

# SAFE HAVENS CONFERENCE 2022



## REPORT

SH|FT

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Written by **Laura Kauer Garcia**

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Designed by **Meltem Dramer**

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# Introduction

Ta jujuntal tspet sbaik nichim sk'anal jotik  
chukbilik ta stsob yipalik  
xyuk'et yik' mu xk'exo tsnojes  
xokol sna yo'nton xch'ulel  
moltot yame'iletik batemik xa.

(Extract from poem "SK'AK'ALIL CH'ULELAL"  
read by its author Enrique Pérez López in Tzotzil)

Agua arrebatada  
Desde mi sustancia  
de temporal florecida  
remonto río arriba  
hasta el día en que muera  
entre los labios cántaro  
de arcilla encarnada  
donde ahogue su sed  
el corazón del fuego.

(Extract from poem "Agua sur"  
read by its author Angélica Altuzar in Spanish)

The Safe Havens conferences started in 2013 and are organised by Safe Havens Freedom Talks (SH|FT) – an independent NGO dedicated to facilitating opportunities for artists and organisations in the Arts Rights Justice field to meet and share knowledge. Its aim is to be able to offer an inclusive and safe gathering, where all are equal, and each voice carries the same weight. To this end SH|FT builds a programme that prioritises a multitude of voices with as vast a geographical and thematic range as possible. It brings together artists, activists, lawyers, and policy-makers, for a creative international meeting at the intersection of the arts and human rights, fostering alliance-making, capacity-building, and developing innovative and artist-centered best-practice solutions to challenges faced by the sector across the entire world.



The conference held from 7-9 December 2022 in Mexico City marked the first in-person gathering in three years due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The first two days were held at the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, a space at the heart of Mexico City, while the evenings and last days led participants to explore cultural spaces committed to bringing human rights and

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activism to the center of their agendas and work. The convening responded to an acute need to gather as a community, to share challenges and successes, as well as to further strengthen and grow the network with a particular emphasis in Latin America. Conversations built on the previous two digital convenings focused on recentering discussions on the rights of artists in times of crisis as they faced the ongoing effects of the pandemic and creeping authoritarianism. Applying lessons learned from the digital conferences and wishing to be as globally inclusive as possible, the conference's main sessions in Mexico were livestreamed, recorded and a parallel digital programme was organized, opening up participation to those not able to travel to the physical meeting.

## Overview of the 2022 Safe Havens Conference and main takeaways

How can we build a space that can hold and respond to the needs and desires that have grown from months and years physically apart? How can we acknowledge a deeply changed and changing world, without abandoning the radical hope and strength that comes from art, community and activism? How can we respond to the urgent needs of our colleagues at risk without forgoing wellness and constructing sustainable, resilient bonds? How can we build a global community, build links across distance and time without washing over the specificity of our regions and contexts? These were some of the questions that we pondered as we collectively constructed the 2022 Safe Havens Conference programme and came together for three days of artistic

interventions, workshops, panel discussions, and network activations. The goal was to facilitate spaces for grounding, reflection and innovation as we collectively imagined how to respond to the current challenges we have as a global community.

The summit found inspiration in the polyphony of social movements and local actors in Mexico and around the world moving forward debates on the environment, gender equality, minority rights, social and cultural rights, and restorative justice, seeking to chart ways to Resist, Reimagine, Restore. There was a sense that it was important to remain grounded and acknowledge the histories of resistance and activism that have led us to this moment, while nurturing ways to

continue our artistic and activist work in ways that are regenerative, not detrimental. Key to our engagements was a commitment to redress historic exclusions that make long-term change impossible and for that, our conversations sought to better platform the voices of women, indigenous, racial and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTIQ+ community.



Mexico City is a unique place to challenge and inspire these types of conversations. Throughout the days of the conference, local speakers and artists reflected on issues of memory as a tool for seeking justice, the strength of social movements protesting in the streets and resignifying public spaces, indigenous creation and the need to promote and preserve indigenous languages, among many other critical issues. Besides the artistic interventions, “hive” discussions, workshops and panel debates that have been key features of previous conference programmes, the addition of “grounding” field visits allowed for participants to visit local cultural venues in Mexico City that highlight important cultural and social processes and their relationship with current human rights struggles.

It was inspiring to see time and time again how through art and the support of courageous, dissenting voices bridges appeared across seemingly disparate places. A keynote performance wound Mayan and

Sámi culture together; a rap performance highlighted the solidarity and common struggles between artists from Mexico, Cuba and Iran; a discussion on how to deinstitutionalize archives and exhibitions delved into the deep wounds that exist for those trying to capture what happened in tragedies in Syria, South Africa and Mexico; a discussion on security found important lessons from the journalistic field to be applied in the arts and cultural realm. As the second conference held outside of Europe, this gathering confirmed once again the universal nature of our fight for human rights through art. There is need and there is power in this global family of artists, activists, lawyers, and policy-makers.

You can read the full conference programme on [SHJFT's website](#).

## Keynote performance: Hyl i Hælen



As has been the tradition for all Safe Havens Conferences, the programme began with a keynote artistic performance. The production “Hyl i Hælen” (Scream in the Heel in English) was not just an encounter between Sámi and Mayan culture, the traditional and the urban. It is a quest for a common language without words, but based on memories, yearnings, traumas and prejudices, as well as strength



and the spirit of struggle. The performance by Carlos “Gato” Catun (Guatemala/Norway), Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska (Sápmi/Norway) and Nicolai Lopez (Spain/Norway) was held in the rooftop of the Museum of Memory and Tolerance as a stage performance and contemporary concert, full of dance and movement.

## Setting the scene: Main challenges and advances for artistic freedom of expression

The opening panel debate “Mapping of artistic freedom of expression in Latin America and globally” was moderated by Alicia Quinones, from PEN International and counted with the participation from Frederic Vacheron (UNESCO, Mexico), Khalid Albaih (Sudan/Norway) and Guillermo Varela (Artigo 19, Brazil). Additionally, participants were able to hear recorded reflections by Matjaz Gruden, Director of Democratic participation of the Council of Europe and Sverre Pedersen, Chair of Freemuse. The objective of this session was to give participants a sense of recent accomplishments in the field of artistic freedom of expression, positive initiatives and learnings, as well as tenacious obstacles and trends that must be faced. Panelists posed questions for participants to explore in-depth during the rest of the programme.

Speakers discussed the more than 1,200 violations of artistic freedom worldwide documented by Freemuse in 2021. Among them is a record number of 39 artists who were reportedly killed that year. More than 500 artists faced legal consequences for challenging the authorities, public figures, and religious and traditional values. In one-third of all documented cases of prosecution and imprisonment, artists suffered reprisals

because of their engagement in, and comments on, peaceful protests. Half of all artists recorded as detained in 2021 were held for expressing their views about political and social issues both offline and online, while the rest were targeted for the content of their work. Music was the most suppressed artform, followed by visual art and film. Political authorities and government-led bodies remained the major violators of artistic freedom, while other non-state groups threatened and attacked artworks, using intimidation and at times violence. The discussion made references to the existing standards on artistic freedom and specific challenges by region that were captured in a [briefer document](#) prepared by Mary Ann Devlieg, Cecilia Noce and Alicia Quiñones for this conference.



# Resist

## Rap Performance - Resisting through lyrics



Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina (CADAL) curated a rap performance that brought together the Cuban rap artist David D’Omni, Iranian artist Justina and Mexican indigenous artist and activist Mare Advertencia Lirika. The songs that they chose violence, racism and persecution, women in rap, lyrics as a form of protest, and the criminalization of rap. All artists remained on stage to answer questions from participants and reflect on how each other’s work echoed their own struggles and the contexts in their home countries.

The first thematic area the programme sought to explore was around resistance in all its embodiments and facets. From listening to

the performances by three rappers who have seen their work and identities threatened by government authorities, we dealt into a panel discussion on art and social movements which resonated across participants who have actively joined, supported and followed massive demonstrations in Iran, US, Nigeria, Chile, Colombia and others in the last few years. The need to maintain the pulse of these social movements was repeated with all the speakers and would later be echoed on the importance of artistic practice outside of institutional frameworks discussed the next day.

Mexican and Syrian activists, companions, family members of persons who have been murdered or disappeared in the “Hive - Memory as a tool for seeking justice” shared cultural initiatives focused around memory and how they can be turned into a tool not only to conserve the memory of disappeared family members, but also to search for justice. The Artists at Risk Connection (ARC) curated and moderated the “Panel Debate - Artistic production in authoritarian and repressive contexts” where Alessandro Zagato led a discussion with Guatemalan performance artist Vanesa Rivera, Cuban writer Carlos Anibal Alonso, and Salvadoran visual artist Renacho Melgar. They shared the experiences of censorship, threats and harassment they have suffered due to their work and highlighted forms of resistances and resilience developed and practiced by the affected creative communities. Finally, in the “Hive- Turning your audience into your advocate” Supriti Dhar of the Bangladeshi organization Women Chapter International and Paula Saucedo from Article 19-Mexico shared how they work to actively involve audiences to counteract misinformation and turn them into advocates for free expression.

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## Panel Debate - Art and social movements: Artistic freedom in the context of resistance

The panel debate titled “Art and social movements: Artistic freedom in the context of resistance” was curated by Artigo 19 Brasil, moderated by Laura Kauer Garcia and counted with participation from Guilherme Varella (Brazil), Preta Ferreira (Brazil), Parvin Ardalan (Iran/Sweden), and Carolina Ramirez (Colombia). Speakers reflected on how in their parts of the world, artists have used their freedom of expression to denounce authoritarianism, censorship and the dismantling of democratic institutions. However, beyond that, the arts have been an important tool of resistance as a language and as a field of articulation and mobilization, in particular around issues of economic rights, racial and gender equality and as support to massive protest movements.

### Musical performance by Brazilian singer Preta Ferreira

Preta Ferreira, a Brazilian human rights defender, housing activist, multi-artist, and writer, closed the first day of the conference with a musical performance that made many of the participants get up from their chairs and dance. She was accompanied by Guilherme Varella, researcher for MOBILE/Artigo 19, lawyer and musician. In between songs, she shared parts of her difficult and inspiring journey. She was imprisoned in 2019 for more than 100 days for actively participating in the Downtown Homeless Movement and the Housing Struggle Front in the city of São Paulo, Brazil. She has become a symbol of the

criminalization of social movements and human rights defenders in Brazil. Among the songs that she played were Minha Carne.





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# Reimagine

Key to envisioning and acting for a better future is putting to use the many tools of creativity and imagination that art gives us. For that, we felt the need to hold a space to question and challenge our definitions of activism, safety, care, and remind ourselves of the sort of society we have dedicated ourselves to building. This section of the programme was opened by testimony from Ukrainian exiled artist Ani Svami, who guided participants through her artistic journey, speaking about the challenges of creating monumental structures that interact with their environment and invite people to touch, intervene with light and reflect on the current war in Ukraine. The “Workshop - Journalists’ safety lessons for other artists” saw speakers from Mexico, Bangladesh, Iran and South Africa discuss the lessons that can be drawn from the journalism sector for artists working in the field (researchers, journalists, documentary filmmakers, etc) taking note of the different forms of assistance that exist and safety toolkits and other resources that are available. It was a valuable reminder of the importance of not only cross-regional pollination, but working across fields that engage issues of free expression and protection of human rights defenders.

## Panel and Workshop - Curation and archivism as forms of activism

SH|FT has been working on an ongoing basis to develop an exhibition based on an open-source archive that can be transformed into spatial solutions, flexible to accommodate different needs and choices depending on the exhibition space and the possibility of updates and global interaction. The exhibition

will be fed by, and in its turn enrich, virtual and in-person gatherings that will be guided by the thematic and regional concerns of SH|FT’s wider network. It will also serve as an advocacy and education tool to reach various audiences, including artists, advocates, policy makers and youth. Key to development of the methodology of this exhibition has been engaging with curators, artists and cultural spaces from around the world.

For that, we convened a panel and workshop session led by Sofia Carillo of Centro Cultural Tlatelolco (Mexico) and Bonita Bennett of District Six Museum (South Africa). Their goal for the discussion was to explore what it means for archivism to be a form of activism, and about the ways in which traditional curatorship might be changed so as to be a transformative tool. They facilitated discussions with Sana Yazigi (Syria/France), Kara Blackmore (United Kingdom) and Taniel Morales (Mexico) and Ali Aguilera Bustos (Mexico) where each speaker spoke about their body of practice and how they dared to cede a measure of control in order to authentically co-create work, develop embodied methodologies, and work collaboratively. Participants were encouraged to consider how their work in relation to the communities they are part of or are nearest to them departs from the traditional standard and the impact of their methodologies. Other points of reflection offered were:

- How do we take the document or memories to the exhibition space without interfering with its reading? And vice versa. How is the discourse and mediation of the document transformed when it is placed in an exhibition space?
- What do we understand by the pedagogy of an exhibition?

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How do we employ pedagogic methodologies to intervene, appropriate and amplify the proposed discourse in the exhibition?

- What are strategies to listen, represent and create an equilibrium of plural voices in an exhibition or an archives?
- How do we approach the implicit colonialism of museums and archives to deconstruct the structure and suggest decolonial alternatives?
- How do we curate in chronically insecure places or when perpetrators who are featured in our work are still in power? What is an exhibition risk assessment and how can we manage care in a way that keeps artists, archives and activists safe?

These and many other questions will nurture ongoing collaborations and the development of materials for the exhibition that is planned for 2023-2024.

Ani Svami, a Ukrainian multidisciplinary artist and public space sculptor, guided participants through her journey she has taken to build the concepts, main themes and material elements of her artistic practice. Coming through a story of more than ten public sculptures, Ani showed her latest project erected in Prague after her evacuation from Prague as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine. The presentation was made possible with the support of the Artists at Risk Connection (ARC).

## Artistic Presentation - Ani Plants Growing



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# Restore

## Performance - Indigenous languages: Memory, poetry and music



PEN Chiapas Plurinational put together a performance where reading of poetry written in Zoque, Tzotzil, and Spanish was accompanied by music composed and arranged by musicians from the Chiapanec culture, an extinct language but one that continues to manifest itself culturally in rituals and festive practices. The readings were by the writers Angélica Altúzar Constantino and Enrique Pérez López and the musical and visual accompaniment was created by musicians Cicerón Aguilar and Ernesto Aguilar.

During the last segment of the programme held at the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, we focused on the restorative practice that allows us to step forward while honoring those who have come before us and the practices and lessons we embody. A musical and poetic performance by indigenous artists from Chiapas led to the “Panel Debate - Linguistic politics and the routes of memory and history.” PEN Chiapas Vice-President Angélica Altúzar Constantino led a conversation alongside Indigenous

artists and thinkers Enrique Pérez López, Sara Marielle Gaup and Maribel Bolom on the impact of the UN International Decade for Indigenous Languages for an effective implementation of government policies for the strengthening of Indigenous languages and their role to transmit history and memory. They discussed their importance as generators of identity and belonging in a global world where communities that speak Indigenous languages seek to survive and flourish through strategies of literary creation. The UN Special Rapporteur on cultural rights Ms. Alexandra Xanthaki also sent a recorded message that was shared at the opening of the panel.

Other sessions illustrated the multiplicity of tools we employ to restore and advance the human rights work we carry out. The Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI) curated the “Panel Debate - Protecting Indigenous Culture: Cultural Heritage, Art, and the Law” which counted with the moderation from Sofia Monterroso (USA) and participation from Dr. Julio Hoil Gutierrez (Mexico) and Dr. Trevor Reed (USA). Through case studies that focus on intellectual property and land rights, speakers will investigate different ways that Indigenous populations work to protect their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. A workshop titled “Wellbeing: A shift in perspective” allowed participants to have an embodied moment of pause and reflect on their bodies as the first safe haven. Bonita Bennett (South Africa) led a conversation titled “Artivism: Dialogue with Khalid Albaih Sudanese artist & political cartoonist” where the award winning artist and political cartoonist from Sudan presented a short video “Bahar - A video experience of Refugees at Sea” and some of his sartorial work, discussing his experiences as an artist at risk and reflect on the impact and provocations that his sartorial work signify.



“...no one would leave home unless home chased you to the shore...”

-Excerpt from visual film Bahar/Sea by Khalid Albaih

## Workshop - Wellbeing: A shift in perspective

What does it mean to be well? And how does it feel? Can we be well in the most difficult circumstances? Or can we simply “be” as a starting point, without the expectation of “being well”? What happens then? In this session, Lebanese social activist, biodynamic craniosacral therapist and photographer led participants to talking about themselves as the first safe haven. They were invited to gently drop into their body, below the mind and into the present moment through simple exercises, breathing and movement. She was joined by Supriti Dhar and Alejandra Henriquez Cuervo from the Colombian feminist fund Urgent Action Fund to tell their stories towards wellbeing and their experiences of simply “being” in challenging situations.

# Mapping Mexico City's spaces that resist, reimagine and restore

After two inspiring days held in the heart of Mexico City in the Museum of Memory and Tolerance, participants were guided to different cultural spaces around the city to see up close about ground-breaking cultural spaces, interventions in the public space by movements of family members seeking their disappeared family members and further discuss questions of gender, censorship and responding to crisis. These were meaningful moments for visiting participants to leave Mexico City with a robust understanding of the cultural landscape of Mexico and establish connections with local artists, activists, curators and researchers.





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On Thursday 8 December, the Colombian theater troupe Corporación Colombiana de Teatro (CCT) presented their award-winning piece “Antigonas: Tribunal of Women ” in the outdoor theater of Casa del Lago in the Chapultepec forest. As night descended, participants experienced the harrowing stories of women who lost and searched for their loved ones from a collective made up of professional actresses and survivors.

The following morning, participants were invited to choose from four cultural spaces to visit. At Centro Cultural Tlatelolco, a guided visit titled “Resistances from Tlatelolco: Collective constructions of memory” participants were invited to learn about M68-Citizenships in movement, the temporary exhibit programs and mediation practices that this space offers in order to break hegemonic discourses of history and pluralize the understanding of the complexity of voices and history that make up this land. Curators of the center were joined by high school students who are part of the center’s capacity building programs and explained how CCT is a pluralist space where there is dialogue with its community from a place of empathy, memories and critical thinking using the arts and history as spaces of convergence.

Another guided visit “Route of Memory - Guided walk of the Anti-Monuments” led participants to walk the length of Reforma avenue to learn about the monumental structures erected by family members and art collectives to intervene in the most historically significant street in Mexico City and make their demands heard and seen.

In Teatro Casa de la Paz, we held the “Documentary screening, dance and talk-Stories about (not) coming home.” Through a documentary screening of “Bboy for Life”,

dance and a discussion, we learn about the artist “Gato” and his experiences as a break-dancer in Guatemala. In contrast with his win of the Premio Hedda and Critic’s Award in Norway, he is faced with death threats in his home country from some of the most dangerous gangs in the world. As a talented dancer, they see him as a threat, capable of recruiting children as “future soldiers” through dance and moving them away from the gang environment. Made possible by Lopez Art & Production. The screening was followed by a dance performance and discussion by Guatemalan break-dancer Carlos “Gato” Catun, Piero Issa (Colombia/Norway), and Nicolai Lopez (Spain/Norway) moderated by Philippe Olle Laprunne (Mexico/France).



The final venue of the conference was Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl, a former residency for artists at risk and now a space dedicated to literature and highlighting the voices of women, migrants and persecuted journalists. In this house of literature, PEN International's Paminder Parbha led the “Workshop - Censorship, gender and creativity.” A community lunch in Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl’s garden was followed by the last “Hive - Artists’ protection in times of crises | Collective responses and forms of resistance” curated by ARC and AFI and the closing artistic statement “KaribeArte Polyphonic Mural” by Salvadoran visual artist Renacho Melgar curated by Cecilia Noce and Diana Arévalo of CADAL.



## Theater Performance - “Antigonas: Tribunal of Women” by Corporación Colombiana de Teatro in Casa del Lago

A collective creation by Tramaluna Theater integrated by professional actors and women who were victims during four events where human rights were violated in Colombia. On the stage, this group of women transform their pain and memory into poetry by singing, dancing and through projections, readings and personal objects of their family members. As in Antigone from Greek mythology, these characters are disobedient. Despite all the difficulties and challenges that surround them, they seek to provide a dignified burial to their disappeared family members, demand justice, and resist the neglect of the State and impunity of perpetrators.

- Made possible by the support of Universidad Iberoamericana, Swedish Embassy in Mexico and Casa del Lago. You can see a previous recording of the piece [here](#).



## Workshop - Censorship, gender and creativity at Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl

Paminder Parbha of PEN International curated and led a creative workshop of a cross spectrum of participants in which we use embodied practice and creativity to: identify forms of coercion and control (including acts of physical violence against women); reflect on how they impact and contribute, compound, and/or create forms of censorship which particularly impact marginalized groups; and discuss how these acts and resulting censorship impacts creative expression.

The workshop explored the different forms of coercion and control over our bodies and expression; the continuum of violence that includes online/offline censorship; understanding the impact of gendered forms of censorship that diminish the body and space, as well as how they impact creative expression with focus on practitioners in different fields: Angelica Altuzar of PEN Chiapas spoke about the publication VIDA – impact of censorship on writing and

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methodologies for counting the silence; Justina spoke of the different layers of censorship she has faced as a female rapper in Iran, and Carolina Ramirez, of Corporación Colombiana de Teatro, spoke about impact of forms of censorship within mainstream drama. They were joined for a series of embodied exercises and small group discussion by the additional facilitators Dina Debbas (Lebanon), Alicia Quinones (Mexico), Karin Elfving (Sweden), Parvin Ardalan (Iran), and Sofia Monterroso (USA).



## Online Programme

*With thanks to **Michael Schmidt** who curated and reported on the online programme.*

Given the long aftermath of the global slowdown initiated by state responses to the pandemic, and given the various additional restrictions under which many artists in authoritarian states labor, not everyone we would have wished to be present in Mexico City was able to be there. That fact, combined with Safe Havens desire to embrace and ensure inclusion of as broad a range as possible of participants from around the world – which digital linkages at Safe Havens in 2020 and 2021 proved – Safe Havens organized three regionally structured themed sessions. One was driven by activists

delivering reports on the state of artistic freedoms in Asia; the other two were “Artists’ Circles” driven by dynamic and groundbreaking artists in the Middle East & North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa, on challenges faced by artists in those regions. A key theme that emerged was how threats from populist, and conservative, and fundamentalist communities were starting to eclipse threats from the state.

The discussion focused on artistic freedoms in Asia titled “The State of the Fight against Arts Censorship in Asia” was attended by

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participants from India to the Philippines. The moderator Kathy Rowland, co-founder & managing editor at Singapore-based ArtsEquator led an engaging discussion with Maha Balakrishnan, researcher at Freedom Film Network (Malaysia) & Aicha Grade Rebecca, cultural public policy researcher at Koalisi Seni: the Indonesian Arts Coalition (Indonesia). Although each country has its own trajectory, through the conversation it became clear that the Asian artistic freedoms environment has some remarkable regional similarities, especially between South-East Asian countries undertaking the difficult transition from autocracy to democracy, which was our focus in 2022.

**“Creating hope or resistance is not a luxury anymore; it’s a necessity.”**

- Abdullah Al-Kafri

The Middle Eastern and North African Artists’ Circle titled “Loss of Innocence after the Spring” was attended by participants from Morocco to Iran. It was held in Arabic and translated into English by Baraa Selaj Aldin and Wissam Tayar. Abdullah Al-Kafri, playwright & cultural manager at Lebanon-based Ettijahat was in dialogue with Lina Sinjab, a film-maker from Syria and Badiia “Neysatu” Bouhrizi, a musician from Tunisia. Reflecting on the frustrations and losses that speakers had experienced from the failures of the Arab Spring, there was still a pervasive sense of hope for other types of revolutions and ensuring further protagonism of youth, women, the LGBTIQ community and minority groups. Resisting against the notion that all stories from Syria have been told, Lina shared about “wanting to tell a deeper, longer

story” around her relocation to Damascus from which many artists had fled. She shared a short clip from her feature film Exiled at Home where her friend and novelist Khaled Khalifa mused on the social, intellectual and cultural loneliness of those few artists who chose to stay in Syria. Badiia also shared about her personal practice and screened a music video The Longings, in which she plays a slow, solo guitar and sings hauntingly.

The Sub-Saharan African Artists’ Circle titled “Why is Art so Dangerous? Targeting Artists as Truthsayers & Knowledge-Transmitters” was attended by participants from Nigeria to South Africa. Jude Dibia, a Nigerian author and LGBTIQ author moderated an exchange with Syowia Kyambi, Kenyan interdisciplinary installation artist and curator and Saifullah “Dr Pure” Ibrahim, Nigerian rapper & radio personality. Throughout the discussion, Syowia examined two of her works interrogating colonial and post-colonial pasts: I’ve Heard Many Things About You in which she walked through the streets trailed by a long train of images in Bremen, one of the German cities that benefitted from the 1904-1908 Namibian genocide; and Kaspale’s Playground in which she used a trickster character to restore the memory of the mothers who demonstrated naked in Kenya against the independence-era torture centre of Nyako House in Nairobi. “Dr Pure” screened a music video shot in the Hausa language with a fish-eye lens that made him look like Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s Le Petit Prince standing on a miniature planet, followed by a other performance scenes and an interview in which he spoke about rap music as a means of achieving peace and unity.

You can watch the recordings of some sessions from the conference on [SH|FT’s Youtube channel](#).



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# Acknowledgments

The Safe Havens conferences come together through many conversations over the year with knowledgeable artists, NGOs and other experts in the network. The conference would not be possible without the dedication of a number of friends and partners, such as Safemuse, PEN International (special thanks to Alicia Quiñones), Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI), Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina (CADAL), Article 19 Mexico and Brazil, Fondo de Accion Urgente LAC, Heinrich Böll Foundation, International Cities of Refuge Network (ICORN), Corporación Colombiana de Teatro (CCT), UNESCO Mexico, the Norwegian and Swedish Embassies in Mexico.

This year on top of hosting the first in-person gathering in three years, we also organised virtual sessions to ensure the conference was accessible to those who could not travel. We are grateful to the following for their support and participation in these sessions: ArtsEquator, Hammerl Arts Rights Transfer, Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy, Mahmoud Othman, Unchained Vibes Africa, Arterial Network, and the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa.

We are humbled by the amazing venues that have opened their doors to our conference in Mexico City: Museo de Memoria y Tolerancia, Casa Refugio Citlaltépetl, Teatro Casa de la Paz of UAM, Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco, Casa del Lago and Biblioteca Vasconcelos. We are deeply indebted to the funding organisations that trust and support SH|FT and our different initiatives over time: The Swedish Arts Council/SIDA, The Swedish Institute and the Swedish Postcode Foundation.

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