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CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

CREATIVE
COMPASS
GEORGIA



CREATIVE CONNECTIONS

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CREATIVE COMPASS GEORGIA

Overview

Creative Compass Georgia

Creative Compass Georgia (CCG) is an EU funded four-year project which is implemented and co-funded by the Goethe-Institut Georgien. It supports the further development of cultural and creative industries (CCI) across Georgia and it thereby, combines a contribution to cultural diversity and further economic growth.

Detailed information about Creative Compass Georgia can be found on the website:

www.goethe.de/CreativeCompassGeorgia

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CREATIVE CONNECTIONS 2024

Creative Compass Georgia designed the “Creative Connections” grant scheme to encourage knowledge exchange and promotion of cooperation within the cultural and creative sectors across regions of Georgia. This initiative wasn’t just about stimulating professional collaboration and regional mobility among cultural professionals; it sought to unlock and leverage the creative potential existing in every corner of the country.

The Creative Connections grant scheme sparked a wave of creative endeavors across the regions of Georgia, successfully nurturing a vibrant networking environment in cultural and creative industries of the country.

Creative Connections empowered independent artists, creatives, cultural professionals, community leaders, and civil society organizations to navigate challenges and seize opportunities across Georgia, excluding activities in Tbilisi.



The program unfolded in two directions:

- **Creative Connections by Individuals**
- **Creative Connections by Organisations:**
Lot 1: Support for creative spaces and cultural organisations
Lot 2: Support for host residencies

- In response to the pressing challenges facing the CCI sector, Creative Connections prioritized mobilities linked to co-creation and co-production with local stakeholders focusing on exploring local creative potential and enhancing creative spaces.
- This grant scheme not only supported individual professionals, creative spaces, and art residencies within Georgia financially– it promoted innovation and collaboration to strengthen the resilience of the CCI ecosystem sustainably. Above all: Creative Connections celebrated their contribution to a vibrant cultural scene in Georgia!
- In total, 24 Creative Connections were funded, linking individuals across nine regions of Georgia and fostering a spirit of co-creation and local involvement. Participants

gained invaluable insights from local practices, which they then applied to their own projects and contexts.

As the first projects began to take root, Creative Connections laid the groundwork for something truly extraordinary: it opened doors to new opportunities, knowledge exchange, and cooperation. The diverse gatherings and visionary ideas developed into a dynamic network aimed to leave a lasting impact on Georgia’s creative landscape.

This publication chronicles the captivating journeys of 24 Creative Connections spanning the entire country - from inspiring mobilities and art residencies nestled in the Tushetian Mountains to the meticulous craft of wooden-boat modeling in the vibrant art studios along the Black Sea coast. These projects highlight the creative spirit thriving across Georgia.

CORE ACCENTS

Mobility

The core aspect of Creative Connections was to support mobilities across the country – creatives and artists travelled from their permanent residence or workplace to another part of the country – to seek for collaborations and synergies with other cultural professionals and artists.

This mobility component supported exchange of knowledge and contributed to the creation of new professional networks as well as allowed local communities to benefit from new opportunities and knowledge.

Co-creation

Another important accent of Creative Connections was to foster co-creation processes in the regions of Georgia - involving collaboration among project authors and local beneficiaries. The scheme prioritized funding initiatives with strong co-creation elements aimed at exploring and discovering creative potential of professional intersections among participating creatives. Thus, innovative partnerships and collective creativity providing new impulses to the local context and CCI ecosystems were supported.

Engagement of Local community

In order to explore creative potential and contribute to addressing challenges of CCIs of Georgia’s regions, it’s essential to engage local communities in the activities and build long-lasting networks.

The project funded impactful and collaborative initiatives, creating a significant level of ownership and empowering individuals through skill-building workshops and joint events with integration of local community’s cultural knowledge and expertise.

Through this, Creative Connections contributed to building trust among locals and creatives from different parts of the country.

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS IN NUMBERS



24
Awards



1100
Beneficiaries



4000
Event
Attendees



45
Locations

- August 2024 to October 2024
- 17 Individual mobilities
- 5 Cultural spaces and organisations
- 2 Art residencies

99 applicants from the whole country applied for funding within the open grant call. Based on jury assessment results, 24 grants were awarded to creative initiatives in nine regions of Georgia.

Ambrolauri

Baghdati

Beghleti

Bodzauri

Bolnisi

Chiatura

Chkhorotsku

Chokhatauri (2x)

Dartlo

Danisparauli

Diklo (2x)

Ghebi

Glola

Goderdzi pass

Gori (3x)

Kakhati

Khoni

Khulo

Kobuleti (2x)

Kulbaki

Kutaisi (2x)

Lailashi

Lanchkhuti

Lasuriashi

Machkhaani

Martkopi (2x)

Mestia

Nikortsminda

Nokalakevi

Omalo (3x)

Ozurgeti

Pankisi

Poti (4x)

Senaki

Shenako

Shroma

Shuapkho

Tago

Telavi

Tkibuli

Tserovani

Tsvrimi

Ushguli

Vani

Zugdidi (3x)

Map of Creative Connections Activities

This map shows locations where diverse Creative Connections events happened.



A JOURNEY OF CREATIVITY: 24 STORIES

Individual Mobilities

17 individual subgrants were implemented in total. They focused on in-country mobility by independent artists, creatives, community leaders, and cultural professionals. These projects offered opportunities for research, co-creation, production, and event hosting.

A key requirement was the willingness and readiness to (temporarily) relocate across the diverse regions of Georgia. Each project team consisted of at least two participants who collaborated and executed these initiatives outside their usual geographical area, enhancing cross-regional engagement and creativity.

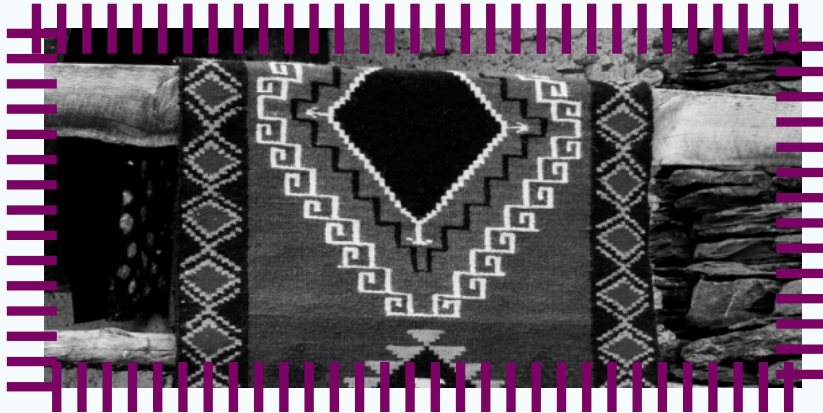
IN THE COLORFUL ASCENT OF ORNAMENTS

Individual mobility of Ani Melikidze and Natia Karkhilaure to Tusheti

The project “In the Colorful Ascent of Ornaments” connected two young cultural workers, Ani Melikidze and Natia Karkhilaure, with Tushetian craft makers. Local handcrafters and tailors were introduced to mobile photography tips, lighting techniques, and composition through dynamic knowledge exchange and engaging masterclasses in various villages. These insights allowed them to capture photos of their unique products like traditional Tushetian carpets, felt, and ceramics. Based on the feedback received during the workshops, Ani and Natia shared suggestions for social media and marketing to the participants, which were enthusiastically

received. As a result, two Instagram pages were created by local small business owners.

Furhtermore, the project increased awareness of Tushetian culture by creating a documentary digital photo book “The way to the clouds - Photo story about Tusheti”. This involved captivating photo stories of daily life and interviewing locals, including the ethnographer Nugzar Idoidze, who provided insights into Tushetian traditions and ornaments. The photo materials created during the project serve as a valuable resource for promoting and raising awareness about the region.



MOVING MINI-MUSEUM OF MACHKHAANI

Individual mobility project of Nana Bagalishvili and Ketevan Molashvili to Kvemo Machkhaani

Nana Bagalishvili and Ketevan Molashvili revived the history of Kvemo Machkhaani by creating a mobile mini-museum and uniting local community around the cultural activities in Machkhaani old theater.

This unique mobile museum, crafted from archival materials and enriched with oral histories, became a traveling storyteller, attracting more than 100 people from Signaghi and neighboring settlements.

While Kvemo Machkhaani was already known to some extent within Georgian society, the project unearthed hidden fragments of its history. Researcher Tamar Sikharulidze gathered archival information about the Kvemo Machkhaani village and theater. Ten exhibition

stories were created, three additional oral stories were documented from the local population describing how once local villagers united around the idea of having shared cultural space and creative initiatives.

The final festival started with a cultural tour of the village, followed by a village sketching workshop with participation of artists from Tbilisi and the local community.

Participants had the opportunity to visit an exhibition showcasing:

- The pre-Soviet occupation histories of Kvemo Machkhaani and Kiziki.



- The founding of literacy societies in Kiziki.
- The establishment of the theaters in Bodbe and Machkhaani.
- The creation of the first hospital.
- The opening of taverns and the depot bank.
- The role of clergy in village development and how the people of Kiziki organized around their own initiatives.

At the end of the day, Inola Gurgulia’s songs were performed by the singer’s family members in the old Machkhaani Theater. New initiatives for a new publication and a new concert emerged at the festival.

“Archival materials confirm that the village had a school, a library, trading shops, a vibrant creative life, and strong self-governance. It is important for regional leaders of Georgian civil society organizations and representatives of the creative sector to reconsider that self-organization can provide solutions to existing problems. Knowing good historical examples of this can serve as a helpful catalyst for starting this process.”

Nana Bagalishvili,
Kvemo Machkhaani, October, 2024

TUNG OIL RESEARCH PROJECT

Individual mobility of Bakar Migriauli and Nika Kevkhishvili to Guria

Tung oil research project involved an expedition of Bakar Migriauli and Nika Kevkhishvili from Tbilisi to Guria, Georgia, to explore the production potential of tung tree fruit. The main objectives were to independently research tung oil production, to gather insights from locals experienced in this field, and to establish an initial infrastructure for drying tung fruit. It raised public awareness and identified local partners for future creative production initiatives. Key results included initiating sustainable, high-quality tung oil production, developing essential processing infrastructure, and empowering

locals and school students through workshops and hands-on training. Different activities like visits, meetings, lectures, and practical workshops, engaged community members and facilitated the installation of a technical dryer to boost production efficiency. The multi-pronged approach addressed both environmental and economic needs, promoted sustainable resource use, and encouraged local involvement in creative production processes. Knowledge exchange among local workshop participants fostered a broader understanding of sustainable production.

“Community members played specific roles based on their expertise, including a local family providing a drying site and specialists sharing drying and squeezing techniques. School students participated in workshops, gaining practical eco-friendly skills. Clear communication and tangible benefits, like financial prospects and skills development, fostered trust and commitment, ensuring the community’s active involvement in exploring sustainable practices.”

Bakar Migriauli,
Chokhatauri, September 2024

SHOP FOR EVERYTHING

Individual Mobility of Ilia Makharadze and Tinatin Tsurkava to Gori

“Shop for Everything” – a mobility project of Ilia Makharadze and Tinatin Tsurkava from Tbilisi to Gori united the local community through creative workshops. Teaming up with “Art House Gori”, the project engaged artists of all ages, from 17 to 60, fostering a vibrant network. Most participants were seasoned artists, but for two, it was their first exhibition experience.

The workshop culminated in an exhibition featuring 16 art pieces, ten by local artists. The artworks ranged from traditional mediums like clay and textiles to innovative pieces like a voice

sensor installation and a comic created with a recording device. Some works were collaborative, and some artists produced multiple pieces. The exhibition space was thoughtfully designed to reflect the project’s concept.

Currently, the project is in the realization phase, focusing on negotiations and future collaborations. Establishing effective communication channels between participants and organizers is key to ongoing success.

“We are currently in the stage of realization of the artworks, which depends on the negotiations and agreements arising from our concept and is carried out in different periods of time. It is also important that we establish and select communication channels between participants and organizers and think about future forms of cooperation.”

Ilia Makharadze,
Gori, October 2024

THE ZERO-WASTE SCULPTURE EXHIBITION AND WORKSHOP

Individual mobility of Giorgi Arziani and Nino Chechelashvili to Poti

The Zero-Waste Sculpture Exhibition and Workshop successfully raised ecological awareness and inspired sustainable practices in Poti, a community facing significant environmental challenges such as air pollution and solid waste pollution. The initiative engaged over 50 participants, primarily local youth, through co-creation workshops, innovative video-audio installation, discussions, and a competitive exhibition of 15 zero-waste sculptures. Three winners were acknowledged for their outstanding contributions. This competitive element added an exciting dimension to the workshops and motivated participants to push the boundaries of their creativity. A discussion on the importance of green transitions and the role of creative approaches in addressing ecological challenges was held. This

session brought together local community members, youth, and stakeholders to share perspectives on Poti’s environmental issues and explore potential solutions.

This project empowered participants with knowledge and skills in upcycling and recycling, fostering a sense of community ownership over environmental issues. The exhibition’s outdoor setting connected the artworks to nature, emphasizing the importance of green transitions. The project established a partnership with a social Café Limena, another Creative Connections’ beneficiary (see page 28), further ensuring the project’s alignment with the community’s needs and its potential for lasting impact.



ARTISANAL MOVEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

Individual Mobility of **Inga Kibiria** and **Manana Mikashavidze** to **Tserovani**

The Poti Art Residency team consisting of Inga Kibiria and Manana Mikashavidze ventured to Tserovani for the “Artisanal Movement for the Future” project, aiming to connect with local self-taught artists and craftsmen, many displaced during the 2008 war. With the support of the organization “Synergy”, they transformed the Youth Culture Center into a lively creative space.

The workshops were a blend of innovation and tradition. In “Making Decorative Baskets,” participants crafted multifunctional items from

recycled materials. “Casting Decorative Tiles” brought nature indoors with plaster plant imprints. “Block Printing on Fabric” turned plain tote bags into vibrant, personalized art pieces.

The project culminated in an exhibition, drawing in relatives, community members, and curious passersby. The space buzzed with excitement and discussions about future collaborations and business opportunities. The project wrapped up with a donation of art supplies to the youth center, ensuring the creative journey continues.



“Our third workshop focused on ‘Block Printing on Fabric.’ This session was eagerly anticipated by the participants, who were tasked with creating decorative patterns on specially sewn tote bags using their own designs and either block prints or other techniques. After some initial hesitation and tentative first steps, we soon transformed plain white bags into vibrant and interesting decorative pieces.”

Inga Kibiria,
Tserovani, October 2024

REGIONAL FILM SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Individual Mobility of **Irine Zhordania**, **Tina Lagidze**, and **Maradia Tsaava**

The Cinematographers’ Group’s mobility project, traveling from Tbilisi to various locations such as Nokalakevi, Shroma, Khulo, Kobuleti, Baghdati, and others, sought to introduce alternative cultural content to Georgian regions with scarce cultural offerings. Through 20 film screenings in various locations followed by discussions, it engaged locals with limited exposure to diverse perspectives. By showcasing Georgian, European, and American films, the project addressed human rights, equality, and freedom.

The project offered new perspectives on social issues and fostered critical thinking. Each screening was followed by discussions led by knowledgeable

moderators, facilitating conversations on civic engagement, free expression, and informed citizenship. Success was measured by participant engagement and feedback as well as the impact on the audience’s understanding of these topics. Ultimately, the project created a platform for open dialogue, using cinema’s narrative power to inspire reflection on pressing social issues and encourage positive change. The project engaged over 500 locals across various regions, with primary beneficiaries including families, youth, and community leaders. In addition to screenings, meetings and discussions with famous directors further engaged community members in dialogue.

FILM WORKSHOP FOR TEENAGERS

Individual mobility of **Nino Shvelidze**, **Lika Glurjidze**, **Alexander Gabelia**, and **Giorgi Javakhishvili** to **Bolnisi**

The “Film Workshop for Teenagers in Bolnisi” was a captivating one-month journey into the world of cinema for 14-17-year-old schoolchildren. Spanning eight enriching sessions, each lasting two to three hours, the workshop blended theory with hands-on practice. Helmed by members of the CinExpress editorial team—Lika Glurjidze, Alexander Gabelia, Giorgi Javakhishvili, and Nino Shvelidze—the program also featured inspiring interactions with film industry luminaries like director Aleksandre Koberidze, cinematographer Giorgi Shvelidze, art director Aniko Iakobashvili, and philosopher Avtandil Dzamashvili.

Structured around three core components, the workshop offered:

- Enlightening lectures and experience sharing from film professionals.
- Engaging film screenings followed by thoughtful discussions.
- Practical activities that brought cinematic concepts to life.

Participants delved into the rich history of Georgian and world cinema, explored the nuances of feature

films and documentaries, and acquired practical filmmaking skills under the guidance of a film director, art director, and cinematographer. They watched and dissected four films, enhancing their understanding and appreciation of cinema.

The idea, born during a 2022 visit to Cinema Bolnisi, became a reality through this project. The project team succeeded in highlighting the significance of local cinema and inspired teenagers to cherish and preserve this cultural heritage. As a result, a strong interest in cinema is maintained, establishing a community of young film enthusiasts.

“A significant achievement of this project was initiating discussions about the need for municipal cinemas in the rural areas. These conversations highlighted a critical gap: filmmakers are creating meaningful content, yet many audiences lack opportunities to viewing these works. We learned that cinema holds a special place in regional communities, where people deeply value opportunities to engage with cultural content. Our screenings provided not only entertainment but also a platform for meaningful discussions on relatable social issues, showing us that film and culture should be accessible to all.

By addressing this issue, we bridged the divide between culture and community in modern Georgia, ensuring that the voices of both filmmakers and audiences resonate together.”

Irine Zhordania,
Baghdati, September 2024

“MI ZI INANA”

Individual mobility project of **Maka Kiladze** and **Zviad Sherazadashvili** to Gori

The Individual Mobility project “MI ZI INANA” showcased the collaborative work of multimedia artist Maka Kiladze and archaeologist Zviad Sherazadashvili. The collaboration advanced contemporary dance, art, and performance while sparking interest in Georgia’s ancient history and culture. The project successfully promoted largely unknown Mtkvari-Araksi culture, intertwining history, culture, and contemporary art.

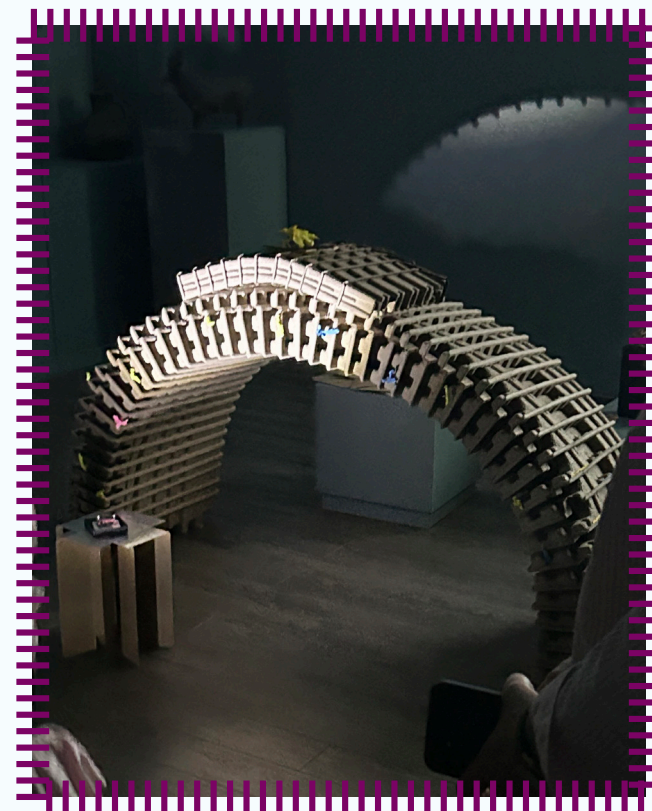
“As an artist, discovering the museum and the culture of Mtkvari-Araksi was truly enlightening and left a profound impression on me. It was a unique experience, especially since it marked my debut as a performer. The installation I created, brought to life with lights, was interpreted by the guests in their own personal ways. This project revealed that our visitors connected with us both as artists and as audience members. Collaborating with Mr. Zviad Sherazadashvili was incredible experience. Moving forward, I plan to incorporate the insightful lectures into my future projects.”

Maka Kiladze,
Gori, October 2024

Project activities included the screening and discussion of the movie “One Drop of Blue,” an exhibition titled “Mi zi Inana,” a public lecture by archaeologist Zviad Sherazadashvili, and two origami workshops “Magic Cubes” involving locals. These events captivated the community, drawing over 500 participants, including families, youth, and community leaders. Also, it promoted the Gori Historical and Ethnographical Museum as a space for rethinking and rediscovering history and culture.



The project encouraged open dialogue, using cinema and art to inspire reflection on social issues. It emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, blending the perspectives of artists and archaeologists. The initiative concluded with a vibrant exhibition, showcasing recycled materials and innovative art forms, leaving a lasting impact on the local community.



“LIANDAGI” - SEWING WORKSHOPS

Individual Mobility of **Lela Chikhladze** and **Mzia Lashkhi** to Poti and Tkibuli

Textile designer Lela Chikhladze from Tkibuli and experienced light industry technologist Mzia Lashkhi from Tbilisi teamed up to offer an innovative sewing workshop and exhibitions in Poti and Tkibuli, celebrating the cities’ post-industrial identities. “Liandagi,” the sewing workshop positioned as a hub for eco-friendly fashion and design enthusiasts. Under the mentorship of Mzia Lashkhi, stakeholders from Poti and Tkibuli were introduced to cutting, sewing, and pattern-making techniques for small-scale textile production. The project elevated awareness of eco-friendly sewing and the use of second-hand textiles.

“Involving young people brings new life and energy to our work, and we must emphasize that this project has also proven very attractive to people over 60, whose motivation and enthusiasm were contagious. One beneficiary, a public-school teacher, while participating in our course, brought out her mother’s hand-sewn sewing machine from the basement, fixed it with the help of a mechanic, and, after the project concluded, happily told us that she is now independently continuing to sew household linens at home.”

Lela Chikhladze,
Poti, October 2024

The initiative involved the local population inclusively, irrespective of age, gender, ability, or ethnicity. To strengthen local engagement, the project employed a culture and methods of voluntary collaboration. The training sessions were followed by a moving exhibition in Tkibuli, held in lesser-known locations where such exhibitions are rarely offered. The locals’ feedback and comments on the exhibited works and the purpose of the exhibition showcased their genuine interest in novelties and new ways of creatively representing their communities. The project concluded with a final exhibition in Poti, showcasing the city’s maritime background.



CERAMIC, SCULPTURE, AND MOSAIC WORKSHOP SERIES FOR KAKHATI YOUTH

Individual mobility of **Nana Jabua** and **Nana Makatsaria** to Zugdidi

Nana Jabua, the head of the Sculpture and Ceramics Club at the “Center of Community Education and Empowerment” in the village of Kakhati, which is densely populated by IDPs, and Nana Makatsaria, a mosaic specialist, united to engage school children and youth in creative activities. The project used the knowledge and experience of the team to stimulate interest of local students in art and creativity.

Weekly series of art workshops were successfully organized, in which children, young people, and women learned about and participated in various creative processes. Led by both team members, the interactive sessions allowed participants to explore different materials, to gain new skills, and to create their own works. These included sculpture, ceramics, and mosaic making.

Project participants travelled to Zugdidi for various art workshops, including the ceramic studio “Orkol” during which they were introduced to ceramic clay, guided by famous artist Robert Absandze. Participants created their own clay works and learned about the creative process.

The project promoted creative knowledge and skills among children and young people, it developed and encouraged their artistic talents. It facilitated cultural integration by acting as a bridge between the host and displaced communities.

The workshops culminated in a vibrant display of art, showcasing the collective creativity of the participants.

This project not only enriched the local culture but also created a lasting bond among community members, emphasizing the importance of art in fostering unity and personal growth.



“ULEVI FEST”

Individual mobility of **Nika Gogiashvili**, **Marita Gogichaishvili**, and **Io Loriashvili** to Martkopi

The “Ulevi Fest” music event series, organized by a team of Nika Gogiashvili, Marita Gogichaishvili, and Io Loriashvili, created an inclusive cultural platform in Martkopi, Georgia. Here, residents and visitors engaged in creative expression and community-building through various artistic and musical activities. The festival bridged generational and geographic divides, involving participants from Martkopi, surrounding villages, and Tbilisi with music performances, art workshops, and interactive experiences.



A large-scale festival was organized in Martkopi attracted around 400-450 attendees through door-to-door invitations and a primary communication with the local population.

The event featured live music, jam sessions, and workshops in ceramics, illustration, and theater, designed to engage people of all ages. Workshops provided hands-on creative opportunities, while live performances offered a space for artistic expression. The event also included food stalls and decorative



installations, enhancing the atmosphere and community involvement.

In addition to the main festival, Ulevi Fest organized meetings with artists Lexo Ratiani, Misho from Mishvardi, and Niko Gorgoshadze in the Ulevi studio. The success of the initial event led to additional smaller events, further strengthening local engagement and collaboration. The festival created a vibrant cultural experience that resonated with both residents and visitors.



PROMOTING THE INTEGRATION OF PANKISI YOUTH BY STRENGTHENING CREATIVE COOPERATION

Individual Mobility of **Nino Gogiashvili** and **Asmat Khangoshvili** to Pankisi

“The youth’s active participation led to the creation of future event ideas, such as organizing literature performances and inviting university representatives and organizing film screening, which demonstrates the project’s sustainability as the participants are now driving future initiatives based on their experiences.”

Nino Gogiashvili,
Pankisi, October 2024

THE LAST STORYTELLERS

Individual Mobility of **Salome Vepkhvadze** and **Aleksandre Eliosidze** to regions

“The Last Storytellers” research project of film director Salome Vepkhvadze, and DJ - music selector Aleksandre Eliosidze focused on documenting and preserving the oral traditions of Georgian folklore; specifically the myths, legends, and folktales of remote villages in Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, and mountainous Adjara.

Field trips were conducted to rural Georgian villages to meet and to interview 31 rural storytellers who have preserved local oral traditions for generations. The interviews captured local myths, legends, rituals, and customs, providing valuable insights into the cultural heritage of each region. The focus was not only on the

stories themselves but also on the unique storytelling styles and regional dialects.

By capturing the stories of local elders, the project created a digital archive that ensures the continuity of Georgia’s intangible cultural heritage and global cultural exchange.

The collected stories were turned into video content maintaining cultural and linguistic nuances. This video production features interviews with storytellers including English translations as well as footage of the surrounding landscapes.

Telavi. This tour brought to life the stories of the area’s craftsmen, merchants, and apartment owners, offering a glimpse into Telavi’s multicultural past.

In partnership with the Pankisi-based Roddy Scott Foundation Center (RSF), the project facilitated a rich exchange of knowledge and creative collaboration. The initiative covered topics relevant to local context, such as shared themes between Kist and Georgian mythology, gender equality, and practical knowledge sharing in digital marketing and the art of composition and poetic performance.

The project engaged 72 boys and girls, who gained insight into the significance of their own cultural identity and shared role within the broader Georgian narrative, motivating them to seek more stories of shared history and understand the importance of coexistence.

The RSF-provided space became a hub for discussions and ideas, continuing to nurture cultural growth beyond the project’s completion.

“As a continuation of the research project, we plan to make Georgian folklore accessible to researchers, educators, and the public worldwide. This includes the creation of a dedicated website to host all the recorded stories, transcriptions, translations, and cultural resources. This digital platform will serve as a living archive.”

Salome Vepkhvadze,
Khulo, September 2024

“ULEVI CERAMICS”

Individual Mobility of **Tamar Bakradze** and **Philipe Khalvashi** to Martkopi

The “Ulevi Ceramics” mobility project by Tamar Bakradze and Philipe Khalvashi inspired artistic expression and community involvement in the village of Martkopi, Georgia, by organizing six ceramic workshops and one illustration workshop. It provided locals of all ages—children, adults, and elderly people—with the opportunity to explore their creativity, to experience the joy of creating, and to learn new techniques such as ceramics and printing.

The project introduced participants to artistic practices, it nurtured their self-expression, and it build a sense of community through shared creative experiences. Two ceramic workshops and one illustration workshop were hosted during a local music festival. The event’s lively atmosphere drew additional participants. The remaining workshops were held at a studio, offering a more focused learning environment.

By providing hands-on instruction and access to materials, a space was created in which participants could freely experiment and discover their artistic potential. For many, this was their first exposure to ceramics and printing techniques, making this experience both novel and empowering. The overwhelmingly positive response, coupled with participants expressing interest

in continuing lessons, demonstrated the success of the project in encouraging artistic exploration and community connection.

“To attract the attention of the local community, we went door-to-door in the village with volunteers from a local non-governmental organization, speaking directly to people at their doorsteps. We were often invited inside and hosted with curiosity, warmth, and hospitality. Some of the people we spoke to took an interest and joined us during the festival or later attended workshops at the studio. Ulevi has now become well-known in the village, and the workshop facilitators are sometimes recognized at the local market or on public transport. One woman who reached out to us and joined our workshop turned out to be an archaeologist and has since sent us illustrations of ancient clay techniques.”

Tamar Bakradze,
Martkopi, September 2024



CREATIVE RESIDENCY

Individual Mobility of **Zurab Tsopurashvili** and **Jumber Peikrishvili** to Shuapkho

The Creative Residency Shuapkho brought fresh opportunities to this remote mountainous community in Pshavi, where just 13 students remain in the local public school – a number that continues to shrink each year. Both, the school and the village, face a serious risk of depopulation, largely due to general socio-economic hardships in connection with limited job prospects.

The project introduced local students to the potential of art and creativity as tools for self-expression and skill development. Through multiple theoretical and practical

workshops, local students gained insights on innovative processing techniques using various materials. This hands-on experience allowed students to discover new possibilities within their community and existing local resources, building their confidence and their resilience.

By connecting these students to skills they can apply in various fields, the project empowered the village’s youth to envision a future within their own community; potentially slowing or even reversing the decline of the Pshavi population.



“The grant action significantly enhanced our educational approach and fostered connections within the local community. Engaging with students from diverse backgrounds allowed us to build a supportive network, bridging Tbilisi and regional ties. Our future plans for sustainability include ongoing collaborations with the Shuapkho school and inviting artists for workshops, as expressed by the school director. This will ensure continued engagement and development for students.”

Zurab Tsopurashvili,
Shuapkho, August 2024

“SAQSLO”

Individual Mobility of **Tamar Kalkhitashvili** and **Ana Gvelesiani** to Tusheti

The individual mobility project “Saqslo,” implemented by Tamar Kalkhitashvili and Ana Gvelesiani, revitalized traditional Tushetian crafts and contributed to the preservation of the region’s cultural heritage by re-engaging local women in age-old artisanal practices. In response to the shift away from traditional crafts due to seasonal tourism work, Saqslo provided a collaborative environment for Tushetian women, allowing them to reconnect with traditional activities such as natural wool dyeing and weaving.

The project successfully revived traditional craft techniques, strengthened community ties, and established a cultural repository through documentation. Women of different generations came together. They created and learnt from one another, reinforcing their shared experiences.

Workshops and community gatherings were organized in various Tushetian villages, including Omalo and Diklo. In total, 13 women aged 16-84 participated in communal weaving

“We worked closely with women from various villages, including Omalo, Diklo, Dartlo, and Vestomta, actively involving them in each phase of the process—from wool preparation and natural dyeing to weaving. Women such as Nazo Tataraidze, Natia Karkhilauri, Elene Karkhilauri, Tea Idoidze, Rusudan Otaridze, and others brought their unique skills and knowledge to the sessions. The elders contributed valuable insights, particularly in gathering natural dyes like local lichens, as they were familiar with the sustainable harvesting practices.”

Tamar Kalkhitashvili,
Omalo, September 2024

projects. These gatherings facilitated traditional crafting, story sharing, and discussions on community issues, preserving these interactions in an archive for future generations. Saqslo also provided materials and resources to encourage personal creative projects, culminating in a community-woven tapestry in Omalo. This tapestry symbolizes the collective efforts of the participants and serves as a tangible link between past and present, enhancing appreciation for traditional Tushetian crafts.



CREATIVE CONNECTIONS BY ORGANISATIONS

Seven subgrant initiatives were successfully implemented by creative spaces, cultural organizations, and art residencies across the country, promoting community engagement and interaction. These initiatives explored new ways to connect, co-create, and collaborate among creatives with diverse professional backgrounds and interests.

This direction united two distinct lots: **Lot 1:** Support for **creative spaces and cultural organizations** focusing on initiatives that promote community

- engagement and interaction in creative spaces and **Lot 2:** Support for host **art residencies** to implement initiatives where organizations invited artists and cultural professionals for co-creation and engagement.
- To qualify, organizations needed to operate in regions of Georgia and have at least two years of experience in the cultural, creative, or civic sectors.
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CREATIVE SPACES AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

VIDEO MAPPING FESTIVAL

*Project implemented by **Gori Photographers' Club** in Gori*

The “Video Mapping Festival in Gori” set out to create mesmerizing audio-visual performances that fused contemporary art with cutting-edge technology. This ambitious project brought new life into damaged buildings and spaces, turning Gori into a hub of digital art.

A cornerstone of the project was the series of intensive workshops for 15 participating artists from Gori, Tbilisi, Samegrelo and Kakheti empowering them with new skills in audio-visual production and video mapping.



These sessions covered preparation, software usage, and the technical fine-tuning required for spectacular audio-visual installations. The project's long-term vision is to establish an annual video mapping festival in Gori, a unique event not yet seen in Georgia.

The inaugural festival was a resounding success, opening new avenues for self-expression and creative exploration among audio-visual artists. The themes explored included ecology, conflicts, war-related trauma, fine arts, and urban development. The festival's organization involved developing its

branding—complete with a name, logo, slogan, and overall concept—in close collaboration with the local community and participating artists.

Beyond the visual spectacles, the festival fostered thought-provoking discussions and experience sharing among artists. It created a dynamic space where art, technology, and innovation converged, transforming Gori into a canvas for extraordinary visual experiences. Approximately 400 to 500 residents engaged as active participants and spectators, sparking interest in modern art and technological practices.



“AFRA” – SHIP MODELING COURSE FOR YOUTH

Project implemented by **Irakli Kekelia** in Kobuleti

The founder of the Ship Modeling Art Studio “Afra,” Irakli Kekelia, relocated to Kobuleti to introduce local youth to artistic woodworking and ship modeling techniques, aiming to boost interest in creative craftsmanship. The one-month training course featured both theoretical and practical lessons in ship modeling, engaging 25 young enthusiasts from Kobuleti and nearby settlements. These participants had the unique opportunity to work with wood and model ships for the first time.

Under the mentorship of Irakli Kekelia, the participants created three ship models from different

eras: a Greek unireme (Argo), a Columbus caravel (Pinta), and a modern towing vessel (Patriot). Held at the Kobuleti Museum, the workshops inspired the hosts to propose a new idea: creating a model of the Lazuri Felucca. This boat-building tradition, recognized as a monument of intangible cultural heritage, became a compelling focus for the project’s future plans.

The structural design and construction traditions of Lazuri Feluccas, influenced by the unique characteristics of the Black Sea coastline, became particularly intriguing to the Kobuleti beneficiaries.

This presented a new and attractive challenge for Irakli Kekelia, who continues to study Felucca blueprints and plans to create his model. By modeling it, he contributes to preserve and highlight the tradition of Felucca construction in Georgia, which is gradually being forgotten in contemporary times.

The project concluded with a joint exhibition showcasing the ship models and other works created during the course.



VISUAL STORYTELLING AND DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP

Project implemented by **Culture and Contacts** in Chiatura

The project empowered local amateur photographers in Chiatura by enhancing their technical photography skills and storytelling abilities. The initiative fostered artistic development, it created narratives reflecting the city’s unique environment, and it built a sense of community through photography.

Natela Grigalashvili and Guram Tsibakhashvili traveled to Chiatura to involve the participants in diverse activities. A dynamic seven-day hands-on workshop led by Natela Grigalashvili guided participants in creating their photography projects. The culmination of this creative journey featured a public talk by Guram Tsibakhashvili

during the final event. It included an exhibition of the participants’ works and a screening of the documentary “Vanishing Villages” by filmmaker Keti Gigashvili. This public event allowed participants to showcase their work while engaging with community members in discussions about the importance of creative expression and documenting local life.

The public event attracted 60 community members. The project resulted in twelve photography series created by workshop participants, as well as it reflected the city’s social and cultural environment and showcasing vibrant community engagement.



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“For us, the mobility component of the project was essential in facilitating knowledge transfer and ensuring the local participants could connect and access the expertise and experience of established professionals such as Natela Grigalashvili and Guram Tsibakhashvili from outside Chiatura, contributing to the overall success of the project.”

Miriam Grigalashvili,
project organizer and co-mentor, Chiatura,
September 2024

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE “LIMENA” - FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Project implemented by **Human Rights and Social Justice research center** in Poti

“Social Enterprise “Limena” - for Environmental Change” brought cultural and community events to life in Poti with dynamic local participation. Recognizing the scarcity of cultural events in Poti, the project diversified the city’s cultural landscape, intertwining public and cultural elements, and raising ecological awareness among its citizens. With years of experience in addressing environmental issues and advocating for residents’ rights and with a new approach, the organization has built strong community connections.

The project’s highlights included an open-air workshop in which artists created pieces inspired by Poti’s environmental challenges. This was

followed by a public discussion and an exhibition at “Limena.” The screening of “Minamata” led to a significant public discourse on environmental problems, featuring insights from Salome Shubladze from the Social Justice Center. A photography contest showcased the state of Poti’s cultural heritage monuments, culminating in a photo exhibition and further public discussion.

In total, over 80 individuals participated in the events, including 19 artists from Poti and various regions. The exhibition attracted friends and relatives of the project participants as well as social cafe visitors, creating a lively atmosphere.

The project also featured a five-day workshop, film screenings with discussions for artists, and an exhibition of their works. Additionally, a session with an expert, followed by a film screening and discussion with activists and community members, was conducted. The photography contest concluded with an exhibition and an engaging discussion with invited guests.

“The frightening state of air quality and solid waste pollution in Poti has long troubled residents. The project events and public discussions on these issues have heightened local interest, fostering public responsibility and greater citizen engagement using creative endeavors. This support has expanded our reach, and we aim to continue increasing visibility to achieve our platform’s goals. We plan to maintain similar activities due to the high level of interest.”

Eliso Janashia,
Founder of the “Limena”, Poti,
October 2024



IN THE CENTER OF CREATIVITY

Project implemented by **Hands for Peace** in Zugdidi

The project “In the Center of Creativity” generated significant interest among creatives from Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti and Apkhazeti by incorporating the creation of unions and co-production elements. It began with the selection of twelve active entrepreneurs from the cultural and creative industries through a competition, who then formed five unions. These unions focused on various creative fields, uniting professional skills for co-production and work enrichment. These were: adding sewed accessories to wooden toy production, combining interior and floral design, modeling clothing and accessories, pairing leather production with painting, and merging epoxy production with herbarium.

Teams collaborated and co-created artworks which were exhibited at a three-day festival, sparking interest among 200 adult attendees and 50 minors. This led to private orders and an increased number of admirers. Consequently, these unions formed a stronger and ongoing cooperation which led to participation in other fairs and to jointly working on new private orders. The festival also enhanced local volunteering culture, with 15 volunteers involved in all phases of the project implementation and event organization.

Through these activities, the project boosted awareness and connections for Hands for Peace, attracting international collaboration proposals, invitations to international seminars in Germany, and thus enhancing the organization’s visibility. Based on participants’ feedback, Hands for Peace plans to make the festival an annual event and to open community centers for artists.

These outcomes demonstrate the project’s tangible impact in establishing strong community connections and generating substantial creative output, ensuring ongoing collaboration and visibility.

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“I have been creating wooden toys for years and I knew that something was missing in my product – now I understand what was! Adding sewed details and accessories created by Lika Gogia to the wooden houses that I create – completed the product and gives me a sense of perfection and completion. This project helped me to realize my visions and find a like-minded professional who adds sparks of creativity. We get various orders and cooperate smoothly.”

Davit Mosidze,
founder of “Grandpa Dato’s Toys“, Zugdidi, October 2024



ART RESIDENCIES

TUSHETIAN ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP

Project implemented by **Aqtushetii** in **Omalo**

Tushetian Architecture Workshop art residency successfully contributed to preservation and promotion of Tushetian culture—both tangible and intangible—by immersing young architects and artists in the region’s unique architectural heritage and traditional construction techniques. This was achieved through a hands-on residency program that combined workshops, community engagement, and cultural immersion.

Over a ten-day residency, eight participants—four from Tusheti and four visiting architects and artists—along with the local residents in Omalo, came together



to explore and to engage with Tushetian culture. The primary objective was to familiarize participants with Tushetian architectural methods, urban layouts, and construction techniques while promoting sustainable practices in modern design.

The project included guided tours of Tusheti’s historical sites, lectures, and hands-on workshops. A key activity was the collaborative construction of a “Camera Obscura” using traditional Tushetian building methods, symbolizing the integration of historical techniques with modern functionality.

This process encouraged cultural exchange, skill-sharing, and active community participation. By directly involving locals and young professionals, the project strengthened cultural connections, created job opportunities, and raised awareness of Tushetian heritage within the broader architectural community. Participants gained practical skills in traditional building methods, inspiring them to incorporate these values into their future work.

Through media outreach, the project reached a wider audience, further enhancing the visibility and appreciation of Tushetian culture.

“The co-creation process, however, presented some balancing challenges as local residents and visiting participants brought different perspectives on blending traditional and modern techniques. To address this, we organized open discussions, allowing both groups to exchange ideas and learn from one another. This approach enriched the project, fostering a respectful environment that honored both heritage and innovation.”

Alexander Zatiashvili,
Project Manager, Omalo, September 2024

“FIRST PERSON PAUSE”

Project implemented by **Leni Academy** in **Kutaisi**

The exhibition-performance “First Person Pause” in Kutaisi successfully connected organizations and artists from Tbilisi and Kutaisi, building groundwork for future endeavors. One of the key objectives was to unite artists from various disciplines, enriching and expanding their individual practices.

The project brought together nine artists and two arts managers, ran a workshop with 20 young aspiring artists, and held an ‘All is One’ performance with an audience of 30 to 50 young people.

During the residency at Leni Academy, an organic way of interacting and co-creating took place, with a real sense of freedom permeating the overall atmosphere. The lead artists (a dancer and a musician) suggested a draft on which each artist imprinted their own touch. Co-creation happened naturally, creating a real tapestry that materialized during the performance. The involvement

of the community enabled performers to integrate the sentiments shared by the young people in Kutaisi into their performance.

“First-Person Pause” presented a variety of artistic experiences, integrating sensory, visual, musical, and choreographic elements. Musicians from Kutaisi, in particular, experienced new creative opportunities by working with dancers and performance actors, broadening their understanding of art’s possibilities.

Overall, this project demonstrated that through co-creation and mobility, art can evolve into new forms while retaining its Georgian authenticity and artists can push their boundaries and express themselves individually while strengthening their community bonds.

“Mobility was an important factor in the project’s success, as artists from Tbilisi found a less tense atmosphere in Kutaisi, giving them breathing space, while artists from Kutaisi received recognition and confidence. The openness of the space offered to the participants during the residency helped them to open up and push their normal boundaries.”

Timothe Audin,
Project Manager, Kutaisi, October 2024



SUMMARY

Creative Connections didn't just aim for success—it achieved it in full color and vibrant detail. Across nine regions of Georgia, 24 innovative projects blossomed. These efforts brought together over 1,100 beneficiaries and drew 4,000 participants across 48 locations, crafting a harmonious blend of cultural exchange and creativity.

For the first time, many artists and creatives stepped out of their usual geographical areas to co-create and collaborate. They discovered the cultural and creative potential of various local contexts, unlocked new skills, made personal discoveries, and established connections with diverse communities.

The exchange of ideas and skills sparked the creation of new professional networks and innovative partnerships.

The impact? A new cultural network that thrived on the spirit of co-creation and collaboration. The seeds planted by these projects quickly took root, opened doors to new opportunities, and created a spirit of cooperation and knowledge sharing. These 24 inspiring stories created a vibrant and resilient cultural landscape in Georgia's diverse regions, from the mountains to the coast.

