

HEARTEFACT

HF ANNUAL REPORT 2024

WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE

In 2024, Heartefact took bold steps in solidifying its position as a regional, independent cultural foundation, while continuing to grow its programmatic reach through HF HOUSE, HF FOUNDATION, and the newly established HF INSTITUTE. This year marked both continuity and transformation, anchoring our existing programs while opening new pathways for regional presence and critical cultural engagement across the Western Balkans and Europe.

HF HOUSE deepened its impact through **two new theatre productions** as well as through maintaining its **regular repertoire** with more than **50 stagings** of our performances in the HF House. We have also expanded our repertoire and reach through touring performances and festival appearances in Serbia, the region, and Europe. With programs like the Theatre Caravan through which our performances were staged in more than **10 smaller municipalities** and cities across Serbia, 13th edition of Contemporary Drama Context, and international collaborations such as Fabulamundi and Playground, HF HOUSE fostered artistic experimentation and brought urgent social themes into the public eye. Beyond but also in front stage, its multidisciplinary programs, spanning poetry, performance, new technologies, storytelling and podcasting—engaged diverse audiences and redefined what critical culture can look and sound like.

HF FOUNDATION concluded the first phase of the Culture for Democracy program by supporting **89 new artistic and cultural initiatives**, organizing **three capacity-building workshops**, and reflecting on four years of supporting independent culture in Serbia during **final project conference *Cultural Nexus***. Through flexible grantmaking and trust-based relationships with grantees, HF FOUNDATION empowered marginalized voices and creative interventions across cities and municipalities in Serbia. It continued to prove that cultural production outside dominant centers and narratives is not only possible—but essential. The Foundation also administered **7 grants** through the Human Rights Leadership Program, supporting grassroots actions for justice and equality outside major urban centers.

With the formal establishment of HF INSTITUTE, Heartefact expanded its mission to include long-term knowledge production and critical inquiry. The Institute's work on human rights leadership and Serbia–Kosovo relations created space for reflection, storytelling, and civic imagination, grounded in lived experience and guided by new generations of thinkers and doers. **Through empowering 23 human rights fellows, supporting 13 researchers, seminars, publications, and organizing cross-border exchanges for more than 30 participants**, the Institute offered fresh narratives on some of the region's most pressing challenges.

Finally, 2024 marked a major regional shift for Heartefact. With a formal presence now established in Kosovo and North Macedonia and stronger collaborations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Heartefact's commitment to regional dialogue is no longer project-based and value-based, but structural. Through this transformation, we reaffirmed our belief that the arts, civic action, and independent culture are essential for nurturing justice, empathy, and resilience in post-conflict societies.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN 2024

HF HOUSE

Heartefact House is a programmatic pillar that focuses on and cherishes arts and multidisciplinary cultural forms, and that experiments with the potential arts have to change hearts and minds. Through Heartefact House, we provide opportunities and work with those who engage in multi-disciplinary cultural forms and in making the cultural space more dynamic and diverse; gather and connect creative individuals and those interested in engaged art into a community; work with other organizations, and public institutions in the area of culture.

HF HOUSE - THEATRE

Pre-Production

1. *They Are All Gone* (written by Dorutina Basha, directed by Andrej Nosov)

They Are All Gone is a sharp and a deeply poetic dramatic concept that explores the issue of suffering, guilt and crime with the intention of penetrating the fundamental idea of theater in imagination – life versus death, human solidarity instead of limitations, and questioning responsibility for the death of those who are no longer here. *They Are All Gone* explores the themes of loss and remembrance, focusing on those who were forcibly disappeared during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. After nearly two years of artistic research, the project culminated in December 2024 with a public presentation of the developed artistic concept through an immersive performance at HF HOUSE. Shortly after, the production phase began in collaboration with the Sarajevo War Theatre (SARTR), which is also co-producing the performance. The premiere is scheduled for May 2025. The cast includes Mirjana Karanović, Svetozar Cvetković, and Alban Ukaj, alongside Maja Salkić, Davor Sabo, Kemal Rizvanović, Matea Mavrak, Hana Zrno, Faruk Hajdarević, Alen Konjicija, Natalia Dmitrieva, and Dino Hamidović.

New Productions

1. *How I Learned to Drive*, directed by Tara Manić, written by Paula Vogel:

The performance premiered at 17th of March 2024 at the Heartefact House and since then it is included in regular monthly repertoire of the House. In 2024 it had in total of 24 stagings. *How I Learned to Drive* by Paula Vogel is a text many describe as “Lolita” written from a female perspective. It follows the story of an adult Li'l Bit as she reflects on her childhood. The relationship between the two characters, Li'l Bit and her uncle, is fraught with ambivalence: love, tenderness, curiosity, teaching, trust, the formation of authority, mistakes, and, consequently, boundary violations, grooming, and harm leading to self-destruction. One of the text's greatest values is the author's empathy for both characters, which opens a vital, provocative discussion about the causes—not just the consequences—of such a relationship. This is a play about forgiveness, even when forgiving seems impossible. Starring: Svetozar Cvetković and Marta Bogosavljević

2. *All the Good Barbies*, directed by Đorđe Nešović, written by Isidora Milosavljević, based on the novel by Katarina Mitrović:

The performance premiered on 26th December 2024 at HF House. In 2025, *All the Good Barbies* will be included in regular repertoire of the HF House. What changes when you step into your thirties? Is that when you become aware of your mortality, confronted with the question: why do we exist if we're destined to die? The protagonist, Vanja, faces a whirlwind of fears, internal dilemmas, and harsh realities. In this chaos, she tries to find reasons to live while also grappling with the futility surrounding

her. This performance is part of the project “Expanding Theatre Landscapes,” supported by the British Council through the Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans project (CC4WBs).

Starring: Aleksandra Arizanović, Julija Petković, Nevena Kočović

HF House Repertoire

Our Son (written and directed by Patrik Lazic; starring: Dragana Varagić, Amar Ćorović, Aleksandar Đinđić): *Our Son* is a sincere, poetic, humorous and, at times, tragic story about parents who deep down cannot find a way to accept the identity of their gay son, even though they think they have tried everything. In 2024, it performed in total of 19 times.

Besides regular stagings in the HF HOUSE in 2024 *Our Son* was also performed in Sarajevo for the opening of Kvirhana festival, as well as during asphalt festival in Dusseldorf, Germany.

The Finger (written by Dorutina Basha, directed by Ana Tomovic, starring: Jasna Đuričić, Milica Stefanović): *The Finger* explores this relationship in the context of the most sensitive issue in Kosovo today: the issue of the missing, but from the completely new, for this society radical position of women left behind. In 2024 it performed in total of 9 times.

A Short History of Burgers and Other Stories (text by Đorđe Kosić; directed by Andrej Nosov; starring Simon Versnel): This is a monodrama performed by Dutch actor Simon Versnel, a longtime member of the Belgian dance theater troupe Peeping Tom. This play tells several stories inspired by the memories of one boy about the traumatic events that impacted his understanding of reality. The author deals with the questions of guilt, love, sexuality and his own relationship with the world. During 2024, it was performed 5 times at Noorderzon Festival of Performing Arts and Society in Groningen, Netherlands.

HF Theater Caravan

In 2023, Heartefact House launched a queer caravan where we perform our plays with minority perspectives in smaller towns in Serbia, followed by discussions with the local audience on these sensitive topics. In 2024, we continued this successful practice with performing *Our Son* in smaller cities in Serbia, but also with performing *How I Learned to Drive* on smaller stages in the country. This allowed us to connect with the local audiences around the difficult topics that speak about womanhood, unspoken things in families, pedophilia, incest. The places in Serbia where we performed our productions are Pirot, Niš, Ruma, Arilje, Užice, Lazarevac, Novi Sad, Aleksandrovac, Požarevac, Bečej, always having a conversation with the audience after the performance. These conversations, especially in the case of *How I Learned to Drive*, tend to have a great significance for the members of the audience since these topics are still largely considered as taboo.

HF Pride Theatre Program

For sixth year, Heartefact participated in the organization of the annual The Pride Week theater. For 2024 edition, in collaboration with Il Dance company from Sweden, we organized 3-week artistic residency in Belgrade with 7 performers, developing a new durational piece called *Boys Just Want To Have Fun*. The work confronts the challenge of deconstructing the “man” and taboos around men’s sensuality and tactility in mainstream Western culture. The work does so by addressing power dynamics and hierarchies of social positioning in the visual art space (the gallery), politics of object and subject (presenting man as an object), questioning what a body is and how its utterances are informed by its process of becoming, as well as the practice of individual agency in a public space (both for the public and the performers). The piece opened the Pride Week on 2nd September in Endžio Hub Gallery, with performances a day before and after. As an accompanying program, on the 4th September

we organized an open Artist talk with the cast, where audiences could share and ask what's on their mind. Choreography was done by Israel Aloni & performers Arūnas Mozūraitis, Victor Persson, Elias Khanamidi, Tomer Giat, Atte Rimpelä, Elias Kraft.

During Pride Week, we had a presentation in the Heartefact House by Aleksander Zain, called Body Confessions. The work is an intimate confession of the artist about his relationship with his own body, as well as many other things that this relationship carries or touches. Through the three segments into which the performance is divided, the contrast between the attitude towards the body as indicated to us by society and the attitude towards the body which is personal and self-realizing. By creating qualitatively contrasting pairs in the first two segments, such as: shame-empowerment, mistake-acceptance, confusion-understanding, chaotic-calm, public-personal, etc., the intention was to show society's relationship to the body (both queer and non-queer) and its impact on the body, as well as to comment on how and how much the body can remain strong in that, and it is strong as such.

Additionally, Hearefact's production *Before we Begin* was also staged as part of the Heartefact Pride Theatre Program on the 5th of September.

HF HOUSE – DRAMA

Contemporary Drama Context – 13th Edition

The 13th Contest for the Best Contemporary Engaged Dramatic Text in 2024 received 117 submissions. Heartefact's Contemporary Drama Context has garnered recognition among both professional circles and the broader cultural audience, with numerous prize-winning works subsequently capturing top awards at leading regional festivals and elevating their creators' profiles. This year's jury, comprised of Ozren Grabarić, Božo Koprivica, and Biljana Srbljanović, awarded first place to Mirza Skederagić, who is a second time winner of the Contest now, for his drama "Baci je Putine i budi precizan." Additionally, the jury highlighted works by Mirjana Medojević, Jelena Krdžavac, Jana Milivojević, Robin Mikulić and Veronika Mah for their exceptional quality. The winning play will be presented to the audience in April 2025.

Fabulamundi – New Voices

In our ongoing commitment to supporting contemporary drama writing Heartefact became part of the Fabulamundi European network of playwrights. This network encompasses 19 playwrights from across Europe, with Biljana Srbljanović and Patrik Lazić representing Serbia and Heartefact. New Voices/Fabulamundi is a multi-year project of 12 participating partners supported by the Creative Europe program. New Voices/Fabulamundi will innovate European playwriting by developing and testing a new methodology to create and train a new generation of playwrights, putting the dramaturgy into the spotlight, removing the barriers to the profession and integrating digital tools and results in the creation process. The methodology will be tested in 9 countries and implemented by a consortium of 14 organisations active in the field of theatre and dramaturgy, located in all the European regions.

In 2024 the following activities were implemented: partner meeting in Paris where all the playwrights involved had a chance to be educated on the topics of "green theater" and ecological perspectives in creative industries, organization of 2 playwriting workshops involving local and international experts in Belgrade, as well as a conference for the FabulaMundi community in the beginning of October.

From October 5th to 7th, 2024, the three-day conference was held at Heartefact House. After gatherings in Rome, Venice, and Paris, Belgrade had the opportunity to host 19 playwrights from

around ten European countries, as well as representatives of theatres and artistic organizations that are part of the network. The three-day conference opened with a walking tour through central Belgrade, during which Jasmina Lazović from the Heartefact Institute introduced the guests to important sites and events relevant to understanding the historical, political, and cultural context of Belgrade and Serbia. Over the following three days, in addition to internal workshops and debates, the conference participants had the opportunity to visit local cultural institutions: the National Theatre, Boško Buha Theatre, Little Theatre Duško Radović, Atelje 212, and the Faculty of Dramatic Arts. These visits were not only a chance to get to know the local scene but also to exchange ideas and experiences that enrich the European theatre community that includes Serbia. The playwrights engaged in conversations with representatives of the local institutions, sharing their experiences and creative processes from their respective countries.

Playground

Playground is a European project in which Heartefact collaborates with partner organizations from Italy (PAV, EURADIA), France (MOUSSON D'ETE), and Romania (TEATRUL ARIEL) during the period of 2024-2026. The project is dedicated to developing new dramatic texts by young playwrights, offering them the opportunity to have their texts translated into partner languages and to collaborate with international directors, performers, and translators. The project's innovation lies in its design, which aims to establish a more complex and comprehensive collaboration among the various professions involved in the theater process—playwrights, directors, translators, and performers.

Three young writers from Serbia will have the opportunity to attend a one-week residency in one of the partner countries, where they will practically examine the first versions of their texts through work with directors, actors, and translators. Afterward, based on feedback, they will refine their texts to the final stage, when their texts are translated into partner languages, thus enabling their visibility in the international theater community. Through this project, we aim to map and encourage the creation of an international community of playwrights, strengthen and develop the knowledge and skills of young writers for their future careers, provide them with greater visibility in an international context, and develop digital tools that will make the distribution of texts more sustainable and inclusive.

In 2024 we realised the following activities: setting up the necessary protocols for the management and communication during the project, mapping out the playwrights that we want to include in the project within the international community and selecting them (for Serbia we selected Jana Miliwojević, Sofija Dimitrijević and Tara Mitrović as a duo and Nađa Mišković), realisation of the first residency in Rome that Sofija Dimitrijević was a part of, making arrangements for Jana's and Nađa's residencies that will take place in France and Romania.

HF HOUSE – MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

Poets of Today – Voices of Tomorrow

Poets of Today – Voices of Tomorrow is a cooperation project of 5 project partners from Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Finland, and Serbia financed through the Creative Europe program. It aims at bringing poetry and contemporary poets closer to young people, teachers, and local communities in all partner countries. In 2024 we did the following activities: regular partner managerial and artistic meetings were held, including two in-person meetings in Poland and Slovenia. A publication called ToolBook was prepared and issued in five project languages, bringing together various methodologies used throughout the project, as well as one poem by each participating poet translated into English. A digital billboard campaign was organized in Belgrade in Knez Mihajlova street to draw attention to the importance of reading contemporary poetry. During the final in-person partner meeting in Ljubljana

in November, a closing conference was held at the Pionirski dom, where members of the international poetry collective—Anja Zag Golob, Harri Harttel, Marton Simon, Radmila Petrović, and Malgorzata Lebda—performed together for the last time.

Slavic Soundwalking

Slavic Soundwalking (SSW) aims to contribute to the transnational circulation of literature and foster transcultural dialogue through literary creativity in Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia, whose languages belong to the same group of South Slavic languages. The project emerged from the need to build good neighborly relations using language in an innovative and creative way, through the digitalization of literature and sound design. SSW will be implemented between four partners from Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia till the beginning of 2025. In 2024 we realized the following activities: finalization of the content for the SSW mobile application; participation in ceremonial launching of the app in Zagreb and Ljubljana, with participation of our own artists and collaborators in several events that dealt with storytelling, creative workshops, panel discussions, for example Svetozar Cvetković, Branko Rosić, Mirjana Narandžić, Vera Jovanović etc. Besides this, during May and June we organized a series of events marking the Belgrade launch of the app, in collaboration with BELEF manifestation. With 10+ events including specific workshops, live podcasts, open talks, storytelling events and special Soundwalking tours in the city, we successfully presented the application to the public in Belgrade with the final event taking place in Salon of the Museum of contemporary arts.

Eclectic of Otherness

Eclectic of Otherness (EoO) represents a partnership initiative of three cultural organizations from Serbia, Croatia, and France. It is dedicated to exploring identity tensions between Us and Them, insiders and outsiders, those we think belong, and those who are not part of that privilege. Through the dissection of identity as an intimate zone of conflict, both microscopic and personal, as well as global and public, EoO uncovers and respects the challenges faced by the unknown, strangers, outsiders, immigrants, newcomers, and refugees on difficult paths to safety and freedom. In 2024 the following activities took place within this project: partner meetings on regular basis, including in vivo meeting in Zagreb, concluding the artistic research phase; production of 3 independent theater performances, one by each partner (Arterarij – The Dog House, Heartefact – They Have Already Gone, El Vaiven - The Rabbit House), with check points during the production phase we called Showcase labs; organization of 2 Festivities of Otherness (in Zagreb and Belgrade) with the third to be presented in Paris during January 2025. During Festivities, all 3 productions were presented to the local audiences with accompanying open talks with the artists involved. Following all these activities, an online video campaign called Mosaic of Otherness was launched on partners social media profiles, gathering 30 artists from various countries answering questions about how it is to be perceived as “other” within their own personal contexts.

New Theater Market

New Theater Market/Sarajevo Theatre Showcase is an annual industry event held during the second week of September, providing a vital platform for theater professionals from Southeast Europe. Led by the Sarajevo War Theatre (SARTR) in collaboration with partners from Norway (Para Film & Theatre), Italy (Binario Vivo), Serbia (Heartefact Fund), and Croatia (Theatre Ulysses), this project seeks to create a dynamic platform for co-production, talent development, and sustainable practices in the regional theatre industry. Its core programs—including a curated selection of performances, presentations, and the Green Lab initiative—connect regional talent with international decision-makers while promoting sustainable practices in theater production. The event blends professional development opportunities, such as residencies and workshops, with targeted support for women, young professionals, and

underrepresented theater makers. By fostering international collaboration and empowering the regional theater sector, the Showcase serves as both a networking hub and a catalyst for innovative, environmentally responsible theater-making. The project started in September 2024, and by the end of the year we developed organizational structure for the festival, as well as program scheme for the whole event, with desired collaborators that we want to include in the manifestation that will be held in Sarajevo in September 2025 for the first time.

Beyond Stage Mastery

Heartefact, in partnership with the Center for Visual Arts Qendra Multimedia, realised the project Beyond Stage Mastery, supported by the British Council through the Culture and Creativity Learning Lab grant line as part of the Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans (CC4WBs) project. CC4WBs is funded by the European Union and aims to enhance dialogue in the Western Balkans by strengthening the cultural and creative sectors for increased socio-economic impact. The goal of the project is to provide high-quality, relevant, and up-to-date professional knowledge, to share experiences, and to offer guidance and advice to theatre technicians and young professionals from Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. Within the project, 3 masterclasses were organized in Belgrade and Prishtina, led by international experts on the topics of sound, light and video operations in theatre. With total of 29 participants coming from 3 countries, 5-day masterclasses were led by Alesandro Olla, Luigi Biondi and Lazar Nikolić and Ivan Đurović.

Microsummit 2024: Sweden–Serbia Exchange in Arts and Culture

In early October 2024, Belgrade became a meeting point for critical exchange through the Microsummit—a collaborative event bringing together representatives from Sweden and Serbia working in the fields of arts and culture. Hosted under the umbrella of the Point in Time initiative by the Swedish Institute, this second edition continued its mission to foster open dialogue and relationship-building across European cultural landscapes. Over three days, participants—curators, cultural managers, researchers, and independent artists—explored pressing questions around the role of the arts in times of crisis, digital transformation, and sustainability, enveloped under the topic of “political loneliness”. With no predetermined outcomes or agenda beyond thoughtful exchange, the Microsummit provided a rare space for open-ended conversation, reflection, and the cultivation of future collaborations between Sweden and the Western Balkans.

Ukraine: Love + War Exhibition

As executive producer and co-organizer, Heartefact collaborated with the Open Society Foundations – Western Balkans and FotoEvidence on a week-long program in Belgrade marking ten years since the start of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Held from November 15 to 23, 2024, the program centered around the exhibition *UKRAINE: LOVE + WAR (2014–2024)*, opened at the European House. Based on the book published by FotoEvidence, the exhibition featured 50 photographs taken between 2014 and 2024 by 95 international photojournalists, offering a striking visual testimony to the war’s impact on Ukrainian society. The program also included a screening of the Oscar-winning documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* at the Vlada Divljan Cultural Center, and a public discussion titled *Art in Times of Crisis* at the KROKODIL Center, featuring artists, curators, and scholars from Ukraine and Europe. The events provided a platform for dialogue on the role of art in wartime, solidarity, and the ongoing consequences of the conflict.

HF HOUSE – PODCAST

Pleasure in Text

A popular monthly podcast by Biljana Srbljanović and Vladimir Cerić that examines narratives of pop culture - TV series, bestsellers etc. through an entertainingly analytical lens in the current social and political context. In 2024 in total 16 episodes of the podcast were published.

HF INSTITUTE

In 2024 Heartefact established new programmatic pillar serving as foundation of our work throughout all pillars currently active (House and Foundation). HF Institute is a programmatic pillar where knowledge is gathered, systematized, established, and shared. HF Institute creates spaces for critical examination of social realities, and enables the generation of knowledge about critical social, political, cultural and economic issues contributing in this way to the emergence of societies that are more just and cohesive, that have learned from the past, that elevate vulnerable groups and enable vibrant social activism. HF Institute aims at creating new narratives and insights in which non-recurrence of violence and exclusion will be guaranteed.

In 2024, the programs of the HF Institute focused on fostering regional collaboration and strengthening grassroots activism and civic engagement by supporting and creating local agents of change.

Human Rights Leadership Program

Funded by the EU *Human Rights Leadership Program* is a three year project aiming at increasing the level of understanding and support for human rights advocacy of marginalized communities among key social and political stakeholders by amplifying marginalized voices and informing policy changes through storytelling. The project provides transformational capacity development for advocacy and public engagement to creative individuals and organizations advocating rights of marginalized communities (human rights defenders). Additionally, it also facilitates campaigns and advocacy through creative actions which tackle the issues of social exclusion, violence, marginalization, and identify meaningful social and policy responses to strengthen the democratic political culture, and culture of respect for human rights in Serbia. Targeted interventions aim to increase the practical understanding of the importance of efforts by frontline human rights defenders, and awareness as well as critical questioning of the patterns of verbal and physical violence that defenders are exposed to, particularly those who themselves come from or represent marginalized communities and those exposed to social, economic, and political exclusion. The program is implemented in the partnership with Slovenian organization 8th March Institute.

In 2024, Heartefact worked with 23 program participants-fellows from 14 cities across Serbia who are engaged in various human rights topics, such as advancing the rights of the Roma community and transgender individuals, combating violence against women and gender inequality, advocating for better conditions for workers and youth in rural areas, addressing the challenges faced by people with disabilities and families with children with developmental difficulties, and improving mental health support.

During a five-day seminar held in April on Zlatibor, the Institute 8th of March worked with the group to develop campaigns with the potential to bring about concrete change at the local level. Special focus was placed on finding ways to run effective campaigns without requiring significant financial resources.

Through a restricted Open Call, participants of the program applied for funding to implement initiatives in their local communities or to strengthen the organizational capacities of their existing organizations. The grants supported actions focused on policy development in the field of human rights, with special emphasis on socially and politically marginalized groups, particularly those facing multiple forms of

discrimination and coming from underdeveloped areas in Serbia. In total, seven organizations were supported (Funded projects are presented in the HF Foundation Section).

Serbia – Kosovo: Reconnection Program

The Reconnection program was re-initiated towards the end of 2019 as an exploratory project with dual objectives: to enhance cross-border dialogue and civic participation between Kosovo and Serbia, and to address nationalism and xenophobia by empowering young individuals with conservative and nationalistic viewpoints (referred to as "unusual suspects") to engage in the development of innovative strategies for regional interactions.

In 2024 HF Institute continued instigating firmer and more sustainable people to people relations between Serbia and Kosovo focusing above all on the effective process of change in public discourse in both countries and forging new alliances as a way towards overcoming the consequences of frozen political conflict between the two countries. Due to still prevailing ethnic tensions and weak political relations between Serbian and Kosovo political elites, the relation between two societies are marked by intolerance, misunderstanding and lack of true dialogue.

In 2024 our efforts were continued to be geared towards broadening the avenues for introducing novel viewpoints to our communities, aimed at challenging existing stereotypes about "the other." Our focus was on fostering stronger regional ties and emphasizing the creation of fresh narratives between Kosovo and Serbia, all while strengthening interpersonal connections across the border. The overall objective of this pragmatic area in 2024 was to support individuals and organizations from Kosovo and Serbia who seek opportunities for collaboration with people "from the other side" either through introducing new narratives regarding Serbia-Kosovo collaborations and connections or through forming people-to people connections and bridges.

Fellowship Program

To create space for alternative narratives and pioneer the change of public discourse and public perceptions based on prejudices and stereotypes, which can be potential invokers of future conflict, Heartefact offers fellowships to representatives of institutions, academia, opinion makers and authorities' representatives to develop action-orientated narrative interventions as a mechanism for creating and bringing to the wider public fresh perspectives.

During 2023 and 2024 we have supported 13 fellows whose researches were published in the second part of 2024 exploring new and constructive narratives regarding Kosovo-Serbia relations. Topics ranged from language and translation issues to education, the EU-facilitated dialogue, the normalization process, and other relevant political and social areas. During the three-month research period, participants spent one month in either Belgrade or Prishtina. Throughout the program, they influenced dominant narratives and offered new perspectives to the public on their research topics. This fellowship program was implemented within the project Enhancing Cross-Border Cooperation and Social Engagement in the Western Balkans, with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy.

List of supported fellows and their researches includes:

1. **Miloš Pavković, *From Brussels to Ohrid, Belgrade and Pristina on a Crossroad (2024)*** – Analyzed conflicting narratives around the EU-led dialogue and challenges in the normalization process.
2. **Sadie Suhodolli, *Linguistic Transition in Kosovo (2024)*** – Explored the Serbian–Albanian language divide and the need for key translations in education and arts.

3. **Visar Xhambazi, *Designing Effective Track Two Diplomacy (2024)*** – Examined the role of non-state actors in Kosovo–Serbia dialogue and proposed conflict resolution strategies.
4. **Hristina Mikić, *Economic and Legal Measures of Cultural Policy (2023)*** – Studied how cultural policies shape Serbia–Kosovo cooperation in creative industries.
5. **Ismail Myrseli, *Memoir 5/5 (2024)*** – Traced the evolution of Kosovo’s alternative music scene through personal stories and visual records.
6. **Adea Batusha, *Border Proximity and Education (2024)*** – Investigated how life near the Kosovo–Serbia border influences education and interethnic relations.
7. **Srđan Miljević, *We Are Love (2023)*** – Collected cross-border love stories between Serbs and Kosovo Albanians, including queer narratives.
8. **Nora Ahmetaj, *Symbiotic Horizons (2023)*** – Linked economic advancement with reconciliation in Kosovo–Serbia business communities.
9. **Stefan Surlić, *The Agreement on the Path to Normalization of Relations (2023)*** – Analyzed EU documents and agreements affecting Kosovo’s international position.
10. **Serbeze Hexhijaj, *Is There Hope for Ethnic Coexistence in War-Traumatized Kosovo? (2023)*** – Documented everyday coexistence and cooperation in mixed villages.
11. **Tevfik Rada, *Is ‘Resistance’ the Fate of New Art? (2023)*** – Explored the political role of contemporary art in post-socialist Kosovo and Serbia.
12. **Nađa Bobičić, *They Could Do It (2023)*** – Highlighted forgotten stories of cooperation among women from Kosovo and Serbia during wartime.
13. **Bengi Muzbeg, *Za Sada Bez Dobrog Naslova (2023)*** – Analyzed the 1988 film within its political and production context, focusing on Albanian–Serb relations.

Visiting Program

In 2024, Heartefact hosted 38 participants through its Visiting Program, facilitating visits across Kosovo and Serbia. The program supported individuals and organizations seeking cross-border cooperation and those in need of partners from the so-called "other side." The Kosovo–Serbia Visiting Program serves as a platform to foster collaboration, encourage regional networking, and promote peacebuilding and sustainable initiatives.

Some of the key activities in 2024 included:

- ***DokuFest Visit (August 2024)***: A 4-day visit to Prizren for 13 young filmmakers, artists, and activists from Serbia. Participants attended film screenings, masterclasses, and cultural events, and met with prominent local professionals, strengthening regional artistic networks and exposure.
- ***Research Visiting Program (June 2024)***: A 4-day exchange involving 10 young researchers from Kosovo and Serbia. Participants visited Belgrade, Pristina, and Gračanica, engaging with over 20 institutions and individuals across academia, civil society, and the arts, laying the groundwork for future collaborative research.
- ***Sbunker Visit (March 2024)***: The independent media outlet Sbunker from Pristina visited Belgrade and Novi Sad, where they met with nine media and human rights organizations. The visit sparked dialogue and opened avenues for future journalistic and advocacy collaboration.

HF FOUNDATION

The Heartefact Foundation is a programmatic pillar that enables us to support those who help push our society closer to our vision. Heartefact Foundation provides support to groups and organizations who nurture critical reflection and thinking, approach social interventions creatively, and provide spaces for production, consumption and engagement with artistic expression and critical content.

Heartefact Foundation provides support to individuals in varied areas of social engagement, arts, and inquiry, particularly those who commit to topics and approaches that are under-represented or seen as foreign, and who are made to feel alone and unsupported in their meaningful commitments.

Culture for Democracy Project

Culture for Democracy (CfD) Project is the first comprehensive, long-term intervention in the field of culture and art in Serbia supported by Switzerland. It aims to protect and enlarge a social space where pluralistic and democratic values can be expressed, an intercultural dialogue triggered and tolerance promoted. The project looks beyond supporting sole production of art and culture, valuing exchange and learning processes. As there is an evident lack of support for independent cultural actors at the local level, the CfD Project focuses on them, following a bottom-up approach. Cultural actors are provided with resources in order to unleash their potential for triggering critical and creative thinking around topics of immediate relevance for their communities, as well as for creating networks that will empower and enable them to uphold a stimulating space for promoting pluralistic values and intercultural dialogue in Serbia.

In the last implementation year of the CfD Project, phase I Heartefact supported **19 artistic and cultural projects** within 4th cycle of Grants for Artistic Expressions Call, **9 additional projects within Art Boost Grant Scheme** as well as **5 new Job Shadowing Arrangements**

Grants for Artistic Expressions

Within Artistic Expressions Grant Scheme 19 projects were awarded to support the realization of initiatives and activities that are relevant both to the development of society and local communities, as well as to the advancement of various cultural and artistic practices within the independent arts and culture sector. The selected organizations are based in 13 different cities across Serbia, and their project activities were implemented in 11 additional cities, municipalities, and villages, demonstrating significant geographical diversity. The projects also reflected a wide range of artistic disciplines, including theatre, performing arts (including dance), visual arts, art theory, music, comics, literature and literary criticism. Thematically, they address human rights, the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, intercultural dialogue, social inclusion, ecology, and the development of critical thinking.

Organizations supported under this call include:

1. Festival of Ecological Theatre for Children and Youth – **30th edition of the Festival “METAMORPHOSIS”**: 1,800,000 RSD
2. Center for Girls – **Promoting Gender Equality through Engaged Art in Niš**: 1,650,000 RSD
3. Academic Initiative Forum10 – **Who's Afraid of Shakespeare's Sister?**: 1,650,000 RSD
4. Rebel Readers – **Critics' Rebellion**: 1,550,000 RSD
5. REX Cultural Center – **To Continue Without Oneself?**: 1,550,000 RSD
6. Association Nova Mreža – **Future – Women's History of Niš Through Artistic Practices**: 1,550,000 RSD
7. Fakiri sa juga – **Gnezdo Fest**: 1,500,000 RSD

8. Center for Women's Studies – **Fem Com(ics)**: 1,500,000 RSD
9. Zemun Small Art Center (ZMUC) – **Polycrisis Residency – (Un)Expected Encounters**: 1,500,000 RSD
10. UNA FILM, Artistic Creation Agency – **Prima Facie**: 1,400,000 RSD
11. Association for Nature and Society Multivox – **Circle Art Festival – Is Green Change Feminine?**: 1,400,000 RSD
12. Zvezdobroj, League for Intellect and Imagination – **Book HQ**: 900,000 RSD
13. Citizens' Association "Anonymous said:" – **Gender (Im)balance of Revolution 5.0: Technology and Feminism**: 800,000 RSD
14. Citizens' Association Livrit – **Džada Fest**: 1,100,000 RSD
15. Satibara – **From the Body, For the Body**: 836,000 RSD
16. Film Club Prokuplje – **Festival of Roma and Serbian Culture**: 800,000 RSD
17. Impuls – **In the Embrace of Forgotten Plays**: 900,000 RSD
18. Mezanin – **Limitations**: 900,000 RSD
19. Academic Scene Citizens' Association – **Bašta Fest**: 800,000 RSD

Art Boost Grants

Art Boost Support Scheme aimed to support innovative, experimental, and strategic initiatives in the arts and culture sector. This scheme aimed to foster imagination, collaboration, and long-term development—not only through specific artistic productions but also by strengthening the conditions in which culture and art are created.

In 2024, the geographic scope of the scheme was expanded to include both national and regional, cross-border initiatives. Across three funding screenings, a total of **9 organizations** received support for projects addressing themes such as social inclusion, cultural policy development, artistic cooperatives, decentralization, and support for poetry, young visual artists as well as cultural media platforms.

Supported Projects:

1. ULUS – **SHARED VISION – The First Artists Cooperative in the Western Balkans** (3,000,000 RSD)
2. Asocijacija Nezavisna kulturna scena Srbije – **Independent Art Scene as a Driver of Social Change** (3,000,000 RSD)
3. Udruženje vizuelnih umetnika Užice – **The First Village Gallery of Contemporary Art – Cultural De-center Reflektor** (2,880,000 RSD)
4. Jednostavno rečeno – **New Routes of Cooperation** (2,440,000 RSD)
5. MM Baza – **All of Us: Poetry Knows** (2,381,000 RSD)
6. Art Aparat – **Svi uglas!** (3.046.000 RSD)
7. EXP Project – **Echo Curve** (2.800.000 RSD)
8. Romski kulturni centar – **Romodrom** (2.440.000 RSD)
9. SeeCult - **ABC of Independent Culture** (2.400.000 RSD)

Job Shadowing Arrangements

As part of its ongoing commitment to strengthening the independent cultural sector, the Heartefact Fund continued its Job Shadowing grant scheme in 2024, under the *Culture for Democracy* project. This scheme supports on-the-job training and capacity building for organizations and professionals in the field of culture, aiming to facilitate knowledge exchange, peer learning, and professional development through internships and practical learning models.

In response to the third public call, which closed on April 20, 2024, Heartefact received 13 applications. A total of five projects were selected for funding, representing diverse practices in theatre, spatial installations, publishing, and circus arts. Two projects were funded under Model 1: Internship, and three under Model 2: On-the-Job Training.

Selected Projects:

1. **Center for Girls, Niš – Internship** (350,000 RSD)
2. **IRIDA / Initiative for Equality, Innovation, and Social Engagement, Novi Sad – Internship** (280,000 RSD)
3. **Association Apostrof, Novi Sad – Internship** (350,000 RSD)
4. **CEKOS – Center for Culture and Education Sonta, Sonta – On-the-Job Training** (350,000 RSD)
5. **Ludifico – Center for the Development of Circus Skills, Novi Sad – On-the-Job Training** (350,000 RSD)

Cultural Nexus: Shaping the Future Together

In May 2024, the Heartefact Fund organized the conference “Cultural Nexus: Shaping the Future Together” in Niš, marking the final year of the first phase of the *Culture for Democracy* (CfD) project. The conference gathered cultural professionals, grantees, and partners to reflect on achievements, assess challenges, and shape the strategic direction of CfD’s next phase.

Through panels, working groups, and discussions, the conference highlighted the CfD project’s impact on youth engagement, gender equity, and decentralized cultural production. Participants emphasized the value of time, flexibility, and collaboration in grantmaking, and identified critical needs for the next phase: sustained institutional support, urgent response grants, audience development, and stronger investment in shared cultural spaces and critical art production. The event reinforced Heartefact’s commitment to participatory program design and its role in building a resilient and inclusive cultural landscape. Insights from the conference will guide the design of CfD Phase 2, ensuring continued relevance and responsiveness to the evolving needs of the independent cultural sector in Serbia.

Capacity Building Workshops

In December 2024 within the Culture for Democracy Project a capacity building workshop dedicated to the cultural and artistic organization was also organized. This year workshop was focused on PR and Communication skills and knowledge transfer. The workshop was led by Jelena Milašinović, the PR Manager of the Belgrade Philharmonic, who brings extensive experience in communications and marketing within both the public and independent cultural sectors. The workshop began with a general introductory session covering advanced concepts in public relations, communication strategies, and marketing in the context of arts and culture. However, the emphasis quickly shifted to a more tailored, hands-on approach. The expert addressed the specific communication challenges faced by each participating organization, using real-life examples from her own experience as well as case studies drawn directly from the participants’ work. The second day of the workshop was dedicated to individual consultations. Each of the ten participating organizations had a 45-minute individual consultations with Jelena, during which they were able to receive direct feedback and guidance on their communication and marketing strategies. To support this more intensive, problem-oriented format, the number of workshop participants was capped at 18, ensuring a more productive and personalized learning environment.

Culture for Democracy – Phase I Overview

Taking into account that the first phase of the *Culture for Democracy* (CfD) project is concluding in February 2025, and that 2024 marked the final year of its implementation, this overview presents key achievements, outcomes, and lessons learned. The second phase of the project is scheduled to begin in March 2025.

Over four years, CfD supported **59 projects** through the **Grants for Artistic Expressions, 19 projects** through **Partnership and Art Boost Grants, 11 Job Shadowing arrangements**, and **3 Capacity Building Workshops**. These interventions reached **46 cities and municipalities** across Serbia, supporting grassroots and independent actors through funding, mentorship, and networking. Supported projects explored key societal themes including gender equality, youth, decentralization, environmental sustainability, queer rights, and intercultural exchange—often serving as the only source of socially relevant cultural content in their local communities.

CfD-funded initiatives generated over 600 positive media articles and attracted wide public engagement through performances, exhibitions, debates, and collaborative artistic work. From community-based festivals and critical theatre productions to experimental music programs and cross-border collaborations, the project proved that independent culture can be a powerful force for democratic resilience.

Key insights from Phase I emphasize the importance of flexible and tailored support, trust-based relationships with grantees, and program designs that adapt to the realities and priorities of cultural actors. CfD's transparent and responsive approach enabled organizations to grow, experiment, and build sustainable partnerships. These lessons will serve as a foundation for the design of *Culture for Democracy Phase II*, ensuring that the project continues to support independent culture as a space of resistance, imagination, and social transformation.

Human Rights Leadership Program – Grant Mechanism

In 2024, through its *Human Rights Leadership Program*, the Heartefact Fund supported seven initiatives advancing human rights and social justice across Serbia. The program focused on empowering marginalized communities, supporting human rights defenders, and strengthening grassroots advocacy in areas such as gender equality, trans rights, Roma women's rights, youth inclusion, disability rights, and combating gender-based violence. Special attention was given to innovative, community-driven approaches and work outside major urban centers.

Grants were awarded to organizations working in diverse locations—including Novi Sad, Niš, Požarevac, Bujanovac, Bečej, and the Zlatibor region—demonstrating the program's commitment to decentralization and locally led leadership. Supported projects combined advocacy, awareness-raising, legal empowerment, and artistic activism to address systemic discrimination and promote equality.

Supported organizations and projects:

1. Grupa Izađi!, Novi Sad – ***Tim za transrodna stanja u Kliničkom centru Vojvodine*** (750,000 RSD)
2. Primer, Bečej – ***Virtuelna kontrola – realna opasnost*** (700,000 RSD)
3. Integrativni Global Centar, Kragujevac / Valjevo – ***I ti imaš pravo!*** (700,000 RSD)
4. Ružica, Arilje – ***Nadi svoj put – Zagovaraj!*** (650,000 RSD)
5. Budućnost, Bujanovac – ***Integracija albanske zajednice na lokalnom nivou*** (600,000 RSD)
6. Niško udruženje studenata sa hendikepom, Niš – ***Gde ste parkirali svoju svest?*** (500,000 RSD)
7. FemIn kolektiv, Požarevac – ***Jačanje položaja žena u Požarevcu*** (500,000 RSD)

REAGIONAL APPROACH

While Heartefact has long embraced a regional approach through cross-border cultural collaborations, the end of 2024 marked a major strategic shift—transitioning from project-based cooperation to a formally anchored presence across the Western Balkans. This transformation reflects not only our long-standing commitment to regional dialogue and cultural cooperation, but also our conviction that arts, culture, and civic engagement—whether independent, institutional, grassroots, or experimental—remain among the most vital spaces for fostering shared experiences, critical thought, and reconciliation in the Western Balkans.

In line with this shift, Heartefact formally established **Heartefact Kosovo** as an independent organization and opened a **branch office in North Macedonia**, expanding our operational reach and deepening our responsibility to the region we emerged from and belong to. In **Kosovo**, we will continue to build stronger ties within civil society, the public sector, and the local cultural scene, and work to foster Serbia–Kosovo relations from both directions—supporting individuals, organizations, and initiatives that engage with questions of memory, identity, and human rights through cultural, civic, and public dialogue. These actors are creating spaces of resilience and transformation in a tense political climate, where culture becomes a medium for freedom, visibility, and community belonging. Our support will be focused on amplifying the voices of those who challenge inherited narratives and advocate for dialogue, reconciliation, and a more inclusive future.

In North Macedonia, we are preparing the launch of the Culture for Development program in 2025—modeled after the successful *Culture for Democracy* in Serbia. The program will offer advocacy grants, institutional support, and small-scale artistic grants, aimed at empowering independent cultural actors in North Macedonia, particularly in smaller and underserved communities. In a context shaped by developmental challenges, economic pressures, and underinvestment in the cultural sector, our work supports artists and organizations that bring new perspectives and optimism—those who engage with the social fabric and help redefine civic imagination through cultural expression.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, our presence has been strengthened through a **strategic partnership with SARTR (Sarajevo War Theatre)**. We will continue to work with cultural actors who, despite limited resources and entrenched divisions, courageously promote narratives of reconciliation, coexistence, and dignity. These actors challenge exclusive historical interpretations and use creativity to bridge divides, offering spaces for encounter, reflection, and healing. Heartefact seeks to amplify these efforts and help build a cultural ecosystem where diversity is embraced and the past is not weaponized but acknowledged in ways that nurture empathy and solidarity.

By establishing local structures and long-term partnerships in Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we aim to deepen our support for independent actors who use culture to advance justice, inclusion, and collective agency. As we move into 2025 and beyond, our regional presence will allow us to build more resilient, interconnected, and critically engaged cultural spaces across the Western Balkans—spaces that resist repression, inspire change, and imagine a different, shared future.