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ArtsLink Fellows Pursue Innovative Projects During U.S. Visit



CEC ArtsLink fellow Jerzy Goltzowski's installation art piece *Crash*, on display in a storefront in Berlin.

By Ralph Dannheisser
Special Correspondent

Washington — A young Polish artist explores the neighborhoods of Cleveland, Ohio, looking for just the right place to create a site-specific installation.

In San Francisco, an independent curator from Estonia conducts research aimed at developing a strategy for presenting the work of socially conscious artists seeking solutions to vexing problems.

A performance artist from Macedonia, whose most recent project involved a street event encouraging passersby to rename the streets of Skopje, searches out kindred spirits in Portland, Oregon.

The three are among 19 visual artists, photographers, filmmakers and arts managers from 14 countries — many in the former Soviet bloc — enjoying residencies throughout the United States under the latest round of fellowships awarded by the U.S.-based international arts organization CEC ArtsLink.

Selected for the five-week program by U.S. arts professionals from among applicants from 32 target countries, the fellows arrived on October 11 and, after opening sessions in New York, fanned out to individual host organizations in 10 states.

CEC ArtsLink's website describes its function as "engaging communities through international arts partnerships." That effort, it notes, is grounded in a belief that "artists and arts administrators can help nations overcome long histories of reciprocal distrust, insularity and conflict."

Tamalyn Miller, director of the ArtsLink Awards program, stresses that "this program is about mutual benefit, not only for the fellows coming here, but for the communities that they'll be working in." Those selected are already established artists — typically ranging in age from 30 to the late 40s — assuring "a certain amount of experience that they can bring to the U.S. audiences and communities."

This year's fellows come from Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

Other eligible countries are Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Afghanistan and Turkey, added just this year.

"This move is driven simply by our wish to expand cultural conversation to an even more diverse group of artists and arts managers, and to increase awareness and appreciation within U.S. audiences of these many rich cultures," says Fritzie Brown, CEC ArtsLink's executive director.

Miller says ArtsLink tries to match each fellow with the host organization most appropriate to their interests.

"Some have the goal of actually producing a work while they're here. Quite a number are more interested in just gathering ideas toward producing work later, or

if they're video artists they may just be collecting footage which will be edited later," she says.

At 29, Jerzy Goliszewski is the youngest of this year's fellows. Trained in graphics and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, he now concentrates on producing installations — "recently, mostly site-specific ones" created to comport with a particular space, he told *America.gov*.

Goliszewski says he most recently completed an installation titled *Crash*, whose theme is drawn from the controversial David Cronenberg film of that name. It was mounted on both sides of a display window in Berlin. "The outside is painted shiny black, like a car body; from the inside there is brown leather. This was my first work that was accessible for anyone and everyone. If you passed by on the street, you could touch it," he says.

His residency is with SPACES, a Cleveland gallery that puts a premium on experimentation. He says he is looking all over Cleveland for the ideal site to accommodate a new work, "going around on a bike, driving a car, looking for spaces I can work on."

Rael Artel, an independent curator based in Tallinn, Estonia, hopes her residency with the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco will help her develop new content for an approach she developed while readying a 2007 exhibition in Tallinn.

"I want to focus on self-organized initiatives by artists working with different social programs, trying to find alternative solutions," Artel says.

"This is not the kind of work that has immediate results, like a project you can put in the gallery," she acknowledges. "Five or six weeks is a short time to produce something solid. If I have met some interesting artists, for example, with whom to collaborate in the future, I think this is already a big success."

Zoran Poposki's multifaceted work combines painting, performance art, digital media and what he terms "public interventions." Poposki, from Skopje, Macedonia, is being hosted by the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland.

"I work with video and performance, usually in a street or a square," he explains, and his projects involve passerby participation. "In Macedonia, streets are named for historic figures and historic dates. So one performance I did was, I invited the people of my city to propose new names — those of their relatives, or friends, or lovers — so it would reflect the community living in it rather than history," he says.

Another project involved the intrusiveness of billboards on public space, Poposki says.

While in Portland, he plans to do research on artists similarly engaged in the social sphere to include in a book he intends to write on the subject. He also is delivering lectures at Pacific Northwest and at Portland State University.

Poposki, Artel and Goliszewski offer strikingly similar responses when asked about their impressions so far, whether in San Francisco, Portland or Cleveland. They uniformly use words like friendliness, helpfulness and openness.

"What stands out to me is the level of hospitality and the sheer warmth that people are displaying towards me. I really feel welcome," Poposki says. Artel observes, "If you come from a place like the North of Europe, people are more reserved, not so open to share. Here it's very different."

Goliszewski terms the community's helpful approach "a highlight of my stay." He contrasts that with a previous, less enjoyable residency. "But that was in Europe, not in the States," he quickly adds.

For more information, visit the [CEC ArtsLink website](#).

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