THE ART OF COMMUNITY
A TOOLKIT FOR YOUTH WORKERS AND ARTISTS
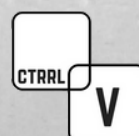
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CTRRL+V Association

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Background

Nowadays the definiton of art is undergoing great changes: social responsibility is becoming more important than ever, substance is getting more important than format, and the priority is the impact of the art on the individual. Different art projects and initiatives are kind of similar to civil initiatives now. In contemporary fine art, participation-based, community art initiatives have taken the forefront.

As civil organization workers focused on Erasmus+ and non-formal education, and as young individuals committed to contemporary arts, we had to recognize the parallel and respond to it.

Our NGO and our partners have explored the connection between non-formal learning tools and contemporary community art methods during the implementation of many common youth exchange projects in the past.

Since 2017, we have been organizing Erasmus+ youth exchange programs on this topic, and in November 2022 and March 2023, we were able to conduct our first Erasmus+ trainings in the topic, during which we practiced and enhanced the methods developed over the years with youth workers and artists. Our partner organizations were Udruga Enas from Croatia, Excel Skopje from North Macedonia and Inkluzivni Pokret from Serbia.

In the first chapters of our toolkit, you will find a theoretical overview along with some international examples, followed by brief descriptions of our own methods. These methods are freely adaptable, can be further developed, and can be applied in different contexts. We primarily share them to provide ideas for artists and youth workers and to encourage them to collaborate.

Participants during our community painting workshop (Project: Art For Youth - 2019)

What is community art?

"Community art is artistic activity that is based in a community setting, characterised by interaction or dialogue with the community and often involving a professional artist collaborating with people who may not otherwise engage in the arts."

(TATE art terms)

The history of community art is a rich and diverse one, rooted in the idea that art can be a powerful tool for social change and community development. Here's a brief overview of its evolution:

- Early Origins: Community art can be traced back to the early 20th century, with movements like the Mexican muralists and the Harlem Renaissance in the United States. These artists (Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, és Orozco José Clemente etc.) used public art to engage with and reflect the struggles and aspirations of their communities.
- Post-War Expansion: After World War II, community art gained momentum, especially in Europe and the United States. Initiatives like the Community Arts Movement in the UK and the WPA Federal Art Project in the United States aimed to use art as a means to foster social cohesion and recovery.
- The 1960s and 70s: The 1960s and 70s saw a surge in community art movements. The Civil Rights Movement and countercultural revolution inspired artists to use their creative skills to address pressing social issues. Public art, street theater, and participatory projects became popular forms of expression. Meanwhile, Augusto Boal establishes the Forum Theatre movement in Brazil.
- The Rise of Public Art: Public art installations, murals, and sculptures became a prominent feature of many cities during this period. Artists began collaborating with local communities to create art that represented their values, histories, and identities.
- Community Engagement: In the 1980s and 90s, community art continued to evolve, focusing more on direct community engagement and participation. Artists worked closely with marginalized groups, using their art as a means for empowerment and social change.
- Globalization: The late 20th century and early 21st century saw the globalization of community art. It expanded beyond Western countries, with community art projects emerging in various cultural contexts worldwide. Artists increasingly collaborated with communities in developing countries, addressing issues like poverty, health, and education.

- Digital Transformation: The advent of the internet and digital technologies opened up new avenues for community art. Online platforms and social media have made it easier for artists and communities to connect, share their work, and collaborate across geographical boundaries.
- Social and Environmental Issues: Today, community art continues to be a powerful tool for addressing a wide range of social and environmental issues. Artists engage with topics like climate change, social justice, and immigration, using their work to raise awareness and promote positive change.
- Inclusion and Diversity: The field of community art has become more inclusive and diverse, with a greater emphasis on representing the voices and experiences of underrepresented communities. It has also embraced a broader range of artistic mediums and approaches.
- Art for Social Change: Community art has evolved into a broader movement known as "art for social change." It encompasses a wide array of artistic practices, including community-based art, social practice art, and participatory art, all aimed at addressing societal issues and fostering positive transformation.

In summary, the history of community art is one of evolution and adaptation. It has grown from its early roots in social and political movements into a global movement that uses art to engage communities, address pressing issues, and promote positive change. Its future is likely to continue evolving as it responds to the ever-changing needs and challenges of society.

Some examples:

- Oda Projesi: (Turkish, meaning: room project) is an Istanbul initiative. The three-member artistic group has been active since 1997 in a specific residential community. They conduct workshops, picnics, communal music, and other events with remarkable activity. The group is known for bypassing traditional aesthetic values, aiming to foster dialogue among community members, using art more as a means than an end in itself.
- The "Before I Die" Wall: This project was started by artist Candy Chang, who transformed the side of an abandoned building into a chalkboard where people could complete the sentence "Before I die, I want to..." This interactive installation encourages community members to share their dreams and aspirations.
- The Gates Project: Christo and Jeanne-Claude's "The Gates" in Central Park, New York City, featured thousands of saffron-colored fabric panels hanging along the park's walkways. This large-scale public art installation engaged the local community and drew millions of visitors, transforming the park into a vibrant and visually stunning environment.

- **Wasteland:** Initiated in 2008, Vik Muniz's project collaborates with individuals in a Brazilian garbage dump, creating art from discarded materials. The art pieces were auctioned, with photographic documentation used as collateral. Funds raised were returned to the local participants, highlighting the transformative power of art, both creatively and economically.
- **The Singing Ringing Tree:** Located in the UK, this unique sculpture is a musical instrument as well as a piece of art. The wind-powered sound sculpture is made of pipes and creates melodic sounds as the wind passes through, inviting the local community to engage with the art and environment.
- **The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program:** Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program is one of the largest public art programs in the United States. It has created over 4,000 murals throughout the city, often involving local communities in the design and painting process, addressing social issues, and transforming neighborhoods.
- **The Inside Out Project:** Initiated by the French artist JR, this global participatory art project involves people taking portraits of themselves and their communities and pasting them in public spaces. It aims to highlight local stories and issues, creating a sense of unity and shared identity.

JR's Inside-Outside Project in Palestine: This project brings together Palestinian and Israeli youth to create public art that reflects their shared experiences, hopes, and challenges, promoting dialogue and understanding in a conflict-affected region. Source: www.insideoutproject.net

What is Non formal learning?

Non-formal education is a dynamic and flexible approach to learning that takes place outside the traditional classroom setting and is not bound by rigid structures, prescribed curricula, or formal assessments. Instead, it encompasses a wide range of learning experiences that are often learner-centered and tailored to individual needs and interests. Here's a more detailed exploration of what non-formal education is and its key characteristics:

- Flexibility and Accessibility: Non-formal education is designed to reach diverse learners who may not fit into traditional educational systems. It can be customized to suit the needs of specific groups, such as adults, individuals with disabilities, or those in underserved communities. It offers opportunities for people who may have limited access to formal education.
- Informal Settings: Non-formal education can take place in a variety of settings, including community centers, workshops, online platforms, museums, libraries, and even in the workplace.
- Diverse Learning Activities: Non-formal education encompasses a wide range of learning activities, such as workshops, seminars, apprenticeships, vocational training, life skills training, and volunteer work. These activities can cover academic subjects, practical skills, personal development, and social or cultural experiences.
- Learner-Centered Approach: Non-formal education prioritizes the needs and interests of the learners. It allows individuals to set their own learning goals, pace, and priorities, fostering a sense of ownership and motivation.
- Practical and Experiential Learning: Non-formal education often emphasizes practical, hands-on, and experiential learning. It aims to provide real-world skills and knowledge that can be immediately applied to everyday life or work.
- Recognition and Certification: While non-formal education may not lead to traditional academic degrees, many programs offer certificates or credentials that validate the skills and knowledge acquired. These can be valuable for career advancement and personal development.
- Inclusivity and Lifelong Learning: Non-formal education is inclusive and accessible to a wide range of learners, regardless of age, background, or prior educational experiences. It promotes the idea of lifelong learning, where individuals continue to learn and adapt throughout their lives.
- Community and Social Engagement: Many non-formal education programs foster community and social engagement. They often involve group activities, collaboration, and the development of interpersonal and communication skills.

- Addressing Specific Needs: Non-formal education can be used to address specific needs within a community or society, such as adult literacy programs, vocational training for marginalized groups, or skill development for individuals in the workforce.
- Complementing Formal Education: Non-formal education is not meant to replace formal education but to complement it. It can fill gaps, enhance skills, and provide opportunities for personal growth and development that may not be fully addressed within formal educational systems.

In conclusion, non-formal education is a versatile and inclusive approach to learning that recognizes the diversity of learners and the various ways in which knowledge and skills can be acquired. It plays a crucial role in promoting lifelong learning, fostering personal and professional development, and addressing the educational needs of a wide range of individuals and communities.

Non-formal education workshop in Somogyszentpál, Hungary, 2022. (Trainer: Gergely Zsóri)

The commonalities between community art and non-formal education:

- Informal Learning Environments: Both community art and non-formal education often take place in informal settings, such as community centers, public spaces, workshops, or online platforms. These environments provide a more relaxed and non-traditional context for learning and creativity.

- Emphasis on Practical Experience: Both fields place a significant emphasis on practical, experiential, and hands-on learning. They aim to provide real-world skills, knowledge, and creative experiences that can be immediately applied in daily life or personal development.

- Social and Collaborative Aspects: Community art and non-formal education frequently involve group activities, collaboration, and the development of interpersonal and communication skills. They often foster social engagement and community building.

- Lifelong Learning: Both community art and non-formal education promote the concept of lifelong learning, where individuals continue to learn and grow throughout their lives. They recognize that learning and creativity are not limited to a specific age or educational phase.

- Addressing Specific Needs: These approaches can be tailored to address specific needs within a community or society. They are often used to provide targeted solutions, whether it's addressing social issues, skill development, personal growth, or responding to the unique requirements of a particular group.

In summary, community art and non-formal education share a commitment to flexible, participant-centered, inclusive, and practical learning and creative experiences. They take place in diverse settings, promote collaboration and community engagement, and emphasize the value of lifelong learning. These common characteristics reflect their shared mission to provide accessible and meaningful opportunities for personal development, social change, and artistic expression.

Community painitng and acting workshops during our trainings (The Art Of Community - 2022-2023)

Traditional art tools

As children, we all painted, drew, expressed ourselves, and nurtured our creativity. Likely, this is why using traditional artistic tools is highly practical in participatory art practices — these methods bring out the long-forgotten child in most of us.

The use of traditional artistic tools is highly practical in the application of participatory art practices. Art is most commonly associated with painting and sculpture, or perhaps drawing, so these tools can encourage participants to create more boldly, even if they lack experience.

Another significant advantage of these methods is that participants work with various tangible materials (paper, glue, paints, etc.) and tools (brushes, pencils, markers, scissors, etc.), which are becoming increasingly rare among today's youth. These methods simultaneously entice participants out of their comfort zones while providing a sense of security.

Community painting:

We can observe various community painting projects and initiatives, but we would like to introduce the methodology we have developed over the years. Upon familiarizing ourselves with other projects and in our initial work, we noticed that in certain communities, most participants may struggle to express themselves, as more confident or experienced participants tend to dominate the space. Introverted, uncertain, or quieter individuals do not necessarily lack ideas; in fact, they often have valuable insights. Therefore, we have created an approach in which everyone can participate on an equal footing.

What we need:
- Minimum of 15-20 participants
- An approximately 8-10 meters long, 1-1.5 meters wide surface (paper or canvas)
- Pencils, brushes, markers, paints, scissors, glues (for collage), and potentially other tools
- 2-3 days of preparation, 2-3 days of creating, and 1 day for evaluation.

First and second day - Introduction and preparation:

Team building is essential during a well-organized community painting project. Participants need to get to know each other, their creative teams, and build trust in the trainers/organizers. This helps facilitate successful collaboration and information sharing later on and enables participants to release their inhibitions more easily. We typically start the first day with team-building games to foster mutual acquaintance and only delve into the project's content in the latter part of the day. We clarify fears and expectations, establish common rules, and set the tone for the project. On the second day, we form creative teams, usually three of them. Since we often work in an international context, when forming the groups, we consider not only gender and age balance but also aim for equal representation from the participating countries. To strengthen the identities of these creative teams on the second day, we continue with workshops where we often organize "competitions" that require participants to go into the city/nature. The winning team receives symbolic rewards.

Third day - Planning:

On the morning of the third day, before the first workshop, we install the canvas/paper, but we don't yet place the paints, markers, and other more permanent tools. We provide each group with just one pencil and eraser. Subsequently, the three creative teams receive a common task. We usually draw a city that aligns with the project's theme (e.g., a sustainable city, a democratic city, etc.), then divide the area into suburbs, an industrial/residential zone, and a city center. The groups are randomly allocated to different sections of the canvas (through drawing lots). Each group is responsible for one third of the image, although participants can certainly help each other in the later stages. Besides creating according to their city section's needs, we often select an art historical period or artistic style with the groups. They have to create their city in that particular style later on. Before they start planning, participants receive individual tasks: we list infrastructure elements corresponding to the number of participants (utilities, education, transportation, communication, etc.), and each participant must draw one element. This way, participants have both individual and group tasks, and they need to collectively create the border areas between their territories.

During the third day, participants focus solely on planning. We divide the tasks in each workshop. In the first one, they have to agree on what they will draw/paint. In the second workshop, they concentrate on their personal tasks and clarify cooperation with the neighboring group. In the afternoon, they begin sketching. It's important to gradually introduce the groups to the creative process, with the foundation being collaboration, allowing participants to experience the significance of planning. At the end of each workshop, we request feedback. Initially, a designated group leader reports on the work processes, and later, each participant provides individual feedback, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to express their opinions.

Fourth and fifth day - Painting:

While the workshops designed for planning can be adapted depending on the group, the theme, and the specific situation, it is essential to only commence the next day with the part of the work when we provide participants with paints, markers, and other durable materials/tools. The foundation of successful collaborative work in this case, too, is thorough joint planning. By the time the tools are introduced, participants are also motivated to bring their ideas to life. At this point, we have received a rough sketch of a landscape, preferably one featuring nature, buildings, and basic infrastructure elements. Thanks to feedback opportunities at the end of the workshops, we have already clarified what each participant's personal task will be.

It's worth giving participants enough time for their work, but at the same time, we don't want them to feel like they have an unlimited amount of time. Based on our experience, 20-25 participants can complete a ten-meter canvas after thorough planning in two days. After this point, interest tends to wane, so it's important to strike a balance. If we allocate less time, participants may feel rushed. However, it's crucial to have defined stages of work. These stages can be divided according to the specific theme, but initially, it's advisable to focus on painting landscapes/buildings and only later on adding people/animals. We organize the work into one-and-a-half-hour workshops, and at the end of each session, we provide feedback opportunities, sometimes involving every participant, sometimes representatives from the group, always focusing on different aspects such as personal tasks, group tasks, and the assessment of teamwork success, etc. This allows us to continuously reflect on "city building." Nevertheless, it's important not to interfere with the creative work or make decisions on behalf of the participants, as this is always the responsibility of the participants and the group. It's crucial to remember that in a community art project, the participant is an equal creator with the organizing artist.

During the final workshop, we ask participants to make the finishing touches and then paint themselves somewhere on the canvas. During the last feedback session, participants show where they've painted themselves and in what form, and they explain to their peers why they chose to depict themselves that way. This usually provides excellent feedback regarding how the individual participants felt during the work.

Sixth day - Evaulation:

Since in a community art project the work process and the community are more important than the artwork itself, it's essential to allow the multi-day process to settle and give time for feedback and evaluation. This is crucial not only for the participants but also for the organizers, as it helps derive insights for further improvement.

The evaluation should be conducted alongside the completed artwork, allowing participants to continuously reflect on the creation and the creative processes, discuss collaboration, and address any potential misunderstandings. The method of feedback always depends on the theme of the specific project.

A significant portion of our participants is typically not artists, yet the end result is always visually fascinating due to the interesting composition created by participants with diverse backgrounds, cultures and varying styles. Since the artwork is rich in small details, it's easy to get lost in them, and there are numerous small ideas and stories within the surface. Discussing and realizing these details is an important stage in community building and raising awareness of the developed competencies.

One of the significant advantages of community painting is that the finished artwork is mobile, easily storable, and can be showcased in multiple projects or exhibitions in the future.

In the toolkit, we detailed community painting most extensively, partly because it's our most commonly used and thoroughly developed method, and we receive the most positive feedback in this regard. However, this process can serve as a basis for creating any other artistic community project. Using a similar breakdown, we can develop shorter theatrical or musical performances, or any other kind of artworks.

The illustrative images were created during our community painting projects.

Community Sculpture Making:

Unless specifically the theme of our project, community sculpture making is primarily suitable for team building or exploring a new approach to the subject we are examining, and for participants to begin thinking visually. In our case, a sculpture represents a three-dimensional projection. Unless we are organizing a community event for professional sculptors, it's natural that we won't be creating carved marble or cast bronze sculptures. It is more practical to recycle waste materials found nearby - as shown on the right, an example from one of our projects demonstrates this. However, it is important to clarify from the beginning that participants should also consider the future of the sculptures after the workshops, because unless we reuse them, they will end up as waste again. A community art project that generates more waste than it resolves cannot be considered successful or environmentally conscious. This workshop is often referred to as the Rauschenberg workshop because Robert Rauschenberg is known for incorporating the waste materials in his installations during his work.

We can even organize a sculpture-making workshop without any recycled materials. Simply dividing the participants into groups and asking them to create sculpture compositions with their own bodies can be sufficient. This workshop can have multiple objectives, such as addressing various themes, exploring how to tell a story through images (we can even request multiple consecutive compositions from the participants), and it can also serve as a team-building exercise.

Collaborative filmmaking

Each form of artistic expression has its own advantages when it comes to collaborative work. While traditional artistic tools are practical and easy to use, motion pictures and digital tools allow us to reach a broader audience, and these methods are perhaps the closest to today's youth. Nowadays, virtually every young person has a ready "film studio" in their pocket (or in their hand), and many know how to use it, as they create content for social media themselves. It's not advisable to underestimate the experiences of these young individuals; even the simplest TikTok videos are often skillfully edited and lighted, brimming with creative ideas. We can rely not only on the experience they gain from this, but also use it as a source of motivation in their work. Later on, they can share the created content with their friends as well.

Of course, every form of artistic expression has its advantages and disadvantages in the context of collaborative artistic practices. The application of digital tools in community art projects requires thorough preparation since even the slightest error can hinder the creative process. Participants or facilitators need to be designated in advance for every phase of the work. For example, in the production of a short film, if something crucial is missing, the entire effort can go to waste. When working in groups, each group should have someone who is knowledgeable about the various stages of filmmaking, either experienced or ensures in advance that the later ideas are technically feasible. Consequently, such a workshop-style collaboration demands meticulous preparation and planning.

Brainstorming on the project called "Step up 4 tolerance!"

Preparation

In addition to technical preparedness, it is advisable to conduct foundational workshops that enhance various competencies. In all our community filmmaking projects, we incorporate at least one scriptwriting workshop into the preparation and multiple group assignments that require participants to take photographs.

Photography workshops:

Essentially, any photography workshop can be beneficial for us, as long as they align with the theme of our project, the location, and the participants. The key is to initiate thinking in images. Tasks may include, for instance, telling a specific story through a few photographs, creating artistic references (as seen in the image on the previous page), or simply producing the best/most creative photos possible during the workshop. This work not only serves as team-building but also provides an opportunity to discuss topics such as composition or the narrative role of images during the workshop's evaluation. The essential aspect is not to encourage young people to engage in simple data collection but to create intentionally composed images. During the evaluation, we should naturally refrain from telling them what makes good composition; instead, we should ask them questions and guide them towards acquiring knowledge, relying on our shared knowledge base.

Solutions for various photography workshops

Scriptwriting workshop:

In the team-building sessions at the beginning of our projects, one of the tasks for every filmmaking project is to have the participants find a film that they all know. We may even ask them to agree on a common favorite film. In some cases, we have screened a film that aligns with the project's theme during leisure time, and most of the participants have watched it. Following this, in the first part of the scriptwriting workshop, we outline the basic plot structure of the chosen film, and collectively, we make the participants aware of the fundamental rules of dramaturgy. In the second part of the workshop, we divide the participants into groups and assign them various tasks. Several types of tasks can be used. We can start a story and then ask the groups to complete it, or we can show them just a picture from which they have to write a story. Alternatively, we can provide only a title, or we can ask them to write an ending for the film that we discussed collectively. The key is for the groups to start thinking in terms of short, few-minute stories and then present these to each other, either verbally or in the form of short presentations.

Film Making Workshops

After thorough preparation, it is advisable to divide the participants into smaller groups. Ideally, each group should have fewer than ten members but more than five. Following the approach used in community painting, the work should also be organized into workshops. During each 1.5-hour workshop, participants perform various tasks, which may vary depending on the theme and circumstances. It is recommended to proceed as follows:

- In the first workshop, participants should engage in brainstorming. Encourage them to come up with multiple feasible short film ideas and distribute roles among themselves.

- The second workshop can be dedicated entirely to scriptwriting and presenting the completed plans.

- Subsequent workshops should focus on shooting and editing. It's essential to allocate enough time for both of these processes. Rushing participants might lead to a lack of enjoyment and dissatisfaction with the final result.

- At the end of each workshop, hold an evaluation session where groups share their progress with each other and the organizers. This not only motivates participants but also helps identify potential mistakes or misunderstandings. If groups are familiar with each other's work, they can offer assistance and participate in each other's projects.

- Once the works are completed, it's a good idea to have a group film screening where we watch each other's creations and provide feedback. However, it's often more effective to schedule a detailed evaluation for the following day when we can approach it with fresh minds, allowing for more lasting insights and learning.

Brainstorming and presenting ideas for our project called "Connecting Hearts.mp4."

Evaluation

Filmmaking, while serving as a practical form of self-expression, demands a variety of tools and resources. Therefore, the assessment of the final creations should not solely focus on aesthetic values, especially since this often depends on the technical equipment, which, if we expect image quality surpassing that of mobile phones, is naturally our responsibility as organizers. What holds much greater importance is the relationships and group dynamics that develop among the participants and how effectively they were able to express their thoughts and emotions related to the theme.

Public Screening

After the workshops, a casual film viewing session with the participants not only serves as a form of relaxation but can also be a part of the preparation for a public screening. Everyone enjoys seeing their surroundings in films, and there is curiosity about how others interpret their environment. Organize a public screening of the completed films and invite the local community! This way, participants can not only engage with the local residents but also receive additional feedback. In our experience, it's often easier to attract locals to such events than to an exhibition, and these occasions can leave both participants and locals with memorable experiences.

The photos were taken at the public film screening of our project "CulTour" in Zebegény in 2017.

Street art/Public intervention

Street art is a well-known and popular form of contemporary visual art. We can create public murals and other outdoor artworks with participants, but for this, especially in the context of youth work, we typically require a legal surface or permission. If these conditions are met, we can even apply the community painting method previously presented in public spaces.

In the absence of these conditions, it's worth introducing our participants to the concept of Public Intervention Art. The commonality between the two lies in their public presence. However, both street art and public intervention art can carry a social message. In the case of public intervention art, the message is the primary focus, and the entire project is subordinated to it, making aesthetics secondary to the message. Artworks falling into this category are often not permanent, easily removable, and aimed at engaging passersby - perhaps the most significant difference between the two concepts. Both street art and public intervention art are excellent forms to consider in community art projects.

When requesting public intervention projects from participants, it's important to incorporate at least one research session into the timetable that builds on a previous occasion (unless we are working with local youth). During this session, participants can gather information about local conditions. This research can be conducted online, but it's advisable to send participants to nearby areas to have conversations with locals about local conditions and issues. In our experience, most people are open to discussing these topics. This way, our project can respond to real issues, and participants can gain a deeper understanding of the environment in which they are creating.

Participants in "The Art of Community" training are involved in a public intervention project, 2023.

Creating a community space

Creating community spaces is one of the most relevant and exciting form of community art, as it connects people and allows for a diverse expression of creativity. There are two options: transforming existing spaces to be more welcoming and inviting, or establishing new spaces. In the latter case, professional assistance may be necessary, as safety should always be a top priority in youth work. These spaces can be either temporary (e.g., within events, festivals) or permanent, often in collaboration with a specific community or municipality. For permanent spaces, an essential ethical consideration is not only the creation of the space but also its management to ensure its sustainability. This involves ongoing involvement and consultation with the community to ensure the space remains a valuable resource for the future.

Creating and participating in community spaces at the Waldofeszt festival in 2017 and 2022
(Projects: Share your culture - Balkans 1., 2.)

Performative arts

There are significant differences between a concert, a theatrical performance, a dance show, or an artistic performance. However, we aim to discuss them collectively in our toolkit for several reasons. On one hand, since we often involve non-artists in our projects, the organization and execution of the performance itself are usually more crucial than the specific expressive form. On the other hand, based on our experience, most groups blend these forms of self-expression in their performances. We not only support this but generally encourage them to freely choose the form of their presentation. Of course, there are exceptions, especially when working with more experienced young musicians or theater performers. In such cases, professionals dealing with these communities have their own methods.

In addition to developing competencies, we have two main goals in our case: establishing connections among our participants and engaging/informing the audience about the topic we are exploring. Therefore, thorough research is essential in our approach. It is advisable to encourage groups to conduct research before they begin preparing their presentations, allowing them to respond to real situations. A great example of this emerged in our last project: one group interviewed residents of Vác (Hungary) about local issues, discovering that Vác does not have selective recycling banks. Subsequently, this group focused on addressing this issue, demonstrating their ability to respond to a real and significant problem.

Team building is here at least as important as technical preparedness in our community filmmaking projects. Among our participants, there will be individuals with various inhibitions related to public performance, and our goal is for everyone to contribute equally and feel comfortable. It is advisable to allocate sufficient time to build trust among participants (those who feel supported are more likely to overcome their inhibitions), and it can also be helpful to create presentations even in the introductory sessions, albeit only for each other.

We have plenty of opportunities for team building and overcoming inhibitions, even among the examples previously presented. It's worthwhile to divide the groups early on to facilitate the formation of group dynamics. Participants can create sculpture compositions with their own bodies, and other groups have to figure out what event or narrative they represent. We can also ask them to <u>present a short story or musical performance</u> after a brief preparation. Since only other participants see them in this setting, even more reserved participants can gradually overcome their inhibitions. These tasks are generally enjoyable for participants, contributing to a positive atmosphere. Creating a safe environment is largely the organizers' responsibility. Facilitators/trainers can help by sharing their own inhibitions and asking participants to assist those who find public performance challenging.

The widely recognized method of <u>improvisational theater</u> can serve as an excellent tool for team building and overcoming inhibitions. We are familiar with several techniques; here, we briefly introduce some of them:

- "Pocket Lines": Before the improvisation the group writes a number of random lines, which are later integrated into the scene by the players at given points (they store these lines in their pockets, and when they get a sign, they have to read them out loud), switching the dynamics, the tone, or bringing humour into the situation.

- "Yes, And": It's a technique where participants accept whatever is presented to them by the other players ("Yes") and then build upon it by adding their own contributions ("And"). This approach creates a collaborative and supportive environment, fostering creativity and preventing scenes from becoming blocked by resistance or negation.

- "Scene Transformation": Participants engage in a basic scene, and at intervals, a transformation theme is introduced (e.g., emotions, time periods). This enhances adaptability, quick thinking, and storytelling versatility.

- "Character Swap": Involves participants portraying characters with distinct traits. Characters are randomly switched during scenes, challenging participants to maintain character essence while adapting to unexpected changes. This cultivates flexibility and character development skills.

After community building, participants continue working in the same groups they were part of during the initial sessions. It is advisable to track this process by dividing planning and preparation into blocks, with a joint evaluation with participants at the end of each block. During the first session, groups brainstorm ideas; in the second, they gather necessary equipment and choose a location. Subsequently, they can create required set pieces/props and, in the following sessions, rehearse performances in front of each other. Participants should not only receive feedback from organizers but also from each other during these rehearsals. Since this is not a competition, groups can support each other and even participate as spectators in each other's performances. Encouraging one another is crucial, especially since it is easier to attract new audiences to outdoor performances when there is already an audience present.

It is crucial for organizers to have thorough local knowledge, and in many cases, informing authorities/local government is unavoidable, as we are conducting public actions. The primary reasons for this are practical rather than ethical. In our experience, during a completely harmless street performance, local security forces appeared and instructed us to immediately stop our performance due to a lack of permission. In essence, a few participants placed ribbons in the main square, directing local residents to engage in conversations about their own culture (participants mostly came from Balkan countries, and we held the project in Vác, Hungary – you can see this project in the illustrative images above). It is not advisable to engage in a debate with local authorities about the ethical questions of contemporary art, so obtaining permits can save us a lot of energy. In the absence of permits, however, we must ensure that our performances are under no circumstances hazardous to pedestrians. From an artistic perspective, there are no obstacles to guerrilla actions, but as youth workers, we cannot afford such risks.

It is advisable to allocate a separate day for evaluation here as well since, on the one hand, the preparation and performance of the performances consume a lot of energy, and, on the other hand, once the experiences have settled, the conclusions drawn can be more insightful.
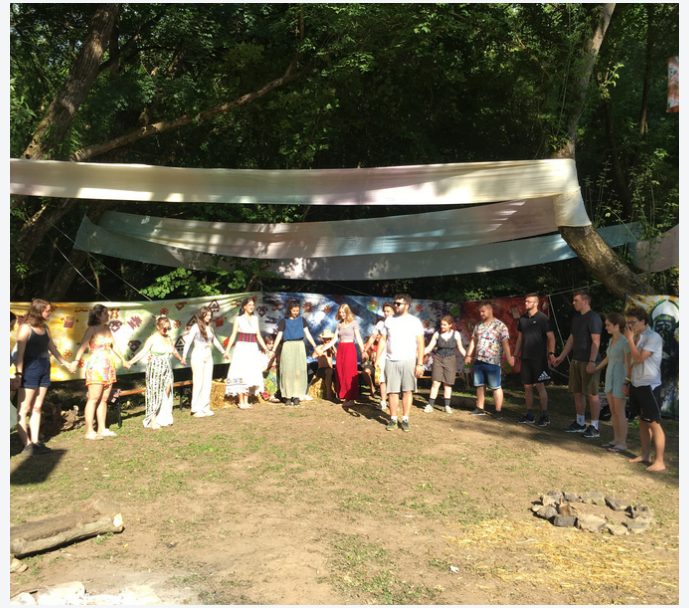
Folk dance workshops (Projects: Share your culture - 2., Political Activity 2.)

Summary

The presented methods have proven effective, and we have successfully applied them several times. However, when organizing a community art project, it is crucial to remain flexible, adapting to the situation and participants. Most of the mentioned artistic methods don't appear in isolation but rather coexist concurrently. For instance, we conduct workshops and performances in the community spaces we create. Our target audience is primarily in the age range of 17-18 to 35 years old, and we generally operate in an international context. Nevertheless, with logical modifications, the methods can also be applied in local communities, involving younger and, of course, older individuals.

Youth workers open to community art can enhance their methods with artistic tools, applying expressive forms that can make their work with young people more effective. Meanwhile, for artists using these methods, the presented workshops can provide an excellent introduction to understanding and adopting a participation-based artistic approach.

Creating in a community setting, bringing out the creativity of participants and recognizing how numerous small ideas can together form an intriguing composition during the organization of a project is always exciting. It is worthwhile to immerse oneself in this type of work, and we hope to experience increasing collaboration in the future between professionals from youth organizations and artists with a community-oriented mindset.

Street Exhibition in Katowice, Croatia - 2016 (Artwork by Petikid)

About us:

Kontroll V (Ctrrl+V) is a Hungarian NGO in the field of social and cultural youth work. Among the association's main goals are creating and developing different projects including Erasmus+, and building a better civil environment for its region, the Danube Bend ("Dunakanyar").

The organization started to create international projects in 2016, since then it is mainly connected to and working with youth. Kontroll V supports the mobilization and integration of youth, and encourages them to improve their creativity and entrepreneurship to create even more fruitful collaborations in the future. Using mostly creative and artistic tools, our aim is to deepen the social awareness and intercultural knowledge of the future generation, practicing the methods of non-formal learning and through intercultural dialogue.

Nowadays Kontroll V's focus has three main aspects: community art, youth participation, and mental health.

Project coordinators:

Péter Bódi - He has studied fine arts, and has participated in many international community art projects, as in many Erasmus+ Youth Mobility projects also. He is an author, a youth worker and the president of the organization.
    If you have any questions or would like to collaborate, feel free to contact:
- boodipeter@gmail.com
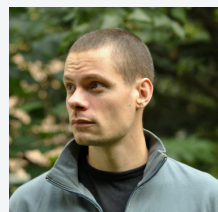
Péter Szlovik - He has studied political science, and he is a youth worker, working with youngsters and high school students about the topics of political and social participation and activism. He is the vice-president of the organization.
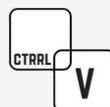- szlovik.peter@gmail.com

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