

# Expanding the field of social arts and design

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Cross Media Arts represents an expanded field in which artistic disciplines extend beyond their traditional boundaries to engage with other areas of knowledge, as well as alternative forms of representation and societal intervention. This phenomenon is particularly evident in diverse forms of collaboration between creatives, makers, stakeholders and communities, aimed at taking action towards socio-ecological renewal and cultural cohesion, both of which are increasingly urgent in today's context.

According to these principles, the opening four chapters of the Cross Media Arts 2025 edition, written by invited authors, present a constellation of artistic processes committed to social, ecological and epistemic transformation. In direct dialogue with the leitmotif of *creative assemblages for social impact*, this art-making transcends disciplinary boundaries, cultivating a multiplicity of perspectives, shared principles and collaborative processes within a web of relations and interactions, shaped by human and non-human variables, with the potential to generate new actions and realities.

Hans Kalliwoda presents the *BeeTotems for RefuBees* project, where public art, activism and ecology converge into living sculptures that assemble pollinators and human communities, proposing cities as significant spaces for biodiversity.

Mimi Hapig and Michael Wittmann share the experience of Habibi. Works, an intercultural collaborative workspace in Greece that works with refugee and local populations, creating spaces of dignity and creative inclusion.

Ivan Txaparro, founder of Resonar Lab, presents a nomadic and decolonial practice that integrates music, art and participatory design in itinerant actions for ecosocial justice and community empowerment between Madrid and Berlin.

These projects are introduced by a reflection from Alastair Fuad-Luke, whose extensive experience in activist and collaborative design proposes the notion of *affective encounters* as a driver of societal transformation. This approach reverberates the dominant theme running through the presented projects, which prioritise the consolidation of relational well-being between *actors* and *actants*, through transdisciplinary and situated practices deeply rooted in community contexts. Grounded in principles of

ecological and epistemic justice, these initiatives assert artistic creation as an act of resistance, care and transformative imagination.

These relational art initiatives are followed by a remarkable collection of selected projects, practices and research that cross the boundaries of art, design, technology, education and social action. This part of the current Cross Media Arts edition is organised into four sections, offering a broad panorama of innovative proposals that demonstrate how interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity, alongside transmedia expression, can serve as forms of resistance, care, transformation and belonging. Common principles and recurring notions are emphasised, including active participation, more-than-human agency, critical resistance, materiality as a mediator of social and environmental concerns, decolonial practices, enabling situated technologies, and interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary methodologies. These dynamics traverse and connect the projects, giving form to an assemblage of creative practices oriented towards social impact.

The first section, dedicated to *education, inclusion and creative empowerment*, explores transformative pedagogical practices embedded in participatory and inclusive methodologies, bringing together intergenerational projects, artistic actions in vulnerable contexts and proposals that encourage sustainability through creation, experimentation and dialogue. Case studies include experiences in schools, prisons and urban neighbourhoods using photography, performance, natural ink printing or modular typography as tools to inspire active citizenship and the construction of shared identities. This session shows how art can act as a vehicle for listening, mediation and collective learning, reinforcing the right to cultural and educational participation.

The second section, themed around *sustainability, agency and material care*, gathers practices rooted in artistic and craft-based creation that challenge productivist and ecological paradigms, promoting forms of cohabitation with the more-than-human world. The featured projects recover ancestral and local knowledge as a means to rethink how we inhabit and regenerate the planet. With a strong ecofeminist and climate justice component, these proposals bring together agroecology, biodesign, craftivism and collaborative practices as tools of resistance against dominant extractivist logics. These are practices related to specific places and the rhythms of other species, questioning anthropocentrism and proposing alter-relational ecologies based on care and interdependence.

The third section, focused on *participation, place and creative intervention*, features site-specific proposals and collaborative methodologies to transform public and social space through participatory art. Community-based sculptures, performances, actions involving found

objects and shared gardens are some of the creative practices presented, where collective processes take precedence over final outcomes. These contributions reveal the vocation of art as a tool for dialogue, citizenship and intersubjectivity in territories marked by inequality, abandonment or gentrification. This section shows how public and relational art can become a field of collective reinvention of ways of living together.

Finally, the fourth section explores the intersection between *technology, inclusion and situated innovation*, bringing together projects that combine digital art, speculative design and participatory practices with critical attention to context, the body and the ethics of relation. Immersive technologies, provocative artefacts, augmented reality and interaction design are here mobilised not as spectacle, but as tools for listening, empathy and social engagement. These projects question the boundaries between the physical and the digital, the human and the technological, stimulating participants to co-create more inclusive, accessible and relational futures. This section highlights the potential of situated technology to generate meaningful encounters and social transformation.

Across its four sections, Cross Media Arts 2025 affirms itself as a space where the arts and design do not merely narrate resistance and utopia, but embody concrete ways of doing, caring and imagining together a common ground. In a time of ecological, social and political upheaval, this edition of the Cross Media Arts series brings together creative projects that act as catalysts for co-creation and renewal. The projects brought together in this volume, anchored in cross-disciplinarity and strong community engagement, not only invoke multiple knowledges, experiences and territories, but also propose new ways of thinking and doing, expanding the field of social art and design as a space for listening, belonging and emancipation.