this project because I believe that every person deserves to be noticed. The mural will benefit the neighbourhood and bring joy to the whole community. I believe that with this work I will be able to change the world for the better. For me, it will be a dream come true to create a monumental piece of street art”

Art commissioner Gosia Tutko talked to artist Filip ‘Skont’ Niziołek to dive into the project while it was being developed.

Gosia: Hi, Filip, could you say a few words about yourself, what you do professionally and artistically?

Filip: I do street art in the broadest sense. And in my definition, that means I paint walls, wall wastelands. That’s what I call them. It’s walls that are broken, knocked down, forgotten or, for example, someone else’s, but, in my opinion, something should be put on them, some kind of artwork. What I do is a modern form derived from graffiti. So I use a lot of – let’s say – the intention of graffiti. That is, I don’t always do it all quite legally, because I think I’m just not doing any evil. I’m after the Academy of Fine Arts in Wrocław, after painting and after multimedia.

And I combine all these interests of mine in such a way that I paint mainly portraits. These are portraits of specific people, some strange images of them, often distorted. Each painting hides with it a story that only I know. I think that over time I will try to reveal these stories more and more, so that the viewer also knows what they are about.

Gosia: So you have your artistic vision, where you’re going, you know what you want to do. And it’s all very specific.

Filip: I’m pleased to hear that. I’ve been doing this for over 20 years now, so it’s slowly getting more concrete for me somehow. I’m constantly learning, developing, interested. Like anyone who is into something. But if you say it sounds



so concrete, then I’m glad. Because I myself, you know, sometimes I have different problems with what I’m doing, different uncertainties, but I guess that’s natural.

Gosia: Please tell us how you found yourself in the DemArt project, how did you come across it? Why did you decide to apply?

Filip: It was a coincidence. I got a link with the call announcement independently from two friends. I don’t usually apply to such projects. Somehow I’ve never been interested in competitions, especially for murals. I go my own way on this subject, I don’t take advantage of what has been created in Poland in the trend of murals. And when I read that this is a project in Brochów, I immediately remembered a wall I have been observing for many years. I have such a collection of walls in my head, I am a wall fanatic. Wherever I am, I look at walls. And I was then reminded of one particular one in Brochow and so I applied. And because I knew it was going to be more than just a ‘pretty painting’, that it was going to have some deeper dimension, I thought it was worth taking that step. And so my adventure began. I just went to these people, to this block. This building.

Gosia: It’s about a social block where excluded people live. Often people with alcohol problems, homeless people, people in a difficult financial situation or some kind of illness, crisis, and who just found their home there.

Filip: Yes, exactly, and the walls of that block of flats just seemed like the perfect place for my art. And that’s how it started. This project is still ongoing, the finalisation will start soon.

Gosia: That block you’re painting, I can see it now from my window even, way over there. It’s one of the ugliest buildings in Brochów in general. Why exactly this ugly block of flats?

Filip: As I said, somehow the walls seemed suitable for me to go in there. I don’t really feel comfortable in such clean



spaces, but I'm more comfortable in a block like that. I feel it, I feel that I can give something back, do something, work, change something. Just like that. This is my artistic feeling, let's say, or just a human feeling, I don't know.

Gosia: We, as artistic commissioners, consisting of myself - Gosia, Arleta and Hubert, chose the final three. Of these three, we chose your work because we thought it contributed the most socially, would be important for the people of Brochów. I still wanted to ask what difficulties you encountered with this project, because we chose you in June. It's mid-November and there is still no finalisation of this project.

Filip: Yes, there's no final for this project, but I'm starting in a few days, so we're talking literally just before the final itself. That is, before the painting of these murals. Where-as so far there have been 2 films, a number of interviews I've done with the residents of this block, I've taken photos of them. I even collected, imagine, RODO consents for the publication of the image, because somewhere in the whole bureaucratic process, someone needed it.

Why did it take so long? The holiday period made administrative matters very difficult. I also wanted to take a bit of a break from this project, because for the first six months of this year I was heavily involved in it, at this stage of the application, of setting it all up. Then we applied with the ArtTransparent Foundation, there were talks with the authorities who decide whether this project is going to be built, which is the city hall, but it's not the owner, it's Wrocławskie Mieszkania. When they agreed, they sent us to the city plastics officer, who in turn sent us to the conservation officer, and there the letter was already stuck for two months. The area around it is historic, so the conservator replied that, well, I can't do such fiddly paintings there, especially when it comes to this wall, because I wanted to paint the whole building. I would still like to paint around it. The conservator agreed only to the side walls, where there are no windows, and not as I had proposed in the designs but in a softer, less fussy way. I needed a while to rework the designs, to transform them into forms I liked. So we wrote again, but the wait was shorter. The answer came after two weeks, then it was back to the building manager. And so it came to pass that it is the end of November and we are starting the project. It's difficult. Not difficult. I am determined to do this project. I've been on this project all year this project, it's with me somewhere. I care and that's it. And the fact that it will be cold? I'm counting on the passionate support of the residents.



Gosia: It is indeed a lot of such administrative, documentary problems that you have encountered. I think that's also a feature of Poland, in terms of such bureaucracy.

Filip: Perhaps, but also what I've managed to do here is not to get upset about it all. Because if I were to get upset, to focus on the fact that it's like this and not like that, I wouldn't gain anything, and the extra energy would still feed myself. So that's the extra learning for me, that some things we don't jump over, because they're not dependent on us.

Gosia: You said it beautifully. So you're about to start the final, and when do you think you'll finish this project?

Filip: I hope to finish by Santa Claus, which is the 6th of December. That is, to paint 18 portraits on two walls. There, certain people have changed, one girl I portrayed died, but her boyfriend agreed that her image should nevertheless appear on this wall in the form of such a memorial. One relationship fell apart, one of them moved out and also withdrew their consent. And other, positive changes have also taken place - two people have stopped drinking alcohol. Quite an interesting thing going on there.

Gosia: It's very interesting because you're actually not just painting, you're documenting these people, their lives. People you met a year ago. You know what has changed in them, what their affairs are like now. May there be more of these positive changes. And I feel sorry for the dead lady.

Filip: I was very surprised by that too. But we'll all, at some point, go somewhere, so....

Gosia: So you also had the opportunity to see such a circle of life and death in that block there.

Filip: Exactly.



THE TOOLKIT



The goal of this Open Art Methodology Toolbox is for the DemArt project methodology to be replicated everywhere. For this reason, not only DemArt values, stories, people, and commissions might serve as an example, but also the actual materials that were developed throughout the project for them to be used as models and be repurposed for future iterations of the project.

Below, readers can find the main deliverables that were developed during the duration of the DemArt project in order for them to use them, edit them, and share them. Along with a brief description, a QR code will take to the original version of the file.

Code of Conduct

During the kick-off meeting of the project, a code of conduct was developed and agreed by all project members at the time in order to establish the terms of the collaboration and set up the guidelines for the future collaboration.



DemArt Code of Conduct

Letter to the Municipality

Given the community-based nature of this project, it is encouraged to involve the municipalities and the public representatives from the very beginning of the process so they can be partners throughout the path. It might be recommendable to send a letter to the municipality following this example.



Bethlen Square Theater and Pro Progressione DemArt Letter to the Municipality

Open Call for Art Commissioners

Art Commissioners were invited to apply to become community leaders through an open call where both their community engagement and interest in contributing at a local level through the arts, among other criteria, were considered.



Bethlen Square Theater
and Pro Progressione
DemArt Open Call
for Art Commissioners



Art Transparent
DemArt Open Call
for Art Commissioners



New Theatre Institute
of Latvia DemArt Open
Call for Art Commissioners

Art Commissioners Curriculum Training

Once art commissioners were selected, a joint training was conducted to create a sense of community as well as to orient them in the development of the open call for artists as well as the selection methodology and criteria.



DemArt Art Commissioners Curriculum

Open Call for Artists

Art Commissioners developed their own open call for artists focusing on the needs and dreams of their communities making decisions about the discipline and scope of the projects always supported by the project managers and advisors of the project.



Bethlen Square Theater and
Pro Progressione DemArt
Open Call for Artists



Art Transparent DemArt
Open Call for Artists



New Theatre Institute
of Latvia DemArt
Open Call for Artists

Artists Application Form

Prospective artists responded to the open call through a form where art commissioners were able to identify potential projects with meaningful ideas for their communities in order to select three of them in the first phase.



Bethlen Square Theater and
Pro Progressione DemArt
Artists Application Form



Art Transparent DemArt
Artists Application Form



New Theatre Institute
of Latvia DemArt
Artists Application Form

Decision-making Methodology

Making decisions is hard especially if only one project can be awarded. Here is a decision-making practice followed by one of the teams of the DemArt project in order to guarantee a final decision where everyone in the process felt heard and included.



DemArt Decision-making Methodology



GO AND COMMISSION ART
IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

Now it is your turn!

We hope this methodology toolbox assists you in replicating the DemArt model in your community.

But before you start, please keep in mind that:

- Engaging people is challenging and not always goes as planned
- Art quality is a very personal concept and very often there is no consensus about it
- Participation in open calls needs to be promoted strategically
- Political elections might result in changes in to what extent the project is supported
- There might be changes in the staff throughout the development of the project
- Conflicts might arise between the different people involved
- Gathering people is difficult due to availability
- Costs might rise due to inflation or extraordinary circumstances
- Community members might have different impressions on the commission
- Make sure you plan for evaluation meetings and debriefing moments
- The continuation and afterlife of the project should be considered

Credits



Democratising Art Commissioners by Involving Local Communities (DemArt)
International Institute of Community Commissioned Art (ICCA)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



Bethlen Square Theater
- Central European Art Network



Pro Progressione



Art Transparent



New Theatre Institute
of Latvia

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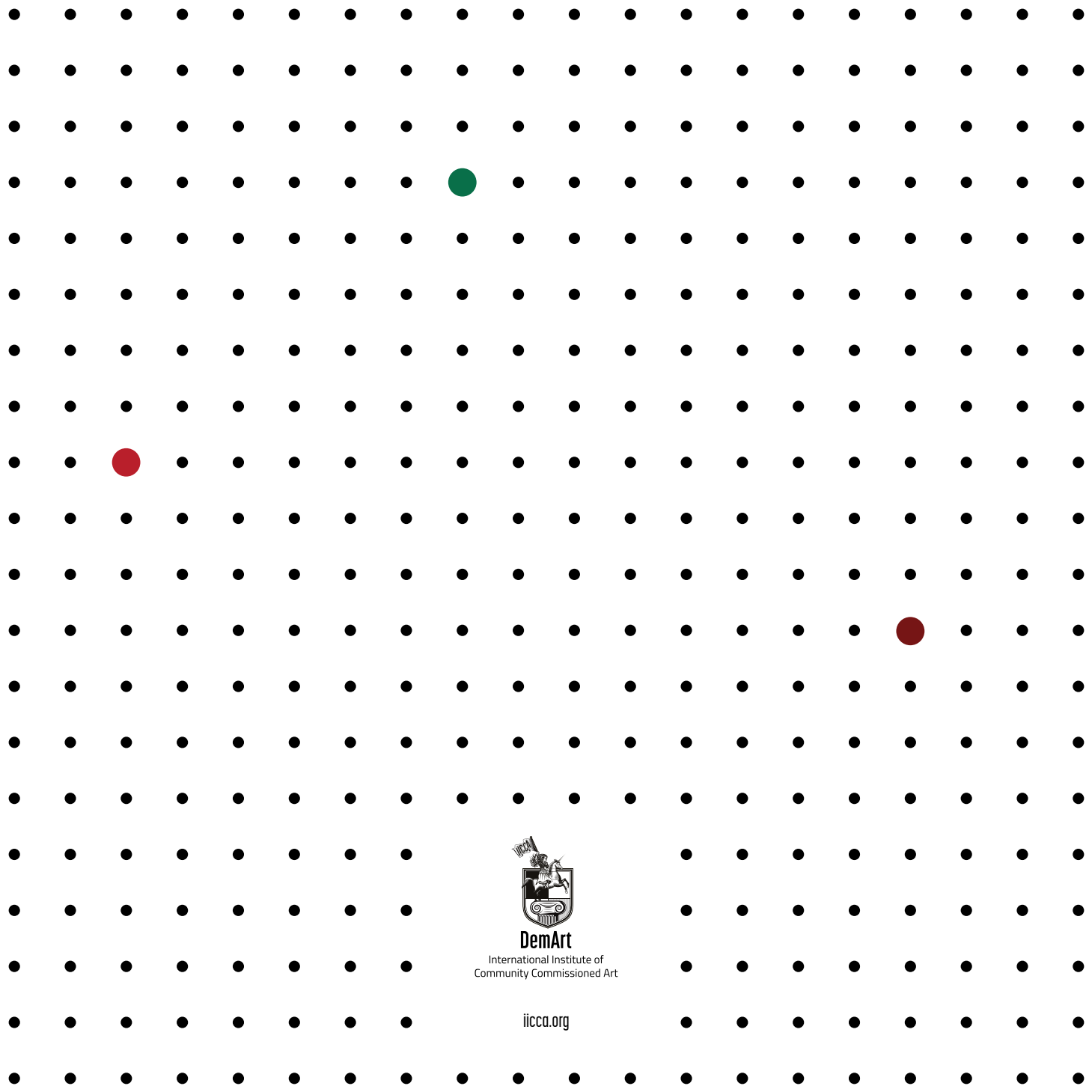
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DemArt
International Institute of
Community Commissioned Art

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