

Stichting Pássaros

ANNUAL REPORT

Period ending 31 December 2022

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Introduction

This is the first report of Stichting Passaros covering the extended annual period from our founding in April 2021 through to end December 2022.

The major project and focus of the Foundation is the project espaço agora now. This is an ambitious and systemic project that is reimagining artist development and public experiment in the performing arts.

The project is the initiative of founder Naomi Russell who, in 2019, started to build a network of artists interested in deeper engagement with civic change. Common threads and shared challenges ran through individual conversations with these artists. An invitation was extended to them to come together to see how we could solve these issues of common concern.

Context

The pandemic impacted arts and culture significantly. The precarious livelihoods of independent artists, makers and freelance creative workers was clearly revealed and showed how, in spite of policies and sector discussions about fair practice and safe working conditions, public funding and institutional structures are not yet addressing the structural inequalities that exist. We think that the 'recovery' for our sector post-pandemic cannot be achieved without bringing artists and communities closer together and creating space for exploration. We also see the need to make more space to listen to artists and give them the opportunity to influence and solve their own economic and production means. The seed of the idea that is now the project espaço agora now was germinating before the pandemic, and became more necessary as a result. The name 'agora now' is the definition: we aim to not only make urgently needed space for process and research residencies, we will open up these spaces as a civic forum to catalyse fresh connections between performing artists, local citizens and public action.

Business case + feasibility study

In 2021 we started to explore the contexts in a number of cities that could host the project, especially Rotterdam, Lisbon, Buenos Aires and London. The starting point was the notion of 'slow residencies', in which performing artists stay for an extended time, allowing them to explore their practice and early stage ideas, and engage with the local community in a deep and impactful way. Our profile appeared attractive to different partners/ activists/ artists/ researchers and city-makers, for it supports sharing art and local civic- change perspectives, close to home *and* trans locally/internationally. Alongside many conversations with local political, civic and cultural leaders, as well as artists from our network based in these different contexts, we undertook three areas of research.

- Benchmarking of the current residency offer in the performing arts
- An exploration into alternative financial models
- A technical investigation into the possibility of how to use found spaces and empty buildings with the expert input of theatre consultancy Charcoal Blue

The research on residencies was especially valuable. Before starting we undertook a poll with the artist network, to identify the criteria they found necessary in a residency and synthesised 11 core offers to benchmark against. We then mapped hundreds of residency spaces for performing artists globally, longlisted 86 in all continents (less Antarctica) and shortlisted twenty. We undertook deep-dive interviews with artists and residency professionals who had undertaken a residency or represented the shortlisted residency spaces. Our aim was to understand the existing offer and to identify how EAN could differentiate and complement existing models. We explored these characteristics and found that only 2 spaces delivered 9 of the 11 core offers. Our proposed model will address this gap in performing arts residencies globally.

We undertook technical assessments of 4 empty spaces to supplement the residencies research. Charcoal Blue, an international theatre consultancy, joined us for an online gathering where they invited artists to think creatively and practically about how to use different kinds of empty spaces, ranging from an old school, a port building and a department store. The research and knowledge was consolidated into the strategic business case, completed in September 2022.

Artist Network + International Exchange

Our vision for espaço agora now is ambitious. This is why we have been taking the time to first listen, reflect, learn and exchange. Since 2020 artists in the espaço network are part of co-leading and co-designing at a local and global level. A large, diverse and growing community of (mid-career) artists and makers, producers, cultural and civic activists, partners and organisations from around the world has been activated. The foundation offers programmatic support to this community through monthly online gatherings (since 2021), producer clinics and speed connect sessions. Our community of artists currently numbers almost 300 representing 48 nationalities and is still growing. Of this community about half are located across the cities where we have been exploring the potential for our first spaces, namely Rotterdam, Lisbon, Buenos Aires, Belgrade, London.

We have met a specific need. Artists who are part of the artist network have told us how valuable it is to have a safe space for reflection, learning, connections, care and solidarity. The community we've built is very unique in the performing arts community globally because of its independence, diversity and intrinsic motivation. Activities have included:

- 22 artist gatherings on- and off-line.
- 5 online information sessions in collaboration with FIBA Buenos Aires, Zoukak Theatre Company Beirut and Projekt Europa. Artists have joined us from Johannesburg, Durban, London, Athens, Lisbon, Beirut, Barcelona, Sweden, Italy and Argentina with many joining the network as a result.
- More than 50% of artists in the community have actively participated in gatherings
- 18 individual artists have co-led these sessions or presented at events with potential funders.

City Relationships

We have spent a lot of time building relationships with a wide range of stakeholders in politics, culture, creative and other sectors in focus cities. As a result of this promising leads developed, which we're now exploring and activating further.

- A building in Rotterdam (Zuid) which is now under negotiation with our intention to start a pilot in September 2023.
- A building in Beato, Lisbon, that we expect to be made available to us from 2024 and which has potential to be a long-term space for the project.
- A visit by Naomi to Belgrade in March 2022, hosted by local NGO Heartefact and Obama Foundation Fellow Andrej Nosov led to connections with local artistic associations, new artists and both the City Mayor and the Prime Minister's Creative Serbia team in Belgrade
- A visit by Catarina and Naomi during FIBA Festival in Buenos Aires in February/March 2022 led to a formal partnership with Planta, a performing arts space led by choreographers and theatre artists Juan Onofri Barbato, Melina Seldes and Elisa Carricajo in Buenos Aires.

Naomi returned to Buenos Aires in December 2022 and Planta hosted a series of events and local consultations during her visit including with the Buenos Aires Culture Minister Enrique Avogadro. With a financial contribution from the Foundation, Planta will continue to scope the Buenos Aires space and will present their plan and next steps in June 2023.

Naomi also attended the Bloomberg City Lab in Amsterdam, co-hosted by Michael Bloomberg with the Aspen Institute in October 2022. This was a wonderful opportunity not only to make connections with city leaders and change makers, but also to be inspired by the innovative practices of all kinds in cities around the world.

Sharing knowledge

As we gather and research a lot of knowledge is being created and exchanged. We hosted a workshop about the project at the Nederlands Dansdagen (Dutch Dance Days) in October 2022. Our first publication was about our values: awareness, diversity, resistance, experimentation and co-ownership. It gave distinctive perspectives of artists during the many conversations we've had which we linked to the values with the aim to facilitate conversations about what residency means for all of us, not just as artists but also as citizens.

Fundraising + Profile

We received invaluable support for the start up and research phase from three key funders Van Beuningen/Peterich Fonds, The Linbury Trust (Sainsbury Family Trusts) and an Anonymous UK Foundation. Other valuable support and advice has been received from Charcoal Blue, Pedro Ferreira, Pentagram and John Fairbairn. The Richard Thomas Foundation receives gifts from UK donors under the gift aid scheme, which is held as a restricted fund for the development of the project espacio agora now.

In October 2022 we launched a Friends Programme. Friends' support is invaluable as unrestricted income we can direct to where it is most needed for the project in these early stages and we're very thankful to every individual who has been able to make a personal donation to the project in this early phase. Our first publication received industry support from cultural colleagues Theater Rotterdam and Cork Midsummer Festival (Ireland).

The project was publicly acknowledged with a Bronze Lamp in the Future + Society category at the Dutch Creativity Awards October 2022.

Our website www.espacoagora.space launched in April 2022. Made by Joe Walkling Design it gives us a strong online presence for both the project and a number of individual artists who are part of it. It provides an online platform to share knowledge.

Team + Partners

Naomi Russell as the founder and initiative taker drives the project, and leads on development of a space in Rotterdam. Alongside her, the core (freelance) team has included Patrick Dickie (UK lead), Catarina Saraiva (Lisbon lead), Margarida Colaco (Project Manager + Researcher) and until April 2022 we worked together with strategist Becky Schutt on the development of the business case. We had advice on specific aspects of the plan in relation to finance and fundraising from external parties including Fraser Jopp, Joe Heitz and Orchestra. All freelance team members and all artists who contribute leading sessions and in other professional activities are paid a financial honorarium in line with the Nederlands Theater and Dans CAO.

We are creating a network and therefore have partners to work together with us at the local level. In Buenos Aires this is the artist-led structure Planta, in London CLOD Ensemble, led by artists Suzy Willson and Paul Clark. In February 2022 Serbian NGO Heartefact hosted a pathfinding visit for Naomi, during which partnerships with local associations in Belgrade including United Artist Labor and ULUS were formed.

At the end of 2022 we said goodbye to Patrick Dickie. We're enormously grateful for everything he has contributed in building the UK networks and to the project as a whole. We will recruit new team members during 2023 including a Rotterdam Producer, Major Gift Fundraiser and Artist Network + Research Manager.

Governance

The Board of the Foundation is formed by the following three members: Naomi Russell, Onno Paijmans, Irene Van Affelen Saemsfoort. As founder and a board member Naomi undertakes executive work for the foundation. Board members are not remunerated, and receive out of pocket expenses only.

The Foundation is committed to complying with Dutch law, including all audit and transparency requirements, and any reporting requirements that assist it in monitoring the application of the funds it receives. We are honest and fair in our communications with our community, the public, media and supporters, including local governments. We adhere to the Codes of Cultural Governance, Diversity + Inclusion and Fair Practice.

Looking ahead

2023 is a very important year for the Foundation as we start Phase 1 of practical execution. This has two component parts which run in parallel.

- The start of working with one pilot site: Rotterdam, while exploring other sites.
- Consolidating and growing the global network and circulating knowledge.

As 2022 ended, we were introduced to the brains behind dance platform Kinani in Maputo, Mozambique, cultural manager Quito Tembe. In November 2023 we will visit Maputo to attend the Kinani Dance Biennale and work together with Quito and his team on the ground to co-imagine a collaboration.

Making this project has included a conscious act to gather artists and partners from different contexts around the world, each with their own unique experiences and multiple perspectives and carefully explore what it means to act together. This means resisting many of the usual logics. A connection with Maputo is therefore a fitting end to the year. It opens up a south-south link and the ability to exchange knowledge and imagine new ways together from the beginning.

Closing remarks

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this project from these early stages - the board, team, artists, our funders and friends and every local artist and stakeholder in different parts of the world who was open to meet us when we showed up!

We are looking forward to the next steps together with you in 2023.

The overview covers the period from April 26, 2021 to December 31, 2022.

Income and Expenses

Income

Foundations (NL + International)	€	103.868
Industry Support	€	2.000
Individual donors	€	16.343
Total Income	€	122.211

Expenses

Feasibility Plan	€	22.328
Global Network Building	€	17.032
City development Rotterdam	€	8.642
City development Lisbon	€	4.228
City development London	€	18.189
Partner + City development Buenos Aires	€	5.000
Strategic Plan	€	5.187
Artist Program + Network support	€	16.939
Team away days	€	4.813
Publication and Knowledge sharing	€	3.905
Representation	€	1.035
Travel expenses	€	7.676
Other overhead	€	5.658
Total expenses	€	120.632

Balance Profit/Loss	€	1.579
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Balance Sheet

Assets

Cash	€	152
Tax claim	€	1.427
Total Assets	€	1.579

Liabilities

Continuity reserve	€	1.579
Total Liabilities	€	1.579

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**Income and expenses outside the annual account
assigned to the project Espaco Agora Now - via UK Partner CLOD Ensemble**

Income

Funds	£	20.000
Private individuals	£	2.132
Total Income	£	22.132

Expenses

Technical Research	£	7.890
Strategic Advice	£	2.000
Project development	£	2.500
London Maker network	£	2.500
Clod Ensemble	£	1.111
Copywriting	£	4.000
Website	£	2.131
Total expenses	£	22.132

Balance Profit/Loss	£	-
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Naomi Russell

Notes:

The profit/loss statement does not include the value of contributed and unpaid work by team members. In the latter period of the accounts (April - December 2022) unpaid work by core team members was to the value of 35.000 euros. Prior to the establishment of the foundation, in 2019 founder Naomi Russell invested personal resources in the amount of 19.222 euros in network building and early stage project development and in 2020 Naomi and Patrick Dickie invested 33.685 euros of time and personal resources to continue this activity.