

Oberliht Association

Founded in 2000 and based on rather long working experience as an independent cultural actor, "Oberliht" aims to interconnect dispersed artistic scenes and build an artistic community making use of public spaces. The Association aims to provide support to young artists and contribute to their professional development. It develops and maintains interdisciplinary platforms and projects aiming to connect the local and international contemporary art and culture initiatives, and advocates for a strong and independent cultural sector in Moldova and in the region.

We curate and maintain informational services for cultural workers like [oberlist] mailing list and printed publications like POSTBOX magazine and various other publications edited on project bases.

Issues related to built environment and city development are often present in our projects due to the role which urban planning and architecture have in projecting public space, and thus fostering or diminishing social cohesion or increasing/decreasing opportunities and representation for most of the people.

We have interest to discuss what forces and processes are shaping the public space today, if the inhabitants take part in this process and how did this process evolve during the last two decades.

Aiming to educate new generation of cultural workers our projects always develop non-formal educational activities through public presentations, seminars and workshops, and we actively involve international and local volunteers to contribute to the aims of the Association.

The activity of Oberliht Association follows the principles of self-organization and non-profit activity.

Communities we mainly work with

Organisations, institutions and individuals from Moldova and wider European region active in the cultural field that reflect in their projects the dynamics of social, political and economic transformations of the society.

Students of art, cultural management, architecture and urbanism, sociology / anthropology faculties in Moldova by engaging them in the frame of various non-formal educational activities (workshops, seminars, presentations etc.) and through internships.

Researchers and experienced activists groups along with other civic organizations dealing with unequal distribution of public space in Chisinau but also in other cities from the region (Yerevan, Tbilisi, Kiev, Bucharest, Budapest etc.)

Inhabitants of several districts in Chisinau that were part of the Mapping of Public space in Chisinau workshop: <http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/atelier-cartografiere/>

Local public administration, central administration and other public institutions.

Journalists and mass-media interested in contemporary culture and in issues linked to public space transformation.

Local and international volunteers.

Why?

Initially Oberliht Association was established in order to support young artists in the very beginning of their career. This is why we stress the need for non-formal education, offering young people the chance to learn and acquire different experience from what they were taught in the University. Later, we have developed an international network and partnerships with similar organizations from Moldova and wider European region due to which we could develop our activities locally and internationally.

Socially engaged culture and contemporary art represents an effective way in communicating and reflecting the dynamics of social, political and economic transformations of our society in the process of its democratisation. This is the reason why we collaborate with organizations and individuals active in the cultural field. Culture also represents a different model for communicating with people and building new relations (if compared to economic or other type of relations). Art and culture also encourages the publics to become active citizens.

Starting with 2007 we are actively working in public space where we have encountered different groups, actors and interests overlapping each other. In this process we identified new partners and collaborators, among them the local architecture community, sociologists and anthropologists, historians who help us understand different processes that shape the Chisinau public space today and help us reach out and understand the needs of the local population.

We appreciate the work that is done by activists and the researchers since they possess the knowledge from the ground that we can use for our work and future projects when dealing with such issues like neo-liberal transformations of public space during the last two decades. In this process local inhabitants are crucial to work with, so we try to involve them in different stages of our projects, as they would give continuity to the activities initiated by us.

How?

We have been supporting local artists by organizing exhibitions, residencies, supporting them to produce their works and promoting them in our publications. We are constantly informing the artistic community about different opportunities to participate in various local and international programs, exhibitions, residencies etc.

We have developed new partnerships with art and culture organizations from Moldova and from abroad, collaborating in the frame of different projects, sharing resources.

Oberliht Association is also active in creating and maintaining various platforms that serve as base for the new cultural infrastructure needed for producing and presenting contemporary art - starting with different mailing lists, websites and blogs, but also publications and periodical magazines, and finishing with physical spaces like Flat Space (cultural information point / platform for public participation:

<http://chiosc.oberliht.com/apartment/>) and Zspace - a newly opened space for

independent cultural organizations, artists collectives and initiatives:

<http://zpatiu.wordpress.com/>

These platforms are used by other independent organizations and this is how a new type of relationship is being formed.

We regularly organize presentations and invite artists, architects, researchers to meet the students of Art Academy and of Technical University / Architecture department in the frame of organized seminars and workshops.

We also run a residency program for international artists, architects, curators, researchers. So far many participants had the possibility to work in Chisinau, within the local context: <http://chiosc.oberliht.com/air/>

Through sociological research we try to reach Chisinau inhabitants and learn about their opinion regarding the use of public spaces in the area where they live, before proposing an artistic project or intervention. We also encourage them to transform the areas around their living area.

We actively communicate with local authorities, informing them about our activities and asking them for administrative support when needed.

We are also running the European Voluntary Service program:

<http://www.oberliht.com/evs/>

Change what?

We advocate for changes in few different but interconnected fields: cultural policies and contemporary art, civil society and independent cultural/youth organizations, public space creation and participative urban development

Cultural policies and contemporary art:

- Culture and access to culture should be included among the state priorities in Moldova as an important component of education of publics and sustainable development in general.
- Including contemporary art production among national cultural priorities.
- Improving public education in culture, including new disciplines etc.
- Greater mobility and introduction of social security for cultural workers.

Developing civil society and independent cultural/youth organizations:

- There is a strong need for a communication platform between independent organizations and public administration/authorities to be created (organizing regular meetings and debates, public consultations).
- Transparency when distributing public funds for culture (need to define a clear set of priorities and criterias (creation of an independent commission of experts) according to which public funds would be distributed) + providing new funding tools.
- Providing production/studio, office and exhibition spaces to independent art organizations and art collectives/initiatives in Moldova.

Public space creation and participative urban development:

During the last two decades the public space (parks, cultural and sports infrastructure, recreational areas, playgrounds and the inner courts of block of flat areas etc.) in urban areas of former socialist countries has gone through significant transformation such as: degradation of existing public spaces, non-transparent privatization of public property, the commercialization of public space, substitution of the public function of various public spaces with profit-making type of activities. One major consequence of these transformations was the constant and permanent exclusion of certain social groups from the use of public space and at a more general level citizens have been deprived of their right to participate in the process of decision making.

- To elaborate concrete mechanisms and instruments through which local communities could be given a voice in the process of urban planning and designing of public spaces (participative urban development).

Regular activities / projects

[oberlist] mailing list - youth culture, arts and cultural policies (2005-2016 - ongoing) is an electronic free of charge service that is offered to artists, curators, cultural workers, managers and activists, policy makers, art lovers etc. from both Eastern and Western Europe but also Black Sea and other regions in the world.
<http://www.oberliht.com/oberlist/>

The POSTBOX magazine is an interdisciplinary and experimental publication that aims to reflect the young artists' and writers' work and activity. The magazine encourages communication between artists, writers, musicians, architects etc. but also sociologists, historians and other various professional groups, emphasizing the important role that art & culture, as 'active ingredient', has in a multicultural society in a globalized world.

<http://plic09.wordpress.com/2013/08/07/10-lansare/>

The **KIOSK project** aims to establish the premises for future collaboration in Europe and worldwide taking the social, cultural and historical but also political and economic character of Republic of Moldova (European neighborhood) as starting point, also the need to match art organizations and individuals from Eastern and Western Europe.

<http://chiosc.oberliht.com/chiosc/>

KIOSK AIR – artist and curator in residency program

Unlike finished exhibition projects that circulate through worldwide network of galleries and museums, the KIOSK AIR program encourages creation of new work in relation to local contexts and realities. It offers the opportunity to explore various issues that relate to Moldova's situation in general and to analyze the processes that shape Chisinau's public space today. The program is structured in a collaborative manner in which the Oberliht association plays the role of local host for invited artists, curators, architects and other professionals, while the city as a whole, substituting for the studio, serves as place of research, for producing and exhibiting. Besides FLAT SPACE, which remains at the disposal of new residents, inviting them to 'finish' its unfinished form, the residents use a series of other locations during their stay, ranging from market places, stadiums and parks through universities and other public institutions and places.

The research phase of KIOSK AIR includes walking tours, visits to different organizations and initiatives in Chisinau, discussions and documentation, while the production phase usually leads to the creation of new works. Depending on the type of work carried out by the participants the program also includes such modules as workshops, seminars, public presentations and screenings.

<http://chiosc.oberliht.com/air/>

The **Flat Space** is a functional replica of a socialist apartment designed by Stefan RUSU commissioned to represent the identity of KIOSK project.

The point of departure for the design of the Flat Space was to publicly display the private space of a flat limited by the standards of the socialist society, which still is a strong visual element within the contemporary urban and social landscape of East European countries.

Moreover, the project was aimed at democratizing the cultural act through providing public access to events that were to occur in this space, somehow as a continuation of the “unofficial” or underground practice during the era of the totalitarian regime, when underground art was being denied access to “official” exhibition spaces and, more generally speaking, it wasn’t publicly accepted; the phenomenon of exhibitions in private flats proliferated during the stagnation years (1970s – 1980s), when underground art could only be seen in intimate settings by a small audience.

<http://chiosc.oberliht.com/apartament/>

B68 – free zone / art space is an initiative by Oberliht Association, conceived in relation to KIOSK project – cultural info point / public platform for participation. B68 is declared a zone free from commerce and control where issues of public importance can be discussed and analyzed and art along with cultural activities are there to give visibility to these issues. B68 is also an invitation for those who want to participate with artistic works or to contribute to the transformation of the square on Bucuresti Street 68 in Chisinau truly into a public space.

<http://bucuresti68.wordpress.com/b68/>

Zspace – independent art and culture scene from Moldova – a series of meetings with the representatives of the independent art and culture organizations and initiatives from Moldova. The meetings are organized to share experience and to bring more visibility to active independent organizations and their activities, and to advocate for a stronger independent culture sector in Moldova and in the region:

<http://zpatiu.wordpress.com/2013/08/05/zpatiu-1/>

Zspace is also a place for the artistic community and gatherings, exhibitions, presentations, screenings and performances offered on demand and free of charge:

<https://zpatiu.wordpress.com/agenda/>

Past / Recent projects

The Mapping of Public Space in Chisinau workshop (July 2012) gives continuity to the activities undertaken previously in relation to public space and aims to establish the bases for a long-term action plan, which would enable the identification, recovery and re-use of public spaces in Chisinau, by offering them a strong civic character. Its objective was to analyze the existing public space and to conceptualize a network of public spaces for Chisinau that would offer an alternative to the public

spaces designed during the previous regimes, and to extend the access to public space and culture to the youth from urban areas and other social groups who are or feel excluded from the possibility of using this space.

<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/centrul-civic-cinema/>

SPACES: CHISINAU CIVIC CENTER – open air cinema (August 2012)

A 2 weeks long residency PROGRAM (walking tours, conferences, installations, film screenings, community work) with 3*2*1*0 (Jarek SEDLAK, Michal MACUDA, Lea HAWERLANDOVA, Mak HUSTOLES), Czech Republic / studioBASAR (Alex AXINTE, Cristin BORCAN, Radu LESEVSCHI, George MARINESCU), Romania / Urban Reactor (Levan ASABASHVILI, Mikheil SVANIDZE), Georgia & Oberliht Association, Moldova

<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/centrul-civic-cinema/>

Chisinau Civic Center – beyond the red lines (Sept. 2013)

Based on the results obtained during the mapping of public space workshop we try to answer how through research, urban planning, architecture, activism and art could we make our cities more inclusive and democratic, and help us resist to the neo-liberal transformations that produce so much inequality and alienation.

<http://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/ccc-liniile-rosii/>

Chisinau Civic Center: Zaikin Park – people’s park (2014-2018) project calls into question the situation of public spaces and perspectives for their development. On a more general level, the project invites us to a dialogue on the issue of the public spaces during the period of transition, on common goods and their role in the social organization, and to propose new models for governing these spaces / goods, as well as forms of institutional innovation, through which they can be protected and democratized.

Beyond the consequences, which the major projects of infrastructure could have for the life of the city, we are concerned by the fate of some smaller spaces that can be found in the districts of the historical center. This year’s edition of the project will focus mainly on the Park situated at the intersection of Sf. Andrei and Ivan Zaikin streets (<http://goo.gl/maps/zl8Pd>). Being one of the few green spaces from the historical area, the park is situated on the axis of Boulevard Cantemir, and, although it was projected as early as in the 70s by Soviet architects, it hasn’t been constructed yet. Situated at the edge of the old city (once known as one of the most dangerous districts), characterized by abandonment and decay both from the authorities and the residents, it is threatened to disappear in the shadow of real estate interests. Once rehabilitated, the park could cover some vital needs, which the city residents have, among them children and parents, youth and elderly people.

<https://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/ccc-parc-comunitate/>

<https://parculzaikin.wordpress.com/>

<https://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/ccc-parc-comunitate/>

<https://parculzaikin.wordpress.com/>

BLOKI – mapping workshop of residential areas of Chisinau (Aug. 2015)

The motivation of organizing this workshop comes from the fact that a big part of urban policies, as well as artistic interventions, are being focused mainly on the city center.

The mapping workshop aims at inventorying the spaces from the apartment buildings areas (micro-districts) from Chisinau, the problems they are facing (e.g. social-economic, infrastructure access – transport, cultural, etc), their demographic and community profile. Based on the developed mapping files and in collaboration with interested actors, new artistic / architectural/social interventions opportunities will be recommended. These will help identify and partially solve the residential area problems, and thus contribute to building an active and responsible community.
<https://chisineu.wordpress.com/2015/08/11/bloki/>

Public Space Days (2015, 2016, 2018) represents a series of events whose aim is to provide a platform of discussion and action for the Public Space. It is our understanding that inclusive, open public spaces are crucial for building and fostering a democratic city in particular, and an inclusive and just society in general. It is also our understanding that the public, open and democratic character of public spaces in our cities is under threat. Commercialization (forcing public spaces to work for profit), securitization (increasing surveillance), policing (excluding undesirable users and behaviors) – are some of the process that affect the access and the quality of public spaces.

The Public Space Days aim to bring together activists, policy makers, artists, active citizens, scholars, architects and the general public in order to raise awareness on topics concerning protection, democratization and opening of public spaces, to share insights and reflections on the transformations of public spaces, to share practices, ways of organizing and collective action that foster and reproduce democratic public spaces.

The program of the last 3 editions of Public Space Days can be seen at:

<https://zilelespatiuluipublic.wordpress.com/zsp/>

<https://zilelespatiuluipublic.wordpress.com/2016-2/>

<https://zilelespatiuluipublic.wordpress.com/zsp-2018/en-2018/>

Public Facades (May 28 – July 1, 2017)

The series of actions and events organized in June as part of the “Public Facades” project attempt to contribute to the development of Chisinau residential areas through cultural innovation and creativity. By initiating various artistic experiments we aim to consolidate the local communities, encouraging interaction among different groups within the district and stimulate social cohesion.

One of the central issues tackled by the project deals with constant degradation of the cultural infrastructure from the remote areas of the city (the so-called micro-districts) – a process that started about 3 decades ago. Once transferred under the administration of the local municipalities, various cultural spaces got privatized and converted into commercial spaces (see the case of Chisinau cinemas:

<http://bacu.ro/the-cinemas-of-chisinau-republic-of-moldova/>). New cultural programs

are lacking as well in these areas. This fact has restricted even more the access of the inhabitants to the new art works and cultural resources, hindering them from developing their creative potential.

The Public Facades project aims to identify innovative solutions for greater cultural mobility directed towards the residential areas, which would facilitate the circulation of the artworks and artists and that would respond better to the cultural needs of the inhabitants. The planned actions take into consideration the urban identity specific for this area and are aiming to complement the programs and resources that are already available in the district.

<https://chisineu.wordpress.com/proiecte/fatade-publice/>

Public Facades – TFIGCWCDMD: The First International Gathering of Cultural Workers of Ciocana District named Maria Dragan (June 16 – July 15, 2018)

Since 2009, The Flat Space, a functional replica of a socialist apartment (author: Stefan RUSU [MD]), hosted dozens of cultural events in its confined space and on its neighboring square from 68 Bucuresti street, in Chisinau. This public platform played the role of an alternative space to the inherited from Soviet period cultural institutions, offering a space for artists and for independent initiatives in Chişinău that lacked free spaces that could have been filled with new content and substance.

Ten years later, in May 2017, during a design workshop, an extensive, but also simplified, new version of the Flat Space was created, which has been installed in the courtyard of 9 Teilor st. In Botanica district. It provided space for communication between the artists and the residents, being part of the first edition of Public Facades – a project that aims to contribute to the development of the residential areas from Chisinau and other Moldovan cities through cultural innovation and creativity, to support artistic experiments that come to reinforce the sense of community, encouraging interaction between different groups in the neighborhood and stimulating social cohesion.

In 2018 we are developing Public Facades project in the neighborhood called Maria Drăgan, in Ciocana district where its residents (about 150 thousands) have access to just one municipal theatre, three libraries, an art and creativity center for young people and a socio-cultural centre for underprivileged children and youth. The situation seems to be similar also in other neighborhoods as just during the last half a year the city has lost two important cultural institutions: Trade-union's Palace of Culture and Gaudeamus movie Theater that were located in the central part of Rîşcani and Telecentru districts.

On Saturday, 14th of July 2018, at 5 PM, we invite you to TFIGCWCDMD – The First International Gathering of Cultural Workers of Ciocana District named Maria Dragan. During a month time period, the artists and researchers have been gathering information from archives about the history of Maria Drăgan neighborhood, they met with the residents collecting feedback about their living conditions, access to green and recreation spaces, cultural infrastructure and sports facilities, public transport etc. This was followed by meetings with representatives of public institutions that work in the district and with other local partners in order to subsequently come up with a few conceptual and visual proposals that explain in a better way the type of the dwellings in the neighborhood, the way in which the public space in between the residential blocks is distributed and assigned, the circumstances that form invisible borders, the specificity of the area that reveals a transitional sense for many of the inhabitants. The final event represents a series of interventions and installations in public space, performances, presentations and a picnic, choreographed as a promenade with a pre-established itinerary according to the nine locations chosen by the participants. This event is organized in the frame of the second edition of Public Facades program (March – October 2018) – a program of conferences, residency exchanges and artistic interventions, film screenings, a summer school, exhibitions, workshops and concerts, which takes place in Maria Dragan neighborhood in Ciocana district, in Chisinau.

<http://chiosc.oberliht.org/paildcscmd>

Links

<http://oberliht.org>
<http://chiosc.oberliht.org>
<http://biblioteca.oberliht.org>
<http://arthotel.oberliht.org>
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<https://parculzaikin.wordpress.com/>
<https://chisinaulcivic.crowdmap.com/>
<https://lists.idash.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/oberlist>

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<https://lists.idash.org/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/oberlist>