

Project Brief Year 1

Kaunas Biennial, established in 1997, has evolved into the largest, longest-running, and most significant contemporary art festival in Lithuania. Renowned for showcasing innovative and interdisciplinary practices, it serves as a dynamic platform for artists worldwide to present cutting-edge contemporary art.

Since August 2017, Kaunas Biennial has led the **Magic Carpets** platform, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. This initiative unites 21 European cultural organizations, creating opportunities for emerging artists to embark on journeys and collaborate with local communities. The first phase of the project culminated in the international contemporary art exhibition *Magic Carpets Landed*, which launched the festive year of Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022. The subsequent final event took place as part of the Tartu 2024 European Capital of Culture program. Looking ahead, we will continue this journey with a grand finale of the 2025–2028 cycle as part of Budweis 2028 – European Capital of Culture program.

Through these initiatives, Kaunas Biennial and the Magic Carpets platform strive to enhance cultural accessibility, activism, and participation, fostering a vibrant and inclusive European art scene.

Residency Theme:

The power of kindness. In a world increasingly shaken by disturbing global politics—where democratic values are under siege, and true victims of war are unjustly blamed—it is more important than ever to reaffirm the fundamental kindness that connects us as human beings. In times of crisis, individual acts of compassion may seem small, but they hold immense power. By embracing inclusivity, showing empathy, and extending kindness—especially to the most vulnerable—we cultivate resilience and lay the foundation for a stronger, healthier society. Our question is how can we show kindness in a creative and new way. This project seeks to highlight the transformative force of kindness, proving that even the smallest gestures can inspire change and restore faith in our shared humanity.

Location:

Dainava, Kaunas

Dainava is a residential microdistrict in Kaunas, located approximately 30 minutes from the city center by public transport. As the largest and oldest district of block housing in the city, Dainava is characterized by Soviet-era apartment buildings, industrial heritage, private homes, and expansive green parks that provide a sense of openness within the urban setting.

Once a thriving hub for factory workers, the district is now home to a diverse community, including many retired industrial workers, young families, and socially vulnerable groups. Although many of the factories that shaped the area's history are no longer operational, Dainava remains a vibrant and evolving neighborhood, balancing its past with the changing dynamics of contemporary urban life.

Involved Communities:



For this project, we will collaborate with the non-governmental organization **Family Center "Let's Be Together"**, located in the Dainava district. The center plays a vital role in strengthening families and fostering social integration by providing essential social services to the local community. It primarily supports socially vulnerable groups, including single mothers, mothers with disabilities, mothers of children with disabilities, seniors, individuals on probation, and unemployed persons.

The community is diverse in age and gender, ranging from young children to seniors. Participation during meetings may vary, with group sizes typically ranging from 10 to 30 members. To ensure meaningful engagement, we have the opportunity to coordinate with community representatives and the most active members in advance of the residency.

The primary spoken language within the community is Lithuanian, though some younger participants may speak English. To facilitate seamless communication and inclusivity, translation assistance will be provided throughout the residency period.

Community Engagement:

During *Magic Carpets* residencies in Kaunas, we encourage artists to engage with the community through various participatory approaches. It may start from a meeting with the most active community members before the residency starts to understand their needs, ideas, and expectations, ensuring the project can be shaped by their voices.

Another proven and impactful engagement strategy involves collaborative workshops—either led by the artist or co-created with community members. These workshops foster meaningful interactions, creative expression, and a sense of shared ownership over the artistic process.

Additionally, we remain open to exploring new and innovative ways to engage the community, welcoming suggestions that encourage deeper participation and collective creation. Our goal is to ensure that the final outcome of the residency is not only artistically significant but also deeply connected to the experiences of the community.

Continuity of Community Engagement:

Our organization has been engaging with the Dainava community in Kaunas since 2024 when we collaborated with the NGO Family Center "Let's Be Together" on the project "**Let's Play Fluxus!**" as part of the *Magic Carpets* platform. This initiative involved artists from Sweden and Lithuania (Felicia Hansen and Ugnė Makselytė) working closely with the community to explore the Fluxus art movement, fostering creativity and strengthening community bonds.

Building on the success of this previous collaboration, we aim to deepen our relationship with the Dainava community in upcoming projects. Our ongoing engagement reflects a commitment to sustained community involvement, ensuring that our initiatives are both relevant and beneficial to local residents.

Expected Outcomes:

As *Magic Carpets* activities attract not only the socially sensitive groups visiting the *Let's Be Together* center but also the broader Dainava neighborhood, the residency presents a valuable opportunity to foster an inclusive and welcoming space. By bringing different community members together, the project encourages interaction, mutual recognition, and a stronger sense of belonging. For the more vulnerable groups, it provides a platform to be heard and actively included in the social circle of the neighborhood.

In discussions with the Dainava community leader, several ideas have emerged that reflect current community needs and could inspire the direction of the residency's outcomes:

- **A small public book exchange house**, allowing residents to freely share and swap books, fostering literacy and connection.
- **Functional community furniture**, which could serve as an exhibition space for small crafts and artworks created by community members.
- **A community-driven weekly restaurant**, operating in the center's premises, where members could cook, share, and experience each other's culinary traditions.

These ideas highlight the community's desire for shared, interactive spaces that promote creativity, storytelling, and social bonding. The residency will aim to develop a project that aligns with these aspirations, ensuring that the final outcome remains meaningful, sustainable, and beneficial to the local community.

Expected Challenges:

The **language barrier** may be a key challenge when collaborating with community members. To ensure meaningful engagement, incorporating non-verbal communication methods and inclusive approaches will be essential.

Additionally, the community center in Dainava "Let's Be Together" is currently undergoing a **transition to a new location**, which may impact the residency activities. This shift could lead

to logistical uncertainties, changes in community participation, or adjustments in available spaces.

Timeline of the residency:

Local Artist Residency – Approximately two months between July and August 2025, with a flexible schedule that can be divided into intervals based on the project's needs.

International Artist Residency – Approximately one month between July and August 2025, with flexible structuring options. Possible formats include:

- A one-week study trip, followed by a three-week implementation and final event
- A three-week study and implementation phase, followed by a one-week final event presentation

Community Meetings – Regular weekly meetings (midweek) will be held with the community to ensure ongoing engagement, exchange of ideas, and collaborative progress throughout the residency.

Residency Activities – Throughout the residency, we will organize study visits, city tours, consultations with experts and team-building activities to foster collaboration and connection between the artists, project team, and local community.

Final Event – Scheduled for **October 2025** (exact date to be confirmed closer to the event).

Artist Profiles:

We are looking for **1-2 local artists** from Kaunas (or Lithuania) and **1-2 international** artists (3 in total):

- that would be open and interested in working with communities, open to people, aware of working with sensitive groups of people (grown ups and kids);
- might be interested in social equality, social inclusion topics;
- may have a background or interest in **sound/music, public space interventions, architecture, design, food-based artistic practices, or activism in social inclusion**—though artists from **all disciplines** are welcome to apply!

Residency Conditions:

Artist Fee – 1,200 EUR

Daily Allowance – 30 EUR per day spent in residency

Production budget – ~1000 Eur per artist

Travel & Accommodation Covered for non-local artists.

Accommodation – non-local artists will be housed in a private 1–1.5-room Airbnb apartment, selected in consultation with the artist in advance. If needed, there is a possibility to accommodate a family member.

Studio space – is possible to provide if necessary

Final Event:

The final event will take place in a public space around the NGO “*Let’s Be Together*” center at the end of the residency in October 2025 (exact date to be confirmed). This open and inclusive gathering will bring together the local community, project participants, and a wider audience to celebrate the residency’s outcomes.

The event might feature:

- A music program or concert, creating a lively and welcoming atmosphere.
- A presentation of the newly created artistic production, showcasing the collaborative work developed during the residency.

Project Team:

- **Director, Project Manager:** Neringa Kulik – Oversees and manages all Magic Carpets platform activities.
- **Finance Manager:** Jolita Strašunskienė – Manages the Magic Carpets budget and provides financial advising.
- **Curator:** Brigita Bareikytė – Leads the artist selection process and oversees the residency program, including artist tasks, creative processes, final event organization, and production coordination.
- **Community Facilitator:** Austėja Bliumkytė-Padgurskienė – Manages community engagement, ensuring active participation and communication between the artists and the local community.
- **Communications Manager:** Agnė Tuskevičiūtė – Handles communication and media for both the Magic Carpets platform and the residency.
- **Tiesiog Studio:** Manages social media communication for the Magic Carpets platform and residency, ensuring outreach and visibility.
- **Technical Team:** Responsible for the technical aspects of the new artwork production and the final event setup.

Contributing Experts:

- **Artist Buddy:** Arnis Aleinikovas - a local artist with previous Magic Carpets residency experience who will assist visiting artists, offering insights about the platform and Kaunas while providing practical support.
- **Residency Psychologist:** Available to advise artists and the team on working with specific community groups and will attend the residency process and events to offer insights on inclusion and collaboration.

Contact Information for applications (short motivational letter, CV and portfolio in ENG):

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