

At Canal180 we create space in our platforms to give independent artists, musicians, directors, researchers and people from the artistic world room to express their thoughts and opinions, usually about a specific topic related to their work. The series 'Thoughts On' gathers a collection of ideas on specific topics, from Collectivism to Artificial Intelligence or The Future of Internet. This time, we travelled to Upper Austria for the Festival Der Regionen (Festival of the Regions) in July, to explore the theme Social Warmth and collect a series of ideas on it. There, we talked to artists with projects at the festival about their thoughts on the theme.

THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL WARMTH





Airan Berg
Artistic Director of Festival der Regionen



Elisa Andessner
Visual Artist



Conny Zenk
Media Artist



Alessia Rollo
Visual Artist



Josseline Engeler
Artist and Lecturer at the University of
Art and Design Linz

Airan Berg, Elissa Andessner, Connie Zenk, Alessia Rolo and Josseline Engeler all told us about the different perspectives they explore Social Warmth from. We got to hear about their experiences on the roles participatory projects can have in imagining a better future, how art can allow people to feel more empathy than the news, how local stories can be used as a starting point to broaden conversations, how food has both a social and an ecological impact, how considering the climate crisis is vital in thinking about what sort of future we can all have and how public art can make people think about all of these things. We decided to present these collection of thoughts under five topics: Creating Conversations, Politics in Art, Borders, Eating, the Future and Collaborative Projects.



Airan tells us how by creating a term, we can also start and control the conversation, the dialogue, the discourse about it.

Airan Berg is the artistic director of the Festival Der Regionen. He tells us about the reason for creating the term Social Warmth, an antidote to the Social Coldness so often mentioned in conversations about politics or austerity. He defends that by creating terms we can also control the discourses that follow. Through participatory projects, artists and participants can create a platform where, instead of presenting answers, people can ask and think about questions together.

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The social warmth idea is to create a platform, which artists and citizens together think what is social warmth, what kind of society we want to live in, what kind of relationships do we want to have with the people that we live with in the same context, what is a society, what does a society look like if it doesn't have social warmth. It can also be dystopian, so we didn't come here with answers, we came here with many questions.

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- Aliran Berg

Elisa discusses the importance of social warmth by creating political art, which she believes can make people feel more empathy with a subject than through the news people read or watch everyday.



With a background in performance, she later switched to photography. Elisa Andessner tells us how her experience doing a residency in Tehran changed her perspective on life in the West, which she reflected on a shift in her art as she started to make more political work. The work she presents at Festival of Regions emerged from the conversations - she started collecting the stories of women in Tehran, which she brings to Austria to contrast with stories of women in Europe

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25 Through art is possible to make a more personal approach, news are always a bit more distant and with art we have the chance to make more of a connection to show more of the human parts on different topics, and not so much the informative parts. It's possible to create more understanding than if you had all the information now but you didn't feel anything.

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- Elisa Andessner



Conny Zenk is one of the artists behind a performance that uses the landscape and the regional tradition of the ratchet, the local history of borders and population displacement to explore conversations about borders on a European and global level.

The performance during Festival of Regions consisted on a bicycle ride through a landscape that has its own unique history. Conny told us that, in the land where the performance takes place, a damn was built in 2012. This damn now works as a border between the water and the land, protecting people. But after it was built, a lot of people had to move, leaving their houses, which were demolished and rebuilt on the other side of the damn. During the performance, the community was invited to ride their bicycles alongside this border and share their stories on their experiences living there.

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Within this European project we want to open the dialog to think beyond borders and also to question what does it mean to move out from your house and to migrate to another place.

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- Conny Zenk

Alessia Rollo, mindful of the social and ecological aspects of eating, decided that as an artist it was important for her to raise awareness to issues surrounding food.



Through her work, she wanted to make apparent that eating is more than a necessity for survival - it is a social activity that is central in bringing communities together, but also something with a heavy ecological impact. Pollution, packaging and waste are all impacts of food production that people are not always so aware of.

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As an artist it was important for me to point it out that the food chain was changing but that as well had a lot of consequences on our relationships, because a lot of people now eat alone and we lose the value of sharing food. But this has a big ecological impact, so all the food is packaged and there's a lot of waste besides this production.

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- Alessia Rollo



Josseline installed a spaceship in a public space to start a conversation about the possible futures for human life.

If, because of the climate crisis, life on the planet changes dramatically, what are our solutions? Will we survive? Will we have to flee? In the digital age, when people do not always have the time to digest things, public art meets people where they do not expect it, incentivising them to think about questions they might not usually think about.

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There is a big lack somehow of social warmth, i think that everything is getting into the direction of technology, of money. It's a very quick world, it's a very instant world that we are in and we this is getting faster and faster and people do not really have the time to digest things.

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- Josseline Engeler

What can we hope to achieve through participatory projects? Can people feel more empathy with art than they can with the news? How can local history be used as a platform for broader conversations? What are the impacts of changing food chains? Why public art? The festival created the space for discussion and Airan, Elissa, Connie, Alessia and Josseline raised their questions.

This is the fourth chapter of our collection of films called "Thoughts on", where we give independent artists and researchers a platform to express their ideas on specific themes. Read the previous articles on this series: [Thoughts on Collectivism](#), [Thoughts on Artificial Intelligence](#) and [Thoughts on the Future\(s\) of the Internet\(s\)](#).

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