

SAFE HAVENS

The
Malmö
Meeting
2016



Safe Havens – The Malmö Meeting 2016 Report

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SWEDISH
ARTS COUNCIL



Dear all,

I wish to thank you all for your wonderful contributions to the Safe Havens 2016 conference. As the Director of Culture in Malmö I feel compelled to address the importance of these meetings for us as an ICORN: city but also as a Leading City in the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). It serves as an important source of knowledge and development of networks also for our overall quest to enhance the knowledge of the importance of culture in sustainable development. Please read the ambitious text from the conference, by Michael Schmidt and check out some of the pictures and films from the event. We are indeed hoping to see you again in December for the Safe Havens 2017. Looking forward to it!

With kind regards,
Elisabeth Lundgren
Director of Culture
City of Malmö, Sweden

Dear friends,

It is merely a few harsh winter's days between now and when we last met at Moriska Paviljongen in Malmö, but we are already looking forward to seeing you again at the next Safe Havens conference.

During our last conference, we commemorated that on the 2:nd of December 2016 it was 250 years since the first freedom of press act was signed in Sweden. I do believe that it is something to be proud of, but let's never ever take this freedom for granted, let's not think that we cannot lose the freedom people before us have fought for – here or anywhere else. Freedom of expression is a global concern; indeed we are all in it together. Let's recognize the efforts that are being made every day by the brave defenders of human rights and the right to creative freedom. Maybe it has never before been so clear what power lies in music and art and the written and the spoken word; why else would we see increasing threats towards the arts, and why else would leaders of small and large nations try so vehemently to suppress the free press and the artistic freedom?

This is why we believe it is so important to have meeting places where we can share knowledge and ideas, where we all feel safe and welcome to have serious conversations. Places where we can also laugh and smile together and where we can give each other more of that energy that we need to create art which is earnest and open and real. A place where we can

share the knowledge we must have to truly protect and promote the human rights defenders and artists among us.

Dear friends, we wish to thank you all for joining us at the Safe Havens 2016 conference in Malmö! We feel strengthened and empowered by the generous talks and the wonderful conversations we had together with you all. We hope that you took away with you from the meeting many new ideas, new contacts and new energy in your work. We are hoping to see you again this year and we will let you know when as soon as we have set the date. Until then, stay safe and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any ideas or thoughts you wish to share for the next meeting.

All our best,
Fredrik Elg
And the Safe Havens team



Mixed photos from Safe Havens - The Malmö Meeting 2016
 Bottom right photo: Shirin Ardalan
 All other photos: Fredrik Elg

The artists at the heart of Safe Havens

Monirah Hashemi's slippers slide on the polished floorboards of on the stage at the orientalist Moriska Paviljongen. The microphone echoes to the rhythmic thumping of her fist against her chest. The audience of arts rights defenders from across the world are silent, horrified, entranced.

Her performance of the play *Sitarah – The Stars*, a portmanteau tale of the struggles of three Afghan women against patriarchy – of Halima, sentenced to death by stoning in 2013, of Sara, dealing with the aftermath of the civil war in the 1980s, and of Gul Begum, forced into slavery during the 1892 pogrom – is harrowing. One character sums up her pain by asking “Should I wait for darkness to see the stars?,” yet before the play began, Monirah herself answered that “the women who are the stars are screaming – not that they are victims, but that they are fighters.”

The City of Malmö, Sweden, brought together fighters for artistic freedom from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America to debate

challenges and innovations against the backdrop of the swing towards neo-fascism and right-wing populism in countries as diverse as the USA, Syria, Britain, Turkey, Poland, and South Africa.

After her exhausting performance, Monirah takes to the stage again to discuss her work with Leif Persson of the Riksteatern Värmland, moderated by journalist Zandra Thuvesson. Monirah explains: “The play has been a long process: during my work I met lots of girls and women, some of them could trust me and tell me what their life is like, then in 2006, I started to do protest theatre, theatre for the oppressed, and created troupes for both men and women, which went to schools, detention centres.”

*"It's about the power,
not about religion."*

But society – even condemned prisoners – viewed actors as prostitutes, so the prejudice needed to be overcome by demonstrating they were true artists: "After performing a play for them, they started to trust and come to the actors, saying 'I am sentenced to 20 years, or to death – but this is not my life, this is the system.'" This was whispered to me... so I collected them." She cites as an inspiration the release from a liberated Taliban prison in 2013, a young girl who had been sentenced to be stoned: "That girl could be me, my sister, any of the girls."

Leif recalls: "Monirah was performing in Stockholm in 2012, and Riksteatern was the manager of that project. We recognized Monirah had a problem, so we invited her... she was talking about culture as a tool for citizenship – not charity. I hadn't been directing for 10 years, and we were sitting in our kitchen and she was reading the play, and we said it must be performed. She said 'Yes, but I need a good actress,' and we said 'That won't be a problem!' The process of this very dark play has been incredibly joyful..."

Working on *Sitarah* drew Leif back into directing, though, he admits, "Monirah is a very stubborn actress. I come from storytelling in the Swedish tradition: it's about to have a continuing story, never let it go down, you need to have a fire and you should be like in old times, that the fire should be in between you, and you are never allowed to stand in front of the fire, or you become more important than the play. For me some of the dances were... I didn't know much about her traditions so we had to fight our way through our traditions... It changed me completely in what I am doing now."

Monirah responds: "I have another children's play, *The Scarecrow*, a fable about migration and integration. I don't know how a farmer looks like in Sweden; that is why I use my atmosphere in Afghanistan... I maybe felt I would let this bit go because I wanted to fit in with Swedish storytelling. What made the play strong is the play went through this struggle to prove itself"

Zandra says: "You were telling me the stories about the girls which are different but in a way universal. When you talked to them in the villages in Iran [in your childhood], how it was then and how it is now." Monirah said she had decided to become an actor in 2003, but was faced with stiff resistance from her neighbours: "Men want female bodies in theatre, but the scenes are so dirty that no woman would want to work there, so in 2004 I started my own company. I had rules that then were the keys to win attention and trust of the families and to bring in girls. After a while, in a society that is so traditional, we had 120 young girls studying film-making, and the only reason for that is to put in rules for us – for our own sake, not for the society – for me working on those strategies makes a platform for us to tell those stories. When the girls were coming, they were fighting with their families, eventually, the father was the one who stood with the girl if a neighbour knocked on the door and said 'I saw your daughter performing'"

Monirah's own mother had come to her at 3am one night with her skirts full of letters of condemnation that neighbours had thrown into the back yard, accusing her of being loose because of her acting, claiming that "Monirah is a prostitute, she is going with different men – and you must stop this or we will do this for you." Her mother and her decided to keep quiet about the threats, but her grandmother informed her father, who followed her as she was walking to work one day, pointing out all the hostile eyes that were looking at her "like wolves," and walking her back home for her protection.

For three months, she stayed home, but one day, her mother came and spoke to her in anger, saying "look, you have given them the girl they want, who is quiet at home, with no giggling, no happiness. I said but 'You and father wanted me here...' She said 'Yes, on that day... [but] I don't want you to sit at home and die for your dreams. There are thousands and millions of women at home who don't have anyone to tell their stories'"

A question from the floor is that the play seemed to show a very negative side to Islam, which seems risky when the racists in Sweden also focus on this to drive xenophobia. Leif retorts that the play is speaking about the politicisation of all Abrahamic religions, not just Islam, while Monirah responds that the character

in *Sitarah* of the old imam who abuses his position of trust to fondle young girls is viewed by Afghan audiences as just that, a character, and not as representative of Islam: "It's about the power, not about religion."

Zandra suggests that Monirah's work has had a "domino effect" throughout Afghan society. Monirah responds that it was not only herself: "My students' mothers had to be fighting for their girls; once they passed the red line of fear, they say 'Our daughters' life is great, their work is great, and they tell stories of the social life and of women.'" Thinking back to her homeland, Monirah says "there are a lot of girls who have started to work, but they can't travel, those from Herat and other cities can't study... We are thinking about how to provide for them. They have access to books and know about work elsewhere in the world, but we need to connect theatre for young girls in Afghanistan to here... I cannot leave this sorrow [though] I am not there anymore I don't need to tell them what to do: those young girls now are starting new groups and new companies."

Cultural Heritage at Risk

The overarching Safe Havens 2016 theme of the defence of cultural heritage – and the protection of its defenders – is underscored in a presentation by Iraqi writer and artist Ashraf Atrachi, whose slide images of the bulldozing of the ancient gates of Nineveh, dating to around 7000 BCE and reconstructed in the 20th Century, and the destruction this year of Mosul's ancient Assyrian sculptures and city wall by Islamic State fanatics reduce him and many in the audience to quiet, angry tears.

Ashraf had worked on a cultural radio programme alongside several writers. Around 2004, he started receiving death threats from a group that evolved into ISIL – then a friend on the programme was murdered, so he mounted an exhibition in Mosul.



Ashraf Atrachi & Abduljabbar Alsuhi

The destruction of artworks themselves began in 2006 with the detonation of a public sculpture cast in the early 20th Century.

"I saw they destroyed a most beautiful statue that I knew from my childhood [it was] lying broken on the ground, with people silent around me. I felt responsibility about my city – and someone wanted to delete my memory, my cultural memory." His response was to document all the city's sculpture on an Arabic website, an initiative that earned him further death threats. In 2014, ISIL invaded Mosul and Ashraf fled to Turkey. Two years later, ISIL began the wanton destruction of Mosul's heritage.

"They destroyed the wall around the ancient city. When I saw the ISIL propaganda film I felt as if my body was destroyed because they destroyed my life... I don't understand why they destroyed the gate and the wall. Before, when they destroyed the sculpture it was an Islamic thing because of some text by Mohammed... I hoped for an airstrike [against ISIL] when they were doing this but nobody cared, the international community didn't care."

His audience is dead silent, but Ashraf is later challenged by Ole Reitov of Freemuse, who says: "It's not that they don't care, it's that they don't know what the strategy would be. This year for the first time

"I saw they destroyed a most beautiful statue that I knew from my childhood [it was] lying broken on the ground, with people silent around me. I felt responsibility about my city – and someone wanted to delete my memory, my cultural memory."

someone was taken to the International Criminal Court for the destruction in Timbuktu – though we are seeing several countries not wanting to be in the International Criminal Court, the US for one, and South Africa looks like it is backing out, so there are problems there too."

Ashraf ends by declaring: "I have a dream to rebuild these ancient monuments; it is my responsibility to my city." His tale is echoed by Abduljabbar Alsuhibi, an actor and cultural events manager from Yemen recently relocated into exile in the city of Helsingborg by the International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), who bitterly tells of the depredations both of the Houthi Militia and the Coalition waging war against them: "The Coalition is using airstrikes to help Yemen by killing Yemenis. The Old city of Sana'a is more than 2,000 years old, and those airstrikes have destroyed some of those houses. The militia uses some of the houses to store weapons because they thought the Coalition won't attack – but unfortunately they did... In the city and other ancient cities where foreigners and Yemenis used to go and to read about the history of these places, now each wall is green-coloured and covered with signs such as "God is Great, Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on the Jews, Victory to Islam" and at the same time sitting with US politicians on one table doing negotiations."

In Houthi-controlled areas, he says, the Minister of Culture has to kowtow to an uneducated militia "Supervisor" and no artistic expression is allowed. "On 13 February the National Museum was attacked by the militia and everything inside was burned: rare

manuscripts and pre-Islamic artefacts and most or all of them were burned. In safe areas like Sana'a, they [museums] weren't attacked but [artefacts] were stolen – and they sell them for US\$2-300; they don't know the value of those things."

The artists and audience debate whether there is any Quranic basis for the destruction, and it is generally agreed that although some cite Mohammed's injunction against imagery, not all Islamic scholars were in agreement on this, but, Abduljabbar points out, "unfortunately most of them now, these extremist Islamic groups, don't understand those texts. Most of the communities don't read, research or try to find out the reality beyond those texts and what they actually mean."

Responses range from suggesting convincing the Saudis to use their influence within Islam to issue a fatwa outlawing the destruction of cultural heritage, to using the new Cultural Protection Fund in the UK and the new American site-mapping project, though as Marie Korpe of Freemuse notes, the latter two raise questions about former imperialist powers which had themselves destroyed and stolen other cultures' artworks now deciding what needs to be protected.

In a constantly-rotating exhibition of his work, Safe Havens delegates are able to see examples of the penmanship of cartoonist Fadi Abou Hassan, prominent among which is the figure of a tiny bearded Islamic State barbarian wielding a pick against a giant Assyrian sculpture which dwarfs him. Fadi's diverse themes include racism and climate

change: one arresting image is of a confused figure looking at the entrance to a maze which is actually the imprint of a military boot, presumably representing the tortured but inescapable path of authoritarianism, as if he were to manage to escape the maze, he would find an officer with a truncheon waiting for him.

Disruptive Voices in Times of Denial

The audience is now treated to an excerpt from the 2012 film True Stories of Love, Life, Death and Sometimes Revolution by Syrian director Nidal Hassan, which picks up on the theme established by Monirah, dealing in documentary format yet oblique style with the abuse visited on women, particularly so-called "honour" killings: as one woman interviewee puts it, "I might be protected against being killed if I married someone from another sect, but I would have died a thousand times."

A woman artist tells the camera: "I found nothing to express about women except the violence that women are subjected to." She shows her sculpture of a bloodied child in a rusty metal cell, the window of which is clouded by Arabic script. "The idea of this cell comes from the Revolution ... the arrests at the beginning were against children, so a child and a cell." She speaks of the anxiety of Syrians longing for the day they can return to their homeland where "we were sacrificed for our hopes."

Artist, researcher and activist Hanane Hajj Ali responds to Nidal's work afterwards: "What an exceptional way to portray the expectation of your choices and the horror of reality... A story about violence against women, violence through the trembling grass, through the back of a dog, through the disturbed eyes of children with those soldiers coming to their village. But it's a latent violence."

Nidal replies that the film had started as a collaboration with Danish artist Lilibeth Rasmussen on two true stories, one of a wife who drowned herself and her three children in a river in Kobane, and another of a woman who, on being forgiven by her family for running off with a man from another clan, returned home only to have her family murder her.

"It's a reasoning – why do these women have to go through this?" he explains, "and an intention to discuss

the issue of honour crimes, something that happens a lot in Syria. When we started research around the movie, we realised women are caught between the state and how the laws are not protecting women and instead repressing them, but also the community which doesn't support them, and they feel trapped between the two."

Hanane puts it to him: "You had this feeling that initially the revolution was feminine and it had to remain peaceful, but again it was violated and today we don't know who are the victims and who are the perpetrators." She notes that, for swimming against the current with his first film Salty Skin (2003), Nidal was imprisoned and deprived of his rights, then fled to Turkey, then Berlin – but deliberately returned to Syria to shoot his second film, Joy (2004).

"As an artist," Nidal says, "the choice to be close to the source of my stories was there and I needed to be close to that, the other issue that Hanane raised: it is the responsibility of the artist to act freely but the responsibility of the institution to provide the space... Artists are always in difficult circumstances when they are creating but it is their responsibility to go deeper; there are always interior difficulties dealing with state censorship as this turns into self-censorship and so there is less work for the state to do."

Of his move from documentary to fictional film, Nidal says: "In my opinion, art is strongly connected to time, which affects the quality but also the nature of the artwork. My choice of going towards film changed my whole life. My return to Syria also changed my life and this is part of the artistic process, of being an artist and being a citizen. I have been working for six years in documentary films; the process has been very tiresome and physically exhausting, but also the situation in Syria is extremely complex and somehow documenting it does not allow the many layers to come to the fore. By moving to fictional films we will be rebuilding new imaginaries about how we would like things to be, or how we see things."

Interpreting Atrocity

We then watch an excerpt from Lebanese director De Gaulle Eid's 2009 film Chou Sar? (What Happened?), which documents his intensely personal attempt to understand the 1980 massacre of his parents,

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youngest sister and eleven other family members by nationalist militia in the hamlet of Edbel in the north of Lebanon. Now resident in Corsica, De Gaulle used a 1993 amnesty for perpetrators of atrocities during Lebanon’s civil war to return home and confront his past – and the killer of his father.

The excerpt is shot at night, with a silent family gathered to the sounds of crickets as Bassan, a cousin of De Gaulle, now a middle-aged man, recalls how his uncle tried to sacrifice himself to save the family by surrendering to the militia – but they shot him in the chest as soon as he walked outside, then rounded up the rest of the family. Bassan and his cousin Ezzat tried to hide in the water reservoir, but the women were forced to reveal where they were.

The two boys later plan to escape the village, but first Bassan decides to look for the bodies of his murdered family, finding them piled up in a tomb: “I looked inside the tomb: it was a horrific sight, horror loomed... Anyway, my father wore a belt; I unbuckled it; he also wore a ring and a watch. I went to Ezzat and we walked away. The men who massacred our family still live in Edbel. That village brings only problems.”

Hanane asks De Gaulle afterwards about why he never screens the part of the film where he confronts his father’s killer, yet the man fails to recognise him because he has grown up. De Gaulle says: “The reason why I avoid showing this is I don’t like to see it again. It was filmed on the spot the first time I returned after many years. The other reason I avoid showing this, is even as an artist, if I am presenting the face of a killer, if the state in Lebanon cannot give me justice by prosecuting these people, we have the responsibility of not overusing these images – and in that moment the camera was more powerful than any other intervention could have been.”

Hanane explores further: “In the film you not only meet the killer of your mother, but a cousin of yours who became a militiaman; one of the most painful moments of the film is when the cousin says that the massacre caused you to have a good life in Paris.” De Gaulle responds: “I am sorry we cannot see all these scenes and go in depth, but I will explain something else: in my opinion when we are bringing back a childhood memory, it is our responsibility to make it universal so that other cultures can relate to it. To go beyond and to make the film talk not only about my life and my family, but to a person accused of a lot of crimes in the civil war, it was my responsibility as a citizen and as an artist.” In this he echoed Nidal’s statement of a sense of responsibility that balanced that of art with that of citizenship.

The Motivations Behind the Music

On stage at the Moriskan is Sudanese singer-guitarist and peace activist Abazar Hamid, whose simple and direct tunes belie the pain of having to leave his homeland and settle in exile in Harstad, Norway, with ICORN’s assistance. He sings a song about the recurrent plague of genocide, his theme running from the Holocaust to Rwanda’s “Hundred Nights” – and urges the Safe Havens guests to do anything they can to secure the arrest Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir so that he can face genocide and crimes against humanity charges at the International Criminal Court.

Abazar is followed by Egyptian rock-rai guitarist Ramy Essam, whose ad hoc lyrics inspired tens of thousands in Tahrir Square during the Egyptian Revolution. Now living in exile in Malmö, Ramy has professionalised



Left: Hanoueh & The Polydramatics
Right: Dusan Marinkovic

his guitar-playing and is now signed to Firebrand Records, of Rage Against the Machine’s protest singer-guitarist Tom Morello. Ramy sings us the stirring song Hurriyah (Freedom), then a worker’s chant that rings like a chain-gang song, then speaks of the bravery of women in the frontline of the Revolution and in jail – which he admitted had changed his view of women – of the fighting spirit of the Ultras and of those blinded by the police in the street battles.

Evening has come and the Safe Havens guests retreat to a local restaurant to enjoy conversation, a dinner, and performances. First up on stage is Lebanese-Palestinian multicultural singer-activist Hanna Cinthio and her band, Hanoueh & The Polydramatics. She says we are probably exhausted by talking politics, so she will entertain us instead with songs about lighter issues. But halfway through her set she tells us the tale of how she performed at a music festival in Qatar, her band having recorded the sound-track to Speed Sisters, a film about women Palestinian racing drivers. She was told she would have to submit her lyrics to the Censorship Department in the Ministry of Culture before she could get her visa, so she submitted innocuous lyrics about love that were not at all on her

playlist. In Qatar, “I performed my proper set to a silent audience, people were shocked. I realised we have the fortune to leave and fly home after speaking what is in our heart.”

The Polydramatics are followed by rapper Khaled Harara of Gaza, who now works in exile for the City of Gothenburg, who rocks the room with two tracks, one of which proclaims that “We are refugees!” – the implication being that we are all refugees in some way or other. Next up is Roma rapper and activist Dusan Marinkovic, who though a young man of 19, notes somberly how although there exists in Europe “a grey mass of people who are not racist and who aren’t against immigration – [there is] a tiny percentage who are racist and against immigration, etc, but for Roma, the grey mass is against you as well. People ask me ‘What it feels like to be Roma?’ and I don’t know how to answer the question because you wouldn’t ask ‘What does it feel like to be Swedish?’ I feel human, watch TV... the problem is that we are not seen as human. It’s the same way the Jews were treated during the Second World War and earlier.” ●

A conversation on self-censorship and writing from outside



Two African writers living abroad, Jude Dibia of Nigeria who lives in Sweden, and Kagiso Lesego Molepe who lives in Canada, take to the stage to debate the dislocation felt by artists in exile, and the expectations imposed on them by their host cultures. →

→ *Kagiso kicks off by reading an unpublished portion of a book she is working on about the rundown apartment she moved into in Canada, which she had painted in loud, hopeful colours, though the bedroom lead directly off the living room which was really just a hallway, and she faced the bathroom while watching TV, sitting on furniture donated by her lover's parents. Kagiso recites that her hair is falling out, "the cold air won't leave my body," and, of her lover, "I think sometimes when she looks at me she sees failure... the kind she sees looming in her future."*

Jude: "You have been living out of your country for twenty years. Do you censor yourself when write from home or abroad?"

Kagiso: "I left because I didn't belong; a lot of people felt unsafe in different ways during apartheid because people were getting killed – but I left South Africa when Mandela was president because I didn't feel safe as a woman, I didn't feel safe as someone who identified as a gay woman. And the confusing thing about South Africa was the laws were very inclusive, the Constitution was so great, the first in Africa to include gay rights – but on the ground things were different. I did censor myself: my first three novels are about growing up young and black in South Africa under apartheid and I never had gay characters until my third novel; I wrote what I thought my country would be comfortable with. It's taken me 20 years to stop censoring myself."

J: "Your description of Canada sounds like what it feels like to be in Sweden as an exiled writer; not being able to identify with the society, not being able to connect with the audience."

Audience: "Now that you live under the care of the Canadian government don't you feel conflicted if you want to criticise the country that you feel indebted to?"

K: "I do! The thing about Canada is that it is a country where people are protected from their own history: Canadians see themselves as faultless – 'We are a multicultural society' – which is not that different to South Africa because we have the laws, we claim we don't discriminate against foreigners, so it is very

difficult for me to point out the flaws. I do feel grateful to not have to watch my back all the time... But we are artists, so we... artists are here to disturb the peace."

J: "In Canada, how is the life of an artist? Here as a foreigner if I register for a skilled job, saying I am an actor or a writer, that skill is not recognised. Do you feel recognised as an artist?"

K: "It's actually quite a pressing issue for me right now. I've just gone through a divorce and the question is 'What are you going to do for a living?' My novels are read in schools in South Africa, but I am not seen as a person who is working. A woman cellist in Canada was asked what she did for a living. It's very hard to make a living, but similar to here because you are not seen as a working person."

J: "Regarding LGBTI issues, especially the reality for lesbian women in South Africa, it is a different story. In my country, they started off saying LGBTI people didn't exist, then in 2014 they succeeded in passing an anti-LGBTI law; prior to that there was an anti-sodomy law that was inherited from the Brits. Gay male or female are very afraid."

K: "South Africa is a very violent place to live; there are lots of murders. You know what's going on and nobody can deny it; a lot of people say the law protects you – but nobody protects me on the street. In the US people are very angry with the #BlackLivesMatter thing because there is no law that says police should harass or kill people. At least in Nigeria you don't need to argue it because the law is there."

"I struggle with place, time, and whom I am speaking to. I try to reach out to people at home but they feel 'You left us and you no longer have a say'; there is that sense of betrayal, even though now I can use my voice."

J: "The most dangerous part of this new law is mob action. It empowers people to take the law into their own hands and mete out so-called justice. There is this terrible video in which two men were dragged out of their home and forced to have sex in front of everyone."

K: "I was at the University of Cape Town and the vice-chancellor was a black woman who instituted rules against sexual harassment but the black men said 'This is against my culture and we can touch women as we wish.'"

J: "We say [in Nigeria] 'Yes we have LGBTI issues, but it's not that important: there is Boko Haram' – and they throw in everything including the kitchen sink, so it becomes more about prioritizing: so, you hear things like 'Don't you think we should fix our education first, etc'... LGBTI issues are then placed at the bottom of the pile."

K: "I think it's because people view it as a 'choice'; you can either 'choose' to be gay or be gay and hide it but you can't not have an education; it would help if people understand it's not a matter of choice."

J: "There was a young boy [in Nigeria] who was apparently gay who committed suicide and nothing was made of it, as if it didn't matter; one life is so important, I believe. What about cultural work... ICORN is also trying to create safe havens within South Africa... the idea of having a safe country within Africa is a super idea."

K: "It sends a powerful message to other countries: as soon as you take in refugees, you send out a powerful message that you disagree with what is happening."

J: "I see Germany and other countries, Sweden especially, taking refugees in, but there is a backlash

also, some people believing and saying that 'These people are going to destroy our culture'... We have seen this with Brexit and the US. The whole world is changing: an election is coming up and because people don't want the far right to come into power [they are sensitive to issues around migration]... How do you see the world changing now? What we are seeing around the world is 'Maybe we shouldn't take those people'."

K: "It goes up and down throughout history, but as soon as there is that backlash and there is that rage of anti-immigrants and xenophobia, it gets us to stand up, and there are some very powerful movements around the world against the backlash. With Trump becoming president, my hope is it will empower people to work together. The only thing we have to work with is hope. People get tired [of hatred] and start working together."

J: "Two years ago I was invited by the UN in Geneva to have a small group discussion: one tough question I was asked was 'How do we help without being condescending or interfering?' We need to create an enabling environment in Africa around freedom of expression without people being killed... I would suggest identifying people within the continent who want this change; not a foreigner, not a white person coming to say do it this way..."

K: "It's the same thing with the AIDS crisis: with Europeans coming in to teach us about sex and doing it in a European way... you need to speak the language of the locals. The model I usually like is somebody coming in and training the people in the country to carry on their work."

J: "What is home for you?"

K: "[Sigh] I have this idea that home is where you have people who look like you and speak your language, but that is a very disappointing idea to hold onto because if you are not safe in your country... Home is where I am welcome and where I am loved."

Jude reads a short piece from his novel he is working on: "Chuck remained still and said nothing. His attention, like a loose feather, drifted off effortlessly... home was a concept he no longer understood. Was it a place one came from by virtue of birth and ancestry making it impossible to call anywhere else home or, was home just a place one chose to be? Whenever he thought of his home country, he only felt the emptiness of spaces... His home country had become merely a nostalgic Polaroid picture of a faded childhood. Perhaps, memory was the true home, not any single physical place." Jude says: "For me, home is memories, what we carry inside, is what is important."

K: "When you leave your own country, you find a way to hold onto it because it takes a long time to feel like you belong to the new country... There's no song, no dance no laughter, the jokes aren't the same, the food isn't the same, we find the shop that sells the sweets from South Africa. You try to find your own people but you realise they aren't the sort of people you would be friends with at home. You can't find your home... As people in exile you sort of float between two countries that don't exist, the country you hold in your memories, and the country you dream of but that you are not in – yet. The new country is this sort of phantom country, and the country I left behind doesn't exist anymore."



J: "I think it's more difficult for artists and writers to live like that: I struggle with place, time, and whom I am speaking to. I try to reach out to people at home but they feel 'You left us and you no longer have a say'; there is that sense of betrayal, even though now I can use my voice."

K: "We go through a lot of depression and sadness, but we don't feel entitled to our depression and sadness, because 'You are safe now'. I find it is only possible to treat with after the depression. When I left South Africa, I was with a woman and I think a lot more about the contrast between the two countries... [In Canada, there is] a lot of quiet disapproval, the cold, standoffish attitude towards LGBTI people; in South Africa I could name the violence and scariness, but in Canada I couldn't name it; all I could name was the brutality of the cold. People in Canada don't name their anger or disapproval towards you, and you feel alone, whereas in South Africa you can because someone is getting killed."

J: "Before I came to Sweden, people said be careful of the Swedes, they are this and that, but it is good to find out for myself amidst this rebirth of racism all over the world." ●

Two case studies: Turkey & Lebanon

Turkey

At Safe Havens last year, the question was raised in a workshop about what country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) could possibly have cities that would fit into the ICORN galaxy. Although Tunisia's Revolution is troubled by reactionary forces wanting to turn the clock back, as warned by last year's keynote speaker Lina Ben Mhenni of the blog *A Tunisian Girl*, the capital Tunis certainly has potential as a City of Refuge. However, workshop participants felt that Turkey fitted into a list of "grey countries" where it was feared the authorities might abuse the presence of a City of Refuge to whitewash their human rights violations. Then in on 15 July this year, Turkey experienced an apparent coup attempt that gave President Recep Erdoğan the excuse to purge not only the civil service, but the academies and to persecute artists too, which has made the working and living environment for Turkish artists far more dire.

This year's organisers decided to take a "deep dive" into the Turkish situation and the first speaker is Sara Whyatt of the Sara Whyatt Consultancy: "When I joined PEN in the 1990s, the number of writers and journalists in prison [in Turkey] was around the 100 mark, already high: most were Kurds held under anti-terrorism laws and others held under insult laws. The scenes were very similar for many decades, but I will jump to the issues still current today. In 2010/11 there was a crackdown on Kurdish writers, activists, lawyers, politicians and their supporters: several thousand were arrested across Turkey... There was very little evidence that any of the writers were involved in



Sara Whyatt

terrorism. Ragıp Zarakolu and Büşra Ersanlı are still on trial now, seven years later, though they are released, and it is even worse for the Kurdish writers who spent more time in jail: Muharrem Erbey spent five years in pre-trial detention and he is also still on trial. And this was taking place during the peace process with government talks with Öcalan, and while conditions in

the south-east getting easier – but they were getting 10-year sentences. By 2011 there were 85 writers in prison and 79 more on trial.

During the 2013 Gezi protests there were 1,000s of arrests including scores of journalists and 13 people were killed. Yet there was no significant increase in the prison population as relatively few were convicted.. However artists and actors are unable to get work, people were sacked, so there was an impact other than imprisonment. As president Erdoğan got more authoritarian, he also got more thin-skinned: around 1,400 people were sued for insult, including even people such as Merve Büyüksaraç, Miss Turkey, who was convicted for a tweet.

To look at the current crisis, we need to go back to December 2013 when a money laundering scandal that implicated many high level officials, among them Erdoğan's son broke. Erdoğan has accused the scandal of being an attempt to undermine the government, so a purge was started of the academy, judiciary, business, etc. Erdogan pointed finger at exiled religious leader and businessman, Fetullah Gülen, accusing him of orchestrating a plot to overthrow the government. This was the start of campaign to cleanse the judiciary, police and others of Gülen supporters, which by July 2016 had extended to media, academics, schools and latterly business people. Many thousands are under arrest, facing trial, lost their jobs and suffered other penalties.

Meanwhile we've seen the Özgür Gündem case where supporters of a Kurdish newspaper under censorship – writers, activists, academics and others - formed a rotating editorship. Scores of them have been arrested and their trials are under way. Most well-known are Aslı Erdoğan, internationally renowned writer who was living in a city of refuge in Europe then decided to return to Turkey to support her colleagues. She has been imprisoned for several months [note: She was freed later in December to face trial].

Sara screens a picture taken inside a women's prison showing the Kurdish newspaper Özgür Gündem produced by hand in the prison, with visitors taking pictures of the newspaper by smartphone, then distributing it.

Then in July 2016 came the coup attempt and another surge of arrests and dismissals under emergency

"Media and freedom of expression is the first target."

regulations under which the government can shut down any media organisation, impose curfews, bannings of demonstrations, restrictions of access to spaces, criminalisation of talking about Kurdish issues, no access to lawyers for five days, and even restrictions on who can act as lawyers. Again alleged supporters of Fetullah Gülen were targeted, although very soon others not connected with the coup and once again Kurdish activists are being penalized under anti-terror laws although they were not involved in the coup.

These events have overshadowed yet another case in early 2016, - the Academics for Peace case where 1,400 academics in Turkey signed a petition 'Not in Our Name' in response to police and military crackdown, sieges and shootings in Kurdish towns and the response was swift: more mass arrests, job losses and other penalties..

What is notable over the past two decades is that while the numbers of people in prison changes, the misapplication of terror and insult laws doesn't change. Media and freedom of expression is the first target. So ultimately, to stop this pattern being repeated, what needs to be done is a review of laws, to repeal anti-terror legislation, remove insult as a criminal offence, and end the targeting of Kurds and ethnic minorities."

Responding to Sara is Turkish curator and producer Pelin Başaran, who is based in the UK and Turkey and who founded the Siyah Bant (Black Ribbon) campaign, "to analyse censorship cases and advocate for freedom of expression. Until now, we are documenting censorship cases, and linking some English articles. The website is just one of the media we are using to understand censorship dynamics and modalities: we visited 10 cities around Turkey and spoke to 80 artists about censorship, then published the results in a book that mapped censorship cases in Turkey. We were so much inspired by work done in Beirut

in 2012. We collaborated with the university, and collaborated with lawyers and others. We focused on music, art, dance, cinema, and literature: five areas. We designed some research projects: justifying the cases it was not possible to go deeper, so we produced research projects of about 10 pages summarised for the blog. The first was on the effects of cultural policy in Turkey: the peace process in Turkish Kurdistan – nothing changed for artists during the peace process; we talked to curators and artists about freedom of expression. And the next report to come out next week, will focus on questions of soft power and the limits of arts freedom.

“After that we can also talk about advocacy: we were a bit weak because it was difficult to get people around our work, but their first need was a toolkit. They didn’t understand how to act if something happened to them. We ran the webpage but also disseminated the research articles free to arts departments, schools, etc. We invited arts and law students in two cities and gave training to them about artistic freedom of expression, arts rights, women’s rights, etc...”

“We submitted reports to the UN and regularly report to the EU. We support artists: legal support for them, write letters to the Cultural Ministry, artists come to us for advice, we work closely with artists. Until Erdoğan’s coup we weren’t looking at artists at risk, but we felt it was coming to the arts as well, so we established a hotline for legal assistance. We get lots of information on how to act. Anti-terror and defamation laws are problematic, but there are also non-state actors: many censorship cases happen though informants going to the police who then shut down exhibitions. The state gives impunity to those who attack artists and artistic works. All who challenge norms are under threat, some are jailed, some lost their jobs.

Pelin screens an image of a man in a crowd at the 2013 Gezi protests. “Here is an actor who is beloved even by the police because he portrays a police character. He tweeted that it was not just about Gezi Park, and he got death threats and is now living in the UK, though he went with a business visa. It is interesting how he became very popular including with the police, then became an artist in exile. One of the documentaries about Kurdish guerrillas, Bakur [North], was invited to the Vienna Biennale, but its film certification was denied so Bakur was denied.

“The Kurdish party was getting support from society, then in 2015 the Kurdish party went for the first time beyond a threshold, but just after there were many attacks by Kurdistan Eagles and ISIS made attacks, and some 300 people died. In 2015, the peace process ended with PKK, and a curfew was imposed on many Turkish cities; it was difficult because we were aware of what was going on in Kurdistan, and they asked for help and we were not able to do anything. The people who want to stop this state violence in Kurdistan have received many threats, many have lost jobs, and many have had their passports cancelled. In January 2016, there was an ‘I Am Walking For Peace’ march across the country, but two artists [who marched] were arrested; they were released but are still facing trial. There was an exhibition called ‘Post Peace’ in February 2016 in a private gallery: the exhibition was cancelled by the gallery itself, and so it is impossible to talk about peace.

“After the coup, 100 journalists were purged, 100,000 officers and 30,000 teachers lost jobs, 180 radio and TV stations, mainly Kurdish, were shut down... Meanwhile democratically elected Kurdish leaders were arrested, and the government has placed their own people in around 30 municipalities, so the PKK doesn’t govern those municipalities anymore, which affects the cultural activities, as festivals and activities and gatherings are cancelled. Some actors are working as city police because they needed jobs. 1,495 NGOs are closed, 12 of them cultural and most of them based in Kurdistan.”

Lebanon

De Gaulle Eid’s film excerpt anticipates a discussion on the unique space of Lebanon as a relatively safe haven for artists in the Middle East. Lebanese dancer, arts rights activist and curator Geoliane Arab asks why new initiatives were happening in Lebanon and not in other Arab countries. Hanane Hajj Ali replies that she feels it is firstly because of “the absence of the strong state; and [also that] during the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s, Lebanon was seen as the antithesis of dictatorship, so writers and creatives who were persecuted – and all the Palestinians – came to Beirut, and Beirut was boiling in quite a free space.”

Lebanese lawyer and researcher Nayla Geagea responds: “The fact we don’t have a dictatorship



Nayla Geagea, Geoliane Arab & Hanane Hajj Ali

and one political party has contributed to freeing the artistic space from the political agenda. We have fifteen religious communities but they have somehow left us a, maybe narrow, but a civil space where we can express ourselves. The tricky part is we don’t know who the enemies are: is it really the state, the society, the religious authorities? Because it is important to adapt tactics or strategies to move forward.

“Unfortunately we don’t recognise refugee status in Lebanon, and there are now more than 1,5-million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, so their status is similar to that of domestic migrant workers, which is horrible: the latter can only enter the country with a sponsor and are prisoners of their sponsor. This is how the state decided to deal with the humanitarian crisis. Unless you are here for work or are married to a Lebanese, it is very difficult to get a residency. Usually women who come to work in entertainment places, the artists’ visa dates from the French Mandate period in the

1920s, it is very complicated and difficult. Artists have archaic legal status; and we are trying to hide human trafficking by using this status.”

Nayla says that Lebanon’s “censorship laws go back to the 1940s – all under the internal security forces mandate, although nowadays we have a Ministry of Culture. The old law is extremely vague, but interesting to research: I had to research thousands of General Security Orders looking at censoring movies, plays, books etc, to see how our authorities censor the arts, and it was very powerful because we were using their own words, vulgarising this. We drafted

new laws for movies and for plays and submitted them to Parliament; unfortunately for the law relevant to movies, we can’t get anyone to agree to adopt it as it is very complicated. We need to revisit our strategies... to look at abolishing all censorship on plays... at applying the same post-censorship logic to print media to plays: hopefully the new law will be on the agenda.”

Hanane says the work done by Nayla and others has strengthened her resolve to stand

against censorship: “After 35 years being an actress I am fed up, and I want to perform a play without submitting it to General Security for permission; this is the time to realise it after all these initiatives. I invite a lot of people to read and interact with me during the performance, so when the audience comes and while I am doing stretching and warming up of my voice, one of the audience members says ‘this play is an illegitimate bastard, born of sin like a daughter that has a child out of wedlock without getting permission from General Security, so if you want to leave you must go.’ I sold the text instead of tickets – if I sold tickets I could face jail and the theatre could be shut down.”

Asked about her anti-censorship advocacy, Nayla says: “Five or six years ago, we created the Observatory of Censorship in Lebanon; we harassed the minister’s consultants who are a lawyer and a judge; so we built a very strong legal file. We have a very interesting legal framework in Lebanon – a very progressive framework, but because culture is not an interesting point for authorities, in 2008, we have laws that protect intangible heritage, though implementation is the problem. [We established] a national nucleus to mobilise support including internationally.”

Geoliane agrees that “it is always one or two persons trying to push, but there is also the IETM international campaign for freedom of expression. We want to build on this: we are looking at ways on how to move forward strategically on this; we have mobilised media extensively, as well as local and international partners and would like to do more.” ●

New initiatives

Artists Everywhere

New York-based artist, journalist and cultural activist Siddhartha “Sidd” Joag speaks of the Artists’ Rights project and its website: “The idea was of creating a space where [we could showcase] the practical applications we are dealing with: polarisation in the United States etc. We are viewing artist rights as resources, whether news and interviews, investigative pieces etc. We designed Artists’ Rights as a space for information for artists doing work: rather than just have one type of media, someone finds out information about an Iranian... The information is being fed by work that happens on the ground and become a resource in its own right.”

São Paulo-based artist, writer and cultural producer Todd Lanier Lester picks up the story: “We didn’t think that freeDimensional should just carry on, as our goal at the 10-year mark was to initiate a sea-change, to learn how to host artists at risk, and more. We had a roster of 400 residencies that could allow for space if needed, we worked with the Rory Peck Trust. Musagetes, a Canadian funder, worked alongside us and funded ArtsEverywhere.ca and it is intended to grow into a professional network. One of the things I asked Musagetes was whether they wanted input on our [freeDimensional] experience and it was an overwhelming positive response. We found a way to get articles commissioned on Turkey and the emergency. There are at least 20 cases a year that deserve the attention that Turkey is getting right now: who would fund that so we don’t need to be wasting the time to find funding for a professional report?... How would we share platforms if we had content that

wanted to collide? Musagetes is ready to commission reports, and is interested to see how it works with the IFEX articles and the Artist Safe Space Initiative...

“The capacity to host, the blur between human rights shelters, and cities that aspire to do so: we have created a global cohort of 30 residency spaces. We will be in a six-month learning cycle from January. Two specialists from two different areas use our template, and then it goes out as a desk study. Then our knowledge from 10 years of doing this and we add regional inputs... Musagetes will have a tech guy riding along with this and then we will make the curriculum available...”

Sidd responds: “We had the idea of this case management process that could result in a journalistic process that has longevity. Case management becomes a way of reporting... There is a communicative ecology between the five or six of us who spoke about the case then there is a broader context and it becomes a resource.”

Magnus Ag of Freemuse says: “Freemuse was focused on freedom and music and censorship. Why we have the site is we see it as a bigger picture, we are given a space to... change the legal practice or the practice of police in the country. On a daily basis we have a great network which keeps us informed, then we use basic journalism tools to write it up, and then once a year we aggregate it into our Arts Under Threat report and it gives us an idea of trends and issues. Then we can go to the EU etc and engage with the government or the UN Special Rapporteur. We need to document violations and failures to protect and show trends in

order to put pressure on governments. We engage the annual UN human rights reviews, and engage local arts community, and see what is needed. We are advocacy journalists, we see arts freedom as a way to reach an end goal somewhere in the world. We shared a lot of our knowledge... The EU delegation in Morocco loved the report, because it gives clear recommendations...”

Artist Protection Fund (APF), Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) & Artists-at-Risk Coalition (ARC)

In New York City – which is in the pipeline as an ICORN City of Refuge (Ithaca in upstate New York is already on board) – there are three fascinating new projects to protect threatened artists. Alison Russo of the Institute of International Education heads up their year-old Artist Protection Fund which currently has taken fourteen Fellows under its wing, including an Iraqi filmmaker who she announced had arrived successfully in the United Kingdom. “We put together an active fund... We continue to hope to innovate about sharing best practices... our programme is dedicated to building coalitions and spaces of practice, veracity and verification of threat. A key component for us is to have spaces for our artists to come together and practice. We are cross-metier [accepting artists from different disciplines].”

Asked what lessons APF had learned in its first year, Alison, replied: “There is an evolution of the arc, a coalition of events. The beauty of vibrant ecosystems is important to what we do: we have a wide array of museums, arts organisations and academic institutions, and I say ‘How can we encourage a practice, when an artist arrives in your already-vibrant ecosystem, how can they integrate into it, not as the other?’ How an artist can find a place for themselves, have more inclusive conversations, a transparency about sharing, building innovative spaces, and encouraging uniqueness, vibrancy and individuality: to speak truth to a power.”

Ashley Tucker, who joined PEN America recently after consulting to the Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) for the past 18 months, tells us that when she attended Safe Havens last year, “AFI was brand new and we were very excited about this initiative. We are three immigration attorneys and human rights

advocates, and the SDK Foundation for Human Dignity is our funder. We designed this initiative to have three prongs: pro bono legal services for artists at risk (many are coming in from Iran, Iraq, India, Libya and Uganda, seeking asylum in the US; we are also focusing on artists for social change); then to secure visas and venues to promote social causes (artists such as Abjeez, Safoura Safavi, and Saeid Shanbehzadeh who is performing for the Education is Not a Crime campaign, working with Ramy Essam who was invited to a folk festival to perform in the States); and lastly artist resettlement services such as housing (the Westbeth non-profit apartment complex in West Village, Manhattan) and work authorisation, matching artists with employers, universities, and residency programmes. Westbeth said they would like to partner with a non-profit who works with artists at risk, and so we applied for a grant to the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation. It is great because there is almost no affordable accommodation in Manhattan. For all of these organisations that work together in this constellation, we would like to offer a place to stay if they don’t have anywhere.”

Karin Deutsch Karlelar of American PEN then tells us of the new Artists-at-Risk Coalition (ARC) which has managed to get funding over the past year: “ARC intends increasing co-ordination and information sharing among organisations that work with artists at risk, then a second track is to provide a point of entry and referral for artists at risk, then engage new and existing stakeholders and improve profiles. We did surveys and interviews with people in the field: lack of funding emerged as a key challenge, then limited co-ordination and information sharing, challenges of the volume of applications and a lack of vetting capacity.

“We are busy identifying at-risk artists and groups active in the field, establishing a clearing-house or online database on emergency assistance services, legal assistance, employment resources, psychosomatic resources, residency opportunities, organisations working in the field, etc. Another track involves information sharing via an email list service, targeted secure communications channels. We want to convene two meetings over three years to do in-person meetings to build trust and relationships. And we want to raise the profile of the field with journalists, funders, policymakers.



Left: Todd Lanier Lester & Dr Daniel Gad
Right: Siddhartha "Sidd" Joag



"ARC is working to develop the online clearing-house and database – please add your ideas and information – on network building, website development and branding, logo design etc. In the future we intend on doing public launches, ongoing expansion of the network, inventory, continued capacity building, collaborations among network members, collaborations on individual cases, to scout new organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America, to establish tracking mechanisms, conduct media and policymaker outreach, develop linkages with free expression organisations in the global South, and get feedback from colleagues and participants."

Arts Rights Justice Academy

One of the most exciting new initiatives showcased at Safe Havens is the development of an Arts Rights Justice Academy to be hosted by the University of Hildesheim in Germany. The project is currently run by a working committee consisting of Wolfgang Schneider of Hildesheim, ArtistSafety.net co-ordinator Todd Lanier Lester who is based in São Paulo, Brazil, Helge Lunde and Elisabeth Dyvik of the ICORN headquarters in Stavanger, Norway, Safe Havens 2016 host Mary Ann DeVlieg, an independent evaluator of the European Commission's culture and science programmes, and Daniel Gad, the managing director of the UNESCO Chair in Culture Policy for the Arts in Development at Hildesheim.

Todd sets the scene: "An artist in distress should receive the same help as a human rights defender in distress. While the desire to host is there – this movement, Haiti, etc, has activated the hearts of people wanting to host – we needed to understand what would be a pedagogy, a training, the next step, various capacities

in which to have learning, online resources, etc. Daniel Gad invited me to speak in Germany at Hildesheim. The city is interested in becoming a safe haven itself, and I said, 'Daniel if the university already has this capacity, and the community wants to help, let's develop something that could draw on ICORN, Arterial, HIVOS, ArtsWatch, etc.' So we started thinking about a regular summer academy and what it would look like."

Daniel picks up the story: "We host a UNESCO Chair in Culture Policy, we are a Department of Culture Policy, but we always insist that we link culture policy to the arts – there is a Nordic version of it – but the arts is a part of a broader field so an interdisciplinary approach is key. To think about artists' residencies in general: what are the fitting forms of artists' residencies for the University of Hildesheim, that could be aimed at the city becoming the European Cultural Capital? Can we integrate safe spaces into the Cultural Capital idea? We were requested by the city to take part in this process. Besides providing shelter, I don't need to tell you why it is important for us to have this exchange. ICORN is our most important partner at this very first step, but our first idea is not to duplicate what is already there."

ICORN's Helge responds: "We are very glad that Hildesheim is coming on board as an ICORN city. We are now passing 60 cities in Europe and beyond, with more than 10 cities joining in 2015, and Hildesheim and other cities hopefully joining in 2017. We also need to keep the old ones, that they are not only coming in but that once the artists have gone home or whatever, they continue the work. We need to build capacity

working with the cities, the writers, the artists to help them meet challenges of this complex world. We will definitely want to send people to the Academy for the first edition: artists, writers and others. Looking forward to what it will consist of."

Daniel replies: "We need to link this to regional, local activities: freeDimensional did a lot of trainings in Latin America, the Arterial Network in Africa and other places as well, and we thought it was a must to link an Academy to other things that happen globally as well... Right now we are focusing the project – it will become a programme when we get a wider circle of funding for more than three years, not just for a pilot – but we are looking at ICORN as a first step. The Academy will be the central one: it should be opened by an International Conference to also give awareness, it will be hosted at the Hildesheim Kulturkampus... There is a certain need to have a wider Conference parallel to the Academy, and there is an idea for an Observatory, and for Regional Workshops elsewhere in the world..."

"This Academy shall be continuously evaluating itself. It will consist of an annual one week training – one week is not much, but most people have only one week to spare – for 30 people. For sure there will be city co-ordinators in touch with safe havens or platforms, but we want to invite artists as well: an interdisciplinary group as the core component. Participants will get a certificate from the university. It aims to professionalise and empower the sector. The next step today is the launch Workshops. From August 26 to September 3, 2017, is the first edition. This Academy might be introduced by an International Conference and might be accompanied by an Observatory.

"freeDimensional documents are about to be transferred to the University of Hildesheim – arts freedom and justice, Freemuse reports, and other important documents – openly accessible to those who want to learn, do research etc. Making knowledge accessible is the very first start of it: if we move towards research, reports, etc, find best ways to share our common energy. Then these regional satellites: there are Regional Workshops organised by others and we'd like to be close to them. To link these 'colaboratories' to the Academy, then through the UNSCO Chair, be guided to organise Regional Workshops then fund them: it will cost 5,000 or 10,000

Euros each to multiply this knowledge transfer... We want to touch the real needs of training here: what is the smart version of sharing knowledge.

ICORN's Elisabeth says: "When I first heard about this idea I got really excited. We had conversations and we quickly thought about this as a much wider perspective than just an ICORN training session: to draw in people as lecturers and participants from all over the world. We see this as something to tap into, to offer spaces for people who work with us. I can imagine that people who come to this week of training could be city co-ordinators, but also people we partner with in other regions.

"A training just for hosting would be very limited because artists at risk is so much broader, much more work needs to be done to protect artists in the field: relocation should be the last resort. We could imagine teachers from our ranks, but also from the academic, human rights and arts worlds; we haven't really thought of limits. We can also talk about different topics that interest us: freedom of expression, human rights, international law, arts of hospitality, research and how to verify and work with people at risk, advocacy, security training, and other things.

Todd agrees that the Academy intends hosting a "diversity of voices and attendees: we are really looking at co-design, looking for input on this. When the university brought this to ICORN, the approach was 'We won't do this unless it is needed in the field.' Examples of attendees, though there are no certainties, could include the ArtsWatch ambassadors for Arterial Africa, the HIVOS programme officers in the arts in Latin America. We have a dedication to cross-subsidising to ensure diversity of voices, not just organisational heads but individuals working on their own projects. We haven't closed the design: an Academy similar to a professional meeting at the end of the year and an Academy earlier in the year means you can have a feedback loop to deal with changing trends or phenomena in the field. freeDimensional was a 10-year project and it expired, so we needed a place to place that information. We wanted to example the caliber of content the Academy would host. For example, a report on Turkey under the state of emergency, the condition of artists, that comes out early next year, would ideally be a good piece of information to have." ●

Finding the funding

Safe Havens hosts an International Funder's Round Table moderated by Ole Reitov of Freemuse and consisting of Angie Cotte of the Roberto Cimetta Fund, Alison Russo of the Artists' Protection Fund, and Guus Van Zwoll of the EU Platform for Temporary Relocation / ProtectDefenders EU. Guus responds to Ole asking him what he can fund by saying: "We run three different things: 1. We give emergency material support to artists or human rights defenders at risk, quick deliverance of money to get out of the country or the city, we can assess and transfer money within 48 hours; 2. we cover legal fees, medical costs, security measures such as bodyguards or CCTV cameras; and 3. we support local organisations who support others at risk. We are a collective of 12 human rights organisations under ProtectDefenders EU, and as the Secretariat we hand out funds ourselves. We try to keep people within the region, so we can pay up to 95% of the costs, though when a human rights defender goes to the EU, US or Canada, we fund up to 50%. We have supported several artists and writers and visual artists, but artists have to be directly threatened."

Angie says that the Roberto Cimetta Fund covers "mobility grants to support artists from MENA countries... very often artists from this region couldn't sustain their projects on returning home, so other types of micro-funding were necessary to provide. Tamteen is a micro-funding scheme to sustain these projects. Fil Manfa provides funds to support host organisations of artists in exile near the conflict zone: could be for shelter or per diems, etc. We have visited MENA, and have identified host organisations in Beirut, Istanbul, Iraqi Kurdistan and Tunis. The situation for artists in Iraqi Kurdistan is very specific: there are about 2-million refugees north of Mosul, artists are among the refugees. We are making contracts with

the artists. With Guus, we can see if any of these artists can get help from ProtectDefenders EU. Artists in exile who receive support are those who now live in precarious situations, who in the past had a full time cultural or artistic commitment."

Alison says the Artist Protection Fund "really is for threatened professional artists. Many artists in MENA, Zimbabwe and Nigeria are among our current fellows. The process is rigorous, with an open selection process throughout the year. Of the 14 Fellows, seven have been placed, and a key component is innovating place-making and host partnerships. We understand that we can have comprehensive in-kind support, accommodation, networking, equipment and supplies, etc. Of the seven starters, three are in Europe, with a woman filmmaker from Iraq arriving in the UK today. It is complicated to build and design, requires a great degree of collaboration and innovation, between artists, collaborators, and creative communities they would work within. There is much work to be done in terms of the right to privacy for the artists, but transparency is necessary. We are Mellon-funded and 100% goes to the artists. There is a clear collaboration between hosts, artists and collaborators, but we know that a lot of arts communities are not equipped to take families. There is a larger conceptual idea around freedom of expression, reaching out to academic studies; many Fellows are being invited to universities and there are expectations around that."

Ole wonders whether the selection criteria may see the selection of artists winding up as "a beauty contest" between the various programmes. Angie explains that "for RCF there is no top model. Artists suggest their own projects. Evaluation is made by a committee of experts that evaluate each project; and

we give the mobility grant to the artist who has the best marks. Each application is looked at by two different experts. We have guidelines for the experts that are not only about aesthetic criteria: how the artists work locally, how they interact within their own community. Because we are dealing with small amounts of money and then regranteeing them, we are careful about how the money is spent. We are looking at ways to get the money to the artists, but also looking at the non-profit, non-religious, non-political characteristics of the host organisations. We don't ask host organisations to give any aesthetic preference when hosting an artist in exile because what counts at first is the hosting, not the art producing."

Guus says: "We got a 50-million Euro grant we have to spend in three years, so any artistic or aesthetic style is good: we don't have any aesthetic preferences; we are a human rights defender fund, and we see artists at risk as human rights defenders; and they have to see themselves as human rights defenders. There has to be a clearly identifiable threat that is there: lots of writers feel threatened, but are not personally at risk. The 48 hours is only for real emergency grants; others take longer. We have supported more than 400 human rights defenders directly over the past year. There are some really professional relocation organisations in Europe. Since we are only a three-year fund for now, we don't want local authorities to back off. If you have the funding for one artist, you can now have the funding for two."

Ole raised the question of relocation creating a critical "brain-drain" in artists' home countries. Angie responded that a creative and developmental drain could occur "through the relocation of MENA artists coming to Europe then returning and being unable to actualise projects, so we need to think about helping them stay in their region as long as possible, bearing in mind the danger factor. We need to develop non-territorial funding strategies, and reciprocal funding strategies. We are not only looking at artists traveling, but hosting them when they are displaced. The expertise in local authorities exists: bringing representatives to MENA countries, having them talk with local authorities and institutions there, sharing knowledge and building strategies together."



Magnus Ag & Alison Russo

Alison responds: "Always be connected to a community of artists, but it is also important to engage in international conversations, academies are looking at what it means to host a threatened creative. Artists by their nature are mobile, they can be outside and inside sometimes simultaneously. The brain drain needs to be addressed by our universities and other partners."

Guus says that "Within my field we see relocation as the last resort because we see people there working for their communities. What precautions can they take before that option? Preventing risks is a better option. Security analysis and understanding what risks are could be better in the artists' world. We need to try to work out regional solutions: switch artists around between country X and Y."

Alison said that the nature of the work "can be a little cloak and dagger; nobody knows what the other is doing, so transparency is an important concept that needs to be addressed into what our own programmes can do. Transparency that respects privacy and certain security issues, but I would like to see a new model about how we can indirectly collaborate."

Angie asks: "Our programme will only provide short-term relief, so what does the artist do after that?"

Guus replies: "The problem is projects say 'Oh, this guy has already had a grant, so let's give another person a chance'. Our temporary relocation project is to work with universities etc and share how to deal with depression, families, etc." ●

Vignette interviews

A select group of Safe Haven artists were asked two deceptively simple questions: what is important?; and tell us about the artwork that changed your life. Their answers were as penetrating as their works.

Abduljabbar Alsuhibi

Singer, Yemen

What's important?

"My daughters Betoal, five, and Reem, three, and my wife Sabah. For me I can do too many things in my country but I feel sometimes I am not able to help my daughters. I might do cultural activities that help my people, but what about the problems of my daughters and my wife? Am I able to help them or not? Being here in Sweden is going to help me a lot to find a good future for those two kids and my wife – and at the same time I can work freely without restriction, for my community, and develop my skills."

Tell us of the artwork that changed your life.

"It was a theatre band that came from France, Bahasabe, and did its concert in the Yemeni Cultural Centre, and that was the first music concert I had attended by a foreign band. I always heard this music on radio or TV, but to see those people in front of me playing

the drums and guitar and singing... after finishing this party – I was a kid only 12 years old – I followed them to the airport to say goodbye and I hung flowers around their neck; they were shocked, that this kid came to the airport, which more than 30km from the city, alone at night. I sang them a Yemeni song and they recorded it, and a year later the French Embassy was looking for me, trying to find Abduljabbar. They had mixed the Yemeni song with French music, and I was on the first page of the newspaper. The embassy's cultural assistant gave me a scholarship, but my family didn't allow it because they were afraid I would convert to Christianity. A year later I saved money – I was working in the street selling flowers – to travel to Syria to take part in auditions for a famous singer's programme."

Monirah Hashemi

Actor & director, Afghanistan

What's important?

"I would always like to trust people, and friends say it is stupid to do that, but for me all the people are trustable, because then that will open completely different doors and life experiences – for me to trust them and for them to see they are not judged."

Tell us of the artwork that changed your life.

"If you are living in Iran as a refugee and all the censorship is going on, you have less access to equipment and resources, and when you have no right to go to school, it is worse, so for me in my childhood, I can't remember things that have changed my life; it has always been struggling to prove your humanity and about the rights you can't get. I decided to do a play with very young girls aged eight to twelve. We started improvising and they came up with a topic about women and after a while I said to them, 'I decided to work with you because I wanted to do something fun, about childhood, but what you want to talk about is brutal.' And one of the girls who was nine said 'I see my mother's life, my sisters' lives and that of the women in the streets; I don't want to be that woman so I put away my dolls and I wanted to fight.' That was the moment that I noticed how my kids were thinking, what our young girls were thinking... If I look into my life, these girls are the ones who changed my life."



Ashraf Atrachchi

Artist & writer, Iraq

What's important?

"Freedom. And a peace for all conflict areas because of the people suffering, as in Mosul now."

Tell us of the artwork that changed your life.

"We have a special artist, Maher Herbi, I think he tried to make peace via the visual arts. Also, when I was young, about twenty, I listened to Enigma; when I listened to it, I felt that it could change something inside, and this peace inside, we can spread."

**S A F E
H A V E N S**

The Malmö Meeting 2016 Report