

Regional Green Dialogs – Artists’ Residency

The transformative power of creative action

Call for Proposals

Karachi, Pakistan – April 2017

‘Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the death line: to dismantle in order to build A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART.’ (Joseph Beuys)

The main objective of this project is to transcend the stalled political parameters of mutual distrust and enmity between people in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is time to let go of nourishing well-known historically established narratives about each other and to open new windows by re-imagining the past, present and future differently.

What do new visions of peace, trust, stability and cooperation look like in a finite world, where natural resources are becoming scarce and growing inequality predominates all political, economic and social relations? How can people from two countries work together to create, provoke and inspire new ways of thinking and acting politically? By developing the concept of Social Sculpture during the 1970’s, the German artist Joseph Beuys established a very broad and political understanding of art. Art, in his regard is not reduced to material artefacts that form a visible final ‘product’ and can be exhibited in galleries and museums. Social Sculpture does not distinguish between arts and non-arts and between the artistic and the social. The concept of Social Sculpture includes not only tangible but also intangible material. It sees art as a participatory process where every human being can contribute. In Beuys’ view, as long as it is enacted mindfully and reflectively, every human act can be regarded as art, thus every human being can be an artist.

The Social Sculpture Research Unit (SSRU) has been working for decades with the idea of the Social Sculpture, whereby it engages in transdisciplinary exchange to create change while sharing the vision of a humane and ecological future.¹ By continually asking what it means to be an artist, the question encourages dialogue processes and connective practices that bring together different people and make possible new insights and inquiries towards a sustainable societal transformation. This understanding of Social Sculpture calls upon all of us to use the transformative power of art to shape the world creatively and socially. This particular concept of art sees the relational structures between humans and nature, aesthetics and ethics, art and social life and thereby overcomes one-dimensional thinking.² Keeping this relationship between art and society in mind opens new avenues to think about the challenges we are facing today and has the capacity to mobilize and transform society.

¹ <http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/history/>

² <http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/our-focus/>

Heinrich Böll Foundation (hbs) and Vasl Artists' Collective would like to bring the idea of Social Sculpture and the transformative power of art together with its perspective on resources and ecology and its approach to enable Afghan and Pakistani artists to be creators of a social change process in the region. How can we convince governments and societies in both countries that our mutual problems need mutual and joint solutions? How do we propagate an understanding of nature and resources as holistic entities, which are not divided by borders or nation states and need to be managed with respect and care? We believe that the transformative power of art across borders can create new perspectives. Inspired by the concept of the Social Sculpture, this project does not aim to create eternal pieces of art, but rather to encourage people to start thinking. In line with Beuys and the SSRU, this process of thinking together within a visual dialog to us is one step of an artistic process.

As part of its work in Afghanistan and Pakistan to focus on peace building aspects of equitable natural resource management, hbs aims to engage national and regional civil society actors from both countries in confidence building dialogs, focusing on common interests for regional cooperation and stability.

In the frame of an artists' residency hbs and Vasl Artists' Collective would like to encourage four artists from Afghanistan and Pakistan to come together for a period of four weeks and explore how arts can contribute in provoking and initiating a dialogue on resources and peace. We invite the participants to experiment with tangible as well as nontangible material. This can happen through any sort of expression that is appropriate to the exploratory processes and possible results. Based on the understanding that everyone is an artist who shares the vision of Social Sculpture, we are inviting graduates from the visual arts fields, be it photography, architecture or design to apply for this project. Artists who are actively socio-politically engaged and see activism as a form of creativity and as a process that brings together aesthetics and ethics and agree that 'responsibility means the ability to respond'³ are especially encouraged to apply.

The call for applications focuses on the concept of Social Sculpture in the hereby-stated understanding of art. The proposals are expected to relate to a perception of resource equity in the region, this should be outlined in the Statement of Intent which can reach a maximum of 500 words. Applicants should also state what their professional and/or personal background bring in as well as how they relate to the framework of Social Sculpture. Additionally, applications from artists should be accompanied by ten images of their previous work (photos, video, audio work).

The artists' residency will take place from April 6th to May 12th, 2017 at the Vasl Artists' Collective residence in Karachi. The participants would receive a nominal remuneration. The residency program will include theoretical inputs and workshops via Skype by Shelley Sacks who is an interdisciplinary Social Sculpture practitioner⁴, writer and Director of the Social Sculpture Research Unit. She will be mentoring the artists' residency to support the participants with ideas and strategies how to practically work on the Social Sculpture. Further, there will be online talks by two visiting tutors of the German projects Stiftung 7000 Eichen⁵ and Omnibus für Direkte Demokratie.⁶ The participants will be expected to document their

³ <http://www.social-sculpture.org/category/our-focus/our-methodologies/>

⁴ www.exchange-values.org

⁵ https://www.documenta.de/en/works_in_kassel; <http://www.7000eichen.de/>

creative process as well as prepare and conduct an Open House Day in the course of the residency. Housing, meals and materials will be provided.

Please submit your proposal, along with a CV to Eva.Kuessner@pk.boell.org and vaslresidency@gmail.com not later than Friday, 17th February 2017. In case of any comprehension questions do not hesitate to contact us.

⁶ <http://www.democracy-in-motion.eu/en/idea/why-democracy/>