

European Artists' Rights

www.earights.org

This presentation on the artist as mediator was delivered as a series of associated images with spoken words from the artists - the included text outlines the general themes delivered in the live presentation.



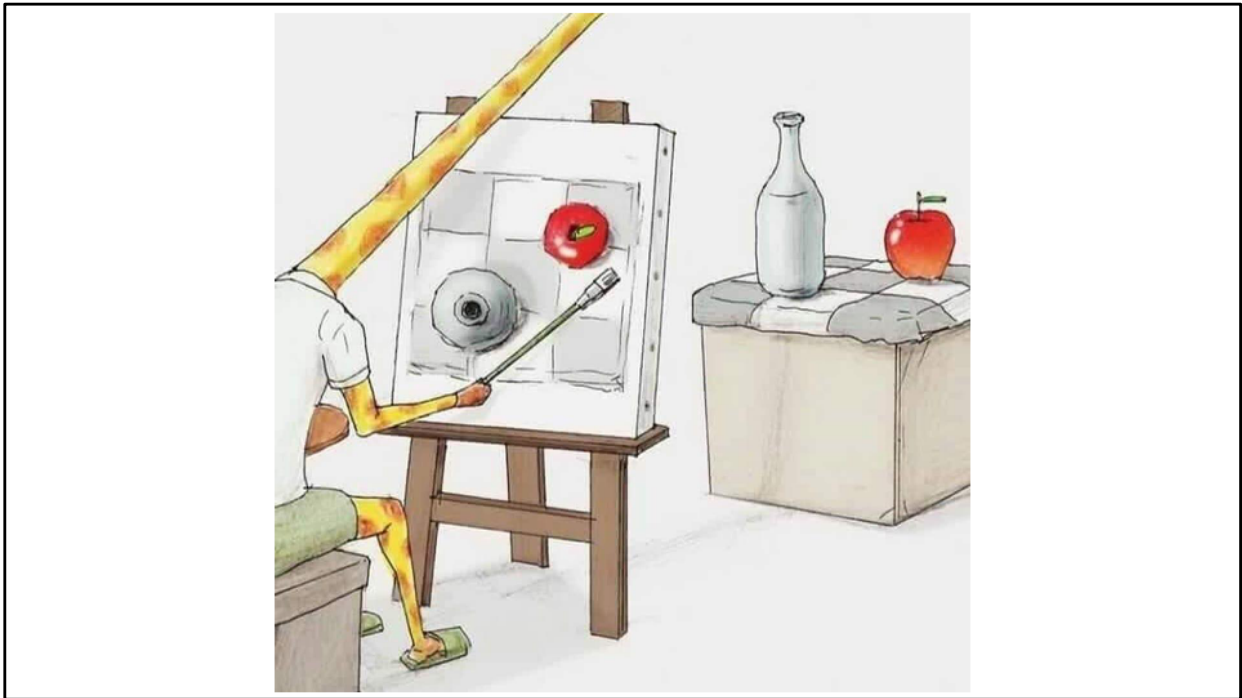
Multilingual Challenges:
Mediating Images
Mediating Rights

The artist is one who sees, listens, analyses, translates and illuminates.

Visual art is not limited to a discipline but rather thought of as a practice able to generate encounters, ways of life, and historical narratives in a different register and as such it often works in an independent state from other sectors.

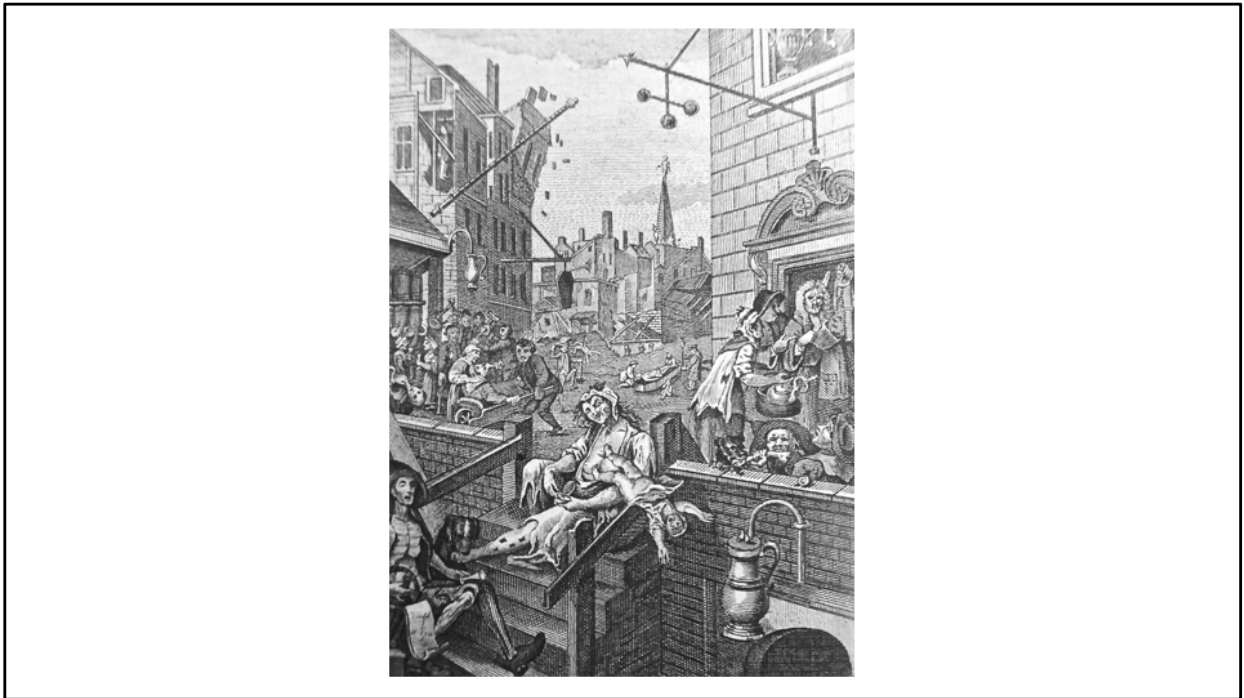
It can be a questioning lens on the changing landscape of cultural and political conditions.

The artist is not isolated, but rather a force stimulating action through discursive means that emanate from the actual art work - these actions can be diverse and often hidden as a defined 'art activity'.



The view of the world can be seen from many angles - "between a strange, hostile world and the human spirit".

In certain circumstances the artist will mediate knowledge to other artists and artist groups - but as we will see later, although artists have a wider alternative perspective on the world, they often find it difficult to look down on their own.



Artists have always been mediators.

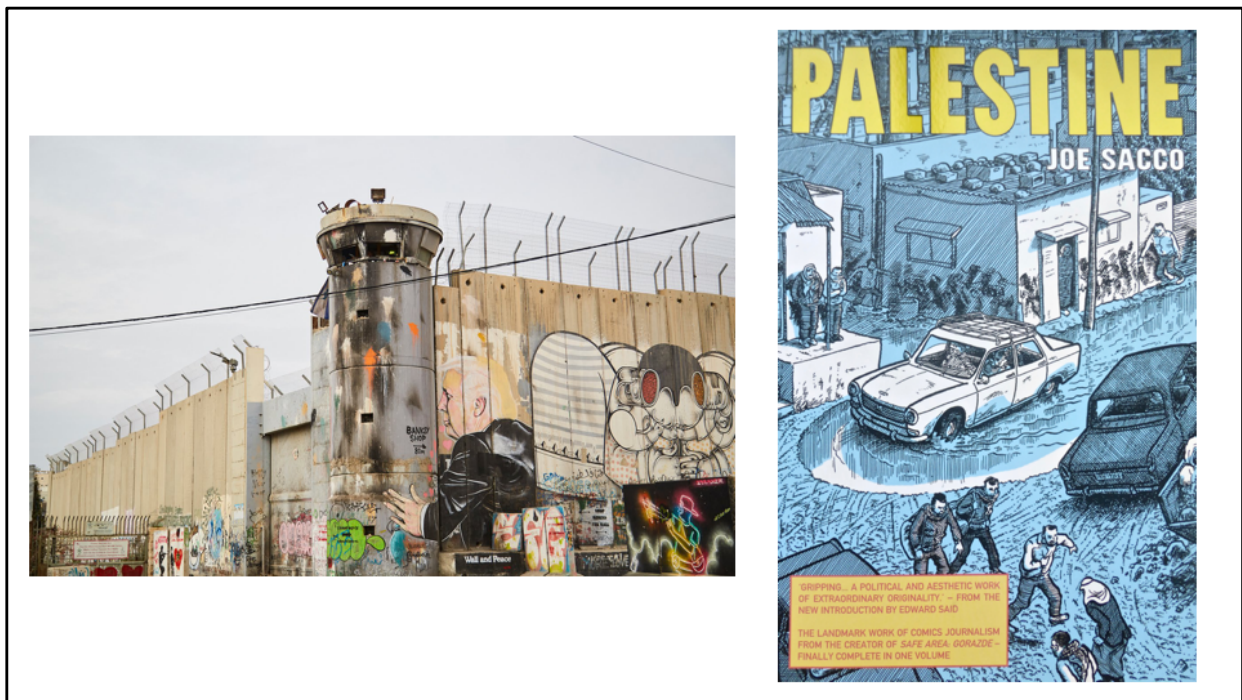
Gin Lane (1751) William Hogarth

As a depiction of the unruly theatre of life offered by society in London, this print was part of a campaign against the uncontrolled production and sale of cheap gin. It helped to curb the epidemic of moral and social disorder caused by the over consumption of gin by the poorer strata of society. Hogarth produced the plates himself to ensure they remained affordable for a wide social audience.

This is artist as social mediator - speaking to ordinary people in a pictorial language that creates a dialogue of potential change.



Guernica (1937) Picasso - almost 200 years after the creation of Gin Lane
A political statement, painted as an immediate reaction to the Nazi's casual bombing practice on the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. The pictorial language discards colour to intensify the drama, producing a photo reportage quality. On completion Guernica was displayed around the world in a brief tour, that helped bring the Spanish Civil War to the world's attention - as an embodiment of peace. Another example of art as a mediation point to highlight conflict in this case - but in a manner that focuses on ordinary people rather than warring sides.



Where the artists attempt to look at a bigger picture - either in the middle or above the actual conflict details.

Israel West Bank Wall - to Israel a security barrier against terrorism, to Palestinians a racial segregation wall.

Example of the actual site where mediation is needed, being directly used by artists to make images and text to create an on-going dialogue.

Palestine (2001) Joe Sacco - combined 9 issue comic series

Sacco positions himself knowingly as the westerner going to the Middle East to confront a reality unfamiliar to an American audience - there is no delusion he is a "neutral" observer or can remain invisible - instead he accepts his role to document and participate in personal experience - depicting contradiction, oppression and horror in a form that manages to be both disarming and disquieting.



Artist interventions that mediate between us and our everyday public space.

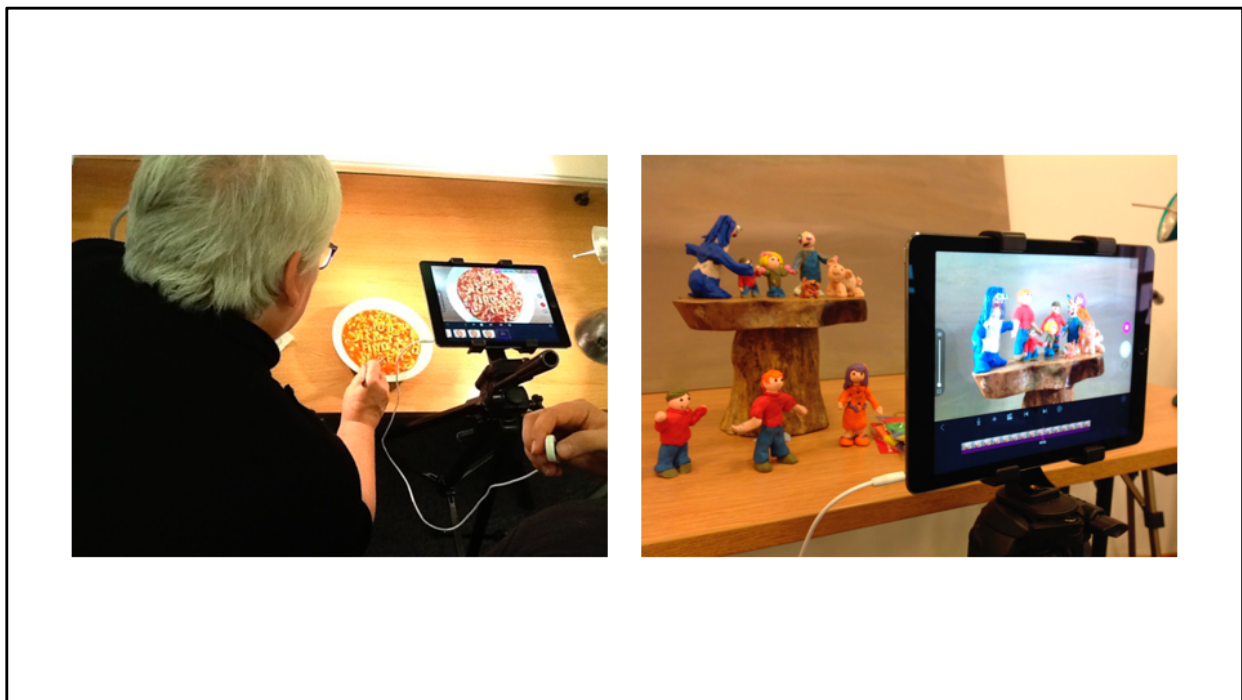
Guerilla Knitting - Yarn Bombing - wool graffiti or kniffiti.

Images from Stornoway, Isle Lewis / Copenhagen, Denmark / Vilnius, Lithuania

This creative activity was initially almost exclusively about reclaiming and personalising sterile or cold public places

Writer Joanna Mann explains the balance between the art and politics, "Yarn bombing, I argue, does more than feminise the city, for the whimsy with which it is imbued has the capacity to increase our attentiveness to habitual worlds in a series of micro-political gestures."

The use of materials / production is an important part in developing particular kinds of mediation (this is all about developing a particular creative language through a specific process).



An example of how the artist works as a facilitator for future mediation.

Tayside Healthcare Arts Trust's ST/ART Project (Scotland), promoting the use of Creative Engagement programmes for people recovering from and living with the consequences of Stroke and Acquired Brain Injury.

2016 - Andrew Low, animator, was brought in to lead a ST/ART programme using iPads for filming animation with a group of people with the communication and language impairment Aphasia.

The animation process mediated the visual expression and explanation of this profound language based communication impairment using shared experiences and personal stories. the outcome was a co-produced free download App, called 'I Have Aphasia' - it informs communication partners about the condition and then helps set the scene for good communication.

<https://aac.dundee.ac.uk/tap-and-talk/animation-workshop/>



An Example of art as a mediated performance.

Diane Torr - gender-as-performance.

Since 1990 Diane has developed her 'Man for a Day' project - a series of taught "drag king" workshops - women can learn not only to dress as a man but also codes of behaviour, gesture, body language and movement that constitute the performance of masculinity. The important distinction to the workshop is that the intention is not to "pass", but rather to question what is considered a given. Diane writes "In the course of constructing another identity, one instantly sees other possibilities of being. In becoming a man, you learn how to "walk the walk" and "talk the talk" without having to wear a testosterone patch!"



Examples of how we operate as artists in two different ways.



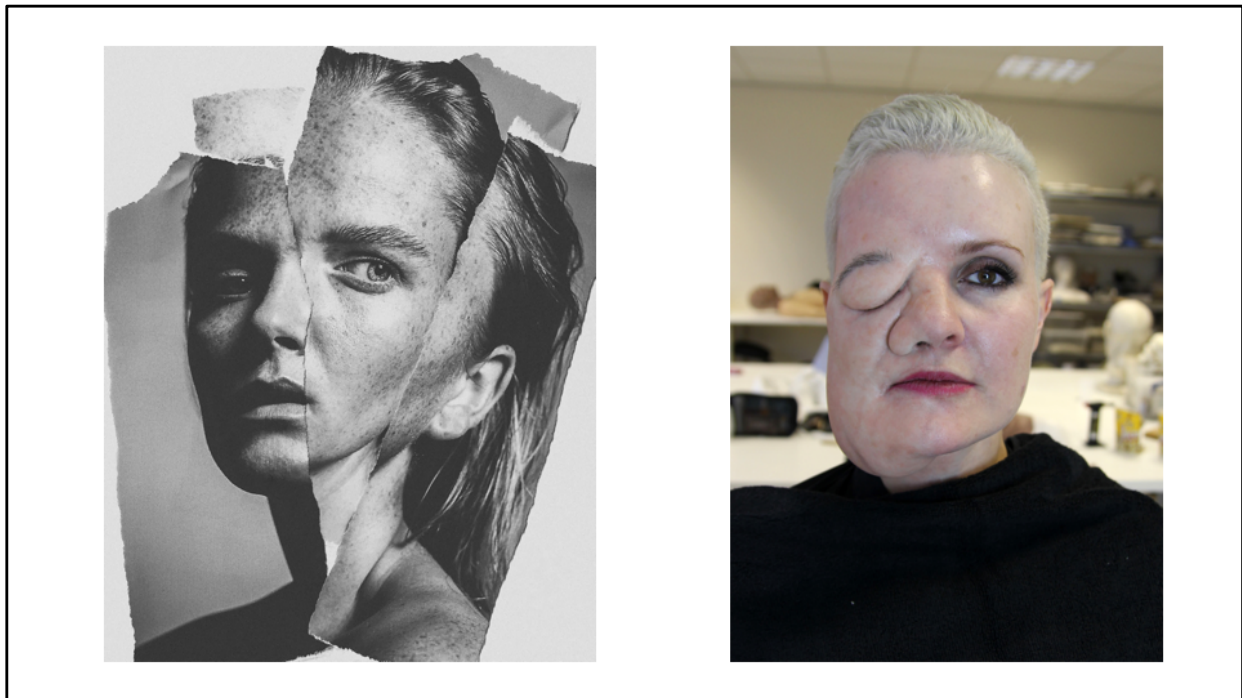
Examples of how we operate as artists in two different ways.



12 TO 16 ARE SLIDES WITH THE WORK OF GUÐRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR, AND OTHER ARTISTS

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Francesca Woodman (**left**) was a photographer who, like Frida Kahlo (**right**), was her own muse. Woodman, who suffered from severe depression took her own life just before her 23rd birthday. Her career was short, but she left behind over 10.000 negatives and around 800 prints. Of these, only 120 have ever been published or exhibited. Her blurred self-portraits might forebode her eventual departure from life. Frida Kahlo is probably one of the best-known artists to make her physical and emotional visible in her work. Her expressions in her self-portraits reflect the challenges she faced, both physical and emotional. Here, we see her pain and sadness over not being able to carry a child full-term.



(Left). Apart from suffering from the very painful condition fibromyalgia, Gunnlöð Jóna Rúnarsdóttir, has an eating disorder and suffers from BDD (Body Dysmorphic Disorder - a mental disorder in which you can't stop thinking about one or more perceived defects or flaws in your appearance — a flaw that, to others, is either minor or not observable.)

BDD is a difficult subject, it is tricky to depict.

(Right). Leigh de Vries also suffering from BDD did depict her illness with the help of a make-up artist. Together, they created a prosthetic tumour, allowing her to make visible the distorted image of herself that she herself perceived. “Wearing it”, she walked the streets of her home town. She could feel the difference – now, people were really looking at her. She had placed cameras in several places. She then proceeded to exhibit the video recordings and added sound effects to enhance the experience of the visitors.



Several attempts at depicting in my photography my own relationship to the bodily chronic pain I have been experiencing were initially unsuccessful. I knew that I did not want to use faces or bodies in agony, but I was at a loss as to how to represent it in a meaningful way. It took a couple of years to create my collection of 17 photographs that depict pain and strategies for coping with it. With these I did not intend to communicate to others how I felt, what my own pain is like. The photographs are to motivate their own reading of these visual representations of pain



We always remember how it is to be in pain, how difficult, how horrid an experience it is. But we do not remember the pain itself. My photography is meant to assist the viewer to go back to the memory of pain and might recommend they stay there for a while and not make a hurried escape from the discomfort.



My 'pain photography' is meant to help the viewer be a meaning-maker, not to 'inherit' my understanding or recognize what my pain is like for me. As a mediator I want to offer viewers images which will help them connect to something within themselves.



SLIDES 17 TO 21 – CHRIS BIDDLECOMBE’S WORK (and his collaborators)

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Site specific - public interventions - The Rice Pavilion (2007)

A project by the Edible Construction Company - creating work that leaves no waste in developing a project - consumable work.

This project highlights the importance of a combination of time / place / subject / community interaction as part of the mediation process.

A project to raise awareness about the worldwide use of food resources - food waste - both in handling and consumption.

Location: Brighton - inspiration from the Brighton Pavilion - the Royal seaside residence finished 1823 for Prince Regent as a frivolous Indian inspired palace built with public money.

The Rice Pavilion was an edible interpretation of the Pavilion, using 10.000 kilos of vacuum-packed rice.

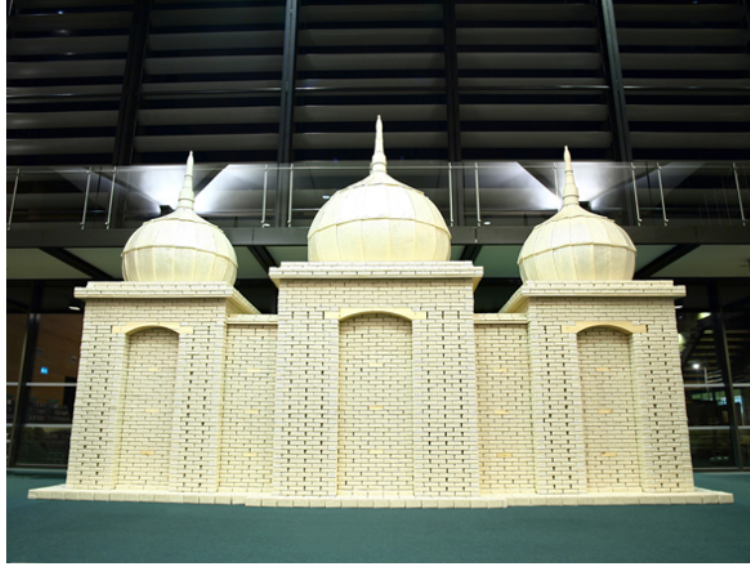
Specific site location - erected in the new Brighton library building - at the time one of the most eco friendly public buildings in the country - also as library a local point of meeting and exchanging information (but not eating!).



Rice building

Mediation through a number of mechanisms - both through the building process and the completed artwork.

A volunteer working group assisted the artists - the building process, dialogue with the workers and dialogue with the public were all part of the mediation process regarding the difficult subject of food waste in peoples everyday lives - and placed in a national and international context.



5.4m tall Pavilion - built over 14 days - completed Pavilion on show 8 days.
Timing of project aligned to summer festival period in the city to maximise both local and visitor experience - during month long build audience figures totalled over 80.000.
Then dismantled and distributed - Rice Pavilion provided enough rice for over 100.000 basic meals for African children, distributed in partnership with Feed the Children UK, a charity that specialises in long term sustainability projects through the United Nations World Food Programme.
Creating a full circle: import rice + action, creativity + construction + raising profile + learning and sharing + deconstruction + exporting + feeding = no waste.



Rice - workshops

A series of supporting artist discussion workshops with volunteers and organised groups and on going informal public interaction throughout the process - creating an environment to learn and self reflect using the construction as a thoughtful mediation stimuli.



Rice - distribution

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THE LAST SLIDES REGARD *EUROPEAN ARTISTS' RIGHTS*, A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BY CHRIS BIDDLECOMBE AND GUÐRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR

European Artists' Rights

When we work together, we have used our skills in creative mediation to develop methodologies that are sent back into the artist community.

When organising projects / exhibitions there is an inverse pyramid of payments - curators are paid, constructors are paid, printers are paid, administrators are paid and cleaners are paid - but very often the artist, who is the reason why the project is happening, sits at the bottom with no payment - and very often also paying themselves to make the work happen.

The artist, while looking out into the world with fresh eyes, ironically often finds it difficult to mediate their own economic situation.

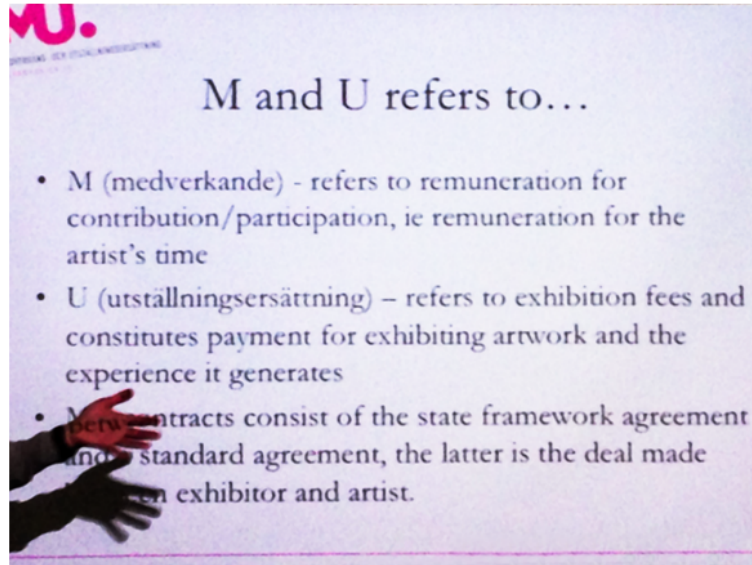


We have explored this situation internationally and discovered many similar stories - but there is a lack of grassroots linked up thinking.

Artists need a mediation process to improve their working conditions.

This is how European Artists Rights was born through our collaboration - using our own creative skills and our own personal experience.

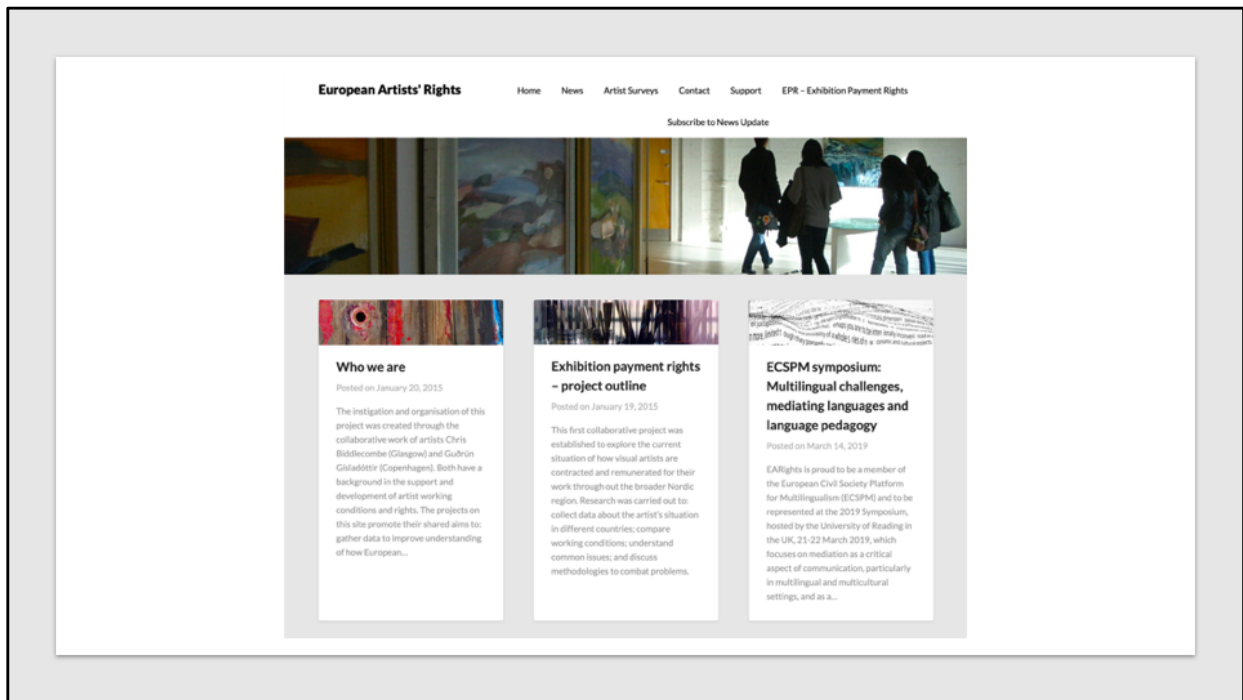
This is a poster from a Polish artists' lobbying group "I am an artist, but that does not mean I work for free" - we look to existing good practice models internationally.



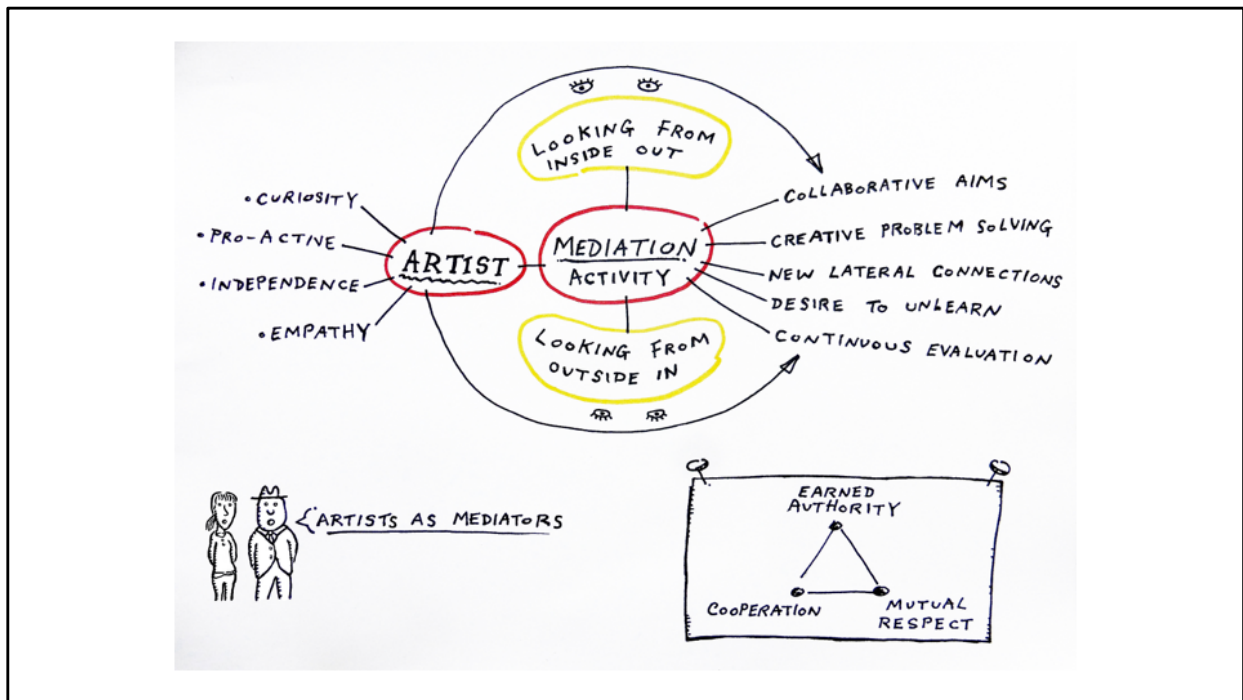
In the first instance we partnered with Swedish KRO/KIF and used the MU Exhibition Payment Rights model from Sweden - to establish a base point of existing good practice legislation to act as a catalyst for discussion.



We have created mediation discussion groups from Sweden, Lithuania, Norway, Iceland, Finland, Scotland, England, Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia and Latvia. Purposefully each group representative has been at a different stage of development or negotiation - the mediation workshop development has allowed each representative to feed knowledge into the group and support individual dialogue. We are happy to report that half of the group have made significant progress in future discussions on negotiation and legislative templates - this work now needs to be shared and tested in each sector.



Our website acts as a collection and distribution point for developing new workshops and connecting networks as they are established.



Finally - this is a gathering of core characteristics that should be considered when an artist is creating work through a mediation process.