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ARTcoWORKers Newsletter

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ARTcoWORKers

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Dear readers,

We are pleased to be able to present you the second "ARTcoWORKers" newsletter. "ARTcoWORKers" stands for "Arts and People with disabilities - cooperative digital working for inclusion during the pandemic". It is a project within the framework of the European Erasmus + special program for strategic partnerships in the creative industries to cope with the consequences of the pandemic. The Training Workshop in Skopje is in the focus for this edition.

The first ArtCoWorkers training workshop took place in Skopje, North Macedonia, 4-8 april, 2022 and was attended by 15 multiplying trainers coming from project partner countries. Participants had the challenging task to go through an agenda full of exchanging experiences, stress testing the draft curriculum of the training course and of course network. The days were full of fruitful discussions and practical aspects of making art and culture as inclusive as possible.

The training was organized by Shadows and Cloud, as they have the specific knowledge with theater plays, the different tasks around arranging the play like script writing, creating figures, installations for shadow play etc. The method of shadow theater was presented to the group after which participants were invited to create a performance with shadow within the safe space that was established during the training.

ArtCoWorkers training workshop is with the objective to train adult trainer and trainer from arts and culture branch on the ARTcoWORKers training course and prepared trainers for the pilot training and the arrangement of the shadow theater plays in the municipality of each partner as well as how to work with the FairShares Platform, making idea workshops and using a Planner/Canvass. Participants were introduced to the content and methodology of the curriculum and the training course in a cooperative and experimental way. KHUF and VSBI introduced the FairShares Model and the already developed tools like the Platform, the Canvass and the Planner.

Also Shadows and Clouds theater organized a performance in their sustainable theater space at the heart of Debar maalo. The study tour happened at Collective Veternica and took the participants on a self-exploration journey through painting, movement and vocal improvisations in their community space. A lot of creative energy, vivid memories and agreements for a more inclusive future were the outcomes.

The team of partners already met again at the next transnational project meeting, which took place in Leiden, July 2022. More on that in the next newsletter, so stay tuned!

“I learned to see my values through others”

Experiences of disabled participants from training in Skopje

HILDA, AUTISTIC WOMAN:

"I have learnt some extra valuable things also as an autistic woman, among others people's point of views, which I would maybe never know otherwise. Learned that I shall know my limits and bravely tell when I need help or some room. We played a fun game: everyone got a sheet of paper taped to their back and others wrote nice things about the person. My lesson this time: I have values only others can see and I cherish those opinions. I will hang my page of heartwarming words on my wall. "



MARCELL, BLIND MAN, AMATEUR ACTOR:

"I have acquired several techniques that I can use in practice, especially in the field of communication and marketing. I learned more arguments about how to involve others in art. As a blind person, the shadow theatre training section developed a different kind of vision for me about the shadow that objects cast. "



ZSUZSA, ABLE BODIES PUPPETEER EXPERT:

"The shadow presentation that we have already created in Hungary fits well into the project in its spirit and solutions. The techniques, tools and approaches we learned in the training provided additional inspiration not only for creating a specific piece, but also for train trainers. I have developed these suggestions and I am happy to pass them on to the group."





Opinions from a future trainer's perspective

Skopje, beautiful creative personalities, ArtCoWorkers trainee program: the cocktail for a perfect week. I stepped in with an open mind and a huge curiosity and I left with a lot of new friends, rich experiences in the world of art and disability.

The Erasmus+ exchange program set up by four partners, VSBI and KHuF from Germany, People First from Hungary, Shadows and Clouds from Macedonia and VitalPed from the Netherlands, aims to create together a blended inclusive learning for everybody with or without disability who wants to develop his or her own creativity and strengthen independent living through the rich artistic possibilities of shadow theater.

It was on the threshold of the spring, the first week of April. I remember that we arrived from the rainy, cold Netherlands in warm Skopje, where our colleagues from Shadows and Clouds from Macedonia, the best hosts ever, showed us the city by night and we tasted the local kitchen. The next morning, at the very first hour we started with the program. It was a strict, full schedule, there was no time to lose. We started with a warming up and an introductory round. Beautiful people with beautiful stories, all of us with sensibilities which we shared openly with each other. The only thing was that the half of the group knew each other, the other half was totally new. We, the new, had to catch up a lot. It costed us a lot of energy and I think that we all missed some feedback because of this. The next time we should schedule a check-in hour so we all can start at the same level. The creators of the blended learning and the future trainers experienced the modules and helped to improve them by giving feedback, culminating in a shadow theater show at the end of the fourth day, a play which we created in four teams. All of the teams put on the scene the life of a drop in one of the four seasons. My team and I were allowed to present the faith of the drop in the hot summer.

The spare time was also filled with great excursions, like walks through the rich history of the city, a study trip to the atelier Partisan Print and last but not least visiting the shadow theater presenting Alice in wonderland by Shadows and Clouds in their own small but very influential theater venue in the city center.

I hope I could contribute to this training by my experience with inclusivity and art. I am so thankful that I had the opportunity to participate in this program. It has brought me a lot, has given me tools, instruments, insights for how to set up a creative workshop using shadow theater in an inclusive group of participants, where each of us participate at an equal level to reach a common artistic goal. I am eager to apply the learnings, the module in the autumn with a group in the Netherlands and a group in Romania during Outsider Art Camp. I am so honored that our friends of Macedonia gifted me with the TINY SHADOW THEATER (SHADOW THEATER KIT – Shadows and Clouds.) which I definitely will use in both camps in the autumn and also in my library work. In theater we all have to contribute and each role is equally important.

by Réka Makkai, Dutch trainer

Lines and Shapes Blended Learning Workshops for sighted and visually impaired people

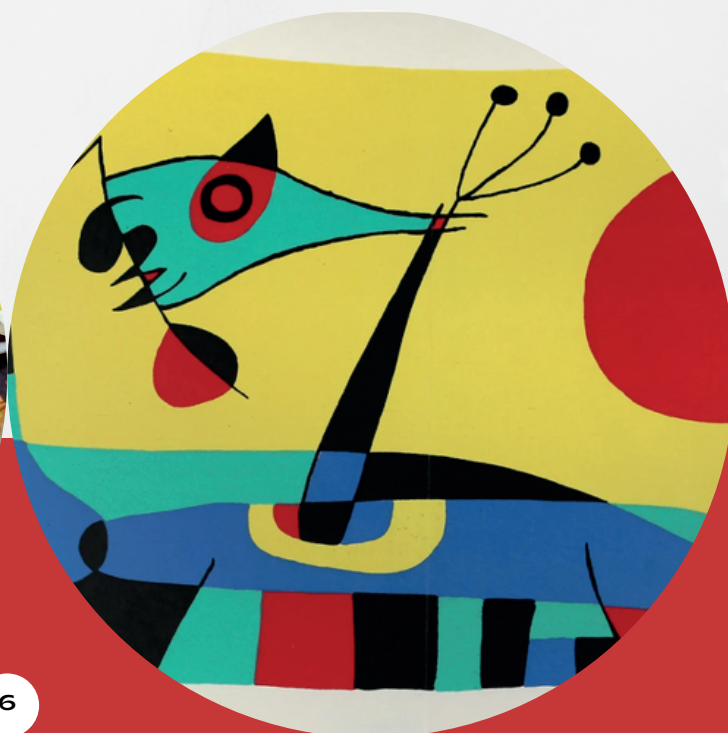
It has been shown that combined formats (e-learning / presence) can be flexibly adapted to the needs of people with disabilities / diverse groups. In the preparation of the workshop, it is important to ensure that each participant has access to the necessary materials (in this case computer, Miro access, pens, paper) and that the time planning is generous enough. All steps should be discussed afterwards in order to illustrate the results to the visually impaired participants.



The participants were asked to put together their favorite animal from geometric shapes on the Miro board. For this step, the blind participant was given geometric shapes made of cardboard, which could be felt and assembled accordingly. This work step functioned as a warm up / introduction for the creative work. The created figures were described.

In the last part of the workshop, referring to the title of the workshop (Shapes and Lines), the artist Miro was briefly introduced. His paintings and drawings consist almost exclusively of lines and geometric shapes. As a representative of surrealist art, he represents a high potential of abstraction spaces that offer interesting theoretical and practical points of contact with regard to inclusion. One sighted participant was asked to describe a picture by Miro, while the others did not see the picture and tried to follow the description. In the last step, the participants were invited to crumple a sheet of paper and now use the pencil to trace different lines and shapes that they can see and also feel on the paper. The last step was to color some of the shapes they found.

By Annika Hirsekorn, KHuF.



The power of Shadow Theater

The visual and expressive performing technique with light and shadows, using different objects, puppets and bodies whose shadows are lively projected on screens is called shadow theater. Commonly mistaken for being only a theater for children, shadows can dive deep into the soul of an audience at any age. Shadow play is among the first forms of play introduced to babies in their youngest age, through the moving shadows on the wall.

At a later stage we briefly touch upon shadows in the school curriculum, in some countries in kindergarten while for others at primary school. With history dating from 1st millennium BCE and techniques from China, Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey are among the common traditional shadow practices used even nowadays.

While craftsmanship of shadow puppets and scenography used to heavily rely on handmade tools, using natural sources of light such as a candle, as well as natural materials like animal skin, nowadays there is a plethora of electrical and digital enhancements that come in handy. From overhead projector, graphoscope, reflector, hand lamps, led and UV light all the way to the flashlight of your phone. Puppets and sets can be made of any material you can think of, paper, cardboard, plastic, fabric, metal wood, but also any recycled material.



Colors in shadow theater are reached through using see-through materials such as painted foils, color filters, glass, x-ray results, even some fabrics and thin paper. Glitter wrapping paper or mirrors can do pure magic on the screen!

One of the key elements of shadow theater is the inclusive dimension, which is also under the spotlight of ArtCoWorkers. This performing art welcomes actors, musicians, voice over artists and directors with any background, physical or mental abilities. It gives space for creative exploration and meaningful contribution on so many levels, as the shadow does not differ. The movement of shadow puppet requires very little effort and a solid technique, but is also open to free interpretation meaning that anyone can perform with a puppet. Actors practice holding and manipulating the puppets within the directed guidelines, but often shadow performances are the fruit of a joint creative initiative, which can easily be inclusive and consider the inclusion aspect in the very making of the performance. As this artform is mainly visual it does not necessarily require use of words, therefore it is very common for a shadow theater performance to be without words.

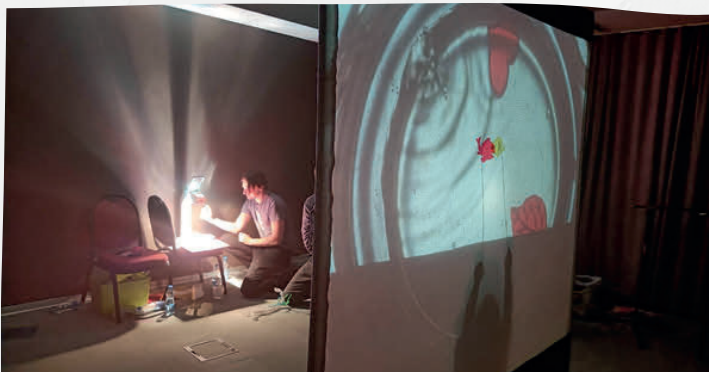
Very few theater companies in the world perform only with shadows, while the majority of puppet and drama theater companies use shadows as an accompanying segment in separate scenes, or depicting some of the characters in the play. When combined with other forms of visual and performing arts, we are usually talking about animation, dance, movie, object theater etc.

By Aleksandra Stojanovska, Shadows and Clouds



Follow the White Rabbit (to get to know Shadow Theater)

On our adventurous trip to Skopje, we were able to follow the white rabbit down his rabbit hole to learn more about the creative art of shadow theater. The white rabbit creatively led us through spring, summer, autumn and winter.



And the Rabbit showed us one important rule about Shadow Theater - there can't be shadow without the ...

By Matthias Piel, VSBI