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Eternal Threads

CRAFTING A TIMELESS WARDROBE
FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW

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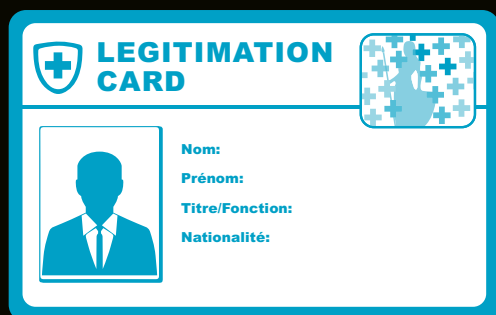
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ETERNAL THREADS

In a world where fast fashion dominates, the importance of sustainability in our wardrobes cannot be overstated. We delved into the heart of sustainable fashion, exploring how timeless, eco-friendly choices can transform not only our closets, but also our planet. By embracing materials and practices that honor the environment, we weave a future where fashion is both stylish and sustainable. I hope that this will unravel the threads of change and stitch together a more conscious and enduring approach to what we wear.

In this issue, I have several articles that will convince you that our topic is important. I also have a touching journey of an English tutor teaching a seven-year-old girl. This article highlights the importance of how families are depicted in educational materials and its impact on a child's worldview. Perfect for educators, parents, and anyone interested in inclusive learning.

Finally, step into the spotlight and unleash your inner leader. Learn from an article about a vibrant community of Toastmasters International UN Geneva Club, where you'll transform your public speaking skills, gain invaluable leadership experience, and build lasting confidence.

I suggest you read all the articles, at your pace. //

FILS ÉTERNELS

Dans un monde où la mode rapide domine, l'importance de la durabilité dans nos garde-robes ne peut être surestimée. Nous avons plongé au cœur de la mode durable, explorant comment des choix intemporels et écologiques peuvent transformer non seulement nos placards, mais aussi notre planète. En adoptant des matériaux et des pratiques qui honorent l'environnement, nous tissons un avenir où la mode est à la fois élégante et durable. J'espère que cela dénouera les fils du changement et assemblera une approche plus consciente et durable de ce que nous portons.

Dans ce numéro, j'ai plusieurs articles qui vous convaincront de l'importance de notre sujet. Je présente également le parcours touchant d'un tuteur d'anglais enseignant à une fillette de sept ans. Cet article souligne l'importance de la représentation des familles dans les supports éducatifs et son impact sur la vision du monde d'un enfant. Parfait pour les éducateurs, les parents et toute personne intéressée par l'apprentissage inclusif.

Enfin, entrez sous les projecteurs et libérez votre leader intérieur. Découvrez un article sur la communauté dynamique du Toastmasters International UN Geneva Club, où vous transformerez vos compétences en prise de parole en public, acquerez une expérience de leadership inestimable et gagnerez en confiance.

Je vous suggère de lire tous les articles, à votre rythme. //



WHERE
COMPANIES
BECOME
BRANDS



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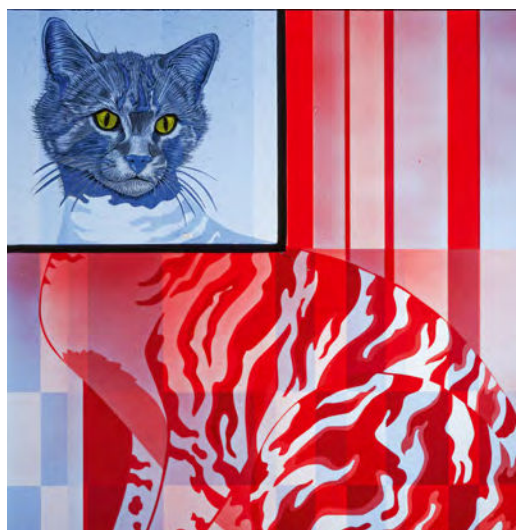


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The Importance of Sustainability and Sustainable Fashion

SUSTAINABLE FASHION IS CRUCIAL FOR REDUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE FASHION INDUSTRY, WHICH IS A SIGNIFICANT GLOBAL POLLUTER



By aligning with the SDGs, sustainable fashion promotes ethical production, eco-friendly materials, and social equity, driving positive change for a more sustainable future.

In an era where environmental concerns are at the forefront of global discussions, the importance of sustainability cannot be overstated. Sustainability refers to meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It encompasses a broad range of practices aimed at preserving natural resources, reducing pollution, and promoting social equity. One of the critical areas where sustainability is gaining traction is in the fashion industry, often referred to as sustainable fashion.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FASHION

The fashion industry is one of the largest polluters in the world. It is responsible for approximately 8-10% of global carbon emissions and nearly 20% of wastewater. The production of textiles requires vast amounts of water and energy, and the use of synthetic fibers contributes to microplastic pollution in oceans. Moreover, the fast fashion model, characterized by rapid production and disposal of clothing, exacerbates these environmental issues.

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations (UN) has been instrumental in promoting sustainability across various sectors, including fashion. The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges, including those posed by the fashion industry. The SDGs aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030.

SUSTAINABLE FASHION AND THE SDGS

Sustainable fashion aligns with several SDGs, particularly those related to responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), climate action (SDG 13), and decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). The UN Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, launched in 2019, aims to coordinate action in the fashion sector to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. This alliance brings together various UN agencies, including the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to promote sustainable practices in the fashion industry.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Ethical Production: Ensuring fair wages and safe working conditions for garment workers is a cornerstone of sustainable fashion. The ILO has been advocating for labor rights and decent work conditions in the fashion industry.

Eco-friendly Materials: Sustainable fashion emphasizes the use of organic, recycled, and biodegradable materials. This reduces the environmental footprint of clothing production and minimizes waste.

Circular Economy: A circular economy in fashion involves designing products for longevity, promoting reuse and recycling, and reducing waste. This approach contrasts with the linear model of "take, make, dispose" prevalent in fast fashion.

Transparency and Accountability: Brands are increasingly being called upon to disclose their supply chains and production practices. Transparency fosters accountability and allows consumers to make informed choices.



Embracing the beauty
of nature and sustainable
fashion #EcoChic.

CASE STUDIES AND INITIATIVES

Several initiatives and case studies highlight the progress being made in sustainable fashion: The Conscious Fashion Campaign: This initiative, in collaboration with the UN Office for Partnerships, aims to harness the power of the fashion industry to drive action towards the SDGs. It engages fashion brands, media, and consumers to promote sustainable practices.

SDGs for Better Fashion: This project focuses on integrating the SDGs into the fashion industry by educating students, engaging companies, and raising consumer awareness. It emphasizes sustainable design strategies, resource management, and responsible consumption.

Remake Hub: A Chinese company that uses recycled plastic to create apparel and consumer goods, demonstrating the potential of innovative materials in sustainable fashion.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Sustainable fashion is not only about environmental impact but also about social equity. The fashion industry employs millions of people worldwide, many of whom work in developing countries under poor conditions. By advocating for fair wages, safe working environments, and workers' rights, sustainable fashion contributes to social justice and economic development.

CONSUMER RESPONSIBILITY

Consumers play a crucial role in driving the demand for sustainable fashion. By making conscious choices, such as buying from ethical brands, supporting second-hand markets, and reducing overconsumption, consumers can influence the industry towards more sustainable practices. Education and awareness campaigns are vital in empowering consumers to make informed decisions.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the shift towards sustainable fashion is gaining momentum, several challenges remain. These include the higher cost of sustainable materials, the need for technological innovation, and the resistance from established fast fashion brands. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and leadership in the fashion industry.

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION

Technological advancements are playing a pivotal role in driving sustainable practices in the fashion industry. Innovations such as 3D printing, digital fashion, and blockchain technology are transforming how fashion is designed, produced, and consumed.

3D Printing: This technology allows for the creation of customized clothing with minimal waste. By using precise amounts of materials, 3D printing reduces excess fabric and promotes efficient production processes.

Digital Fashion: Virtual clothing and digital fashion shows are emerging trends that reduce the need for physical samples and travel, thereby lowering the industry's carbon footprint. Digital fashion also offers new avenues for creativity and consumer engagement.

Blockchain Technology: Blockchain provides transparency and traceability in the supply chain. It enables consumers to verify the authenticity and sustainability of products, fostering trust and accountability in the fashion industry.

POLICY AND REGULATION

Governments and regulatory bodies play a crucial role in promoting sustainable fashion. Policies that incentivize sustainable practices, such as tax breaks for eco-friendly businesses and regulations on waste management, can drive industry-wide change. Additionally, international agreements and collaborations, such as the Paris Agreement, emphasize the need for collective action to address environmental challenges.

THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE FASHION

The future of sustainable fashion lies in collaboration, innovation, and consumer engagement. Brands, consumers, policymakers, and organizations must work together to create a fashion industry that prioritizes sustainability and social responsibility. By embracing sustainable practices, the fashion industry can become a leader in the global movement towards a more sustainable and equitable world.

The importance of sustainability in fashion cannot be overstated. As one of the most influential industries globally, fashion has the potential to drive significant positive change. By aligning with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, adopting ethical and eco-friendly practices, and fostering transparency and accountability, the fashion industry can contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world. Consumers, brands, and policymakers all have a role to play in this transformation. Together, we can ensure that fashion is not only a means of self-expression but also a force for good. //

Mon empreinte écologique

My ecological footprint

POÈME - POEM

Le poème «*Mon empreinte écologique*» met en avant l'importance de vivre de manière durable et respectueuse de l'environnement.

Il encourage des actions concrètes comme réduire, réutiliser, recycler et utiliser des appareils économes en énergie, soulignant que chaque geste compte pour préserver la nature. Il appelle à une mobilisation collective et responsable, insistant sur la nécessité de pratiques écologiques pour un avenir plus vert. En valorisant la responsabilité individuelle, sociale et le respect pour notre planète.

Réduire, réutiliser, leçon de sagesse,
Respect de la nature, geste raisonnable,
Appareils au repos, quand la nuit
est au rendez-vous.

Mon empreinte écologique, un art de vie,
Recyclage, compostage, un élan unique.
Mobilisation éco-responsable,
préservation de la nature,
Consommation responsable,
source d'agilité.

Fournitures durables, économie à construire,
Goutte d'eau, trésor à chérir.
Ampoules éco-énergétiques, leur sage,
Réduction des déchets, équilibre
dans le partage.

Emballage écologique, plastique désarmé,
Entreprise verte, politique affirmée.
Recyclage des déchets, idées en lumière,
Responsabilité sociale, notre devoir commun.

Dans l'écho de nos actions, un appel résonne,
Celui de laisser notre
environnement prospérer.
Un pacte sacré, pour un avenir
plus vert.

Que notre empreinte soit bienveillante,
Empreinte écologique,
Empreinte d'amour pour la terre.

//

The poem “*My Ecological Footprint*” emphasizes the importance of living sustainably and respecting the environment.

It encourages concrete actions like reducing, re-using, recycling, and using energy-efficient devices, highlighting that every action counts towards preserving nature. It calls for collective and responsible mobilization, stressing the need for ecological practices for a greener future. By valuing individual, social responsibility and respect for our planet.

Reduce, reuse, lesson of wisdom,
Respect for nature, a reasonable gesture,
Devices at rest,
when night is at rendezvous.

My ecological footprint, an art of life,
Recycling, composting, a unique momentum.
Eco-friendly mobilization, nature preservation,
Responsible consumption, a source of agility.

Durable supplies, economy to build,
Droplet of water, treasure to cherish.
Eco-energy bulbs, wise glow,
Waste reduction, balance in sharing.

Eco-friendly packaging, disarmed plastic,
Green enterprise, affirmed policy.
Waste recycling, ideas in light,
Social responsibility, our common duty.

In the echo of our actions, a call resonates,
That of letting our environment prosper.
A sacred pact, for a greener future.

May our footprint be benevolent,
Ecological footprint,
Footprint of love for the earth.

//

The Sacred Circle: Rediscovering Ancient Wisdom in Fashion and Design

THE CIRCLE REFLECTS THE NATURAL RHYTHM OF EXISTENCE,
AN ETERNAL LOOP CONNECTING ALL THINGS



The circle has been revered for millennia as a symbol of completeness, unity, and the natural cycles of life. Across ancient cultures, it represented everything from cosmic balance to spiritual wholeness. Yet, in modern times, humanity has become enamored with linear progress - an endless forward march that often leaves the circular rhythms of the universe forgotten. But the circle has not vanished. In architecture, fashion, and design, the circle continues to exert its quiet power, shaping everything from city layouts to couture gowns, from particle physics to the symbolism of the Olympic rings.

CIRCLES IN ANCIENT AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

In ancient times, the circle was more than just a shape - it was a way of understanding existence. Hindu mandalas and Buddhist wheels of life represented the eternal flow of life and death. The yin-yang of Taoism, though appearing to be two opposing forces, is contained within a perfect circle, symbolizing the unity and balance that comes from opposition. In Greek philosophy, the circle was considered the perfect form, embodying ideals of symmetry and divine order. Plato famously described the heavens as circular, believing that the cosmos followed a perfect, eternal course.

In Europe, this reverence for the circle echoed across different cultures. Stonehenge and the labyrinths of medieval Europe were not just places of gathering but also spaces designed to reflect the cyclical nature of the universe. These ancient monuments remind us of the circle's role in shaping human thought - a reminder that life is a series of returns, not a straight line toward some imagined endpoint.

MODERN CIRCULAR DESIGN

Today, the circle continues to play a vital role in modern design, especially in Switzerland, where it often symbolizes harmony and precision. The Swiss watchmaking tradition - where the very essence of time is visualized through the continuous movement of circular hands - captures the deep connection between human invention and the cosmic cycles. The circular railway clock, a Swiss icon, offers more than just practical utility. Its design reflects the eternal flow of time, reminding us that, even in a world of rapid change, some things remain constant.

Fashion designers across Europe have also turned to the circle, not only as an aesthetic motif but as a foundation for innovation. Circular forms are emerging in *haute couture*, with designers like Iris van Herpen from the Netherlands, whose creations flow in curving, organic shapes that mimic natural cycles. In her work, the circle is both a design principle and a nod to nature's endless loops.

In Switzerland, the Circular Design Lab at EPFL explores the intersection of sustainability and circular forms. Their research focuses on creating closed-loop systems where resources are reused and recycled, echoing the philosophy of nature itself. This circular economy, increasingly embraced in Geneva and Zurich, is more than a trend - it embraces the ancient belief that nothing in the universe is wasted. In circular fashion, fabrics are designed to be reused, turned into new garments after their first life. This concept of circularity links back to ancient understandings of renewal and return.



THE CIRCLE IN ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

Across Europe, architects are rediscovering the circle to connect modernity with nature. In Copenhagen, the Circle Bridge, designed by artist Olafur Eliasson, curves gently over the water, allowing pedestrians to move in a fluid, circular path. It is a statement about the power of design to mirror the natural world's cycles. Similarly, Le Corbusier's pavilion in Zurich reflects an integration of circular forms to create harmony between structure and environment. The influence of the circle in architecture is not limited to physical buildings. City planners have embraced the idea of circular cities, where transportation, energy use, and waste management follow cyclical models. These urban designs echo ancient city layouts that prioritized balance and regeneration, rather than endless expansion. In Zurich, new sustainable buildings are designed with circularity in mind - using round forms that reflect a return to nature's geometry, while the materials used are part of a broader circular economy.

OLYMPIC CIRCLES: UNITY AND TENSION IN DESIGN

No conversation about the circle would be complete without the Olympic rings, a global symbol with roots in Lausanne, the Olympic Capital. These rings, overlapping in tension, represent global unity and competition at the same time. They are not complete circles but fractured and intersecting - unlike the seamless loops that dominate traditional ideas of wholeness. The Olympic rings visually break the perfection of the circle, reminding us that while the world strives for unity, it often stumbles into competition and division.

This duality can be seen across design and architecture as well. In fashion, circles often represent harmony, but in the Olympic rings, we see a reflection of modernity's conflict - our desire to connect, but the inevitable divisions that emerge. The same tension plays out in city planning and architecture, where circular models of sustainability clash with the linear drive for growth and expansion.

Stonehenge symbolizes the cyclical nature of the universe.



CIRCLES IN EVERYDAY LIFE: DESIGN BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

From architecture to fashion, the circle's influence extends into the everyday. The very objects we interact with - round door handles, circular light fixtures, or the fluid curves of modern furniture - are reminders of the form's power. In Scandinavian design, circular furniture, particularly from designers like Hans Wegner, reflects simplicity, function, and beauty in balance. Meanwhile, Swiss furniture designers like Atelier Oi incorporate circular designs to evoke natural harmony, bringing the cyclical flow of nature indoors.

In fashion, circular motifs are not just aesthetic but deeply functional. Designers are creating garments that return to their natural state, embracing biodegradable materials and closed-loop production systems. Circular fashion aims to break the cycle of waste by transforming old clothes into new ones - an echo of the natural cycles revered by ancient civilizations.

SURRENDERING TO THE CIRCLE

The circle has always been much more than a shape - it is a way of seeing the world. It invites us to embrace balance, unity, and the cycles of renewal that govern everything from life to the cosmos. Yet, humanity's focus on linear progress - faster, higher, stronger - has left the wisdom of the circle largely forgotten.

In modern Europe, architects, designers, and scientists are rediscovering the power of the circle, whether in the curves of urban planning, the forms of sustainable fashion, or the design of cutting-edge scientific tools like the Large Hadron Collider. From the fractured Olympic rings to the seamless circles of Swiss design, the circle is woven throughout our world, though we often fail to notice its quiet influence.

As the universe itself may be an endless loop, so too must we learn to see life not as a race to some distant goal but as a series of returns. Progress is not a straight line - it is a circle. To move forward, we must bow to the humility of universal wisdom: everything is nothing and nothing is everything. //

The Olympic rings break the boundaries, emphasizing competition.

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Slow Fashion Gives Us Space. And Hope

ARE WE READY TO SLOW DOWN?
THIS IS A QUESTION FOR EVERY ONE OF US

Fast fashion is not just a problem anymore – it is a full-blown catastrophe. Clothing made to last only a season has brought us to the brink of environmental collapse, with billions of garments ending up in landfills each year. But fashion is undergoing a radical shift, with slow fashion, wearable tech, and science-driven materials leading the charge. Universities, research institutions, and governments are at the forefront of this movement.

RETHINKING CONSUMPTION IN A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The slow fashion movement is about more than just buying better; it's about buying less. The Swiss Federal Office for the Environment, for example, has been instrumental in promoting sustainable consumption. The government has focused on minimizing waste and developing a circular economy, including in the textile industry. The city of Geneva, known for its progressive environmental policies, is supporting sustainable textile innovations through partnerships with universities and startups.

In Lausanne, the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) is conducting groundbreaking research on sustainable materials for fashion. This includes developing technologies that improve sustainability, such as creating textiles that require less water, chemicals, and energy during production. EPFL's innovation extends to developing strategies to make these materials accessible and affordable, addressing one of the biggest critiques of slow fashion – its oft-high price tag.

Germany's Green Button initiative and France's Anti-Waste Law are transforming the landscape by forcing companies to rethink their production cycles and pushing for more transparency. But what makes slow fashion challenging is consumer behavior. Can countries incentivize a real cultural shift from *"buy now, wear once"* to valuing clothes that last for years? Europe is betting it can, but it's a race against the clock.

WHEN FASHION GETS SMART

Switzerland is a heavyweight in both fashion and tech. At the crossroads of science and style, CERN is better known for smashing particles than crafting garments, but it plays a key role in developing cutting-edge wearable technologies. CERN's open science program has provided crucial research to wearable tech innovations, particularly in the area of energy harvesting from body movement. Imagine a shirt that powers itself as you move – this is what CERN's research has opened up.

Over in Japan, The University of Tokyo is pioneering thermal-regulating textiles that respond to the body's temperature. These garments automatically cool or warm you up, reducing the need for energy-consuming devices like air conditioning. However, privacy remains a thorny issue – smart textiles that collect data could potentially be hacked or misused. The intersection of fashion and tech brings convenience but also concerns about surveillance and data exploitation.

SCIENCE-INSPIRED FASHION: THE LAB MEETS THE RUNWAY

Science is fashion's new muse. With environmental pressures mounting, labs are becoming the new factories, and bioengineering is crafting the textiles of the future. CERN's contribution to science-inspired fashion may seem indirect, but their research in material physics has inspired the development of lighter, stronger, and more sustainable textiles.

At EPFL in Lausanne, researchers are working on self-cleaning textiles. Using nanotechnology, fabrics are being developed that can break down dirt and bacteria when exposed to sunlight. The implications? Far fewer washes, significantly reducing water and energy consumption. This type of science-inspired fashion could redefine not only how we wear clothes but also how we maintain them.



"Fast fashion" is responsible for massive landfills in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Finland's Aalto University is developing Ioncell technology, turning wood pulp into sustainable fibers. This is part of a broader European trend to replace conventional textiles with renewable resources. In Italy, the University of Bologna is conducting similar research with bioplastics made from seaweed, aiming to create biodegradable garments that can return to the Earth without polluting it.

Asia is making massive strides as well. In China, Tsinghua University is leading the charge with synthetic spider silk, produced without harming any living creatures. This biodegradable material is stronger than steel and could have a huge impact on reducing our reliance on environmentally harmful fibers like polyester and nylon. But there's a catch - scaling these lab-grown materials to meet global demand is a monumental challenge.

BIODEGRADABLE FASHION

If slow fashion is about reducing waste, then biodegradable fashion is about erasing it entirely. Imagine a future where your clothes don't just fall out of favor - they fall back into nature. ETH Zurich, one of the world's top research universities, is working on biodegradable

fibers made from cellulose, a plant-based polymer that breaks down completely once discarded. In combination with EPFL's work on circular textiles, Switzerland is fast becoming a hub for eco-friendly innovation.

The EU's Circular Economy Action Plan is promoting the development of textiles that can be reused or recycled multiple times, aiming for a future with zero textile waste. But let's be real for a moment - just because something is biodegradable doesn't mean it will disappear quickly. Even natural materials like cotton can take months, if not years, to fully decompose in landfills. The real challenge is how we dispose of these garments. Compostable clothes are only part of the solution; we need infrastructures that can handle them properly.

In Japan, Kyoto University is exploring the use of seaweed and algae to make garments that decompose within weeks, not years. This research is part of a growing movement in Asia to tackle the massive waste problem created by the fashion industry. But while the science is promising, the infrastructure to manage biodegradable waste is still lacking in many parts of the world, meaning these breakthroughs could be stifled by outdated systems.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FUTURE OF FASHION

The truth is unavoidable: the future of fashion is inseparable from the future of the planet. The fashion industry is one of the most resource-intensive on the globe, responsible for vast amounts of pollution and waste. While researchers are striving to change that, consumer habits need to evolve just as quickly as technology.

The stakes have never been higher for the future of fashion. Switzerland's leading universities, alongside institutions across Europe and Asia, are proving that sustainable and smart fashion is not only possible but essential. However, these innovations will mean nothing without a global shift in how we consume fashion. Slowing down consumption, embracing tech for good, and trusting science-inspired solutions are crucial steps toward a future where fashion can truly be part of the solution, not the problem. The question remains: are we ready to change? //

Rewear, Reuse, Revive: Upcycling Fashion in Humanitarian Emergencies

WHEN DONATIONS OVERFLOW DURING CRISES, CREATIVE UPCYCLING TURNS EXCESS CLOTHING INTO SUSTAINABLE FASHION WITH A PURPOSE

When war broke out in Ukraine in early 2022, it set off one of the largest refugee crises in recent memory. Millions of Ukrainians fled their homes, crossing into neighboring countries with little more than what they could carry. As they arrived in Europe, the outpouring of support was immediate and overwhelming. Communities rallied together, collecting and donating vast quantities of clothes to meet the urgent needs of these displaced families, most of whom were women and children. But as donations piled up, a new challenge emerged: how to ensure that these clothes could be used safely and effectively, and how to make sure nothing went to waste.

In Switzerland, a small but innovative NGO called U4U Volunteers¹ found themselves at the forefront of this challenge. They recognized that upcycling – transforming old or discarded materials into new, usable products – could be the key not only to addressing the practical needs of refugees but also to providing them with a sense of purpose and hope in their new lives. However, before any upcycling could begin, the donated clothes needed to be disinfected to ensure they were safe for use. U4U Volunteers discovered a simple yet effective solution: placing the clothes in freezers for 24 hours. This method kills off any bacteria or viruses, ensuring the garments were safe to handle and wear without relying on harsh chemicals or expensive treatments.

Once the clothes were safely disinfected, U4U Volunteers turned their attention to the upcycling process. Inspired by Creative Resilience International², an organization committed to fostering positive change through creativity, and FabricAID, an initiative founded by Omar Itani with works with vulnerable communities to turn clothes into household items, they set up workshops where refugees and local residents

could come together to transform the donations into something new – garments tailored to their needs and preferences.

These workshops became spaces of healing and empowerment. Especially for people who had lost so much, the act of upcycling was more than just a practical task; it was a way to regain a sense of control and agency in a world that had been turned upside down.

In upcycling workshops, refugees and other people in distress can learn valuable skills like sewing and tailoring, which not only help them create the clothing but also give them tools that could aid in their long-term integration into their host communities. Working alongside volunteers, often from local Swiss communities can help forge connections that transcended language and cultural barriers. The simple act of upcycling old clothes into something new thus becomes a powerful symbol of resilience and renewal.

U4U's approach is part of a broader movement across Europe to use upcycling as a means of addressing both humanitarian and environmental challenges.³ The fashion industry is one of the world's most wasteful, producing over 92 million tons of waste each year. The influx of donations following the Ukrainian refugee crisis could have easily added to this problem, with unwanted or unsuitable items ending up in landfills. But by embracing upcycling, we are able to turn what could have been waste into valuable resources.

In the Netherlands, Repair Cafés⁴ – a network of community spaces where people bring broken or damaged items to be repaired – expanded their focus to include upcycling. Like U4U, they recognized that upcycling could be more than just a way to make use of old clothes; it could also be a way to foster community and build bridges between refugees and their new neighbors. At these cafés, refugees and local res-

TEXT YULIA LEMENEZ, UNITED NATIONS
PHOTO YULIA LEM



idents worked side by side, repurposing donated garments and in the process, building relationships and understanding. Today, there are more than 2,500 Repair Cafes globally!

The impact of these upcycling initiatives goes far beyond the immediate crisis. They challenge the fast fashion model that has become synonymous with overconsumption and environmental degradation. By repurposing existing materials, these projects reduce the demand for new clothing production, conserving resources and reducing the environmental footprint of fashion. But perhaps even more importantly, they show that upcycling could be a tool for social change, helping vulnerable communities to become more resilient while also promoting sustainable practices.

For the refugees and migrants involved, the benefits are profound. They are not just about clothing; they are about dignity, about reclaiming a sense of self in a new and often overwhelming environment.

And for the volunteers and local communities, the experience is equally transformative. Working alongside refugees to upcycle donated clothes gives them a new perspective on the refugee crisis and their role in addressing it. It is a reminder that even in the face of immense challenges, there are always opportunities to make a difference, to find creative solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

This work demonstrates the power of collective

action and creative problem-solving. The refugee crisis could have overwhelmed Europe's resources, but instead, it sparked a wave of innovation and compassion. Upcycling became more than just a practical solution; it became a symbol of what is possible when people come together with a shared purpose.

In a world increasingly defined by climate change, overconsumption, and displacement, we must find ways to make the most of what we have, to turn waste into resources, and to see value where others might see only discard. Upcycling, with its dual benefits of sustainability and empowerment, offers a path forward, not just for the fashion industry but for all of us. By embracing this approach, we can meet the immediate needs of those in crisis while also building a more sustainable and compassionate world. //

1 U4U is a global volunteer network, empowering vulnerable communities across Switzerland and Europe to integrate and thrive. Through innovative, non-verbal therapies and volunteer-driven integration, U4U transforms lives - matching resources directly to needs with minimal overhead and maximum impact. See www.unitedforu.org

2 See <https://www.creative-resilience.org/portfolio/fashion-for-refugees>

3 See, for example, a London-based initiative "Decolonising Fashion and Textiles", "Refugee Wear" by the artist Lucy Orta, and "Towards Circular Economy."

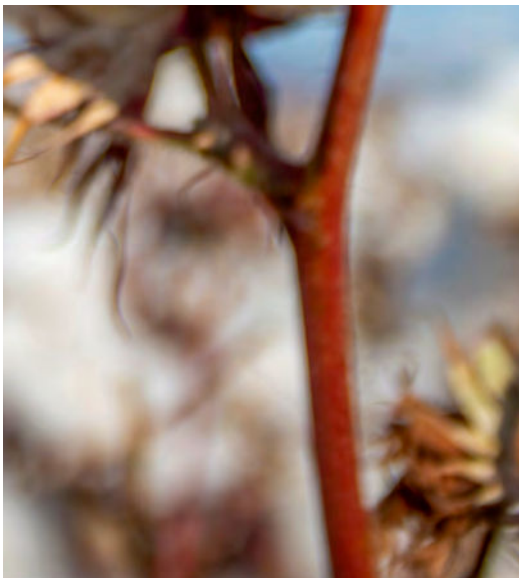
4 See <https://www.repaircafe.org/en/>

Threads of Tomorrow

POEM



This poem celebrates the essence of sustainable fashion by focusing on the thoughtful process of creating and choosing garments that honour both the environment and the art of fashion.



In fabric's embrace,
a whisper of change,
A world in each stitch,
where we rearrange.
Gone are the days of the fast
and the fleeting,
Now, we craft garments
with mindful repeating.

From cotton fields
to the weaver's loom,
Our choices decide the fate
of our room.
With hands that cherish each
fibre and seam,
We sew the future
from yesterday's dream.

No longer the cycle of waste
and of haste,
But a journey of purpose,
no moment to waste.
Reclaimed and renewed,
the old finds its grace,
In the threads of tomorrow,
we find our place.

Beneath the labels and tags
that once shone,
Lies a promise of care,
in each stitch we've sown.
From organic cotton
to the vintage revived,
Sustainable fashion,
where true styles derived.

For in each choice,
a story unfolds,
Of values and visions
that the heart beholds.
So, let's dress the world
in colours profound,
In a tapestry woven
with love all around.

//

TEXT SHYAM KUMAR ADAPA, WHO, INDIA
PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK

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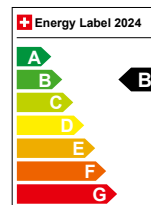
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Advancing Gender Equity in Global Health

WHO LEADS WITH SAGER GUIDELINES

In a landmark step toward addressing the gender evidence gap and promoting gender-responsive research, the World Health Organization (WHO) has adopted the Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines.¹⁻³ This pivotal commitment not only underscores WHO's dedication to promoting gender-responsive and ethically responsible research and advancing the women's health agenda, but also sets a global standard for ensuring more robust, transparent, and inclusive scientific practices. By embracing the SAGER guidelines, the WHO seeks to inspire other United Nations agencies and other actors engaged in data collection, analysis and research to follow suit, fostering a collective approach to evidence generation that serves everyone and leaves no one behind.

RECTIFYING THE GENDER EVIDENCE GAP AND PROMOTING GENDER-RESPONSIVE RESEARCH

Mounting awareness of historical gender biases in medical and health research has prompted a growing demand for addressing the resulting gender evidence gap.^{4,5} The persistent oversight of the impact of sex and gender, along with their intersections with other determinants, has impeded the development of effective policies and has often neglected the distinctive health needs of women and people of diverse gender identities.

In response to persistent sex and gender biases in research, the SAGER guidelines were developed in 2016, providing a comprehensive framework for integrating sex and gender considerations into all stages of research conduct and reporting.¹ By incorporating these dimensions into study design, data collection, and analysis, researchers can uncover valuable insights into the diverse ways health issues impact populations. Promoting transparent and systematic reporting of these dimensions ensures a more accurate understanding of experiences and outcomes. This approach allows for better evidence and targeted, effective interventions that are more inclusive and responsive to diverse population needs, especially women, whose experiences have historically been overlooked.

The SAGER guidelines offer specific recommendations and tools to facilitate its implementation. The guidelines' emphasis on systematic reporting of sex-disaggregated data aligns with the ambitions of the UN System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and the empowerment of women⁶, an accountability mechanism for UN entities to track their progress towards closing gender inequalities. The adoption of the SAGER guidelines is part of WHO's broader agenda towards comprehensive and systematic mainstreaming of gender, rights, and equity into its technical work, as outlined in a roadmap launched last year and is testimony to its commitment to an inclusive and holistic women's health agenda.⁷

SETTING A HIGHER STANDARD

By prioritizing the integration of sex and gender considerations into research practices, the WHO champions a comprehensive and inclusive approach to generating evidence, emphasizing the importance of gender-sensitive research globally. This move benefits not only women's health but also contributes to a more holistic understanding of health issues affecting all.⁸

The adoption of the SAGER guidelines by the WHO, a leading global health authority, represents a significant advancement in gender-sensitive health research. This move raises the standards for collaborating partners and stakeholders globally, promoting more rigorous research practices and addressing gender disparities in health.

Furthermore, this step serves as a call to action for other UN agencies to follow suit. Gender biases are not confined to global health but also prevail in development and humanitarian fields. There is further a risk that these biases are perpetuated and amplified with growing use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. As such, harmonization across UN agencies is vital in creating a unified and standardized approach to gender-responsive evidence generation and evidence-based policymaking. By adopting the SAGER guidelines, UN agencies can contribute to a more cohesive and comprehensive un-

TEXT SHIRIN HEIDARI, ANNA COATES,
DEPARTMENT OF GENDER, RIGHTS AND EQUITY, WHO
PHOTO ADOBESTOCK



derstanding of societal issues globally and accelerate their commitment to UN-SWAP ambitions and Sustainable Development Goals. This collective effort will not only improve the effectiveness of policies and programmes but also foster a culture of inclusivity, equity and gender equality within the UN system.

CONCLUSION

The World Health Organization's adoption and implementation of the SAGER guidelines represent a landmark towards addressing the gender evidence gap, promoting gender-sensitive research, and subsequently gender responsive policy and programmes to advance women's health and realize health for all. This initiative sets a higher standard for global health research and serves as an inspiration for other UN agencies and partners to follow suit.

Closing the gender evidence gap is imperative towards achieving health for all, reaching gender equality goals and leaving no one behind, important Sustainable Development Goals set by the global community. As the WHO leads the way, it is our hope that other UN agencies and other organizations will join in this critical endeavor, contributing to a world where research and evidence truly reflect the diverse needs and experiences of all populations. Through collaborative efforts, we can build a foundation for evidence-based decision-making that will positively impact global health for generations to come. //

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Incorporating sex and gender, alongside their intersection with other variables, in research is key to ensuring an equitable health response that meets the diverse and unique needs of everyone.

Not Your Typical Nuclear Families

FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS NOW, I HAVE BEEN TUTORING ENGLISH TO THE DAUGHTER OF A FAMILY FRIEND. SHE'S SEVEN, SO THERE ARE STILL LOTS OF THINGS FOR HER TO LEARN, BUT MY BIGGEST WORRY, IS HOW SHE SEES FAMILIES IN EXERCISE BOOKS

Let me provide context.
(Names have been changed.)

Eleanor, is seven. She has an older brother and sister, and two dads. Her dad, Marcus, is biologically her father. Her dad, Connor, is not. Whether she knows this or not, I haven't asked her. It seems like a big topic for a seven-year-old to understand, but maybe she knows. What bothers me is when I take English workbooks for her to work on, the depiction of a family always consists of a father and a mother. I understand that for the purpose of learning English, a mother needs to be present in exercises, however, maybe not all of them? It seems to me that every exercise, every drawing in an exercise book involving a family, always shows a mother, a father, a brother and a sister. Your typical 'nuclear' family. But what about the children whose families don't look like this? Again, I know the point of an exercise book is not about representation of families, but to help learn a language. However, something just doesn't sit right with me when I see a 'typical' family constantly featured as the only option for a family.

It bothers me that in 2024, a "typical" family has to consist of the same people again and again. What about single parents? Same-sex parents? Kids who aren't brought up by their parents? Blended families? (Granted, some of these may be a bit more difficult to depict in exercise books.) Maybe I'm overreacting. Like I said, the most important thing when learning a language, is most likely not to see yourself represented. But it can't hurt, can it? And nowadays, more and more families don't consist of the ideal father, mother, brother and sister layout.

In 2020, swissinfo.ch reported that the 'number of single-parent households' had doubled since the 1970s. The second most common fami-

ly structure after married partners, was single parents. (15.5%) Overall, there were 171,800 households where children under the age of 25 were being raised by single parents.¹ In fact, by 2023, single parent households with children under the age of 25 made up for one-sixth of households with children. And Geneva, Neuchâtel and Vaud, are the areas with the most single parent households.²

In 2022, in the UK, there were over 2.94 million single parent households.³ So, if this is not something that is uncommon, why is it not depicted as such in exercise books? I get it. Kids need to learn the words that consist of making up a family. But like I said, why should every depiction of the family be the same when it is not universally accurate?

Since July 2022, in Switzerland, it has been legal for same-sex couples to be married. However, more uncommon than single parents, they only make up for 0.1% of the household form.⁴ In the United Kingdom, there were about 212,000 same-sex families in 2019⁵, which is about 0.265% of the population. Again, not as common as single parents, but I think equally as important. I think it's fair to say that teachers at school should not automatically assume that all children have both a mother and a father. Why then, should exercise books that they may use in the classroom do so?

Patchwork, blended families, step-families, whichever you prefer, make up 6% of Swiss households.⁶ Blended families, which can occur at any stage of life (young, single parents or middle-aged recently-divorced parents), usually consist of two separate families coming together. For instance, a father and his son move in with a woman, who is not biologically the son's mother, and her daughter. (This may sound slightly complicated, but Disney is rather well-known for its step-family portrayals.) As I said earlier, this might be a little more complex to



This is the nuclear family that I am tired of seeing in English language exercise books.

represent in an English language workbook, however, it could be important. Step-siblings and half-siblings are important words (and concepts) to know when growing up. They might not be part of your typical nuclear family, but these are words that are essential to some in the English language. For instance, when Eleanor is older, she may realise that her two siblings are actually her half-siblings. She may not think this important, but it's always useful to know.

And finally, children who aren't brought up by their biological parents. Whilst I didn't find any recent numbers for how many children are adopted each year in Switzerland, in 2016, 363 children were adopted. This was a huge decrease from 1980, when 1,583 children were adopted.⁷ It's generally thought that adoption is on the way out in Switzerland, as most mothers are able to support themselves and their children. In England, there has also been a fall in child adoptions. Perhaps this is the case because it is more widely accepted to be a single parent, and people are being supported a lot more by families, organisations that can help them to look after their child. There could be many reasons why adoptions are declining, but that doesn't make them any less important. Possibly a difficult concept to portray in an English language exercise book.

I think the main thing that I am trying to share with you is that although English language exercise books are not the main place where you will find representation, they are important in shaping children's lives. And their language. If films, theatre, television shows, books are all about representation, why am I not seeing rep-

resentation in all media? Sure, I don't need the representation for myself, but I feel that young children like Eleanor would benefit from it. And that's what representation is all about. It's not necessarily about yourself. It's about others finally seeing people like themselves.

Each family is equally as important as the next. It doesn't matter if your family is not the typical nuclear family that is so often depicted in these exercise books that I see. Your two dads are equally as important as the single mother. Every family should be acknowledged and celebrated. Everyone who gets a chance at parenthood should feel welcome and feel like they belong, no matter what type of family they're a part of. Any way that you have become a parent is a blessing and I hope that you treasure it as much as possible, because you are important. And you are helping shape people's lives. //

1 https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/society/federal-stats_number-of-single-parent-households-doubled-since-1970/45583740

2 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/life-aging/number-of-single-person-households-triples-in-switzerland/48863422>

3 <https://www.singlemotheredit.com/parenting/how-many-single-mothers-are-there-uk#:~:text=More%20and%20more%20women%20are,for%2084%25%20of%20the%20total.>

4 Second footnote

5 <https://www.fflag.org.uk/portfolio-item/lgbtplus-parenting/>

6 <https://www.expatica.com/ch/living/family/parenting-in-switzerland-760885/>

7 https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/business/tougher-regulations_is-adoption-in-switzerland-on-its-way-out/43913138

This is the representation I'd like to see in English language exercise books.

The World Health Organization's National Health Simulation Exercise Programme

A COORDINATED APPROACH TO SIMULATION EXERCISES IN HEALTH EMERGENCIES MANAGEMENT EXPONENTIALLY INCREASES AN INSTITUTION'S OR ORGANIZATION'S OR COUNTRY'S EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES.



TEXT COUNTRY SIMULATION EXERCISES AND REVIEW UNIT (CER), HEALTH SECURITY PREPAREDNESS (HSP) DEPARTMENT, WHO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS (WPE) DIVISION, WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES (WHE) PROGRAM, WHO HQ PHOTO WHO

WHAT ARE SIMULATION EXERCISES IN HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS?

Simulation Exercises within health emergencies management are a form of practice or training that models a real-life emergency to which health emergencies simulate response to a fictitious public health event. Simulation exercises are used by countries to develop staff competencies and test established emergency preparedness and response plans and procedures. Simulations are like drills done by institutions or firemen in preparation for fires and other emergencies.¹

"A fire drill is a method of practicing the evacuation of a building for a fire or other emergency. Regularly practicing fire drills helps build muscle memory among the occupants so that they can quickly evacuate without thinking in a real emergency. The practice is rooted in a serious commitment to safety and is an integral part of an organization or building's overall fire safety protocol. It ensures that all individuals are prepared, aware, and capable of taking appropriate actions should an actual fire emergency occur. Regular drills can increase the effectiveness of the actual evacuation in a real crisis, potentially saving lives." Syed Mubashir²

COUNTRY-LED SIMULATION EXERCISES: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

The WHO Country Simulation Exercises and Reviews (CER) Unit of the Health security Department (HSP) published the WHO Simulation Exercises Manual in 2016 to guide Member States to conduct simulation exercises to build their IHR

capacities.¹ The WHO CER Unit has supported countries globally to conduct over 225 simulation exercises on all hazards from 2016 to date.³

LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING COUNTRY-LED SIMULATION EXERCISE PROGRAMME

Countries often conduct simulation exercises for health emergencies preparedness in an ad hoc manner. Moreover, simulation exercises are not evenly done to test different IHR (2005) capacities.⁴ Furthermore, published literature reports suboptimal implementation of recommendations that arise from simulation exercises.⁵ Simulation exercises are a voluntary component of the International Health Regulations Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (IHR MEF). However, the IHR MEF recommends that for a simulation exercise to be considered as part of the IHR (2005) monitoring and evaluation process, a minimum set of information should be shared with WHO.⁶ But inconsistent reporting regarding the number, scope and other details regarding simulation exercises conducted by Member States limits a comprehensive evaluation of the contribution of Simulation Exercises to health emergency management.³

WHAT IS A NATIONAL HEALTH SIMULATION EXERCISE PROGRAM (NHSEP)?

An NHSEP is a coordinated programme of simulation exercises that covers the entire health sector and ensures the effective testing and validation of health systems as part of the emergency preparedness process. The CER Unit of the HSP developed a new guidance, *The WHO*



Guidance on Implementing a National Health Simulation Exercise Programme (NHSEP) to address the limitations of the currently existing country-led simulation exercise program.⁷

HOW WILL A NATIONAL HEALTH SIMULATION EXERCISE PROGRAM ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF THE EXISTING COUNTRY-LED SIMULATION EXERCISE PROGRAM?

Whereas simulation exercises are conducted in an ad hoc manner, the NHSEP encourages countries to develop and deliver a simulation exercise plan over a 2–5-year period to build capacity within its health system. Repeated practice results in skillful, swift and steady execution by emergency response personnel.

“Exercises are not one-time events but should be undertaken as part of a carefully designed exercise programme that ensures a common strategic objective is addressed. The exercise programme forms a vital component of the emergency preparedness cycle.” (WHO Simulation Exercise Manual, 2017)⁷

Given that simulation exercises do not cover all IHR capacities nor prepare for every possible emergency scenario, the NHSEP covers simulation exercises of varying scopes and for all capacities within the IHR 2005 as well as other events-specific pillars that are relevant to public health emergency preparedness. Simulation exercises build not only the competencies but also the confidence of emergency response personnel to act when called upon to during public health events.

“Confidence brings clarity in situations where stress and confusion run rampant, where the goalposts can be hard to see through the fog, and where the questions become harder to answer, not easier, as time goes on. Confidence leads to more favourable outcomes, more often. Confidence is competence in the realm of emergency response. A confident team that trusts in its abilities is ready to tackle the confusion and uncertainty of an incident or accident. Finding a clear path forward may seem impossible when things fall apart, but an organization with confidence has the best chance at putting the pieces back together.” Stephen Burgess⁸

*In preparation for the inevitable, firefighters have fire drills...
Healthcare workers at operational level have mass casualty event drills...
Public health officials at program and policy level simulate a response to a fictitious public health emergency in a simulation exercise.*

Because simulation exercises may not always result in improvements in IHR capacities, the NHSEP recommends the monitoring of the exercise schedule, quality of exercises delivered, the uptake of recommendations into policy documents and the administrative performance of the program. The NHSEP also recommends the evaluation of the entire program to determine whether it is fit for purpose. Simulation exercises that do not ultimately improve IHR capacities remain box-checking exercises.

Whilst WHO cannot consistently monitor simulation exercises done by Member States, the NHSEP proposes a minimum reporting template to support the monitoring and evaluation of simulation exercises as a voluntary component of the IHR MEF. Monitoring and evaluation provide feedback on the effectiveness of policies, programs, and services.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF A NATIONAL HEALTH SIMULATION EXERCISE PROGRAM?

- Strategic-level coordination of all simulation exercises over a defined period.
- Ensuring adequate resources, funding, and staffing are allocated to simulation exercises.
- Ensuring lessons identified from simulation exercises are disseminated and incorporated into policy and operational practice within the health sector.
- Supporting the sharing of learning from simulation exercises in the wider health community.
- Providing an overview of planned and completed exercises, thereby enabling a staged approach to simulation exercise complexity, and ensuring that relevant risks are regularly tested.
- Testing and validating interoperability with other sectors, such as animal health, disaster management, the military and security services.

NEXT STEPS

The WHO will continue working with WHO Member States and UN family to support the development of IHR (2005) capacities to prevent public health emergencies or mitigate their impact when they occur. It is anticipated that the NHSEP will build resilient health systems for the highest level of public health emergency preparedness and readiness. //

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/operations/simulation-exercises>

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Behind the United Nations' Walls

EXPLORING THE TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL UN GENEVA CLUB

“We are a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering public speaking, leadership and communication skills. We gather on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, and everyone is welcome to join.” Franklin Javier Moya Gonzalez, Vice President of Public Relations, UN Geneva Toastmasters Club.

Our story reflects our commitment to making a positive impact in the field of public speaking, especially for those pursuing it professionally. Our club actively participates in public speaking competitions, workshops, and conferences. The year 2024 is especially noteworthy as it marks the 100th anniversary of Toastmasters International.

A HINT OF HISTORY

Toastmasters International is founded in the US in October 1924, and now spans a global network of over fourteen thousand clubs across one hundred fifty countries. In Switzerland, there are forty-five Toastmasters clubs where meetings are conducted in multiple languages such as English, German, French, and Italian. A new Spanish language group is about to be launched soon.

The first Toastmasters club in Switzerland is Bern Toastmasters Club, which was chartered in January 1996. It holds the distinction of being the pioneering club that introduced Toastmasters International's program to the country.

THE PROGRAM

Toastmasters International offers an educational program called Pathways, featuring multiple specialized learning paths for members. While the current Pathways program is at a transition phase, the current eleven specialized learning paths is aimed at helping members enhance their public speaking and communication skills. Every new member starts their journey with “The Ice Breaker” speech, where they introduce them-

selves and share their personal growth goals through the program's opportunities.

ABOUT THE UN CLUB

Our meetings take place at 5:00 PM, coinciding with the closure of the United Nations' Pregny Gate to visitors. For first-time attendees, we suggest meeting at the Broken Chair landmark by 4:30 PM if needed. A QR code and a valid passport (or ID) are required to pass through security gate. The UN Toastmasters club will provide the QR code link upon email confirmation of attendance.

For those unable to attend in person, virtual participation is available via Zoom. Interested members and visitors can join us by registering for a Zoom invitation. The meeting link will be provided by the UN Toastmasters club after email confirmation.

Our email address is:
info.ungenevatoastmasters@gmail.com

CHALLENGES AND VISIONS

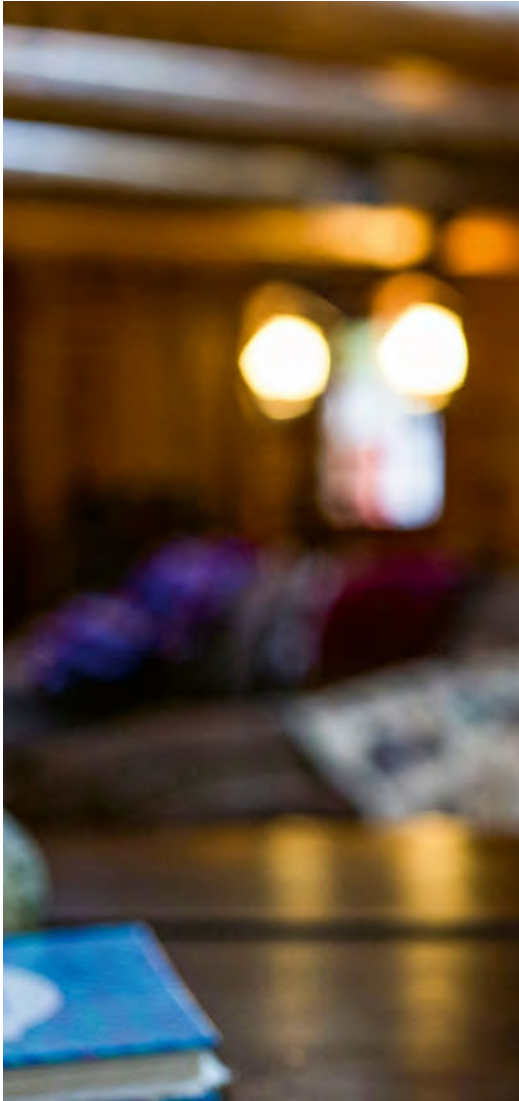
We are excited to interview Catherine Lomona-co, our past Club's President. She has graciously agreed to share her thoughts on the challenges the club has faced over the past five years. Her insights will help us understand how the club is managed and its vision for the future.

Catherine, can you please tell us about your journey in the UN and what brought you here?

I joined the UN Club in June 2021, initially fearful of public speaking. Despite being a new member, I accepted the role of Vice President Membership in September 2021. A year later, I took on the role of Vice President Education, and eventually, I became the Club President.

When I joined, I never imagined handling so many roles so quickly!

TEXT J. FRANKLIN MOYA GONZALEZ,
VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, UN GENEVA TOASTMASTERS CLUB
PHOTOS SALYA T AND KYLE GLENN – UNSPLASH AND J. FRANKLIN MOYA GONZALEZ



How do you believe Toastmasters International has evolved during your time with the organization, and what changes or initiatives are you most proud of?

When I started attending the UN Club, meetings were only online due to COVID-19 and building renovations inside the United Nations. Members were becoming fewer as they were looking for in-person meetings.

When I became president, it was clear to me that resolving these issues was crucial for the club's survival.

As the club meets twice a month, I built on the previous president's efforts to resume physical meetings, which were held once / twice a year, by establishing a regular schedule of monthly in-person meetings altering with virtual ones. This strategy paid off. The club has now a number of new members and a highly motivated new committee. I am proud to see that our club is thriving, meeting now twice a month in the UN building with a hybrid option, thanks to the new president.

How has Toastmasters International adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and what lasting changes do you foresee in the way the organization operates?

Our UN club transitioned from in-person to virtual meetings in response to COVID-19. As an English-speaking club, the online format enabled us to connect with members and guests worldwide, which is particularly valuable for a UN club. Meeting people from around the world promotes international understanding, diverse perspectives, and cultural exchange, aligning with the United Nations' core mission of fostering cooperation and dialogue among nations. Those virtual meetings were particularly enriching.

We have now adopted a hybrid meeting model allowing people to either attend in person at the United Nations or connect online from anywhere in the world, allowing our club to keep the best of both worlds!

In the long term, the hybrid model might continue, as it offers both flexibility and inclusivity.

The Toastmasters International has supported millions of members in 150 nations for a century.



Members and guests in one of the club meeting rooms. Smiles reflect another growth after a meeting.

On a scale from 1 to 10, how much would you recommend Toastmasters International?

I will definitely have to give a 10! The Toastmaster's experience is a holistic one, aimed at improving not only public speaking but also embracing leadership and personal growth.

I joined Toastmasters to overcome my fear of public speaking, and not only have I dramatically improved in this area thanks to the Toastmasters amazing structure and an incredibly supportive environment with a feedback culture, I have also gained so much more by taking on various roles on the club's committee! I've developed a wide range of skills that extend far beyond public speaking and were more extensive than I initially anticipated.



THE RENAISSANCE

As Catherine mentioned, in recent years, the UN club has faced various challenges that have affected attendance. Maintaining the stability of our community has never been easy, and it may continue to be challenging. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful that our learning program, which focuses on communications and leadership, will continue to benefit many participants.

We are proud to mark this year (2024 - 2025) as the renaissance of the UN club, with the help of a fresh new group of members eager to grow, led by our new president, Damien Gautier.

REACHING US OUT

If you want to learn more about our club, we invite you to follow us on social media for updates on future events. You can also reach out to us via email at: info.ungenevatoastmasters@gmail.com. Find us on LinkedIn and Instagram at [@un_geneva_toastmasters](https://www.linkedin.com/company/un_geneva_toastmasters) or visit our website at <https://ungeneva-toastmasters.ch>

We look forward to seeing you soon! Remember, *"we meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, and everyone is welcome to join."* //

UN Geneva members are international members just like the United Nations.



CHF 495'000.-

CHAMPEIL (GE)

IDÉAL INVESTISSEURS STUDIO EN SI

Cadre de vie agréable et pratique / Proche de toutes les infrastructures / 36 m² habitables / Entièrement rénové / Cuisine équipée / SDD moderne avec WC / Balcon.



CHF 895'000.-

CHANCY (GE)

3.5 PIÈCES DANS CADRE BUCOLIQUE

Magnifique appartement de 81 m² habitables / Idéalement exposé au sud / Généreux et lumineux volumes / Splendide terrasse-véranda de 50 m² / Le jardin en copropriété ajoute une touche de verdure à ce cadre idyllique / 1 chambre avec SDB en suite / 1 toilette visiteurs / 1 cave en sous-sol / 2 parkings intérieur et extérieur.



CHF 1'520'000.-

LACONNEX (GE)

DUPLEX DE 6 PIÈCES AVEC JARDIN

Vaste appartement situé dans un cadre privilégié, dans un petit immeuble villageois / Orienté sud-ouest / Surface habitable de 173 m² ainsi qu'un jardin de 60 m² / 3 chambres / Séjour avec cheminée ouvrant sur une salle à manger / Cuisine ouverte donnant sur le jardin / 2 places de parking sous abri / Cave en sous-sol / Belle opportunité de vivre dans un environnement paisible et verdoyant.

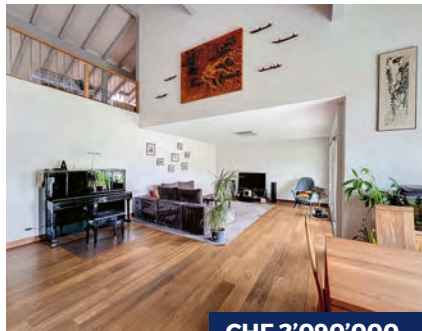


CHF 1'790'000.-

ATHENAZ (GE)

EXCLUSIVITÉ - VILLA MITOYENNE

Dans hameau paisible / 180 m² habitables / Nombreux atouts, dont 4 chambres spacieuses / Chambre parentale en combles avec dressing, SDD, WC et lavabo / Sous-sol aménagé comprenant salle de jeux, buanderie, atelier, cave / 1 parking extérieur avec borne de recharge électrique / 1 grand box en sous-sol / 1 emplacement dédié pour une piscine hors-sol.



CHF 2'090'000.-

BERNEX (GE)

SPACIEUX DUPLEX EN ATTIQUE

Au calme absolu / Style loft / Généreux volumes / Rénové avec des matériaux de qualité / 285 m² habitable / Séjour de plus de 57 m² agrémenté d'une cuisine ouverte / Loggia / Belle master bedroom avec spacieux dressing et SDD en suite / 2 chambres / Grande mezzanine sous combles / 1 chambre / 1 SDD / 1 buanderie / 1 cave et un grand box de 45 m² / 1 parking extérieur.



CHF 2'290'000.-

LE GRAND-SACONNEX (GE)

PENTAURA - LES JARDINS PATIOS

Promotion de 5 sublimes villas semi-individuelles THPE de 6.5 pièces / 2 niveaux avec sous-sol complet / Volumes lumineux et généreux / 4 chambres / 153 m² habitables / Terrasse de 11 m² / Pergola de 13 m² / Jardin entre 120 m² et 126 m² / Garage double et places de vélos.



CHF 2'350'000.-

GENÈVE

MAGNIFIQUE DUPLEX EN ATTIQUE

Superbe 4.5 pièces / À proximité des Organisations Internationales et du Parc Tremblay / Espaces généreux et lumineux grâce à sa triple exposition / 142 m² habitables / Magnifique terrasse en U de 107 m² / 2 chambres, dont une parentale avec armoires intégrées et SDB en suite / 1 SDD / 1 cave / 1 garage fermé au 2^{ème} sous-sol.

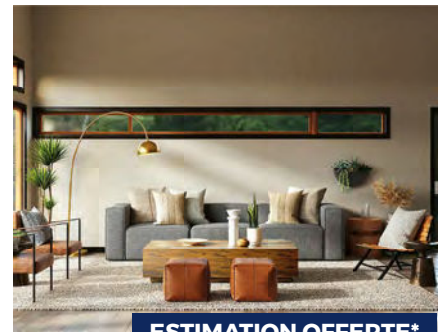


CHF 3'500'000.-

LANCY (GE)

MAGNIFIQUE VILLA INDIVIDUELLE

Villa de 8 pièces offrant un cadre de vie exceptionnel / Prestations de qualité / Environnement paisible / Volumes généreux / Jardin séduisant, entièrement clôturé et piscinable / 5 chambres dont une parentale avec dressing et SDB complète / Grand séjour de plus de 45 m² avec cheminée, ouvert sur terrasse et jardin / Sous-sol chauffé complet.



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The Harmony Peace Prize 2024

PATRONS OF THE ARTS IN PURSUIT OF HARMONY: THE ABSENCE OF VIOLENCE

International Peace Doctors (IPD), as patrons of the arts, launched the prize first edition last year (2023) from Texas, USA, as part of its Peace Education and Mediation Programs. As an international NGO for peace, IPD believes that harmony is the true absence of violence.

HARMONIC APPROACH IN CONFLICT

Inspired by the legendary Lorenzo de' Medici, a renowned patron of the arts and architect of Florentine harmony during the Renaissance, this international prize seeks to foster harmony through creative expression. Medici's legacy, marked by his support for artists and his cultivation of a stable society amidst a turbulent era, serves as a powerful model for our pursuit of a world without violence.

As an outstanding diplomat, Lorenzo was a great advocate of harmony and to this day, continues to be praised for neutralising military threats from neighbouring city states, such as Naples and Rome.

By implementing a harmonic approach that embraced diversity and respect, Lorenzo proved how treating adversaries with respect was the key strategy to ensure long-term prosperity for all.

Like Lorenzo, IPD believes that conflicts must be resolved harmoniously for the simple reason that a harmonious order fosters harmonious unity, where all members of society can flourish without violence or tyrannical aggression.

THE RISE OF HARMONY

Following de Medici's foot steps, IPD continues to recognise the vision of the artists in the pursuit of harmony. The theme of this year's Harmony Peace Prize is the Rise of Harmony, a concept developed by none other than Michelangelo, a protégé of Lorenzo de Medici.

As a young Florentine, Michelangelo was exposed to de Medici's vast art collection of sculptures,

paintings and, of course, ancient Greek philosophy. Lorenzo's patronage nurtured Michelangelo's intellectual capacity and creative talent. A privileged education at such an early age played a crucial role in shaping Michelangelo's artistic genius. Medici's protégé was to become, not only a true cannon of the Italian Renaissance, but one of the greatest artists of all time.

Michelangelo established himself as a painter, a sculptor and an architect. His impressive talent was recognised during his own lifetime as the embodiment of artistic perfection. He was the chief architect of the final design of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican and sculpted *The Pieta*, one of the most admired sculptures in the world.

But, perhaps Michelangelo is more commonly known today for his famous frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. One of the scenes, the Creation of Adam, is an image of profound theological and philosophical depth that captivated the world. This scene holds significant symbolic relevance to the concept of harmony, not only due to its balanced and proportionate composition, but because it represents the harmonious connection between humanity and divinity.

Here, Michelangelo extends God's hand to touch Adam's hand striving for harmony between the two - a dynamic state that requires continuous effort to bridge the gap between humans and their surroundings.

Yet, a closer look at the scene reveals Michelangelo's three more subtle reflections: First, the transfer of a power higher than the potential of human intellect. Second, Adam's hesitance to receive such power. Third, the gap between both hands suggests a mutual desire to connect and rise in harmony.

Michelangelo's masterpiece serves as a timeless reminder that true harmony is not a static state but rather a dynamic process. It requires a constant effort to bridge divides and connect with ourselves and our surroundings. This rise of harmony, beautifully captured in *The Crea-*



Third Prize 2023 "Lotus" Ritu Atwal,
California, USA.

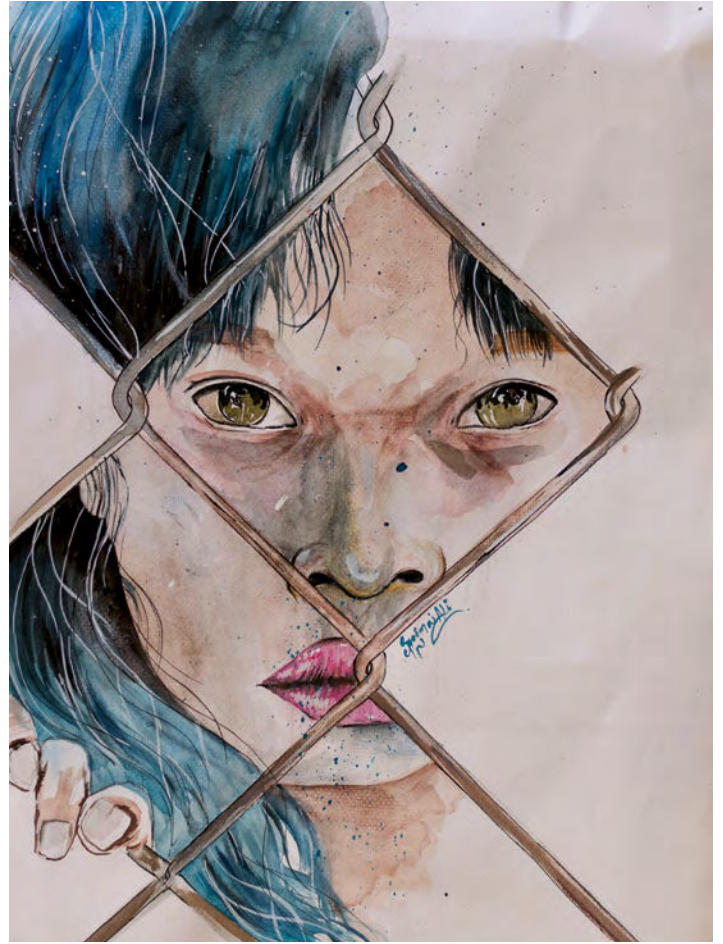
tion of Adam," resonates with the core values of the Harmony Peace Prize, inspiring humanity to create a more harmonic, yet diverse world.

As discussed in The Harmony Peace Prize last year's edition, the Renaissance man sought to follow the ultimate perfection to solve intellectual, artistic, political, and social problems with humanistic ideals. For Michelangelo, as well as his patron Lorenzo de' Medici, art held the potential to motivate and transform people's lives in harmony. Their idealism was a cornerstone of the Renaissance, inspiring generations to seek beauty, respect, diversity and prosperity in their world.

This is precisely the goal of the Harmony Peace Prize 2024, to promote harmony making a difference in people's lives for without harmony, there is no peace and ultimately "*rationality turns bitter and leads to chaos, the source of human suffering.*" Lorenzo de' Medici.

THE HARMONY PEACE PRIZE 2023

Last year, under the theme of "*The Expression of Harmony*" the art competition was open to artists from all over the world. The three most influential artworks came from United Arab Emirates, India and USA. The big surprise was the theme challenger from Pakistan.



Harmony Challenger 2023 Spogmai Ali's
led by Irfan Khan, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Launched from Houston, USA, the concept has captivated artists as well as the general public and government institutions from all over the world.

PASSIONATE ABOUT ART?

If you would like to make a contribution to the development of Harmony through the arts, don't be shy and register now for The Harmony Peace Prize 2024, by contacting info@ipeacedoctors.com or simply registering on www.ipeacedoctors.com. Cristina Cabrejas-Artola, IPD Co-founder.

International Peace Doctors™ (IPD) is an international NGO for peace that promotes harmony as the natural part of human interaction leading to better relationships, more productive workplaces, and safer environments. They do this by providing training and mediation services to education institutions, businesses and government institutions. //

Second Prize 2023 "We, The Children of Earth"
by Skanda Ravindra, Chennai, India.



First Prize 2023 "Time and Life" by Abbas Saberi, Dubai, UAE
(embossed, engraved and painted on aluminium base, 3D effect, decorated with crystal, pearls, turquoise and red coral).



RITU ATWAL
THE HARMONY PEACE PRIZE WINNER
(3RD PLACE)

The harmony, peace prize project was such a wonderful opportunity for me as an artist to lend my vision, in whatever small way, to a very crucial subject. I have participated in other art shows with varied themes, but nothing as meaningful as the message of this "call for art". It felt more like a "call for action". In the world that we live in today, where there is so much focus on the differences, and a drive for separation, Peace and Harmony is an invaluable platform to celebrate what unites us. The team was so easy to work with, and so generous in their awards. A special shout out to Cris Cabrejas, for creating this unique opportunity for artist around the world and bringing them together for this worthy cause. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

SKANDA RAVINDRA
THE HARMONY PEACE PRIZE WINNER
(2ND PLACE)

I came across the Harmony Peace Prize when I was looking for an avenue to express my creativity during my spare time. I found resonance with the theme Harmony and Peace, so I gave it my hundred percent and poured my thoughts and soulful feelings into it. Overall, a fantastic and a very memorable experience for me personally in 2023, and I look forward for any future events that are to come from International Peace Doctors Team.

IRFAN KHAN
THE WINNING CHALLENGER

I came across the Harmony Peace Prize when I was looking for an avenue to express my creativity during my spare time. I found resonance with the theme Harmony and Peace, so I gave it my hundred percent and poured my thoughts and soulful feelings into it. Overall, a fantastic and a very memorable experience for me personally in 2023, and I look forward for any future events that are to come from International Peace Doctors Team.

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Words Without Borders

The Venezuela elections of 28 July 2024: What and whom to believe?

DISPUTED ELECTIONS AND SOVEREIGNTY.
WHO HAS THE COMPETENCE TO VERIFY RESULTS?

Newspapers delight in sensationalistic headlines. Premature judgments disseminated by the media¹ are seldom corrected, even after proven false or misleading. With regard to the Venezuelan elections of 28 July, we are told without solid evidence that Nicolas Maduro rigged them. But why do journalists insist that we reject the results announced by the competent institutions, the Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), notwithstanding the testimony of hundreds of international observers, and after the 3-week examination of the ballots by the Venezuelan Supreme Court?

Should we, as a matter of course, doubt the results of elections in the United States, United Kingdom, France, in Thuringia and Saxony in Germany, or for that matter also in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Belarus and Russia?

The media pretends to tell us whom to accept and whom to reject. Alas, many of us lack discernment and tend to believe the narrative, because many still trust the media. As Julius Caesar formulated it, *"quae volumus, ea credimus libenter"* – we believe what we want to believe.²

Like many Latin American, African and Asian States, Venezuela has a long history of corrupt elections and *coups d'état*. Until the election of Hugo Chávez in 1998 most elections were marred by massive foreign interference, and most Presidents were subservient to Washington. Pedro Carmona's failed coup d'état in 2002 confirmed the pattern of meddling, as did the *opéra buffa* of Juan Guaidó's imaginary Presidency 2019-24, and the bold affirmation that Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia won the 28 July elections.

EU Foreign Minister Josep Borrell recently said *"If Maduro insists on saying he has won and does not want to understand that, for the international community, without verification, there is no as-*

sumption of results, Venezuela could enter a serious crisis." Who is the "international community" other than the US, UK and EU? Does the global majority really want the Venezuelan elections to be verified? Should the EU henceforth establish a new ministry to verify the results of the elections in all 193 UN member states? Should we call it the Office of Neo-colonial Affairs? Would that advance international cooperation and mutual respect in the spirit of the UN Charter?

THE OAS AND THE VENEZUELAN ELECTIONS

The OAS recently reprimanded the Venezuelan government and refused to recognize Maduro's re-election. Is this within the OAS's remit? As we know, the OAS is an organization created by the United States in 1948 with headquarters in Washington. Since the beginning, the OAS has pursued US interests rather than those of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples. Since 2015, the Uruguayan Luis Almagro has been Secretary General, and he dutifully supports US policy, spreads US propaganda³ and thus undermines Latin American governments such as those in Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela. He recently appealed to the International Criminal Court and asked that Nicolas Maduro be arrested.⁴ It is obvious that the OAS is not terribly concerned with guaranteeing stability and peaceful coexistence between states, but rather facilitates regime change in the continent.

In this author's opinion, unless fundamental changes occur in the way the OAS functions, in the ideological composition of its secretariat – it would be best to abolish it. In a very real sense, the OAS belongs to the 20th century era of imperialism, and is a misfit in our century. By contrast, there is another regional organization that is more representative of the Latin American and Caribbean peoples – the CELAC – *Comunidad de Estados de Latino America y del Caribe*⁵, which, according to its statute, repre-

sents the interests of the peoples of America, for example by declaring the region a “Zone of Peace” in 2014⁶.

CHALLENGE TO THE ELECTION RESULTS AND REVIEW BY THE VENEZUELAN SUPREME COURT

In the light of the refusal of the Venezuelan opposition to accept the election results issued by the competent authority, the CNE, Maduro invoked the procedure known as “amparo” and turned to the Venezuelan Supreme Court as is provided for in the Venezuelan Constitution⁷. In this sense Maduro acted pursuant to the Venezuelan legal order. It is important to remember that serious cyberattacks were registered against the CNE system and numerous government offices, making it difficult to verify the digital evidence. Notwithstanding the technical obstacles, the Venezuelan Supreme Court did verify the ballots, examined the complaints against the government, demanded pertinent evidence from the opposition, and analysed the CNE records. On August 22, the Court issued its ruling, confirming that Maduro was indeed re-elected with 52 percent of the popular vote⁸. The opposition and the US media promptly rejected the court’s ruling. But whether we foreigners like it or not, the Venezuelan Supreme Court is the final authority on the matter.

This review process corresponds to the demands of the “rule of law” and is also known in other countries. For example, the elections in the USA in November 2000 were disputed in several states. Many US citizens, including myself, wanted the results verified, but on January 8, 2001, the American Supreme Court stopped the verification process and gave the presidency to George W. Bush. Personally, I think there were too many “irregularities” and the elections should have been reviewed in several states or elections should have been repeated in those states. I am inclined to think that Al Gore was the winner. The US elections in November 2020 was also contested and many Republicans still think that the Democrats “stole” the election. But there again the courts rejected Trump’s legal challenge and confirmed the election of Joe Biden. For reasons of stability and reconciliation, one has to abide by the decision of the final judicial instance.

It is worrisome that a number of Western states continue to demand insight into the Venezuelan election results. This constitutes a grave infringement on the sovereignty of Venezuela and is contrary to international law, the UN and OAS Charters. Just imagine if India or China refused to accept the results of elections in the US, UK, France or Germany and instead would recognize the opposition leader as the legitimate winner! Yet, as we all know, *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* - what is permitted to the hegemon is not permitted to the rest of us.⁹

IN CONCLUSION

Even after the Venezuelan Supreme Court confirmed Maduro as president, it is certain that the hostility of the US and EU will continue. An interesting “what if” question is whether Venezuela could have achieved social peace by submitting to foreign intervention and allowing the opposition to take the presidency in 2014 or 2018. Could it achieve it in 2024? Would equanimity reign in Venezuela if Edmundo Gonzalez were to return from exile in Spain to assume the presidency? I rather doubt it. The fact remains that there are millions of Chavistas in Venezuela who will reject retrogression in human rights and the dismantlement of the socialist model. A coup d’état by the opposition would mean civil war. No one wants that. The UN Charter stipulates the “live and let live” rule, whose validity prevails domestically and internationally. As a former UN rapporteur, I think we owe it to ourselves and to humanity to work for reconciliation through dialogue. //

- 1 See Chapter 7, de Zayas, *The Human Rights Industry*, Clarity Press, 2023.
- 2 Gaius Iulius Caesar: *De bello civile* 2,27,2
- 3 <https://freedomhouse.org/article/luis-almagros-defense-democracy-venezuela>
- 4 <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/oas-chief-demands-indictment-and-icc-arrest-warrant-for-maduro/ar-BB1rIcyE>
- 5 <https://caricom.org/institutions/the-community-of-latin-american-and-caribbean-states-celac/>
- 6 <https://wpc-in.org/news/celac-declare-zone-peace>
- 7 <https://mppp.gob.ve/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/01-CONSTITUCION-NACIONAL-Reimpresion.pdf>
- 8 <https://www.telesurtv.net/sala-electoral-del-tsj-de-venezuela-certifica-triunfo-de-nicolas-maduro-el-28j/>
- 9 paraphrased from Terentius

Water Design: water shapes the city

WATER DESIGN IS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE TODAY.
THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE
ARE A CAUSE OF GLOBAL CONCERN



TEXT PAOLA VIGANÒ, CYRIL VEILLON, EPFL
PHOTOS JULIEN HEIL, COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The number of projects dealing with water-related issues is virtually endless, so pervasive that they play the role of connectors among coalitions of different players, disciplines, performances and ways of thinking. Water Designs, the title of the exhibition currently on display at Archizoom EPFL, considers not only water as a topic, but the project that water itself designs, according to its rationalities, logics and behaviours.

The water project is the one that shapes our territories and our living space over the longue durée. Water is the subject and the agent that we simply reveal, rediscover, accompany and follow, with projects that listen to its voice and its intentions. Water has been one of the many weak subjects of modernity, one that has been violated, attacked, modified, hidden. Water is nonetheless a 'weak structure', capable of structuring the contemporary city territory beyond its heterogeneity, fragmentation and the separation of spaces and functions. Cities and territories are the "water laboratory" in which to shape the socio-ecological transition. Water is about life, space and power relations. The exhibition focuses on several fundamental paradigm shifts around Water Designs that characterize our times and a plurality of geographical, disciplinary and cultural contexts.

URBAN AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

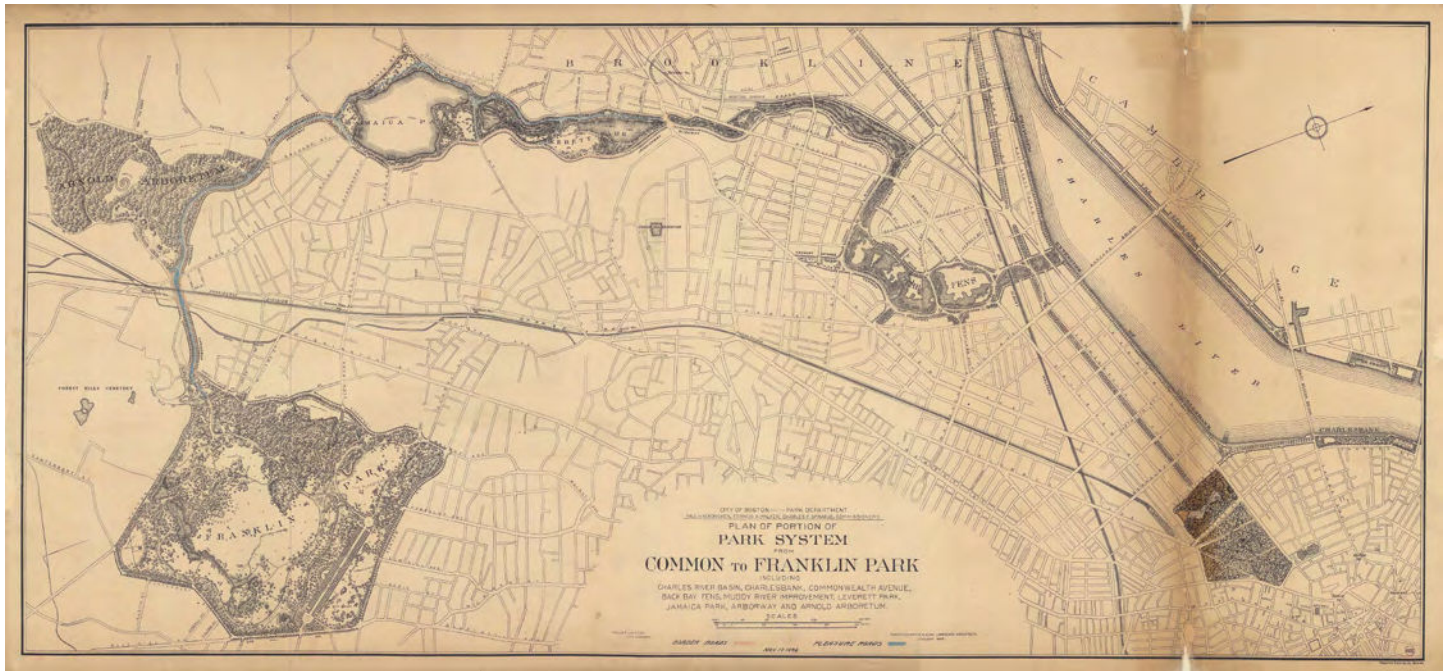
Frederick Law Olmsted's park system in Boston, the first in this line, is not just a spatial and ecological innovation: the Back Bay Fens was a tidal swamp that was often violently flooded and a repository for sewage. The wetland designed by Olmsted reconciled engineering and landscape design. In the decades that followed, this example inspired the understanding of the potential of vacant plots in Philadelphia to accommodate the flow of water along the course of buried rivers in dilapidated neighbourhoods or the need to give more space to water and rivers in Dutch cities.

In more recent decades, a number of themes - water urbanism, water-sensitive urban design, the sponge city, the rationalities of water, the decolonization of the river as an artificial dividing line between water and land in favour of the blurred concept of "wet" - have reconfigured the design activity: no longer a project on water, but designed with water, with its non-linear logic and forms. Natural flood control and constructed wetlands are part of the nature-based solutions (NBS) which include climate change adaptation enhanced by "ecological engineering" and the landscape.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENGINEERING THINKING

Engineers have always thought in terms of getting water out of cities as quickly as possible. This implies steering the flow, penalizing the ecosystem created by the flowing water and its interaction with riverbed and vegetation. Against floods and bank erosion, heavy modifications of watercourses, rectifications, coverings, diversions, exploitation for energy production, irrigation, sanitation and such have all marked the long history of territorial and urban construction.

However, a number of authors have stepped out of the mainstream, reflecting on the behaviour of untouched water flow and its capacity for self-stability; the concept of water age, that is, the time that water takes to travel through the terrestrial hydrological cycle, pushes in the direction of extending its presence on earth; "green water", the "rainwater that infiltrates into the root zone and is used for biomass production", and "blue water", "the water that either runs off from the soil surface or percolates beyond the root zone to form groundwater", articulate the role of any single drop; the water quality higher standards and the costs of meeting them with heavy infrastructure help revise the traditional model of water evacuation. All have played a role in changing the thinking of environmental scientists, hydraulic engineers and hydrologists. Increasingly integrated with that of designers and



ecological thinking, it is at the heart of a veritable paradigm shift that opens up to hydrosociology / socio-hydrology, investigating the co-evolution of coupled human-water systems.

POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Water Design is discussed through political ecology which explores power relations with a focus on how people, society and the environment interact with each other over time. Since the 1970s, political ecology has denounced and tried to explain environmental degradation by corporations and through state mismanagement. It highlights the role of radical movements, of local / global conflicts in the distribution and use of resources, among them water scarcity, accessibility, quality and distribution.

Water is essentially a public good and human right, not a profitable commodity. Institutions, both local and international, civil society and local communities participate and oppose on the topic of water design, its complexity and innumerable contradictions. It is on these themes that the most recognized authors, like Indian activist Vandana Shiva, have focused their efforts. Climate change (extreme drought and flooding) and the lack of good-quality drinking water per capita situates the project of water in hydropolitics, which studies everyday local and geopolitical or transborder conflicts and cooperation between states and other partners over water resources.

Social sciences are encouraged to be more involved in water planning. *“Improved analysis of social consequences of water projects will make necessary a considerable development of the rather new field of hydrosociology”*, according to Malin Falkenmark, writing in 1979.

LEGISLATIVE EVOLUTION ON WATER

Laws often only come into being when changes in societal values have already happened and left their mark, transforming practices. In this case, laws seem to be precursors, pushing citizens, scientists, professionals and institutions to change their ways of making things and update their knowledge.

The European Union’s Water Framework Directive (2000) is a monument to the centrality of water issues, aimed at achieving a good status for all ground and surface water and introducing the River Basin Districts delimited by the spatial catchment area of the river (watershed) as a natural geographical and hydrological unit. The directive is the result of several decades of sectorial directives, of hard negotiations and inspired by previous national policies like the French law of 1964 that states the principle of a water management based on the big river watersheds. In Switzerland, the federal law on the management of rivers (1991) has protected the natural courses of rivers and their renaturalization.

Biodiversity and the interaction between surface and underground water are important aspects of the legal agenda. Different countries have developed specific perspectives, starting from the common water ground: in Australia, for example, the extreme drought that occurred after 2000 has pushed laws to include water-sensitive design solutions and shifted the view of floodwater as a problem to floodwater as a resource to be managed.

From Harold N. Fisk,
Geological Investigation of the Alluvial Valley
of the Lower Mississippi River,
U.S. Department of the Army,
Mississippi River Commission, 1944.

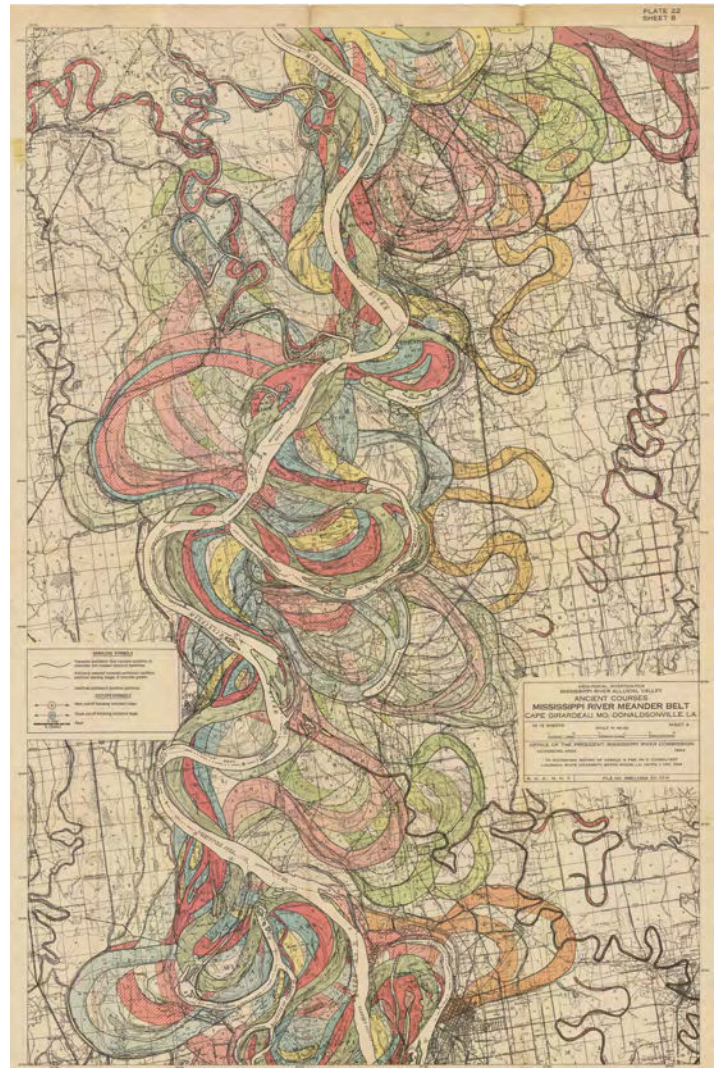
This exhibition presents the new knowledge that can be generated on a common interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary conceptual basis; it wants to show that on the issue of water, new interpretations can emerge, new research and collaborations can find their starting point, a ‘new climate’ of discussion can arise among sciences, academia and society. //

REFERENCES

“We need a paradigm shift in planning and designing our cities to adapt to the changing climate.” Kongjian Yu, *The Sponge City: Planning, Design and Political Design*, 2000, p.53

“The story of a stream, even one born and lost in moss, is the story of infinity.” Élisée Reclus, *Histoire d’un ruisseau*, Chapter 1, “La Source”, 1869

“Nature is process and value, exhibiting both opportunities and limitations to human use.” Ian McHarg, *Design with Nature*, 1969, p. 105



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A HUMAN RIGHTS VETERAN EVOLVES INTO
AN ACCOMPLISHED NOVELIST



TEXT ALFRED DE ZAYAS,
UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

Historical novels are necessary to make us understand historical realities through the perspective of fictional characters that tell us as much about history as about ourselves. Frequently we can identify with the *dramatis personae* of a well-written novel whose plot does not betray the historical context but instead makes it more immediate by highlighting the motivations and emotions of the characters.

As a professor of history at the Geneva School of Diplomacy, I can confirm that many history books are awfully tedious and necessarily incomplete, because the historian has to make a selection and sometimes by omitting crucial facts and events, the narrative becomes “*fake history*”. That is why I tell my students that history is a kind of “*political fiction*”, which does not always observe the seven C’s of history-writing: chronology, context, coherence, comprehensiveness, causality, comparison and *cui bono* (who stands to gain from an event, conflict, war, or from a particular interpretation thereof – Cicero *Pro Milone* and also *Pro Roscio Amerino*, § 84, 86).

Literary fiction also entails a selection of facts, but by interweaving them with human experiences, it passes a message at a different level of cognition. Indeed, the human person may forget chronologies and names of places, but will remember certain emotions prompted by vicariously experiencing, by internalizing the joys and woes of fictional characters. Sometimes fiction is far more interesting than reality, more meaningful to the reader, and immensely more entertaining than history textbooks.

Life after a rich and productive UN career can reveal itself as more creative and exciting. The novel being introduced here was written by a colleague from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Carmen Rosa Rueda Castañón, a superlative jurist and committed professional. When she returned to Spain, her homeland, she started a new career as an author. She has flourished. Her experience il-

lustrates that of many UN retirees who have joined academia, engaged in journalism, gone on to discover other facets of themselves. Indeed, we all have latent talents that cannot always be nurtured during our working careers because of the pressing schedules and general lack of time. However, our encounters with diplomats and politicians, our official missions to other countries, our day-to-day exchanges with colleagues provide us with a fountainhead of experiences that can be channelled into literary ventures.

Carmen had a very good mentor, Mirta Teitelbaum, former OHCHR staff member, wife of the prolific human rights defender Alejandro Teitelbaum, and a known essayist in her own right, author of fascinating short stories, many of which were published in literary journals, including the UN literary magazine *Ex Tempore*, under the name Sofia Brey¹ Mirta and Carmen were colleagues at OHCHR and it was Mirta who first discovered Carmen’s literary flair and encouraged her to write texts other than reports and draft resolutions.

Carmen has made excellent use of her retirement and last November 2023 she published her first novel *Mariposas negras sobre fondo rojo* – Black butterflies on a red background².

The title is well chosen. It refers to a historical event during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Thirty-two years ago, on the night of 25 to 26 August 1992, the Army of Bosnian Serbs fired direct artillery grenades at the Sarajevo City Hall, where the University Library was located³. The famed library burned and the pieces of scorched paper wafted in the air like butterflies. To deplore were many civilian deaths, which is much more tragic than the loss of books and manuscripts, reminiscent of the burning of the great library of Alexandria in 48 BC. It is the madness of war that brings immense suffering to humanity, whether in Dresden on 13/14 February 1945, Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, Nagasaki on 9 August 1945, at the inferno of Baghdad and Fallujah in 2003 or the Gaza and West-bank bombardments of 2024.

Carmen Rueda



Mariposas negras sobre fondo rojo

Ediciones Velasco, Oviedo,
Nov. 2023

Another calamity of the Bosnian war was the destruction of the Mostar Bridge, also known as the Stari Most (“Old Bridge”), a 16th century Ottoman landmark that had stood for 427 years before it was destroyed on 9 November 1993 during the Croat-Bosniak War. It was reconstructed after the war following the establishment of a committee of experts by UNESCO in 1998. The Old Bridge was rebuilt with Ottoman construction techniques using local limestone and inaugurated on 23 July 2004⁴.

Carmen Rosa presented her novel at the *Salon du livre de Genève* on 8-9 March 2024 and again at the Albatros bookstore on 19 April, introduced by Dr. Gustavo Gallón, the current Ambassador of Colombia to the UN in Geneva and former UN Rapporteur on Haiti. The book can be obtained in Geneva at the Librería Albatros, in Plainpalais, Charles-Humbert 6.⁵

I do not intend to give away the plot of the novel, because I want the reader to discover this fine work of literature in all of its facets. It is not just a memoir of the war in Bosnia, which Carmen experienced in her capacity as OHCHR staff member, not just a story of war crimes and accountability, of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague (ICTY, page 139ff), of Bosnian refugees in Switzerland and the process of their integration, it is also a story of a real woman, Milena, who was received by a Geneva family and helped in the process of overcoming the trauma of losing her sister Marija during the bombardments of Sarajevo. Her foster family in Geneva put her in contact with a psychiatrist, Dr. Wollenweider (p. 80 ff), a wise and mature woman, survivor of civil war and the Argentinean junta regimes. The ex-

changes with the psychiatrist are particularly interesting, as we begin to understand the predatory in us, *homo homini lupus* (Plautus, man is a wolf to other men). This is the story of a young Muslim woman who was in love with Dragan, a Serb from Bosnia, but who eventually married Jacques, a young man from Geneva, who was madly in love with her. They had a child, a girl, Emma, who goes to school in Veyrier. Carmen also has a daughter, and her experiences at educating a child are clearly reflected in these pages.

As a professor of international law at GSD, I particularly appreciated Carmen’s analysis of the legal issues involved – not in legalese, but in understandable language. She describes tense moments during the proceedings before the ICTY and the arguments pro and con punishment. We understand how young soldiers come to commit war crimes, how each of us is capable of atrocities if placed in specific situations and driven by war psychosis. We read about regret and contrition, but also about failure to come to grips with one’s own guilt.

From the literary standpoint, I laud the elegant Spanish employed by Carmen in her novel. Spanish is also my mother tongue, but I could never write so beautifully. As far as literary devices, Carmen uses the flashback method and some very useful “*Introspecciones*” which facilitate the reading and help the reader grasp the deeper meaning of things. At the end the novel offers a cartographic annex with useful maps of the region, so that the reader can see where Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Visegrad, etc. were located, where the frontiers between the República Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina lay, where Slovenia, Croatia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro lie in relationship to each other.

I read the novel in one go and loved it. The book has significant potential for the film medium, since the situations are real and one can easily identify with the characters and share their emotions. That is what good art is all about: Inspiration, yearning, catharsis, love. The Spanish original deserves translation into English, French, German, etc. //

1 www.extemoire.ch

2 Carmen Rueda Castañón, MARIPOSAS NEGRAS SOBRE FONDO ROJO, Ediciones Velasco, Oviedo 2023.

3 <https://lithub.com/30-years-ago-tonight-sarajevos-national-library-was-burned-to-the-ground/>

4 <https://www.rferl.org/a/mostar-bridge-30-years-destroyed-restored/32677921.html>

5 <http://www.libreria-albatros.ch/>

The Verbier Festival

A UNIQUE FUSION OF MUSIC, COMMUNITY, AND INCLUSION

Every summer, the picturesque Swiss village of Verbier transforms into a bustling hub of classical music, drawing in legendary musicians, eager young talents, and devoted volunteers from all over the globe.

The Verbier Festival, now in its 31st year, is more than a mere series of concerts; it is a celebration of community, cultural exchange, and the universal language of music. This year, the Festival's spirit of inclusivity was evident not only in its diverse musical offerings but also in the stories of its volunteers, who brought their unique perspectives and experiences to this magical gathering in the echoing heart of the Swiss Alps.

A PLATFORM FOR MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

The Verbier Festival is known for its eclectic mix of performances, ranging from grand orchestral concerts to intimate chamber music sessions and innovative UNLTD events that push the boundaries of traditional classical music. Volunteers play a critical role in bringing these events to life, managing everything from logistics to audience engagement. For many, like Sergio, the Festival is a place to rediscover the magic of music. *"After years of resentment towards my violin, being at Verbier inspired me to consider playing again. Maybe Bach or Mozart—who knows?"* he muses.

For Tatiana, a pianist and composer, the Festival was an opportunity to engage directly with artists she admired. *"Meeting Alexandre Kantorow and talking with him for just a few minutes gave me so much joy and energy,"* she recalls. *"And there was this surreal moment when I met Bruce Liu outside the church. He couldn't get his ticket for a concert, so I gave him mine for the second half. It was such a spontaneous and unexpected encounter—just another example of how approachable the artists are at Verbier."*

BEYOND THE MAIN STAGE: A CELEBRATION OF CULTURE AND INNOVATION

The Festival is much more than its main stage performances. It is a vibrant cultural event that engages people of all ages and backgrounds through a wide range of initiatives, from masterclasses and workshops to buskers playing in the

hilly village streets to unique experiences like the Verbier Generation Orchestra. Dominique, a long-time attendee who became a volunteer, shares one of her cherished memories: *"Years ago, during the Musical Ballade, a saxophonist played while paragliding above us - it was so exhilarating! Being part of the first Chorale des Festivaliers and singing under Kurt Mazur's direction was another highlight."*

Dan, another volunteer, found his involvement in organizing events deeply fulfilling. *"I had the chance to help with the UNLTD events, and seeing how people reacted to the performances was truly rewarding. You realize that music really does connect us all, no matter where we come from."*

Zulykha, who had no formal musical background when she first arrived, quickly found herself immersed in a new world. *"I have never been so surrounded by classical music before. I even learned to differentiate between various instruments!"* she laughs. *"But more importantly, I learned a lot from the diverse group of people I worked with. I even picked up a few phrases in different languages. Verbier really opened my eyes to new experiences, even though I discovered I'm more of a jazz person than a classical one."*

REFUGEE VOLUNTEERS: A PATHWAY TO INTEGRATION AND HEALING

For over three decades, the Verbier Festival has been a beacon of musical excellence, attracting top-tier musicians and eager audiences alike. It is also a place where young talent is nurtured through the Verbier Festival Academy, a prestigious program that allows emerging artists to learn from and perform with world-class musicians. Volunteers have always played a crucial role in making this festival a success, but this year, the Festival's collaboration with U4U Volunteers – an initiative that integrates people in distress such as refugees, into volunteer roles – introduced a new layer of purpose.¹

This collaboration proved to be a mutually enriching experience, providing refugees with a sense of deep meaning, integration and growth. Iya, a Ukrainian refugee and musicologist, found solace in her role at Verbier. *"Volunteering at the festival was a delightful experience, possibly the best event since I sought refuge in Switzerland from*

TEXT NINA CHINGIZ-TARKOVSKY, UNITED NATIONS
PHOTO YULIA LEM

the war,” she shares. “I had the chance to interact with renowned classical musicians and make new friends in a welcoming environment. It was more than just volunteering; it was healing.”

However, integrating refugees into such roles came with its own set of challenges. Nina An, Art Director of OK’TAVA Open Arts, a unique platform that brings together leading art and humanitarian institutions such as the United Nations,² highlighted the importance of professional support when working with vulnerable communities. “Events like the Verbier Festival can greatly benefit from partnering with organizations like U4U Volunteers. Refugees often come from very sensitive backgrounds, and there needs to be a careful balance between offering support and respecting their autonomy” she says. After recounting success stories and lessons learned, she adds that “Initially, there was some confusion - what was meant as care sometimes felt like micromanagement. This was a learning experience for all, with the key takeaway being that a close working relationship between a host institution and human rights experts is key to making vulnerable communities feel genuinely nurtured and integrated into the fabric of the hosting community.”

Tina, another volunteer, echoes these sentiments: “Working with refugee volunteers was eye-opening. You realize that they have so much to offer, but also unique needs. It was important for us to adapt and learn from them as much as they learned from us.”

THE FESTIVAL'S UNIQUE SPIRIT OF INCLUSIVITY AND INNOVATION

The Verbier Festival brings together people from all walks of life, whether they are seasoned musicians, budding talents, or volunteers like Dan and Zulykha, who found themselves immersed in a world they had never imagined. The Festival’s success lies not only in its artistic excellence but also in its ability to create a sense of community among its diverse participants.

Tatiana’s experience reflects this spirit of connection and inclusivity: “I was surprised by how approachable the artists were. I even got to thank Simon Rattle for his music, even if it was just a brief moment. That’s what makes Verbier special—you never know who you might meet or what kind of connection you might make.”



Sergio perhaps sums it up best: “The Verbier Festival is more than just a series of concerts. It is a place where music, people, and stories come together in a way that you can’t find anywhere else. It is a community that I am proud to be a part of.”

LOOKING AHEAD: BUILDING ON SUCCESS AND INCLUSIVITY

This year’s collaboration with U4U and refugee volunteers is just one example of how the Festival continues to evolve, finding new ways to enrich the lives of everyone involved. Whether it’s a seasoned musician rediscovering their passion, a refugee finding a new sense of hope and belonging, or a first-time volunteer discovering a love for classical music, Verbier offers something unique - a place where everyone is welcome, and every story is celebrated.

“Thank you, Verbier,” says Iya, with a smile. “See you next year!” Her words capture the essence of the Festival - a place where music and community come together to create something truly extraordinary, resonating far beyond the Swiss Alps. //

- 1 U4U is a global volunteer network, empowering vulnerable communities across Switzerland and Europe to integrate and thrive. Through innovative, non-verbal therapies and volunteer-driven integration, U4U transforms lives—matching resources directly to needs with minimal overhead and maximum impact. See www.unitedforu.org
- 2 OK’TAVA Open Arts is a unique collaboration between academia, leading art and cultural venues, medical professionals, creative arts therapists, artists and UN partners. It explores the healing power of arts. See www.oktava.ch

Verbier Festival relies on dedicated volunteers for its success.

Post Tenebras Lux: Les vitraux du Musée Ariana

MUSÉE ARIANA, DU 15 NOVEMBRE 2024 AU 2 NOVEMBRE 2025:
REJOIGNEZ-NOUS POUR CÉLÉBRER LA MAGIE DES VITRAUX, UN ART
QUI TRANSFORME LA LUMIÈRE EN ÉCLAT ET EN HISTOIRE

TEXTE MUSÉE ARIANA
PHOTOS ATELIER GIRARDET

Du 15 novembre 2024 au 2 novembre 2025, le Musée Ariana à Genève présente « Post Tenebras Lux », une exposition unique consacrée aux vitraux, un art qui magnifie la lumière et le verre. Ce titre, qui signifie « Après les ténèbres, la lumière », fait écho à la devise historique de Genève, symbolisant le pouvoir de la lumière pour transcender les ténèbres, tant sur le plan spirituel que matériel.

L'exposition met en lumière la riche collection de vitraux du musée, composée de 370 œuvres principalement issues de Suisse et des régions voisines. Ces pièces, couvrant une période allant du Moyen Âge à nos jours, illustrent la diversité de l'art du vitrail, qu'il soit religieux ou civil. Le vitrail raconte des histoires, transmet des messages et capte des fragments d'histoire à travers ses motifs et ses couleurs.

Bien que quelques vitraux aient été visibles dans le cadre du Musée Ariana ou du Musée d'art et d'histoire, cette exposition révèle pour la première fois plus de 200 pièces, sorties spécialement des réserves municipales. Restaurées avec soin, ces œuvres dévoilent la beauté et la finesse d'un art qui transforme la lumière en une expérience visuelle spectaculaire. Chaque vitrail, qu'il soit en grisaille ou polychrome, invite à une immersion dans un univers où le verre capte la lumière pour la rediffuser en nuances subtiles.

Le vitrail, avec ses jeux de transparence et ses éclats de couleur, crée des ambiances uniques selon la lumière qui le traverse. Cet art transcende les matériaux pour devenir une véritable expérience sensorielle. L'exposition « Post Tenebras Lux » plonge les visiteurs dans un monde où la lumière sculpte les images, magnifiant les scènes figurées.

En parallèle de la présentation esthétique, cette exposition s'appuie sur un travail de recherche scientifique mené en collaboration avec le Vitrocentre Romont et l'Université de Genève. Ce projet a permis de restaurer et d'enrichir l'inventaire des vitraux de la Ville de Genève, désormais accessible en ligne. Un catalogue bilingue (français/allemand), prévu début 2025, viendra compléter l'exposition en offrant une analyse approfondie des œuvres. Publié aux éditions Georg, ce catalogue, richement illustré, réunira des articles d'experts renommés.

L'exposition se prolongera également avec un colloque international intitulé « Collectionner l'art de la lumière. Verre, connoisseurship et marché de l'art au XIX^e siècle », qui se tiendra les 7 et 8 mars 2025. Ce colloque réunira chercheurs et amateurs autour de discussions sur la place du vitrail dans l'histoire de l'art et son marché.

Enfin, des ateliers de vitrail, organisés avec l'École suisse de vitrail et création de Monthey, permettront au public de s'initier aux techniques de cet art ancien. Une Journée médiévale, prévue le 5 octobre 2025, recréera l'atmosphère des ateliers du Moyen Âge, offrant un voyage dans le passé à travers le vitrail.

« Post Tenebras Lux » est plus qu'une exposition: c'est une célébration de la lumière et de la couleur, une plongée dans l'histoire d'un art fascinant. //

SAVOIR +

Musée
Ariana



De haut en bas et de gauche à droite:

Armoiries de Dietrich I d'Englisberg et de Madeleine de Praroman, Fribourg (Suisse), vers 1483-1486.

Katze auf dem Radar, Martin Halter (né en 1947), Berne (Suisse), 2003.

Armoiries d'Aarau, Johann Heinrich Müller (1822-1903), Berne (Suisse), 1861-1891.

Cygne fantastique, Joseph Mitrey (1853-1936), atelier Marius Enneveux & Bonnet (1891-1906), Genève, 1898.



Le col de la Flüela

COLS ROUTIERS DE SUISSE (14)

SAVOIR +

Internationale
Vereinigung
für Walsertum



Pro Flüela



Flüela
Hospiz



Flüela-
Schwarz-
horn-Weg



Jöriseen
Rundweg



À Zernez, point de départ pour le col de l'Ofen*, commence aussi la route du col de la Flüela, qui se trouve dans le canton des Grisons à 2382 mètres d'altitude. La route de 26 kilomètres est la liaison directe entre la Basse-Engadine, à 1420 mètres d'altitude, et Davos, à 1560 mètres d'altitude. La pente moyenne n'est que 7.3% côté sud, et 6.4% côté nord, et des virages en lacet alternent avec des longs trajets droits.

La découverte de têtes de lance de l'âge du bronze au col de la Flüela prouve l'utilisation de ce passage depuis la préhistoire. Avant le XIII^e siècle, la région n'était que peu peuplée et tous les territoires autour du col, la vallée de la Susasca au sud ainsi que la vallée de la Flüela au nord, appartenaient au Susch (qui fait maintenant partie de la commune de Zernez). Au XIII^e siècle, les Walser sont arrivés dans la région de ce qui est maintenant Davos et s'y sont installés.

Les Walser, un peuple germanique, s'étaient établis au X^e siècle dans la vallée de Conches en Valais. Pour des raisons inconnues (surpopulation, mauvaises récoltes?), ils ont commencé de migrer dans d'autres vals alpins, avec l'accord des seigneurs féodaux qui leur permettaient de s'installer dans des zones inhospitalières afin de consolider leurs prétentions au pouvoir, d'augmenter la population et la terre cultivée ainsi que de maintenir et de contrôler les cols alpins. En échange de cette activité colonisatrice dans des conditions difficiles, les Walser s'accordèrent divers droits et libertés qui n'étaient pas du tout évidents à l'époque: la pleine liberté personnelle et le droit des héritiers à la succession de la propriété.

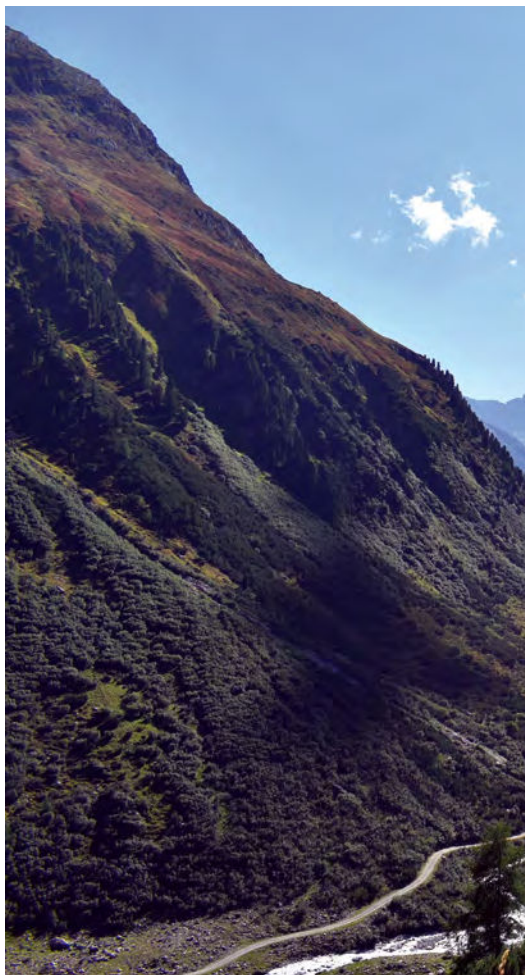
Au début du XIV^e siècle, la vallée de la Flüela fut vendue aux Walser, qui, contrairement à la population d'origine, étaient germanophones. Le col de la Flüela est ainsi devenu la frontière entre deux régions linguistiques, le romanche au sud, et l'alsacien au nord. D'ailleurs, on voit bien la différence culturelle aussi dans le paysage: au nord du col, il ne reste que peu de forêt, presque tout le terrain a été déboisé pour permettre l'estivage du bétail ou l'agriculture. Au sud, les arbres dominent toujours.

Au Moyen Âge, de nombreuses marchandises franchissaient le col par le sentier muletier, telles que du beurre et du bétail en direction de la Basse-Engadine et le Tyrol, et du sel et du blé en direction de Coire. Néanmoins, le passage par le col ne franchissant pas la chaîne principale des Alpes, il ne jouait qu'un rôle secondaire dans le trafic régional. En outre, le col était - et continue d'être - très exposé aux avalanches, ce qui rendait l'utilisation du chemin dangereuse en hiver et il fut donc évité. Une route carrossable fut aménagée en 1866-1867, pour mieux intégrer la Basse-Engadine dans le canton des Grisons. Un hospice fut construit en 1868-1869. Avec la croissance du tourisme, l'importance du col s'accrut, et la circulation des diligences devint importante.

En 1999, après huit ans de travaux, le tunnel ferroviaire de Vereina fut ouvert entre Klosters et Susch. Ce tunnel d'une longueur de 19 kilomètres est le plus long tunnel du monde en voie métrique. Un service de transport de voitures permet d'éviter la route du col de la Flüela; le trajet ne prend que 18 minutes, mais bien sûr on ne voit rien du paysage! Avec le tunnel, la circulation par le col est devenue moins importante, et la route reste fermée en hiver. Néanmoins, grâce à l'association privée *Pro Flüela* la route est maintenue ouverte après l'été jusqu'au début janvier.

Nous prenons la route du col depuis Zernez, un beau jour de septembre. Juste après Susch, il y a déjà trois virages en lacet, et un peu plus loin nous nous arrêtons pour admirer l'impressionnant panorama sur la vallée de la Susasca qui longe la route en bas. En s'approchant du col, les arbres deviennent rares, et au col nous nous trouvons dans un paysage austère.

Deux lacs se trouvent au col: le Schottensee, source de la rivière Flüela, et le lac noir, source de la Susasca. Le col est ainsi aussi une ligne de partage des eaux, les eaux de la Flüela finiront après de longs détours dans la mer du nord, et celles de la Susasca rejoindront l'Inn pour terminer dans la mer noire. Ces deux lacs donnent un certain charme au col, et nous admirons la vue des deux côtés. Le lac noir, le plus petit, est bordé de fleurs, et le *Schottensee* donne l'impression d'être glacial, avec des plaques de neige sur ses bords.



L'hospice, au col, accueille des passants depuis 1869. À cette époque, il n'y avait pas encore l'eau courante, et on devait aller puiser l'eau du lac noir! Des années après, on a construit une conduite d'eau en bois depuis le lac qui amenait l'eau à une fontaine devant l'hospice. Maintenant, après plusieurs rénovations, il y a bien l'eau courante à l'intérieur, et l'hospice possède son propre lac de barrage pour l'approvisionnement de l'eau et de l'électricité. Il offre plusieurs chambres et un dortoir. Le restaurant propose des plats typiquement grisons, comme de la viande séchée et des capuns (une espèce de pâte à spätzlis aux herbes et des morceaux de viande séchée, enroulée dans une feuille de côte de blette), ainsi que des produits de chasse, faits maison. Depuis la terrasse on a une belle vue sur les montagnes. Le col se trouve en fait entre le Weisshorn et le Schwarzhorn, et un sentier balisé permet de monter jusqu'au sommet du Schwarzhorn, à 3186 mètres d'altitude, avec une vue splendide sur les sommets environnants. Par beau temps, on peut même voir le Mont Blanc!

Un peu plus loin en descendant sur Davos, il y a l'arrêt de bus *Wägerhus*, à 2200 mètres d'altitude, d'où part une randonnée populaire vers les *Jöriseen*, des petits lacs de montagne verts bleus alimentés par l'eau de fonte du glacier de

Jöri. Dans une boucle passant au-dessous du glacier, on revient au point de départ après une marche de quatre heures et demie, ébloui par l'impressionnant paysage.

Nous suivons la route pour nous arrêter à un point de vue superbe sur la vallée de la Flüela en direction de Davos, halte obligatoire dans le grand tour de Suisse. Après cette pause et en s'approchant davantage de cette plus haute ville des Alpes, nous remarquons que le paysage devient de plus en plus habité avec des restaurants et des auberges, pour enfin arriver au très animé lac de Davos, où la route se termine. De nouveau dans le monde construit, l'environnement chic et surpeuplé nous donne tout de suite envie de retourner au col afin de profiter de nouveau de l'immensité de son paysage. //

* Voir *NewSpecial* de septembre 2024

De picos en levadas

MADÈRE 2/3

SAVOIR +

Allibert
Trekking



Terre d'escale sur la route des grandes découvertes et aujourd'hui sur celle des illustres courses transatlantiques, Madère, île verdoyante aux extraordinaires reliefs accidentés, comblera également les amoureux de la nature ainsi que les passionnés de randonnée qui pourront profiter des innombrables sentiers aménagés pour satisfaire leur passion.

Le jour se lève sur Santa Cruz (voir le *newSpecial* précédent), l'un des plus anciens villages de Madère. Son histoire remonte au XV^e siècle lorsque l'île fut découverte par Joao Gonçalves Zarco. A l'époque, l'explorateur aurait trouvé de vieux cèdres qui couvraient cette zone avec lesquels il ordonna de faire une croix, baptisant ainsi ce lieu.

L'île n'est pas grande (55 km de long et 22 km de large), et un court transfert va nous projeter dans un univers minéral complètement différent, avec une impression d'être au bout du monde. Classée en réserve naturelle, la presque-île de Sao Lourenço fait partie des plus belles randonnées de Madère. Battue par les vents, cette péninsule d'origine volcanique avec ses vertigineuses falaises offre des paysages à couper le souffle.

L'INCONTOURNABLE «PONCHA»

Après ce premier aperçu des fabuleux panoramas découverts à l'extrême est de Madère, ces deux semaines de randonnées proposées par «Allibert trekking» s'annoncent féériques. Cela va se confirmer dès le lendemain sur les hauteurs de Machio, localité qui occupe une petite baie. C'est ici que Joao Gonçalves Zarco et ses compagnons ont pour la première fois posé le pied sur l'île. Depuis Boca do Risco, le sentier, taillé dans la falaise et surplombant l'océan, traverse les cultures en terrasse de Ribeira Seca - garnies de vignes, de fruits tropicaux et de mimosas - avant de rejoindre Porto da Cruz. La côte, avec ses falaises tombant à pic dans l'eau, est particulièrement sauvage et les paysages maritimes sont idylliques. Une pause improvisée chez Lionel, un ami de notre guide Rodrigo, permettra de nous délecter de l'arôme et du goût uniques d'un vin de Madère «fait maison». Le raisin utilisé provient de vignes cultivées à la main sur de petites parcelles appelées «poios»,

soutenues par des murs de pierre sur les flancs abrupts de la montagne.

Connu sous le nom d'«Or blanc», la canne à sucre a fait la réputation de Madère aux XV^e et XVI^e siècles. Aujourd'hui, 172 ha sont occupés par sa culture, et la distillerie de Porto da Cruz produit du rhum agricole qui se déguste notamment avec une touche de miel et du citron pressé; c'est la poncha, boisson typique de Madère que nous ne manquerons pas d'apprécier tout au long du séjour: après l'effort, le réconfort!

Santana, où nous poserons nos valises pour deux jours, sera notre camp de base pour les randonnées à venir. Située sur un plateau côtier à 436 m d'altitude, c'est l'une des principales localités de la côte nord. Déclarée réserve de biosphère de l'Unesco depuis 2011, elle abrite un patrimoine historique unique, les palheiros. Ces originales maisons de forme triangulaire et aux toits en chaume sont considérées comme un des symboles les plus représentatifs de l'île.

Au départ d'Achada do Teixeira, un sentier empierré escarpé - qui permettait autrefois de rallier la capitale Funchal - donne accès au Pico Ruivo (1862 m), point culminant de Madère. Par beau temps, la vue à 360 degrés est magnifique sur l'ensemble de l'île. Puis la traversée des crêtes, par un chemin parfois aérien longeant une levada et empruntant quelques tunnels creusés dans la montagne, permet de rejoindre le Pico do Arieiro qui culmine à 1818 m. Les paysages au relief déchiqueté, aux roches multicolores, recouverts de genêts jaunes et d'Echium candicans violette - vipérine de Madère d'une incroyable beauté - sont tout particulièrement grandioses.

LEVADAS, UN TRAVAIL DE TITAN

Du dénivelé, encore du dénivelé au menu de cette nouvelle journée qui va nous emmener du Pico das Pedras à Sao Jorge par un joli sentier tracé au milieu d'une forêt remontant aux origines de l'île qui traverse le parc forestier de Queimadas. Bruyères arborescentes, lauriers de Madère, un véritable éden follement luxuriant situé à environ 850 m d'altitude classé au patrimoine mondial naturel de l'Unesco. Notre itinéraire longe ensuite la Levada do Caldeirao Verde, puis la Levada Caldeirao do Inferno où



Formées par des roches volcaniques, les piscines naturelles de Porto Moniz sont l'incontournable de cette ville pittoresque.

se succèdent cascades, petits tunnels et passages plutôt vertigineux. A la lumière de nos lampes frontales on s'enfonce dans la noirceur presque absolue, au milieu des flaques qu'on tente tant bien que mal d'éviter tout en prenant bien soin de ne pas se cogner la tête à la voûte des tunnels. Par endroits les levadas sont vraiment taillées à flanc de falaise et le sentier qui serpente au-dessus du vide procure quelques sueurs froides à certains. Mais on ne se lassera jamais de cette vue toujours autant remarquable. La randonnée nous conduit au cœur d'anciennes bouches éruptives résultant de l'effondrement d'une chambre magmatique provoqué par l'expulsion de gaz et de lave. Les parois rocheuses sont couvertes de mousses épaisses, de fougères, d'orchidées... C'est sublime!

De Boaventura, petit village qui essaime ses maisons au flanc d'une colline très verdoyante séparant deux vallées, un court transfert pour Lombo do Urzal va nous permettre de découvrir la source de la Levada dos Tornos qui amène l'eau du nord vers le sud de l'île. Inaugurée en 1966 et longue de plus de 100km, cette levada compte parmi les plus importants canaux d'irrigation de Madère. La randonnée se déroule dans un cadre naturel exceptionnel, au cœur d'un site parmi les plus préservés et paisibles de l'île parcouru par d'innombrables ruisseaux qui dévalent ensuite la pente pour se transformer en cascades. Au fur et à mesure, entourés du vert exubérant de la nature, fascinés par la splendeur de la laurisilva (forêt dense de lauriers) et des plantes endémiques de Madère, nous nous délecterons de toute cette beauté que nous offre cet environnement.

ESCALE-DÉTENTE À PORTO MONIZ

Changement complet de décor mais toujours autant de dénivelé positif pour cette nouvelle étape qui mène à la station balnéaire de Porto Moniz. Ce sera même la plus escarpée du voyage; l'île de Madère est vraiment le paradis des randonneurs. C'est au travers d'une forêt primaire classée au patrimoine mondial par l'Unesco que se fera l'ascension pour atteindre le plateau Paul da Serra depuis Chao da Ribeira. S'étendant sur une zone de 24km² à environ 1500m d'altitude, c'est la plus grande surface relativement plate alors que tout autour le relief est sacrément accidenté. Couvert de prairies parsemées de majestueux lauriers centenaires - dont certains datent d'une époque antérieure à la découverte de l'île -, c'est un véritable havre de paix et de silence qui se prête parfaitement à la relaxation.

Bien protégé par une coulée de lave qui s'allonge en direction d'un îlot (l'Ilheu Mole), Porto Moniz est le seul port abrité de la côte nord. On y pratiqua la chasse à la baleine jusqu'en 1981. Depuis, le village s'est reconverti dans le tourisme, les maisons de pêcheurs ont disparues mais l'endroit, entre les imposantes montagnes et l'océan, est très plaisant. D'origine volcanique, formées au cours des millénaires par le refroidissement de la lave, les piscines naturelles de Porto Moniz sont l'une des principales attractions de Madère. La physionomie naturelle de ces bassins permet à l'océan d'y pénétrer en permanence et la qualité de l'eau est excellente compte tenu de son renouvellement incessant.

L'envie de pouvoir farnienter est forte mais il faudra patienter jusqu'en fin d'après-midi pour pouvoir bénéficier des bienfaits de l'océan. 600m de dénivelé positif et surtout plus de 1000m de descente sont au menu de cette nouvelle escapade prévue sur la côte au nord-ouest de l'île. //

[Aventure à suivre dans le prochain numéro du newSpecial!](#)

Aus Rainer Maria Rilke

„LARENOPFER“ 1895



VOLKSWEISE

Mich rührt so sehr
böhmischen Volkes Weise,
schleicht sie ins Herz sich leise,
macht sie es schwer.

Wenn ein Kind sacht
singt beim Kartoffeljäten,
klingt dir sein Lied im späten
Traum noch der Nacht.

Magst du auch sein
weit über Land gefahren,
fällt es dir doch nach Jahren
stets wieder ein.

//

FOLK MELODIES

Bohemian folk tunes move me
deeply as they softly steal
into the heart and make it feel
a wistful melancholy.

When in potato fields a child
while weeding gently sings,
that melody in late dreams rings
within you true and mild.

And even if you travel far
to distant lands, the tune so dear
comes back to you year after year,
recalling who you are.

//

AIRS DE BOHÈME

Elles me touchent à l'extrême
les chansons du peuple bohème,
qui se glissent dans le cœur,
le grevant de langueur.

Quand un enfant chante
doucement en sarclant dans les champs,
écoute dans tes rêves ce même chant
tard dans la nuit résonnant.

Et même si tu pars en voyage
en des terres éloignées,
te suivront cet air cette image
au fil des années.

//

Flowering potato field.
Rilke loved the Bohemian countryside
where he spent his summers.



TRANSLATION BY ALFRED DE ZAYAS,
UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS
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