

# The birds of freedom

## abstract

**The source of inspiration** The arrival of a large number of refugees in Lesvos, the routine of idleness during their extended period of waiting for a response to asylum requests and the need to find creative ways for refugees and locals to connect, coexist and cooperate with each other, has been the source of inspiration for the creation of the experiential installation titled **The birds of freedom**

**Objectives** **The birds of freedom** represent an artistic activity with specific social purposes, aiming to provide a solution for a significant social problem and at the same time motivate and raise the awareness of the citizens worldwide. The common characteristics and the aim of all three of the above are: the artful experiential awareness of the participants, on issues arising from the mass movement of people who migrate to seek salvation or better living conditions and empowering them. The main objective of this initiative was and still is:

To facilitate the peaceful integration and incorporation of refugees in the social fabric of each receiving community

To offer refugees experiential training in an art that will lead to their reinforcement and future self-determination

To provide a model and a protocol that can be applied to various other vulnerable social groups

To involve actors and individuals, refugees and natives, in an active action on a personal and social level, emphasizing the interaction and active participation of all

To create strong links between participants

To provide training to all those involved in cyclical economy issues

To bring together the participants with other forms of culture and art

**Project background** The participants crafted and painted small and bigger birds using recycled materials (water bottles, paper, and newspapers). A total of 652 people participated in the action and made a corresponding number of birds leading to one bird for every 1000 migrants arriving in Lesvos (2015-2018)

# The birds of freedom

## Detailed presentation

The experimental installation “the birds of freedom” is a work of art following the research project of a graduate thesis, which was completed within the framework of the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies Program entitled “Applied Clinical Sociology and Art”. This graduate program is implemented by the in collaboration with the Department of Applied Arts of the University of Western Macedonia.

**The source of inspiration for the project:** The arrival of a large number of refugees in Lesbos, the routine of idleness during their extended period of waiting for a response to asylum requests and the need to find creative ways for refugees and locals to connect, coexist and cooperate with each other, has been the source of inspiration for the creation of the experiential installation titled “the birds of freedom”.

**Objectives of the project:** “The birds of freedom” represents a form of intervention- al art, an artistic activity with specific social purposes, aiming to provide a solution for a significant social problem and at the same time motivate and raise the awareness of the citizens of Lesbos of Greece and abroad.

The common characteristics and the aim of all three of the above are: the artful experiential awareness of the participants, on issues arising from the mass movement of people who migrate - under extremely difficult conditions - to seek salvation or better living conditions and empowering them.

The main objective of this initiative was and still is:

- to facilitate the peaceful integration and incorporation of refugees in the social fabric of each receiving community
- to offer refugees experiential training in an art that will lead to their reinforcement and future self-determination
- to provide a model and a protocol that can be applied to various other vulnerable social groups
- To involve actors and individuals, refugees and natives, in an active action on a personal and social level, emphasizing the interaction and active participation of all,
- To create strong links between participants,
- To provide empowerment and employment to the disadvantaged group
- To provide training to all those involved in cyclical economy issues
- to bring together the participants with other forms of culture and art
- to bring the change to the existing situation

**Project background:** The project was realized in workshops of 14 people, with 7 immigrants and 7 locals each. The participants crafted and painted small and bigger birds using recycled materials (water bottles, paper, and newspapers). A total of 652 people participated in the action and made a corresponding number of birds leading to one bird for

every 1,000 migrants arriving in Lesbos from 2015 till today. The workshops were attended by individuals of all ages, children 6-12, adolescents 13- 18, adults.

**The installation:** “The birds of freedom” were exhibited as a single installation in the Lesbos Chamber and received great feedback from the public (more than 500 visitors). The installation was displayed in the hospitable area of the Technopolis of the City of Athens, from 24th of May until 9th of June 2019 and 26th of June until 15th July 2019 (more than 4.000 visitors) and aspiring to ultimately be exhibited abroad in places like the European Parliament and the United Nations.

**The installation is structure in sections:** A large number of individual crafted birds was installed in large cages (3m high and a diameter of 1.5m), to symbolize the compulsory stay of the refugees in the hot spots for many long months, while a flock of birds with their wings open is surging out from the half-open door of the cage to symbolize the journey to freedom. To represent the number of the nationalities that participated in this specific artistic action 14 small circles were formed with a large number of crafted birds with closed wings, thus symbolizing the peaceful coexistence of people before they were driven to emigrate.

Another group of birds with closed wings was installed as if making a stop during their journey from the small circles to the cage, symbolizing the route of the refugees.

On the occasion of this exhibition, workshops and lectures will be organized to promote the importance of this project in terms of integration, inclusion and socialization of the immigrants and other vulnerable groups.

Fereniki Tsamparli

Concept and coordination of the project

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