

Fostering Transcultural Communities of Practice

artlink
2025

A Report on Diversity and Collaboration
inspired by the Turntables programme

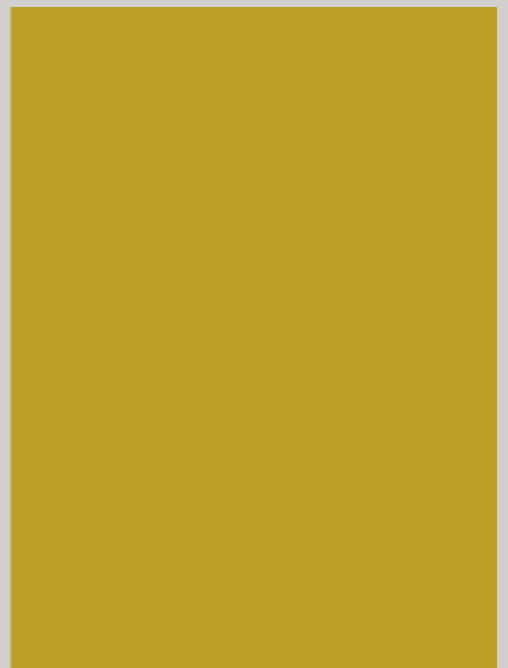
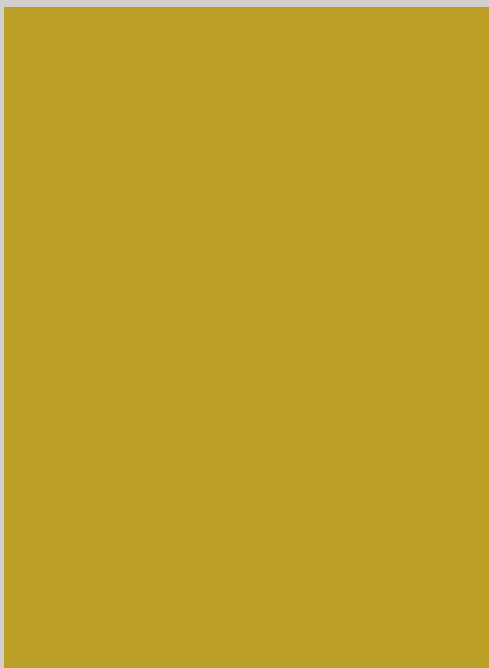


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Introduction

Turntables is a project by artlink aimed at supporting creative practitioners worldwide by developing future skills, fostering networks, and encouraging artistic collaboration. Its primary objective is to build a transcultural community of practice, bringing together members across the globe who are interconnected and engaged in continuous dialogue, learning from one another. As a global initiative, much of its implementation relies on online connections.

The idea for this project emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, which showed us how quickly mobility can be disrupted: visas were issued more restrictively, countries were closing their borders to non-citizens, and international festivals, showcases, and networking events where artists and organizers met were cancelled. As a result, artists from the South and East were hardly present in cultural scenes in Switzerland anymore, and the exchange between Swiss and international artists diminished.

In this context, we recognized that artistic connections and exchanges between Switzerland and the rest of the world should not be limited by travel conditions. Artists and cultural practitioners needed alternative platforms for presentation and exchange to share their works and ideas and gain visibility. These challenges accelerated the need for artlink to become a digital and interactive hub, supporting diverse networks fostering transcultural exchange.

Since its launch in October 2022, Turntables has been exploring innovative ways of connection and peer exchange. As the digital world continues to reshape how we work and connect, being an artist or creative professional today relies heavily on entrepreneurship, global connectedness, and digital skills. These competencies are often best developed outside formal classrooms, within communities of practice.

This report is an account of our learnings and reflections since Turntables started, addressed to cultural practitioners and peer organizations. It is also an invitation to think about other questions that occupy us: Is virtual mobility an alternative with the same value as physical mobility, or does it represent a fundamentally different kind of collaboration? When does a virtual encounter contribute? What are the implications and conditions that come with it? 'Fostering Transcultural Communities of Practice: A Report on Diversity and Collaboration' sets out to approach these questions, knowing that their answers are complex and continually evolving.

Guiding Principles



The artlink Directory

The artlink Directory is a digital gateway that serves as a living record of the artists, cultural workers, and organizations that have taken part in our programmes. It allows them to create a profile, presenting their work in their own words. Through the artlink Directory, they connect with each other and benefit from training on cutting-edge topics and skill development. Today, 337 artists from more than 50 countries are part of the directory.

The artlink Directory was born out of the commitment to building long-term, sustainable relationships with the artists and cultural practitioners we engage with. It was initiated and coordinated by artlink taking into account the needs and feedback of experts, artists and cultural organizers around the globe.

Different workshops and activities are organized and promoted through the artlink Directory Community Briefing, a newsletter with the latest news and initiatives inside the community. By maintaining connections over time, we aim to create a living network of practitioners who continue to inspire and strengthen each other's work, long after the initial partnership has ended.

TOPICS	SKILLS	ACTIVITIES	
ALL	ALL	ALL	SEARCH

Export search results

Lise Smirnova

Nisha Abdulla

Sada Malumfashi

Purnendra Meshram

Ozhopé Collective

Tsz Hei 梓熙 | Simon 西門

Thando Cleo

Ritika Sharma

A Community of Practice

Through different activities, artlink Directory profile owners across different backgrounds and locations started interacting and collaborating. This network became a transcultural community of practice, that is, a space where diverse cultural perspectives meet to exchange, and co-create knowledge. Having a community of practice helps to:

01 | Create safe spaces for exchange

Overcoming virtual distance and still enabling emotional connections.

02 | Contribute to a dynamic cultural ecosystem

Supporting resilience and diversity of creative networks.

03 | Propose new ways of seeing and knowing

Inspired by the intersections of culture, technology, and lived experience.

04 | Model sustainable cultural practice

Grounded in care, continuity, and accessibility, ensuring that creative relationships can evolve and endure over time.

05 | Foster learning spaces

that are not restricted to classrooms nor physical encounters.

“Initiatives like this one are important for me at two levels - For one, it builds community amongst the artlink Directory members since there is interaction between us. And it also allows the community to share skills horizontally in an organic way. There is so much to be shared among us!”

Natalia Ludmila (Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico),
host of the Skill Share Workshop Programme 2025

Activities

The activities below emerged through online engagement and communication with our communities of practice:

01 | Mentoring

Structured, participatory sessions where artists and cultural practitioners learn new skills, ideas, or methods from experts, fostering hands-on learning and creative experimentation.

02 | Workshops

Peer-to-peer learning among artists and cultural practitioners, where knowledge, skills, and best practices are shared. These sessions focus on common needs and experiences.

03 | Incubators

A grant programme that nurtures emerging projects or initiatives providing guidance, resources, and networking opportunities.

04 | Roundtables

Facilitated discussions that bring together diverse voices from the cultural sector to exchange insights, debate ideas, and co-create strategies, promoting reflection, collaboration, and shared understanding.

Our Learnings so Far

The implementation of the different initiatives brought us lessons and learnings: what works, what doesn't, and how we can improve.

Structure and Scheduling

- Flexible programming: online events and trainings do not need to follow the intensity of 3–4 day in-person programmes. Allowing time between sessions enables participants to process content, apply learnings, and reflect more deeply.
- Global time zone awareness: always account for participants' time zones and communicate schedules using UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) and different regions time zones to avoid confusion.
- Attendance expectations: anticipate a 50% attendance rate for online events, and plan engagement strategies accordingly.

Engagement and Collaboration

- Foresee informal interaction: create spaces or moments dedicated to informal exchanges - the online equivalent of 'corridor conversations' - where artists and participants can connect more organically.
- Encourage reflection: offer structured opportunities for grantees and artists to share reflections and experiences, such as work-in-progress reviews, peer feedback sessions, or collective discussions. These deepen learning and can spark future cross-regional collaborations.
- Participant feedback: always collect feedback from participants to continuously improve workshop design and facilitation.
- Include other communities: initiatives should not necessarily be exclusive to one network. Artists grow together with their communities. Connect them to ensure better impact.

Our Learnings so Far

Tools and Facilitation

- Collaborative platforms: make use of digital tools to promote active participation and a dynamic atmosphere.
- Documentation and outputs: prepare handouts or digital summaries capturing the activity's content, key learnings, and outcomes. These reinforce learning and serve as reference materials.
- Manage expectations through transparent communication, ensuring all participants understand the process, their role, and what they can gain from the initiative.

Conclusion and Acknowledgements

Since its launch, Turntables has been exploring innovative ways to connect artists despite systemic barriers that limit their visibility, recognition, and access to markets and resources. It has also demonstrated the potential of digital platforms to foster meaningful artistic exchange across borders. The project highlights that virtual encounters open new forms of collaboration and learning that are accessible, inclusive, and resilient to disruptions.

Our experiences show that supporting artists today requires more than providing opportunities. It also means cultivating skills, nurturing networks, and creating spaces where knowledge and practices can be shared collectively. Peer-to-peer exchange has proven essential for meeting on eye-level, building common trust and sustaining engagement across diverse backgrounds. As an evolving experiment in transcultural collaboration, the lessons captured in this report point to the value of inclusive and participatory approaches. Most importantly, this work is an invitation to continue the conversation: to question, test, and refine the ways we connect, collaborate, and support creative practitioners worldwide.

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The project team includes Malaya del Rosario, Rahel Leupin and Virginia Kargachin.

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Join the conversation!

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In Progr - Atelier 156
Waisenhausplatz 30
3011 Bern, Switzerland
www.artlink.ch