

SAFE HAVENS CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 2 - 4, 2021

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

SH|FT

SAFE HAVENS - FREEDOM TALKS

INTRODUCTION

Safe Havens is the annual summit of the artistic freedoms sector, convened each December since 2013. It embraces protections as diverse as intellectual property rights and emergency relocations to cities of refuge for artists of all disciplines and aims at the collaborative workshopping of innovative and artist-centered best-practice solutions to challenges faced by the sector – while providing a unique opportunity for artists and those who defend them to network and build collaborations across the entire globe.

After last year's Safe Havens Global Stream 2020 focused on a necessary improvement of cultural and artistic policies, this year's **Safe Havens Conference 2021** over 2-4 December is focused on the artists themselves and the challenges they face at this stressful time of pandemic and creeping authoritarianism. This year's summit has the overarching theme of **Recentering Artists' Rights in a Time of Crisis**. Our program has three key design components, each with its own objectives:

Artistic Interventions: starting with a Keynote Performance instead of a speech, and closing with a multi-disciplinary Concert, the conference will feature several Artistic Interventions with the aim of re-centering our focus on the artists themselves.

"Hive" Discussions: convened by key grassroots regional organizations in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, and followed by an Asia Report, the Hives are beehive-like audience-participative, solutions-oriented discussions on key issues facing each region.

Artists' Round Tables: two in-depth engagements between some of the leading lights of their fields with the intention of producing commonly-agreed manifestos or positions, one on perceptions of artistic freedoms and introducing the Majlis concept for the voices of the artists community, and the other on repetitive patterns of definitions of who is "at risk" in arts and culture.

To these are added two debates, one by on **Risk, Safety and Wellbeing** on managing our mental and spiritual health during current conditions, and the other on the **Safe Havens Next Steps** and the artistic freedoms sector.

Our overarching ethics are inclusiveness, equity, balance, fairness, collegiality, and horizontality. We trust you enjoy and grow from participating in Safe Havens Conference 2021!

Please note that times listed below are CET.

DAY 1 - Thursday, December 2

Conference host: **Kagiso Lesego Molope** (Canada-based, South African author)

12:15 - 12:45 **Keynote Performances**

Artistic interventions by

Ahmed Tobasi (Palestinian actor, director and educator)

Mey Seifan (Syrian performing artist and choreographer)

Sina Winter (Iranian black metal artist)

curated by **Safemuse**

12:45 - 13:00 **Introduction to the Safe Havens Conference 2021**

13:00 - 14:30 **Hive I (Africa): In-Country & In-Region Protections for Creatives**

A discussion session convened by

Margaret Aduto, Artists at Risk Connection, Africa Regional (Nairobi)

and **Michael Schmidt**, Hammerl Arts Rights Transfer (Johannesburg),

a member of the Amani: Africa Creative Defence Network

Initiators:

Mahmoud Othman, independent Egyptian artists' lawyer

Charles Clint Chimedza, Ubuntu Hub Cities (Tunis, Abidjan, Kampala, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria)

Ines Tlili, Tunisian cinematographer and activist

DeLovie Kwagala, Ugandan photographer and activist

Audience-Participant Organizations:

Al Mawred Al Thaqafy

African Human Rights Network Shelter Cities (Cotonou, Dar es Salaam), Olivier Muhizi

ArtVeda, Ahmed Mourad Khanfir

PEN Uganda, Danson Kahyana

Performing artists:

DeLovie Kwagala, Ugandan photographer

14:30 - 14:45 **BREAK**

DAY 1 - Thursday, December 2

14:45 - 16:15 **Hive II (Latin America): State & Non-State Forms of Repression of Freedom of Expression**

A discussion session convened in Spanish (with simultaneous translation into English) by

Cecilia Noce, Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina (CADAL, Argentina) and **Alessandro Zagato**, Artists at Risk Connection, Latin America Regional (San Cristóbal de las Casas)

Initiators:

Ariel Maceo, Cuban poet

Órion Lalli, Brazilian visual and audiovisual artist and LGBTQI+ activist

Danitza Luna, Mujeres Creando

Audience-Participant Organizations:

Shelter City Costa Rica, José Ignacio Gómez

Casa Refugio - International Cities of Refuge Network, Philippe Ollé-Laprune

Fondo de Acción Urgente para América Latina y el Caribe

PEN International por Latinoamérica y el Caribe

ARTICLE 19 - Oficina para México y Centroamérica

Acción Constitucional

Interpreters: **Nancy Guevara** and **Jacobo Currais Arcay**

16:15 - 16:30 **BREAK**

16:30 - 17:30 **Risk, Safety, and Wellbeing**

A presentation and a discussion session led by **Dr. Alice Nah** and **Dr. Julia Bala**, and introduced by **Fredrik Elg** (Chair of SHIFT)

In this session, we explore the mental and emotional impacts of the risks, threats and attacks that artists, writers, and academics experience as they exercise freedom of expression and conduct their work. We discuss how experiences of stress, fear, anxiety, depression, exhaustion, burnout, post-traumatic stress disorder and vicarious trauma are more common than we realise, and that these affect the way we view ourselves and our relationships with others. In this session, we identify the underlying causes of such experiences, how we can get 'trapped' in them, and focus on helpful practices that contribute to individual and collective wellbeing.

17:30 - 17:45 **Wrap Up, short feedback, questions**

DAY 2 - Friday, December 3

12:15 - 12:30 Introduction to Day Two

12:30 - 14:15 Artists' Round Table I

A cross-cultural Majlis-style debate on artistic freedom perceptions and ongoing challenges curated by **Meriam Bouselmi** (lawyer, writer, director, lecturer, cultural expert)

with artistic intervention 'Clown Me In' and 'Clowns Without Borders' by **Sabine Choucair** (Lebanese humanitarian clown and performer)

"Silence is death, and you, if you talk, you die, and if you remain silent, you die. So, speak out and die."

claimed Taher Djaout the Algerian Kabyle writer assassinated in 1993 by the Armed Islamic Group. His vision of artistic freedom was a clear response to the context in which he lived and inscribed his work. Artistic Freedom is indeed a question of perception. It depends on the singularities of each artist and each context. What may be subversive; risky or provocative somewhere, may be considered irrelevant elsewhere. The parameters of freedom are variable. And the mechanisms of censorship in a hyperconnected world are increasingly subtle and complex. Exploring echoes of artists' experiences and becoming aware of their struggles and the challenges they face in exercising their work could allow us to envision better strategies for strengthening and protecting Artistic Freedom.

The Safe Havens Team has chosen to make the artists talk and listen to them. Ten Artists from different cultures, backgrounds and working contexts are invited to take part in the Safe Havens 2021's *Majlis*. *Majlis* is an Arabic word meaning "Assembly" or "Parliament" or "Congress", a safe place to confront divergent opinions. In several Asian countries, *Majlis* means as well: association. Safe Havens 2021's *Majlis* intend to be a pluralistic and multilingual approach to the perception of Artistic Freedom from artists' points of view. Participants are invited to explore the meaning and challenges of Artistic Freedom in different languages and contexts.

DAY 2 - Friday, December 3

The debate will focus on three key questions:

1. How much artists feel free and how do they perceive the Artistic Freedom in the local context in which they work?
2. Does the Digital-Land offer better guaranties for artistic freedom?
3. What kind of Artistic Freedom's protection mechanisms are available? and how do they affect the dynamics of creation in an international context which tends towards decolonization? How to get rid of the White Saviour Syndrome/Victimisation in dealing with Artists in Vulnerable Situations?

Debate - Protagonists will be invited to write a Report (Bayan 21) containing 21 statements around the issues discussed.

The "Bayan 21" (in Arabic Bayan means Declaration but also Clarification) will be written in English enriched in foreign words and concepts relating the cultural and contextual differences of the debate protagonists and breaking with Western linguistic and ideological hegemony.

Debate - Protagonists:

Amitesh Grover, theatre maker and interdisciplinary artist (India)

Tea Tupajić, theatre and film director (Sarajevo)

Chong Wang, theatre director (Beijing)

Mona Merhi, writer, theatre maker (Lebanon/USA)

Basima Takroui, novelist, poet and translator (Palestine/Canada)

Amir Hassan Chehelan, author (Tehran)

Carole Lokossou, actress, dancer and vocalist (Benin)

Hamdy Reda, artist and activist (Egypt/Germany)

Marie Yan, writer, playwright and dramaturge (France/Germany)

Special Guest:

Alexandre Paulikevitch, artist and Arab belly dancer (Beirut)

Majlis video documentation by **Franzi Cagić**

14:15 - 14:30 BREAK

DAY 2 - Friday, December 3

14:30 - 15:30 Artists' Round Table II

Repetitive Patterns in the Artistic and Cultural World

curated by **Khaled Barakeh**, conceptual artist and cultural activist (Syria/Germany)

Having understood the historical importance and value of art, states worldwide have built institutions and museums to become gate-guards of artwork to protect it from any possible risk. Yet, they did not spend those same efforts to defend its makers: artists.

By way of assuming hegemony over the cultural world, Western institutions got to define the concept of being "at risk" through a western-centric lens. The current situation in Afghanistan, followed by an increased response of media and the cultural world, reminds us once again of this selectivity involved in defining who is considered an "artist at risk." The Western(-centric) gaze/focus shifting within just a matter of years from so-perceived "crisis hubs" to the next mediatic center of attention uncovers new patterns of dependency between global politics, media, and art institutions.

Simultaneously, the pandemic exposed the existing power dynamics between the core and periphery. This newly revealed fragility and injustice of the systems we live under pose and propose new notions of being "at risk." Hence, a need arises for the Safe Havens network to revisit definitions of "risk" to understand the needs of artists, from their perspectives, to be able to create new and better solutions in response.

Thus, we need to ask: What is the responsibility of (Western) cultural institutions in creating such fragile temporal and geographical dependencies? Can the new urge of artists to institutionalize their work fills the epistemological gaps of the Western art world to reframe global solidarities and systems of support for artists at risk - and why do artists in the first place have the urge to institute their initiatives instead of relying on existing structures?

DAY 2 - Friday, December 3

What role are cultural organizations playing in that dilemma - aren't they pushing artists to take more risks than they might be ready for? If we agree on the role of art in creating better communities, can we shift the welfare of artists from the margin to the center through a more expansive definition of artists at risk?

While acknowledging all the great efforts that many have made so far, this round table aims to look critically at where we are today and what can be done differently to enhance our work. With:

Abed Al Kadiri, artist, curator (Lebanon/France),

Mey Seifan, choreographer, lecturer, cultural manager, and activist (Syria/Germany)

Hamlet Lavastida, independent visual artist and political activist (Cuba/Germany)

15:30 - 17:00 **Hive III (Middle East): Building Resilience in the Face of Injustice & Insecurity**

A discussion session convened in Arabic (with simultaneous translation into English) by

Basma El Hussein, Action for Hope and **Abdullah Alkafri**, Ettijahat – Independent Culture (Beirut)

Initiators:

Suha Oda, Iraqi journalist, Women's Voice for Peacebuilding

Liwaa Yazji, Syrian writer & filmmaker, Ettijahat

Rasha Hilwi, Palestinian writer, journalist & DJ storyteller

Zaina Erhaim, Syrian journalist

Audience-Participant Organizations:

Un Ponte Per, Mohamed Ambrosini and Luca Chiavinato

Al Mawred Al Thaqafy, Helena Nassif

Performing Artists:

Alaa Sandouk, Syrian musician

Interpreters: **Baraa Seraj Eddin** and **Wissam Tayar**

17:00 - 17:15 **Wrap Up, short feedback, questions**

DAY 3 - Saturday, December 4

13:00 - 13:15 Introduction to Day Three

13:15 - 13:55 Report from Asia:

Arresting Art: Repression, Censorship, and Artistic Freedom

Convened by PEN America's Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), Asia Regional Representative, **Manojna Yeluri** in collaboration with **FORUM-Asia** and the **Mekong Cultural Hub** (MCH)

13:55 - 15:15 Afghanistan

Multi Ethnic Afghanistan – art under fundamentalism

Conversation led by **Sverre Pedersen** (Norway) with **Maryam Sharifi** (cultural manager and producer) **Monirah Hashemi** (actor, director and playwright)

From Hazaristan to Sápmi - A Genuine Musical Meeting

Artistic intervention by **Hamid Sakhizada** (Afghanistan) Dambura and vocals, and **Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska** (Sápmi) Yoik curated by **Safemuse** in cooperation with **Arctic Arts Festival**

15:15 - 15:30 BREAK

15:30 - 16:30 Workshop: Safe Havens Next Steps

A workshop session facilitated by **Fredrik Elg** and **Jude Dibia** (Safe Havens Freedom Talks, SH|FT) with participant speakers: **Meriam Bouselmi** (lawyer, writer, director, lecturer, cultural expert), **Khaled Harara** (Palestinian hip-hop artist), **Dr. Daniel Gad** (Arts Rights Justice Academy, University of Hildesheim), **Ashley Tucker** (Co-Executive Director, Artistic Freedom Initiative), **Sofía Monterroso** (Senior Officer of Programs and Operations, Artistic Freedom Initiative) and **Maria Arnqvist** (the Swedish Arts Council)

This session aims to tackle important issues that examine the impact of Safe Havens & The Freedom Talks since inception. Artists and institutions will share their views about their participation with the conference and the Freedom Talks and what type(s) of outcome these interactions have led to. We will focus on the future, highlighting on SH|FT as a global platform that brings all arts rights justice actors together to discuss, share ideas and tackle issues that affect them all. Then we will open this discussion for the team and the participants.

DAY 3 - Saturday, December 4

16:30 - 16:45 Wrap Up, short feedback, questions

17:00 - 19:00 DINNER BREAK

19:00 - 21:00 What we risk for art:

How censorship and persecution of individual artists reflects a global trend

The closing event, curated by **Safemuse**, will physically take place in Kronosalen at Sentralen in Oslo and live-streamed to a global audience. The event will include conversations with various artists, as well as artistic interventions.

Artistic director: **Hooman Sharifi**

Moderator: **Ingeborg Moa** (director of the Norwegian Human Rights Fund)

Performing Artists:

Yasmine El Baramawy (Egyptian musician, Oud performer, composer)

Carlos Catun aka **Gato** (Guatemalan breakdancer)

Ahmed Tobasi (Palestinian actor, director and educator)

Rezan Betula (Kurdish performance artist)

Per Oddvar Johansen (Norwegian jazz percussionist/drummer, composer)

Hamid Sakhizada (Afghan musician, dambura performer and singer)

Naïd Mubalegh (French/Hazara, flute player)

BIOGRAPHIES



Dr. Alice M. Nah is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Applied Human Rights and the Department of Politics at the University of York. She conducts research on the security and protection of human rights defenders at risk. Her research projects have involved working collaboratively with artists to create, imagine, and tell stories in ways that inspire action and reflection. Her recent edited book *Protecting Human Rights Defenders at Risk* (Routledge, 2020), proposes ways in which the protection of human rights defenders at risk should be reimagined and practised.



Dr. Daniel Gad is the Managing director of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy for the Arts in Development at University of Hildesheim since 2012. Starting from 2017 he is head of the Arts Rights Justice Program which beside a wider research stream organizes the annual Arts Rights Justice Academy at Hildesheim Kulturcampus.



Meriam Bouselmi has been a lawyer registered to the National Order of Lawyers of Tunisia since 2010. Trained to work in different contexts and different languages, as an international jurist, writer, director, lecturer, cultural expert and bridge-maker, she had the double opportunity/responsibility to conceive, manage and take part in wide-reaching artistic, cultural and legal projects in different countries. Her academic and artistic research focus on empowerment and resistance narratives. Since 2017, she has been working regularly with the ARTS RIGHTS JUSTICE Academy (Hildesheim University) to lead workshops and write research articles in the field of Cultural Diversity and Artistic Freedom.



Jude Dibia is a Nigerian award winning novelist and human rights advocate. Dibia's writings have tackled sensitive issues like the maltreatment of the LGBTQ+ community in Nigeria as well as gender inequality issues. In 2014 after the enactment of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act was signed into law, a law that targeted the LGBTQ+ community, Dibia left Nigeria. Based in Malmö, Sweden Dibia has continued his work both as a writer and a cultural arts worker responsible for Malmö's Fristadsprogram (sanctuary program for writers and artists at risk).



Kagiso Lesego Molope is an indigenous South African, an award-winning novelist and playwright. She writes post-apartheid, feminist and resistance literature. Her work centres the history and experiences of indigenous South Africans and tackles issues of race, class, sexuality and identity and her books are read in schools across Southern Africa as well as in parts of Europe. She lives in Canada.



Michael Schmidt is a Johannesburg-based veteran investigative journalist and best-selling non-fiction author who has worked in 47 countries on six continents. He founded the Professional Journalists' Association of South Africa (ProJourn) in 2010 and got into the arts rights justice field in 2012 through his work on journalism safety. Since 2016, he has served as the official rapporteur of the annual Safe Havens summit, and in 2019 co-founded the non-profit Hammerl Arts Rights Transfer (HART) which ran the logistics on Safe Havens in Cape Town that year. HART was a co-founding organisation of the Amani: Africa Creative Defence Network in 2020.

Photo: Gerard Rudolf



Khaled Harara is a renowned Palestinian hip-hop artist who has lived as a refugee in Gaza. His texts discuss the political situation in Palestine from a humanitarian and social perspective and criticise the lack of freedom of expression and the suffering in Palestine under the Hamas rule. In Gaza, Khaled Harara was the first to organise hip hop workshops for youth, focusing on writing texts and on different ways of expressing oneself. The workshops were banned, just like his group “Palestinian Unit” and the artist organisation that he was a member of. Khaled Harara was Gothenburg City of Refuge first musician that ICORN accepted - from 2013 to 2015. During his stay in Gothenburg, Khaled Harara has taken part in several public events, debates and workshops.

Photo: Joakim Roos



Dr. Julia Bala, Ph.D, is a psychologist, psychotherapist, former staff member of ARQ, National Psychotrauma Center in the Netherlands. She specialised in diagnostic and treatment of refugee children and families, developed therapeutic interventions in relation to family consequences of trauma and participated in establishment of novel treatment and preventive programs. In her current work as independent consultant, she provides training, consultation and publishes on topics related to her main fields of interest: intergenerational consequences of trauma, forced migration and strengthening the resilience of refugee families.

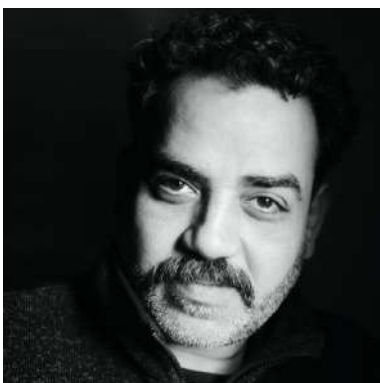


Fredrik Elg, previously a filmmaker, specializes in issues concerning democracy, inclusion and freedom of speech, specifically in the arts. He has worked for the Swedish Arts Council, Malmö City and partnered with several global organizations working with democracy and freedom of speech, as well as, conceptualized and launched the Safe Havens Conference for creative professionals under threat. He is one of the founders of the non-profit organization Safe Havens Freedom Talks (SH|FT). Elg has studied arts, journalism and social studies at Lund University, Malmö University and at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Photo: Sofia Elg



Alexandre Paulikevitch is a Lebanese artist living in Beirut, Lebanon. He is one of very few male Arab belly dancers, and is known for his thought-provoking work and the social issues he tackles through his art. He studied at the University of Paris VIII majoring in Theater and Dance. He returned to Beirut in 2006, where he is now permanently based, and has since "been creating spaces of reflection on Middle-Eastern dance through his work as a choreographer, a teacher and a performer». Today he specializes in contemporary Baladi dance, a new dance form he has created and divulged.



Hamdy Reda is a visual artist, a curator, a culture activist, and a photographer, living and working between Egypt and Germany. He was born in Cairo in 1972, and graduated with an honorary degree in the faculty of fine arts - (BFA Painting), University of Helwan- Cairo in 1997. Later he attended anemones workshops and training sessions for art history, curating, and culture management. The last was UDK (Berlin Career College) Artist Training 2019. Alongside his artistic career, he was the founder, Managing Director, and Curator of artellewa art space, a residency in Giza-Egypt for domestic and international artists. artellewa used to be a haven for the formation and activation of dialogue between artists and the community. The recipient of various artistic awards, he seeks to further the creative dialogue within the public sphere while simultaneously informing his art practice.



Amitesh Grover is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist based in New Delhi, India. He moves beyond theatre into installation, video, digital and text-based art. His work delves into themes like the dyad of absence/presence, the necessity of remembering, and the performance of resistance to keep on living. He is the recipient of MASH FICA Award (New Media Art), Pro Helvetia. Arts Residency Award, Arts Centre Melbourne Commission, Charles Wallace Award, and was nominated for Arte Laguna Prize (Italy), Prix Ars Electronica Award (Austria) & Forecast Award (HKW, Germany). His work has been shown nationally and internationally. He studied at University of Arts London, and teaches, writes, and curates for performance as well.



Wang Chong is the founder and artistic director of Beijing-based performance group Théâtre du Rêve Expérimental. He is the most internationally commissioned Chinese theater director. Wang was born in Beijing in 1982. He received his bachelor degree in law from Peking University, and then master's degree in theater from University of Hawaii. In 2008, Wang founded Théâtre du Rêve Expérimental. In 2012, he started the Chinese New Wave Theater Movement by presenting a series of new performances with innovative use of body, live video and sound. This ongoing movement gained critical and popular acclaim. Wang's works have been performed in 20 countries and territories.

Photo: Zhou Jing



Tea Tupajić is a Croatian theatre and film director. She investigates the role that art and performance can play in a wide range of often controversial social issues. Her work has a strong international orientation and takes place at the intersection of theatre, performance, video art and happening. As 'lead actors' she usually chooses non-professional performers: a company made up of festival curators, former employees of Israeli intelligence, or a mixed selection of ordinary European citizens. Within the clearly delineated context of the theatre, she is able together with her performers and the audience to create space for meeting, discussion, experience and reflection; a free space for a new perspective on complex, political topics. In 2020, she was named as one of the hundred world's most influential theatre artists by Verbrecher Verlag and NTGent.



Franzi Cagić is searching for ways to communicate topics of socio-political interest - usually visually but experimenting with different styles and disciplines. She co-organizes and curates an independent little festival in Alsace where people from different experiences come together, since being in dialogue and having an ongoing exchange is crucial. Currently she lives in a very small town called Hildesheim and is doing her master studies in media production.



Basima Takroui is an established novelist, poet and translator. She worked and lived in the city of Jerusalem until the year 2014. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature from Bethlehem University in 2004. In 2016, she obtained a masters' degree in Communication and PR from Lasell University in Newton, USA. Upon graduation, she migrated to Ottawa, Canada where she is currently established. She is the chairperson and general director of Nuwa Arts and Cultural Production Organisation aiming to bridge and create ties between Canadian and Palestinian Artists with the purpose to foster the birthing, creation, showcasing and distribution of bilingual literary, media, performing, and visual arts in Ontario.



Amir Hassan Cheheltan studied Electrical Engineering in Tehran and London. While still studying, he published two volumes of short stories in 1976 and 1978. For the past 16 years, Iranian authorities have not issued permission to publish Cheheltan's new novels. Although his previous works can, more or less, be published. Cheheltan new books are only published abroad. He has published seven novels in (the 8th will be released in March 2022). Some of them are also translated into English, Italian, Norwegian, Lithuanian, Hebrew and Arabic. He also writes essays and articles for international media, including German newspapers such as FAZ, SZ and others.



Mona Merhi is a writer, researcher, TV producer, theatremaker, cultural manager, doctoral student and instructor at the University of Washington. Being a theatre critic in many local and regional newspapers in the Arab world, she published articles about diversified performance landscapes. She was involved in research projects relating to cultural policies and in initiatives relating to the freedom of expression. Her current research interests are concerned with staging catastrophes in light of technology and contemporaneity (when the world is subsumed either to camps or to incarceration clusters/Focus on Syrian performance and theatre). Mona received the Simpson Center for the Humanities Cluster support Grant and the Michael Quinn Writing Prize for 2021.



Carole Lokossou is a Beninese actress, dancer and vocalist whose warm and guttural voice sublimates a charismatic body with multiple expressions. Former resident of the Ensemble Artistique et Culturel des Etudiants du Bénin where she learned theater, dance and music, Carole LOKOSSOU holds a bachelor's degree in sociology, a master's degree in English and a master's degree in management. projects and organizations. For the past fifteen years, Carole LOKOSSOU has given pride of place to the direction of actors and, depending on the projects, helps young actors to detect, reveal and sublimate the artistic potential buried in them. Seeing Benin 2025 overcrowded with talented actors and revealing Benin's cultural richness is her daily dream.



Ahmed Tobasi is an accomplished actor, director and educator with experience working in theatres throughout Palestine and internationally. Born in Jenin refugee camp in Palestine, restricted and frustrated by the occupation, Tobasi joined an armed resistance and was in prison before his 18th birthday. Upon his release 3 years later, Tobasi embraced the idea that he could become an agent of change and resistance using the medium of theatre. After 2 years studying at The Freedom Theatre, Tobasi undertook further education in Norway, followed by a 3- year professional career abroad. Tobasi is currently working as the artistic director of The Freedom Theatre, Palestine and continues to act and work in international productions sharing the Palestinian experiences and narrative with new audiences.



Rezan Betula is an independent artist. She collaborated with AHJ (Aide Humanitaire et Journalisme) during the Mekanati project and the VFSF project. She writes articles for Kurdish magazines and newspapers on the status and the image of women in art and the media in Kurdistan. She also writes about art genres and movements. Betula was a lecturer at the Sulaymaniyah University, the first professor giving classes on gender studies at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Sulaymaniyah. She participated in several artistic exhibitions in Kurdistan and Paris. Betula is a co-organizer of a project on feminist art in Sulaymaniyah.



Ingeborg Moa is the Executive Director of the Norwegian Human Rights Fund. She is the former Director of Activism and Organisational Development at Amnesty Norway, and has nearly two decades of international experience working with local organizations and human rights defenders around the world.



Yasmine El Baramawy is an Egyptian musician, sound artist, Oud performer and composer who came to Malmö, Sweden through the ICORN City of refuge programme in 2020. She develops an original sound universe around her practice of the Oud – one of the world’s oldest instruments, but also around concrete music and other electronic experiments. She builds sound installations mingling with poetry and spoken word added to her Oud live manipulations. Besides music composition and sound design Yasmine is a political activist engaged in women’s rights.

Photo: Sascha Kajic



Carlos Catun, aka. 'Gato' is one of Central America’s foremost dancers and a prize-winning breakdancer from Guatemala. He is currently based in Tromsø, Norway as a Safemuse residence artist. In 2016, Gato participated in the groundbreaking theatre production «Vidas Extremas» together with the National Sami Theatre institution Beaivvás, which received the National Critics Award for Best Play of the year. Gato is involved with a number of artistic projects, and was recently nominated to the Gullsekken-award for a production performed for schools and students.



Mey Seifan is a choreographer, a lecturer, a cultural manager and an activist. She learned at the Ballet Conservatory in Damascus and then studied classical and contemporary dance at the HfMDK Frankfurt. She later switched to the master's degree in theater studies at the LMU Munich. Beside founding the Damascus Contemporary Dance platform at the Opera of Damaskus she worked for many years at Goethe Institute in. Her company TANWEEN has been active in Damascus since 2008 and in Germany since 2013. She co-founded the feminist association NESWA in Berlin, where she is currently the managing director. In 2011 she started the "Syrian Dreams Archive" on which all of her subsequent projects were based. Seifan is a board member of Regional Association of the Free Performing Arts LAFT Berlin, and an Officer at the diversity politics of the Federal Association of Dance in Germany.



Per Oddvar Johansen is a Norwegian jazz percussionist / drummer and composer. Since the early 1990s, he has released a number of artists and has collaborated with an extensive number of distinguished artists, projects and releases. He has also participated in an array of tours in Eastern and Western Europe, the USA, Canada and Asia. So far, he has been awarded the prestigious Spellemann Prize six times, in addition to many nominations. In 2018, Johansen wrote a commissioned work for Drivhuset's anniversary performance.

Photo: Helge Lien



Zaina Erhaim is an award-winning Syrian journalist, working as communication and gender expert with a couple of international organizations in the Middle East and North Africa region. Zaina contributed to three books related to journalism and women including 'Our Women on the Ground'. She worked with IWPR as communications manager for eight years. Before that, she was a journalist with the BBC. She writes for different outlets such as Newslines Magazines, Open Democracy, AL Modon, amongst others. Zaina has an MA in International Journalism from City University of London.



Marie Yan is a writer, playwright and dramaturge for dance and theatre. Born in France and now living between Paris and Berlin, she writes in French (language of childhood), English (language of learning), German (her mother's heritage) and wishes to write in Cantonese (her father's heritage) by 2031. Her interest is the future. In worlds that range from near documentary to speculative fiction, she has written stories about immigration, encounter at a border, social collapse and transformation. As a dramaturge and occasional curator, she tends to work on projects with a focus on postcolonial, creaturely and, or, queer-feminist perspectives. She holds a Master in Literature, a Master in Playwriting and dramaturgy and a Physical Theatre diploma.



Khaled Barakeh is a conceptual artist and cultural activist. Barakeh's practice is based on reframing moments of dissonance, and often outright injustice, in political, and social structures. Although he employs a wide range of artistic strategies, this is often achieved through deft manipulation of immediately recognizable and found objects, and preexisting imagery. In recent years, his projects have delved into the media's portrayal of victims of conflict, once cohesive communities divided by political strife, and the dynamics of integration for refugees. Barakeh sees art as an opportunity for these moments to be understood, and felt, by a broader audience; not just the individuals which experience their acute effects.

Photo: khaledbarakeh.com



Abed Al Kadiri, is an artist and curator, double majored in Arabic Literature and Fine Arts. In 2006, he left Beirut heading to Kuwait where he held various positions apart from his painterly practice. His work focuses on the deprivation of freedom in society by analyzing contemporary issues of violence, cultural heritage, migration and belonging. From 2006-2015, Al Kadiri held various positions apart from his painterly practice. There he curated numerous exhibitions and developed an extensive education and cultural exchange program. In 2017, He cofounded Dongola Limited Editions. Currently he is residing between Paris and Beirut



Julie Trébault is the director of the Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), a project of PEN America that aims to safeguard the right to artistic freedom by connecting threatened artists to support, building a global network of resources for artists at risk, and forging ties between arts and human rights organizations. She has nearly two decades of experience in international arts programming and network-building, including at the Museum of the City of New York, the Center for Architecture, the National Museum of Ethnology in The Netherlands, and the Musée du quai Branly in Paris. Julie holds a Master's Degree in Arts Administration from the Sorbonne University, a Master's Degree in Archeology from the University of Strasbourg, and teaches at Fordham University.



Liwaa Yazji is an established filmmaker, screenwriter, playwright and a poet. She lived and worked in Damascus until 2013 where she obtained her degrees in English Literature and Theater Studies, after that she moved to pursue her work projects in Beirut and then in Berlin. Her work is internationally celebrated. She is a writer in the Birth Debate Project-Royal Exchange Theater Manchester. She has been part of several collaborative artistic projects and has several publications. She got the prestigious Berliner fellowship for non-German speaking authors in 2018. She is a Berlinale Talent, and her coming feature documentary Hostage was part of DOC Station Berlinale and DOK Fest Munich Market and won a Prize from the Documentary Association of Europe.

Photo: Florian Riemann



Alessandro Zagato is the Latin America regional representative for the Artists at Risk Connection. Prior to PEN America, he worked as a researcher for a European Research Council project. He founded the "Research Group in Arts and Politics" and the associated "Casa Giap," a residency center for international artists and researchers. He holds a PhD in Sociology from Maynooth University, Ireland and is the author of "After the Pink Tide. Corporate State Formation and New Egalitarianisms in Latin America" and "The Event of Charlie Hebdo: Imaginaries of Freedom and Control", among several other publications. He lives in San Cristóbal de Las Casas.



Abdullah Alkafri is an award-winning playwright and theatre director. He also works as a trainer, strategic planner, fundraiser and designer for arts intervention initiatives, working with Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung among many others in Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and elsewhere. He is a member of selection committees of the Arab Council for Social Sciences, a regular collaborator with the Sundance Institute's MENA Theater Lab and the board of the 7th World Summit on Arts and Culture. In 2014, Abdullah Alkafri, a founding member of Ettijahat – Independent Culture, was chosen to succeed Ms Rana Yazji as Executive Director of the non-governmental organisation. Alkafri also teaches MA Theatre at l'Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut, where he is also currently undertaking a PhD.



Suha Oda is a journalist from Iraq, and Director for the Women's Voice for Peacebuilding Project for media production. She is also an investigative journalist who won first place in the Najiba Hamrouni competition in Tunisia 2019. She works in the written, visual and audio media, and has previously managed several media projects in conflict areas in Iraq, including a radio department that aims to promote transitional justice in conflict areas after the stage of ISIS in 2017. She has provided many international trainings in cooperation with international institutions such as the Deutsche Welle Academy, the French CFI and MiCT. She works as a mentor and trainer for Yemeni journalists with Internews organization.



Rasha Hilwi is a Palestinian writer, journalist and a mother of twin girls. She was born in the city of Akka and based in Amsterdam. She graduated from the University of Haifa with a Bachelor of Sociology and Anthropology. She is the co-editor in chief of Raseef22, An Arabic language media platform standing at the intersection of identity, democracy and social justice. She is also its opinion department editor and "The Arab World and Europe" department editor. Rasha is a DJ storyteller, an artistic form that combines stories and music. In her work she focuses on the questions surrounding "Home بيت" and "Ghorbah غربة" and their intersection with womanhood, feminism and identity.



Charles Clint Chimedza works closely with Southern Defenders and partner organisations in the region to offer rapid and practical support to human rights defenders in need of protection. He coordinates Southern Defenders' protection programme through providing timely and effective protection practical, comprehensive and inclusive protection support to HRDs in Southern Africa; and forges strong partnerships with civil society organisations in Southern Africa including NGOs, social movements, students movements, democracy activists, government entities and UN agencies, in aid of the HRDs protection objectives. He holds a Bachelor of Law (LLB) Degree, (2015) from the University of Kwazulu Natal (South Africa).



Ines Tlili, graduated in Architecture and Cinematography, has always been committed to the defense of individual and collective rights and freedoms. By alternating professional and activist experiences in the field of cinema and civil society, she has developed an expertise in linking arts and culture to the promotion and defense of human rights and non-violent transformation. She also has extensive experience at the local and international levels in issues related to the fight against gender-based violence and gender economic and social justice, as well as issues related to violence prevention. She is currently pursuing an MA in Cultural Policy and Management with a focus on issues related to the cultural relations in Africa and the Arab world.



Mahmoud Othman Abd Elsalam is a licensed and practicing lawyer, legal adviser, legal writer, and consultant who is current employed by Association for freedom of thought and expression (AFTE), Cimatheque, and some of Egypt's most well-known artists. He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from Cairo University in 2007 and has since defended his clients in national legal cases such as that of notable author Ahmed Naji, illustrator Islam Gawish, satirist group Atfal al-Shawarea, and popular television program and puppet show, "Abla Fajita." He currently resides in Cairo and continues to specialize in defending academic, creative, and media-based rights.



Hooman Sharifi is a Norwegian choreographer with Iranian roots. He started his dance career with hip-hop when he was a teenager. Then, he went on to study classical and modern ballet in his twenties. Sharifi graduated in choreography at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. Moreover, he is particularly interested in the artistic expression found in the intersection between dance, theatre and graphic art. In 2000, Sharifi established his own company, Impure Company, dedicated to highlighting civic engagement and politics in its art.

Photo: Tale Hendnes



Sabine Choucair is a Lebanese humanitarian clown and performer. An RSA fellow and the first female clown to receive the “Premio Clown Nel Cuore” award in Italy. With qualifications in performing arts from London and social therapy from New York, she has been working with different communities around the world. She co-founded Clown Me In in Lebanon and Mexico, a group using the art of clowning to fight social injustice. She is a member of Clowns Without Borders USA spreading joy and laughter among disadvantaged communities. She’s the artistic director of the International Institute for Very Very Serious Studies. Sabine was among the 40 cultural leaders chosen to share their work at the World Economic Forum in Jan17.



Naïd Mubalegh taught the basics of Indian (Hindustani) classical as well as Nepalese folk music by South Asian masters in Portugal. She has a French and Afghan (Hazara) background. She now lives in Oslo and is particularly interested in exploring the possibilities that arise from encounters between different musical traditions and expressions, as well as the preconditions for these encounters to be fruitful.

Image: Khadim Ali

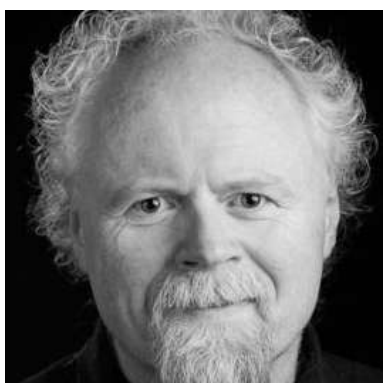


Hamid Sakhizada is a highly acknowledged musician from Afghanistan, specialized in the Hazara traditional music and the instrument dambura. He has performed in several countries, as well as having produced three albums. Hamid's all-consuming passion for the Hazara music has cost him dearly. The Hazara-people is a minority in Afghanistan, and due to his tireless efforts to preserve the tradition, Hamid became subject to a steady campaign of threats and violent harassment from groups who oppose the minority Hazara culture, as well as from religious traditionalists. Hamid was forced to leave his country, and in 2016 he came as guest musician to Safe Music Haven Harstad, Norway, under the ICORN/Norwegian PEN program where he still lives and continues to perform his music openly and keeping the Hazara tradition alive.

Photo: Knut Utler



Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska is a traditional and modern yoiker, and one of Norway's most talked about Sami artists since the 2000s. She is known from the group Adjágas and the duo Arvvas, together with Steinar Raknes.



Sverre Pedersen worked at Freemuse from August 2019 to June 2021 as a campaign and advocacy manager. He has been a filmmaker since 1985 and was the leader of the Norwegian Film Association from 2005 to February 2020. He sits on the board of FERA, The Federation of European Film Directors for the period 2015 to the end of 2021. He has studied sociology at the University of Bergen and he has a bachelor's degree in social work from Norway's municipal and social college. He has been active in human rights work, solidarity work, environmental protection, work with refugees and anti-racism since his early teens.



Margaret Aduto is the Africa regional representative of PEN America's ARC. She has over a decade of experience in development, human rights, and project management. She is currently a Programme Manager–Knowledge and Technology at Inuka Kenya Ni Sisi! Limited. Previously, she worked at Akiba Uhaki Foundation (AUF); at IGAD'S Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism (CEWARN) in Uganda, and at Uganda Change Agent Association. She holds a Master of Business Administration – Management option from Bottega University, a Post Graduate Diploma in Project Planning and Management from Uganda Management Institute, and a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and Social Administration from Makerere University Kampala.



Ashley Tucker serves as Artistic Freedom Initiative's Co-Executive Director, leading the planning and implementation of its programs, operations, and legal services for at-risk artists. Previously, Ms. Tucker has worked for the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, and the Centre for Civil and Political Rights. She has worked on strategic litigation before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and conducted research and human rights trainings in Haiti. Ms. Tucker received her BA from the University of Arizona in Studio Art, and her JD from City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law. She currently serves as a member of the New York State Bar Association's Committee on Immigration Representation.



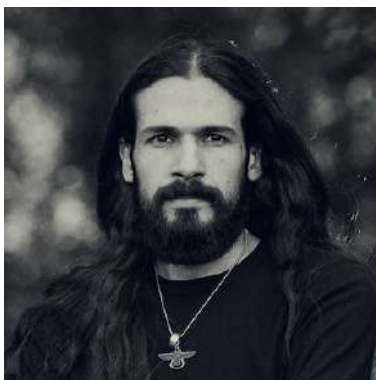
Sofía Monterroso serves as AFI's Senior Officer of Programs and Operations, supporting the planning and implementation of its programs, operations, and legal services for at-risk artists. Throughout her career, Sofía has dedicated herself to developing socially engaged public programming for international and domestic audiences. Her public affairs and project management experience include contributions to the U.S. Department of State in Lusophone and Francophone Africa, and Civil Liberties and Public Policy of Amherst, Massachusetts. Prior to joining AFI, Ms. Monterroso completed a Bachelor of Arts with honors in Gender Studies and Romance Languages from Mount Holyoke College.



Danitza Luna is a member of a collective called Mujeres Creando. It is a Bolivian radical feminist organization that mainly operates in public spaces, using graffiti and performance as forms of expression and protest. The collective embraces anti-racist and feminist ideas. It was founded in 1992 by María Galindo. Initially, it was aimed at questioning an elite class of women who they considered privileged and detached from reality, and who—mainly via NGO platforms—were promoting and championing an exclusive discourse of “equality.” Mujeres Creando participates in heterogeneous types of interventions such as street theater and actions against poverty. They run a newspaper and they have published books on poetry, feminist theory and sexuality, and videos.



DeLovie Kwagala is a non-binary queer, They/Them/Theirs; self-taught photographer and social activist from Kampala, Uganda, and currently based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Their work explores narratives around Identity, Belonging, Social Injustices, and Gender-Sexuality with the intent to not sexualize, fetishize or stigmatize; inspired by their experience and those of others. DeLovie is a current WomenPhotograph Mentee and Market Photo Workshop student pursuing Photojournalism and Documentary Photography Programme.



Sina Winter is a black metal musician, song writer, guitarist, vocalist and lyricist from Tehran/Iran. In January 2014 he moved to Norway as the first Safemuse's residence artist to continue his music career in Norway due to his risky situation in his homeland, especially after playing his show at Inferno festival and the big attention he got from the media. Now he works with known and professional Norwegian black metal musicians like Tjalve (Ex-Den Saakaldte/ Ex-1349), Spektre (Gaahlswyrd/Horizon Ablaze), Destructhor (Myrkskog/Ex-Morbid Angel, Zyklon) and Vyl (/Ex-Keep of kalessin/Gorgoroth-Live).

Photo: Henrik Fjørtoft



Basma El Husseiney is a cultural manager, an activist for social change and a defender of cultural rights. For the past 30 years she has been involved in supporting independent cultural projects and organizations in the Arab region. The two main organizations she founded; Al Mawred Al Thaqafy and Action for Hope, are proof of her commitment to culture and artistic creation as resources that enable people to attain social justice and freedom, and endorse positive social change. Basma is currently leading the organisation Action for Hope, that was established in 2015 with the objective of addressing the cultural and social needs of distressed and displaced communities in the Arab region. Basma is a UNESCO expert in cultural governance since 2011.



Órion Lalli is an activist, performer, visual artist and professional actor with theatrical background and experience in the research field of performing arts. Since 2005, his research has focus on the intersection and influences between Dance-Theater and Performance Art. His work is mainly developed from the experiences of his own body and its dialogue through different languages. Since 2018 he has been developing the project EM.COITROS, encounters of a body living with HIV, where he delves into his body and the unraveling about HIV/AIDS and the possible relationships with performances and art installations, a dialogue about public policies in the field of arts.



Maryam Sharifi came to Norway as a refugee due to her husband Hamid Sakhizada's musical activity in Afghanistan through the international program under ICORN, and came to Harstad, Norway in 2016. Sharifi has a degree in sociology from Kabul University and has many years of experience as a festival producer and cultural activist from Afghanistan. Sharifi has worked in a number of major art and culture projects in Afghanistan. In particular, she has been involved in spreading the story of the Taliban's destruction of the two large Buddha statues in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. The statues are considered by UNESCO as part of the international world heritage. Every March 11, she organizes the festival in Harstad in collaboration with Harstad Municipality and the Arctic Art Festival.



Monirah Hashemi was born to Afghan parents living in Iran as refugees. She moved to Herat, Afghanistan at the end of 2003 where she co-founded Simorgh Film Association of Culture and Art in 2005. She established Simorgh theater department and has worked as a stage actor, director and playwright, with a particular focus on creating female-led and female-fronted productions. In 2006, she wrote and directed her award-winning debut play, Cry of History, produced solely by women. Her credits as a playwright includes Masks under the Burka and Sitaraha – The Stars, presented in 2012 and 2015 at Women Playwright International Conferences in Sweden and South Africa. Monirah moved to Sweden end of 2013.



Alaa Sandouk is an oud and bass player, song-writer, oud teacher, and organiser of many musical initiatives. Hailing from Damascus in Syria and now living in Basra in Iraq, he has helped organise concerts such as for European Union Day in the Green Zone, Turkish National Day at the Turkish Embassy, a cultural event between China and Iraq in the cultural center, The (TAHAWER) conference in Najaf through the European Union and the British Council, The International Autism Day at the Iraqi Fashion House, and the Damascus Overland World Festival. Alaa is the founder of the Anber Team and the Al Mahatta Band, and is also the founder and director of JUMARts.



Hamlet Lavastida is a Cuban independent visual artist and a political activist by way of his art. His work reconstructs old Cuban political and military propaganda. He has been one of the founders of most prominent artist-led freedom movements: 27N and MSI (San Isidro Movement) that demand freedom of speech in Cuba. On June 26, 2021 he was incarcerated by state security forces, when he returned to Cuba from an artistic residency in Berlin. He spent three months in Villa Marista, the high-security prison known to be a detention centre for political oppositionists. In August 2021 he was named by Amnesty International a prisoner of conscience. Currently, he resides in Germany where he was granted artistic scholarships.

Photo: Ina Fassbender

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