

**WALC OPENING SEMINAR**

***Walking as a Community-based art practice***

**Tuesday, September 17th, 18:30 CEST**

**Microtext:**

**Art achieves its full potential by addressing societal issues and empowering communities beyond traditional art forms. The WALC network, formed by seven European partners, aims to revitalize Greece’s Prespa region and rural areas in various other European countries with community-based art and walking art as its central practices. This initiative broadens Prespa’s reach globally via an ongoing outdoor art venue in both physical and digital spaces. It brings together artists, ecologists, scientists, citizens, refugees, and immigrants to promote rural sustainability. The presentation includes discussions with curators and artists, and a roundtable with the European WALC partners, concluding with an invitation for broader participation in WALC’s residency and collaboration opportunities.**

**Summary:**

Art reaches its full potential when it engages with societal issues, empowering communities beyond traditional art's focus on objects and images. In this context, the artist acts as a community member, sharing personal experiences. Landscape, Place, and Space are crucial in shaping communal and nomadic practices. Europe’s rural communities, facing abandonment and destruction, can be revitalized through community-based art, with walking as a key practice. The WALC network, created by seven European partners in Greece’s Prespa region, aims to transform walking into a community-based practice, fostering social development in areas impacted by war and decline.

The WALC network aims to expand community-based practices from Greece’s Prespa region to a global audience through an ongoing outdoor art project with both physical and digital spaces. This initiative will bring together walking artists, ecologists, scientists, citizens, refugees, and immigrants to support rural sustainability. The presentation will feature discussions with curators and artists, followed by a roundtable with WALC partners from various countries. The event will conclude with an invitation for organizations, groups, and artists to join WALC's journey, offering opportunities to participate in the residency program or collaborate remotely.

**Full text:**

No art form truly reaches its full potential unless it engages with societal issues. Art has the capacity to empower communities and individuals, proposing practices that extend far beyond the mere creation of objects and images, which is often the focus of mainstream art. Through artistic practices, communities and individuals can discover some of the most therapeutic and effective tools for their survival. In this context, the artist's role shifts from being a master narrator to becoming a member of the community, sharing their own traumas, needs, and expectations. Landscape, Place, and Space are fundamental in this process, providing an environment where individual, communal, or nomadic practices and activities can unfold. These elements become intertwined with the walking body, becoming an essential part of reality(ies).

Today, one of the pressing issues in Europe -marked by wars, conflicts, and the threats of totalitarianism- and globally, is the gradual abandonment and decay of rural communities. Community-based art, which differs from traditional art forms, offers ways to strengthen these communities through the unique power of artistic practice. Walking as an art form can be integrated into community-based art to address social issues and promote active citizenship and change. However, both community-based art and walking remain underrepresented in contemporary art spaces.

In response, seven European partners have created a nomadic network called WALC, centered in the Prespa region of Greece. WALC aims to elevate the role of walking art in the realm of / as a means of social development and transform it into a community-based practice. Prespa, one of the poorest rural areas in Europe, still scarred by the traumas of past wars, has seen its population almost vanish. Since 2007, Prespa has been the site of a model for social change through art practices centered on walking, providing a breeding ground for community-based walking initiatives.

The WALC network seeks to expand the experiences of Prespa and other areas where the project partners have implemented community-based practices. It will establish an ongoing outdoor art venue, encompassing both physical and digital spaces, to bring together walking artists, ecologists, scientists, local citizens, refugees, and immigrants. The goal is to collaborate on community-based practices that support the sustainability of rural areas facing abandonment.

The presentation will unfold in three parts, beginning with a discussion featuring curator Lydia Matthews (Athens/New York), artist/researcher Clare Qualmann (Walking Artists Network / University of East London), and nomadic artist Jez Hastings (UK), followed by a roundtable moderated by curator and activist Nina Felshin (US). The roundtable will include WALC partners Clara Gari (Catalonia), Natacha Antao Moutinho (Portugal), Sylvie Marchand (France), Anna Luyten (Belgium), Andrew Stuck (UK), and Yannis Ziogas (Greece).

The talks will conclude with an invitation from WALC artistic coordinators Yannis Ziogas and Geert Vermeire, encouraging other organizations, schools, groups, collectives, and individual artists to join the journey. Learn how WALC can reach you during this online event and explore opportunities to participate in our residency program or collaborate with us from your location.

**Meeting Link**

[**https://zoom.us/j/93135579672?pwd=YnNGZklCT3dUdmp4VDlZd0JYZGQ3UT09**](https://zoom.us/j/93135579672?pwd=YnNGZklCT3dUdmp4VDlZd0JYZGQ3UT09)

**Registration Link:** [**https://walklistencreate.org/walkingevent/walking-as-a-community-based-art-practice-walc-opening-seminar/**](https://walklistencreate.org/walkingevent/walking-as-a-community-based-art-practice-walc-opening-seminar/)

