

Opening Speech

by Jana Jiroutová

Dear guests, colleagues, friends in art and art education,
welcome to our virtual international conference!

It is our great pleasure to see you all here, ready to get in touch, to share, to talk about the area that is so dear to all of us. The area of art and education through art.

The global situation that some of us are now experiencing for the second time this year, has presented us with many challenges. Back in March when the first state of emergency was declared, our lives changed almost at an instance. The new reality has affected every part of it including, of course, also art education.

However, it is the great character quality of Petra, my dear colleague and the head of the Czech Section of INSEA, to turn every challenge into an opportunity. And so, she did with this one, too. If we can't come together physically let's do it virtually. And if we can do it virtually, why not do it internationally – she thought.

And that is precisely the objective of this conference: to come together, to connect with one another no matter the geographical distance between us because, really, thanks to new media, there is no distance, and let's share our thoughts and good practice of education through art in this unique yet global situation. Let's create art and enjoy art together. Because how often does it happen to us, the global community of art educators and artists that we would occupy ourselves with the exact same theme at the exact same time.

So, my message to all us is to really take the opportunity of our international gathering here and let's connect. Let's work together with the canvas presented to us by the global pandemic and let's paint on it a group image of what art and education through art can be in such an unprecedented time.

Live Discussion Rooms and Acknowledgement

Our conference is primarily not live-streamed which is great in that sense that we don't miss out anything. We can all see, hear or read everything and as many times as we like. But, there is a section of the website that is titled General Discussions where everybody who has registered, be they active or passive participants, can get in touch and talk. There is also a big section with workshops where some of them take place in the real time and are streamed.

Foremost, I would like to invite you to the three discussion rooms that will be live. One is hosted by the president of InSEA, Glen Coutts, and the prime topic is the membership in InSEA and the benefits of it. You are all very much invited to drop-in any question you might have about InSEA, its aims, what it does, how it operates, how you can contribute and how to join the worldwide community of

education through art. The second discussion room is hosted by the USSEA Board of Directors who invite everyone to join art education scholars from the United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA) who will share their unique and shared challenges resulting from teaching and researching practices in the era of COVID-19. In the third room hosted by members of the InSEA European Regional Council, you are all invited to share and explore possibilities for Post Pandemic art teaching with the hosts who will offer insights from five different European countries perspective. Please, see the section with conference program for more details regarding the date and time of the discussion rooms.

To conclude, I would like to express our deep gratitude to all of you for taking the time and participating in this conference. Our sincere thanks go to the keynote speakers who selflessly agreed to share their great experience and expertise with us. And we would also like to thank our partners who helped us along the way to organise this conference, namely: our alma matter and the seat of the Czech Section of INSEA – Palacky University Olomouc here in the Czech Republic, our colleagues from the Olomouc Museum of Art, our colleagues from USSEA, from the Canterbury Christ Church University in UK, and to our colleagues from InSEA who were so generous as to endorse our event. Our thanks also go to the scientific and organising committee for volunteering to help us with the conference. We would like to extend our thanks to all the volunteers especially to our Ph.D. students who helped us create the visual style of the conference and the promo videos. Last but not least, our special thanks go to the artists who offered to perform for us at the opening of our conference.

So, now make yourselves comfortable in your homes, offices, anywhere else you are right now.

And enjoy the conference which is now officially opened! Cheers to all of us!