



Human Stories

15th edition





“Before I came to Berlin, I had several different ideas, but the residency helped me refine them into something new.”

Marie-Louise Jones, multidisciplinary artist

Where ideas flow: How an international residency sparked new creative directions



What if water could change how we see our cities? British artist Marie-Louise Jones spent a British Council residency in Berlin putting the idea to the test.

Through the British Council-supported Urban Streams residency at Spreepark Art Space in Berlin, British artist Marie-Louise Jones explored how art can reimagine our relationship with urban water.

Marie-Louise arrived in Berlin with ideas rather than a finished artwork. As one of four artists in the residency, she explored urban waterways through conversations with experts, fellow artists, local communities and the city itself.

“The expert sessions and all the different input were generative and inspiring,” she says. “Before I came to Berlin, I had several different ideas, but the residency helped me refine them into something new.”

The result was Which Worlds World Worlds, an installation incorporating locally sourced waste oyster shells, natural fibres and horticultural materials. Its porous forms absorb, seep and create

the conditions for life, inviting viewers to imagine infrastructure based on care rather than control.

Spreepark’s landscape shaped the work, prompting Marie-Louise to explore tensions between nature and infrastructure. A community gathering near the site brought local voices into the project, with participants contributing field recordings to the final soundscape.

Inspired by Berlin’s industrial landscapes and Spreepark’s ecology and community collaboration, Marie-Louise now hopes to expand the project into a public installation.

“This is just the beginning – the seeds of the ideas. I can definitely see this growing into a public installation with more community collaboration.”

The project has been implemented by four EUNIC Berlin partners – the British Council, the Finland Institute, the Embassy of Ireland, and the Embassy of the Republic of Estonia, together with Spreepark Art Space Berlin.

Beyond the classroom: Two students meet Ken Loach in Paris

At 16 and 17, Ariane and Simon took the stage at the Cinémathèque Française to interview Ken Loach, one of Britain's most celebrated filmmakers.

What happens when young people get the chance to question a celebrated director? For Ariane and Simon, two students at the British Council France, it was an opportunity to combine their passion for film with their English skills.

As part of a partnership with the Cinémathèque Française, the 16- and 17-year-olds joined two students from its film club to interview Ken Loach at the opening of a retrospective of his work. After watching and discussing his films, they prepared their questions together before taking to the stage before a young audience.

For Simon, the experience opened up a new side of filmmaking. Preparing his questions in English made him think differently about writing,

storytelling and the relationship between screenwriters and directors. *"It is not a recitation, but an appropriation of the subject,"* he explains. Speaking in front of an audience also helped him turn ideas on paper into a conversation.

For Ariane, who has studied English at the British Council since she was six, the interview was *"a really beautiful experience"*. Meeting Loach gave her a new perspective on a filmmaker whose work continues to explore issues relevant today.

For both students, the experience showed how language learning can take them beyond the classroom – and give them confidence to make their voices heard.



"[The interview was] a really beautiful experience."

Ariane, English student at the British Council

By and for disabled artists: The award-winning production changing Romanian theatre



Supernormali, a production that won the British Council Award at Romania's UNITER Gala, put disabled actors like Nicoleta Profir at its centre and changed the stage to match.

Actress Nicoleta Profir was part of *Supernormali*, the theatre production awarded the British Council Award at the UNITER Gala for its contribution to Romania's arts and disability sector.

"Supernormali gives voice, space and visibility to realities that are rarely seen, discussed or represented in public," she says. "The play was adjusted so that we could truly live on that stage."

The production explores disability, vulnerability and sexuality, inviting audiences to question assumptions that can exclude or stigmatise. *"It encourages the audience to reflect on realities that society has often ignored because they seem too complex, too uncomfortable or too costly to address,"* Nicoleta explains.

For her, representation matters far beyond the stage. *"Our presence communicates something important to the public and to society: we belong there."* Seeing disabled people represented in cultural spaces can help others imagine possibilities beyond isolation, while challenging assumptions about what disabled people can do.

Nicoleta believes inclusion is not about privilege. *"We are asking for dignity, respect and meaningful opportunities for people whose ways of experiencing life have long been overlooked or excluded."*

The award celebrates *Supernormali* while highlighting a wider need: disabled artists should be empowered to shape the culture they are part of.

"We are asking for dignity, respect and meaningful opportunities for people whose ways of experiencing life have long been overlooked or excluded."

Nicoleta Profir, actress



Different Memories, Shared Futures: Rethinking how we remember conflict

Two people can remember the same event completely differently. Peacebuilder Natalija Havelka is helping communities across five countries make room for both.

For Natalija Havelka, remembering the past is not simply about looking backwards. It is about asking who gets to tell the story – and who might be missing from it.

A peacebuilding practitioner with the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek, Croatia, Natalija works with communities and young people on dialogue, reconciliation and the legacy of the 1990s conflicts.

“People can carry very different memories of the same events,” she says. “If we want to build a peaceful future, we need to create space for all of those experiences.”

Through the British Council’s Different Memories, Shared Futures programme, organisations across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia are exploring more inclusive ways of remembering. The programme

supports initiatives that bring marginalised voices, including women, young people and minority communities, into conversations about the past.

Natalija joined a study visit to the UK and a regional conference as part of the programme. For her, the value lies in creating opportunities to learn across borders.

“Memorialisation can be a way to connect people, not only to remind us of what divided us,” she says. “We have different memories, but that doesn’t mean we cannot work towards a shared future.”

By opening up space for dialogue, Natalija hopes younger generations can engage with the past without simply inheriting its divisions.



“If we want to build a peaceful future, we need to create space for all (...) experiences.”

Natalija Havelka, Executive Director at Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights



Ideas that travel: How a film made in a Nicosia bedroom won a European prize



Alexandru Musat made a film in his bedroom in Nicosia with a few schoolmates. It won the British Council's Your World Regional Prize for Europe – and taught primary school kids to rethink their rubbish.

At 17, Alexandru Musat from Cyprus entered the British Council's Your World Video Competition to challenge himself and strengthen his videography skills. He won the Regional Prize for Europe alongside his teammates from The Grammar School, Nicosia.

"Realising that a project I had planned and produced in my room, together with members of my school community, had been recognised as the best in Europe showed me that ideas can travel much further than we expect," says Alexandru.

Their project tackled littering and waste through interactive learning. By teaching primary school students about the harm caused by litter and encouraging them to recycle and repurpose everyday items, the team aimed to help young

people develop more sustainable habits. The experience also strengthened Alexandru's research, communication and storytelling skills.

For Alexandru, sustainability is a collective responsibility. *"Small actions, such as reducing waste, recycling properly, consuming more responsibly, and encouraging others to do the same, can add up to make a significant difference."*

Most importantly, winning showed him that creative storytelling can spark conversations far beyond the place where an idea begins.

"The competition challenged me to present a complex issue in a clear and engaging way within a short amount of time."

Alexandru Musat, Your World Europe Regional Prize winner

Celebrating our community

Every programme starts with
people.

