

NAČO DIVADELNÁ NITRA 2014 ART, WHAT FOR?

26 SEPT > 1 OCT
INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL
MEDZINÁRODNÝ FESTIVAL

Art, What For?

at International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2014
26 September – 1 October 2014

THE THEME

In connection with the moral decay of contemporary society, the prevailing consumer way of life and the overall disregard for man and nature, we would like to think about the role of art and its potential to influence the nature and spiritual dimension of man. We would like to point out the relation between the state of the society and the position of art therein. We would like to emphasize the meaning of art in the development of human personality, its creative, as well as economic potential.

We would like to talk about **art that brings joy, knowledge, lessons, and consolation. Art, which teaches us to be empathic, promotes thinking and creativity, helps us understand the complexity of the world and has the ability to help solve social, economic or scientific problems of the society.**

"Culture is a source of personal fulfilment, creativity and joy. I am concerned that fewer EU citizens are involved in cultural activities, as performers, producers or consumers. This survey (Eurobarometer on cultural participation) shows that governments need to re-think how they support culture to stimulate public participation and culture's potential as an engine for jobs and growth. The cultural and creative sectors also need to adapt to reach new audiences and explore new funding models."

Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

OBJECTIVES

The project **ART, WHAT FOR?** aims at stirring a public discourse (on both national and international level) on **(un)necessity of art** in the life of nowadays society. Cultural operators and artists strive to create, produce and present art to the widest possible public, while the latest findings of Eurobarometer survey on cultural participation show worrying signs of decreased interest of European public in cultural events.

This project wants to question whether at all, art is still being perceived by the public as something that significantly enriches the lives of individuals as well as of the society. With our efforts, we want to turn public's attention and sensitivity towards all the different important roles art can and should play in our lives. The project in the framework of International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2014 (and outside it as well) aims at provoking and opening a public debate by various means:

- Mapping out the situation in Europe by surveying, collecting existing data from various researches on art participation and art consumption, analysing and comparing the findings.

- Asking direct questions to the public of Europe by customized scientific and artistic research and through the media, creating a database of opinions of diverse people on un(necessity) of art. We want to question official representatives of cities and countries, the elites (artists, scientists, economists, businessmen, politicians, decision-makers) and the wide public – people that attend art events as well as those that do not;
- Asking questions through artistic projects
- Stirring an ongoing online discussion about art and its role nowadays
- Opening the discourse at a public debate with experts from different fields and countries
- Discussing the position and functions of art
- Following the discussion and the artistic works online
- All the above mentioned activities have one overarching goal: **To find new effective ways of bringing art to people's lives, to look for innovative ways of audience building and audience development, to discover and test-drive new approaches allowing for more profound engagement of audiences with the art works.**

WHICH QUESTIONS WE WANT TO ASK

Throughout the project period and with emphasis on the period of Divadelná Nitra festival we would like to explore the theme through provocative questions raised to form some kind of a logical pyramid or generated in a completely random, partial, subjectivist way. It will depend on the context in which the questions and answers will appear, and on whom we are going to ask. In any event, the central question is **Art, what for?**, and the rest of the questions all derive from or are directed towards it. Questions formulated in such an insistent way should mobilize the audience, visitors and partners, and in terms of the field of cultural policy it is expected to tackle a serious contemporary issue – that of the position of art. Speaking not only in national, but also regional and Europe-wide context.

PYRAMID OF QUESTIONS

- *What is art?*
- *What are the functions, mission and meaning of art?*
- *What does art have to offer?*
- *Do we realise the importance of art for our life?*
- *What is the relationship between art and other fields of activity – science, history, economics, and politics?*
- *What is the mutual influence between art and society?*
- *What is the position of art in our society?*
- *What or who should promote the development of art? And what hinders the development of art?*
- *What is the need for art like? Who actually needs it?*
- *What is the education toward art? Whose responsibility should it be?*
- *Can we live without art? What life would be like without it?*
- *Well then, what is art for?*

The purpose of the multiplied questions presented in form of activities in the framework of this project is to point out a problem, elicit various opinions, arouse a public discourse, seek answers, but also express the attitude of the organizers and participating artists.

TARGET GROUPS

1. Artists

- Theatre professionals and artists from various artfields
- Theatre managers, artistic curators, dramaturges, art historians and theoreticians

- Art schools students
- 2. Experts**
 - Sociologists, politologists, economists, politicians, decision-makers, local government
 - Students of social sciences
- 3. Public**
 - Audience of Divadelná Nitra festival
 - Young people – pupils and students in Nitra and Nitra region
 - School teachers
 - Audience
- 4. Media**
 - Art critics, journalists, representatives of print and electronic media from European countries

PROJECT ACTIVITIES / OUTCOMES

- 1. Research – scientific and / or artistic:** mapping out the different art-consumption habits in European countries
- 2. Public debate** questioning various angles and approaches to the main project theme – Art, What For? The discussion taking place during the International Theatre Festival Divadelná Nitra 2014 is international, open to public, and presents opinions of experts from different fields: artists, sociologists, politicians, scientists, economists, philosophers, historians etc... Project partners are in charge to define the speakers / representatives from their countries. Not only speakers / experts from participating countries, but also other EU countries based on their expertise will be involved.
The debate is made interactive for the audience through the use of the sli.do tool (enables the audience to pose questions or vote through their smartphones). The debate will be streamed online, allowing for questions from broader audience. The stream will be accessible on the project website even after the end of the festival and the project. The broadcast of the debate on Radio Devín (RTVS) is under negotiation.
- 3. Project's website** "www.nacoumenie.sk" (www.artwhatfor.sk) an online platform for an ongoing **discussion** on what for do we need art nowadays. Website will feature contributions from the public debate (articles, quotes, short edited videos as well as its full version), contributions from the festival audience and general public, contributions from the "elites" (artists, businessmen, politicians, experts etc) and public. The website will be the basic tool for the ongoing online discussion about the (un)necessity of art for nowadays society, supported by social media interactions and regular e-newsletters.
- 4. Awareness campaign "Even This is Art"** – will point out to neglected objects in the city of Nitra that have intrinsic artistic and cultural value and serve at the same time as PR campaign for the project itself. Objects (buildings, statues, public spaces) in the streets of Nitra will be marked with a banner with a claim Even This is Art – to highlight the mundane, the normal, that we walk past daily and never notice that it possesses an artistic value. In cooperation with architect and culture heritage expert we will identify these objects, collect information about them and in the framework of the festival organise guided walks and tours to the forgotten artistic and cultural sites of the city of Nitra.

The project does not limit itself to theatrical expression only. We would like to invite to the dialogue also the artists from the field of visual arts, film, literature, music and representatives of creative industries.

PLANNED PR ACTIVITIES

Overview of printed materials and PR activities promoting the project:

Advance notification / Programme planned	Electronically / 5000 e-mails
Programe brochure	12 000 copies
Poster (idea and programe)	1 000 copies
Catalogue	2 000 copies
Public debate programme	1 000 copies
Flyers for artistic interventions in public spaces	500 copies
Outdoor banners for Awareness campaign	20 pcs
City lights	40 pcs
Tickets	5 000 pcs
Advertisements in print media	10 releases
Advertisements in electronic media (radio and TV spots)	App 300 appearances
Internet banners	App 500 000 views
Press releases	10 individual press releases in Slovak and English language
e-newsletter	At least 10 e-newsletters in Slovak and English language / each to min 5 000 addresses
Project website	www.art-whatfor.eu
Festival website	www.nitrafest.sk
Websites and e-newsletters of partner organisations	

Slovak Media planned as media partners of the project and the Divadelná Nitra 2014 festival: RTVS – Slovak TV and Radio, SME (including SME TV and SME online), .týždeň, the Slovak Spectator, zoznam.sk, SITA, KOD magazine and other media

Intended online streaming of public debate – in cooperation with SME TV or to be broadcasted on Radio Devín (RTVS) – to be confirmed

Read more about our thoughts on the theme...

Reasons for choosing the theme, background

Substantial changes in our society that occurred over the past two decades have also had their impact on the position of art, the need for art in people's minds, and the possibilities of its development.

The long-lasting absence of a culture concept as an omni-societal agreement for the future, decentralization of state-owned cultural institutions and their subsequent commercialization in most of the Central European countries, lack of financial resources and financial crisis – all these factors have cast doubt upon the responsibility of the government and public institutions for the conditions for the development of culture and art. On the other hand, the historically unprecedented boom in private business sphere and the laws of the markets which have absolutely dominated the society, have created a peculiar idea of how culture and art should be run and what they should "live on".

And because there is no conceptual material available to the public, no social discourse on the theme that would serve as a foundation for reasoning and offer a plenitude of examples also from comparable foreign countries, the attitudes of various social groups (political representations, business sphere, citizens, journalists, and on the other hand artists and cultural operators) differ significantly, are irreconcilable, and most importantly – they are often unrestrained and unjustified.

Over the past twenty years, in Slovakia, creative conditions within various art genres have worsened, some artistic professions are heading for extinction, there is much less space for presentation of art in the media, the credit of art in the eyes of the public has lowered. Inadequate education has caused absence of the need for culture and art in the population.

In Slovakia there are practically no institutions nor initiatives which would continuously deal with the relationship of the public toward culture and art, study the conditions for the development of such relationship, implement modern methods of cultural education, spread information about European trends in understanding art and culture, including interdisciplinary relationships, the nature and importance of the culture industry etc. The awareness that culture and art are an integral part of our lives is scarce. Most people (including politicians who decide about it) consider art fun and relaxation, or a pleasant leisure-time activity.

Occasional cumulating of questions:

- Are you a regular theatre goer? How often do you go to the theatre?
- Do you visit fine arts exhibitions?
- Do you read books? Do you buy them? How often?
- What do you consider art? From among the things around you, in your home?
- What does art mean to you? Is it relaxation, fun or more than that?
- Do you think you need art to live? How often and in what form?
- Can you imagine your life without art? Under what circumstances and for how long?
- How much of your yearly private budget goes to art? Do you support art as a donor?
- Should art be state-subsidized?
- Do you think art should/can make enough money to live on? That is, do you think it does not need to be supported?
- Is it possible to link in public, in the media, the "brand" of a national cultural institution with a donor (business company) who's reputation is questionable? If so, under what circumstances?
- Are you an art lover? What art do you love?
- What irritates you about art? What kind of art do you hate? Is there something you would prohibit if you had the power?
- Do you think that education toward art should be a family responsibility? Or a school responsibility?
- Is it necessary to educate people toward art?
- What is art for in your life?

