

## **RestART - Empowering victims of domestic violence through art**

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It is my pleasure to participate in the seminar RestART Empowering Victims of Domestic Violence through Art organized by the ROOM FOR ART.

It is obvious that unless we have a clear sense of the meaning of empowerment, it will be difficult to understand the power of interactive art making. In this context, empowerment is defined through the processes, which grant the oppressed power and freedom and ideological, philosophical, as well as ethical and political conviction and rights.

Empowerment processes aim to equalize power between low- and high-power group members by seeking the appropriate tools and environment to increase the former's power and their ability to set individual goals that will allow them to reclaim their self-respect and willingness for resistance to all forms of violence. Thus, although it may seem like a paradox, with empowerment referring to groups with more and less power it presupposes the transformation of individuals who understand the political patriarchal structure of society and the gendered imbalance of power.

As a creative pedagogical tool, art is expected to influence the self and the way one understands his/her role and relationships. It achieves this through reflection on our own achievements and the faces we face. There is an unavoidable necessity for everyone in society to exist as persons in relations to other people and rarely do we escape from affirming ourselves through the eyes of others, the significant others in each stage of our lives. Art reflects on our lives and on the attitudes of others towards us and reveals the wrongs and rights. As the philosopher Gadamer (1977:38) commented 'Reflection on a given pre-understanding brings before me something that otherwise happens behind my back.' Habermas (1972:208) also elaborated on the concept and process of self-reflection: 'Self-reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence.'

Thus, the victims of domestic violence and in general vulnerable people find their identities and construct a better sense of self, hopes, and desires, by portraying them through visual and written language. Through the art-making process, interaction and reflection, the victims begin to gain insight into themselves and the powers that oppress them. When domestic violence deprives victims from their self-esteem and sense of pride in themselves and their capabilities, art making can support them to uncover their own character and strengths, to evaluate their experiences, and to get rid of their fears.

We congratulate the organization committee and its collaborators for the seminars within the framework of RestART, and we hope the participants will gain rewarding interactive experiences with the thoughtful guidance of experts in the field, who are able to motivate change in understanding of the self and of others.

### **References**

Habermas, J. (1972). *Knowledge and Human Interests*. London: Heinemann.

Gadamer, H. G. (1977). *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press)