

# QUARANTINART

## THE CREATIVITY BOOST GUIDE

2022

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## Introduction

The use of imagination, the willingness to bring some creative ideas to life or to invent something new proved itself to be a safeguard for many individuals, living under conditions created by ongoing pandemic restrictions. Life under lockdown showed itself not to be only boring and missing the social aspects of our “normal” everyday lives, but also to bring potential threats and dangers to our wellbeing.



Of course, it influenced us not only physically with closed gyms and restrictions for going out, but lots of us met with new kinds of problems dealing with our own minds and power of thinking. The negative thoughts came to many of us and changed our already difficult situation to almost unbearable. An average person has about 60,000 thoughts in a day and during this self-isolation time, negative thoughts can be overpowering.

As one of the positive results many individuals find their new balance thanks to activities such as painting, sculpting, jewelry making or other creative activities which helped them not only express themselves, but also express their feelings about the situation which became our new everyday lives.

The art itself helped many of us to survive and to fight with the changes, which influenced us as individuals, as family members, as friends, relatives and as whole society. To see it from a different perspective we can say that the pandemic helped many of us to come out from their safehouses and to express ourselves artistically, which would never have happened if we wouldn't be living our lives under the lockdown. The purpose of the project Quarantinart is hidden within its name and

its dealing mainly with the possibilities for artistic activities during the times of pandemic. The main goal is to equip and support women with knowledge, key competencies and tools for improving understanding of artistic environments and diversity concepts in order for people who do not have the luxury to learn how to invest in art, or with a background that is not so artistic friendly, to invest time and energy in accepting that a more creative life will ensure an increase of resourcefulness and inspiration which even allows women to work professionally in a creative field.

As the consortium of 5 partners from Slovakia, Cyprus, Italy, Poland and Lithuania we share similar ideas and willingness to work together on this common goal. This is also the reason why we created this guide, as the tool which will together with others (virtual lessons, inspirational videos, website) help the low skilled women to express themselves through art and to become not only creative in their personal world but also to be able to interact in the field of art with the community and with the world. One of the main aspects of this guide is also the changes which happened in expressing and creating art due to the pandemic, which will be reflected and taken into consideration through all our project activities.



# Theoretical Approach

One of, if not the most pressing, problems of the twenty-first century - the COVID 19 pandemic, along with many other areas, had a major impact on artistic life; have a greater impact on some social groups than others. How you respond to stress during a COVID-19 pandemic may depend on your background, the social support you receive from family or friends, your financial situation, your health and emotional background, the community you live in, and many other factors. To look at the issue from the theoretical perspective there are many guidelines, newsletters, courses and books addressing the issue of teaching and learning how to produce and how to be successful doing art. However, these materials were written in the times where the art could be expressed openly in the offline world, which is the way many artists express themselves. In recent years Covid showed us that the art among the many other fields will have to move also to our online world - which became one of the most accessible tools for socializing and expressing ourselves. Therefore our guide will mostly focus on the online opportunities and techniques which can be shared through the personal websites, blogs or social media accounts. In this part of the guide we will focus mainly on the theoretical concepts of how to create art and explain why art should be an important part of our lives. We will also explain who our target group is in this project and who is this guide mostly for.

## 1.1 Why do we need such a guide

A good guide can take form in many ways. Basically it should be a material that gives you the most important information about a particular subject; something that helps you form an opinion, make a decision or learn something new. As the name of the project suggests, the reason this guide was developed is the negative effects of the global pandemic on our everyday lives, on our mental health and especially on the way we express our artistic sides. This guide should therefore be some form of an educational document, with the aim to help people, especially women around the world to pursue their artistic dreams and hopes. The guide is a new and unique way for giving out useful information and tips for individuals who find it difficult to navigate in the online space while expressing themselves through art. Our guide aims to be easy to read material that will walk you through the way of finding your creativity and artistic side, to search for the best methods and learning styles to help you achieve the best experiences, even and especially if you do not have any beforehand experience, or you just want to experience a new ways of creating arts.



## 1.2 Who is this guide for?



Our primary target group are low skilled women, which in this case should not be understood as the women who did not receive the proper education, but more like the women who do not know how to be active in “art” in their personal or professional lives. As we can see in the third chapter of this guide we questioned many women with or without education and we understand the word low-skilled as someone who is not skilled in the field of art.

Our target group could be therefore more less anyone who is not active in the artistic field for some reasons (courses are not accessible, does not know how to market themselves, doesn't know techniques), but would like to change that in the future.

Other important group who can profit from this guide are art teachers or professionals in the field of art, who are interested in sharing their knowledge and skills with others. Therefore we were focusing also on their opinion and their experience on educating and working in the field of art during the COVID -19 crisis. Their answers and advice are summarized in the third chapter of this guide.

## 1.3 Teaching techniques, different approaches

As we already mentioned at the beginning of this document we will be mostly focusing on teaching and sharing the art during COVID-19 crisis. Obviously the art couldn't be taught in its usual form when the starting artists are attending lectures either in group or individually and create/produce the art under the supervision of a skilled teacher or other professional in the field of art. It became clear not only at



schools but also in different art courses that even such a difficult subject such as art will have to adapt and become accessible also through the online form.

This however requires completely different planning as the student/individual is not coming to the art studio filled with materials accessible for any kind of art and ready to use. Teachers were forced to plan ahead and send all the teaching plans together with materials to the students to give them time to collect the necessary materials. This was another challenge as due to the lockdown the materials which could be bought or collected were limited therefore many teachers started to make their art from the materials which are available in every household. As the teacher could not see the continuous progress of their student and could not give them instructions whenever they wished, it was very important for them to set up clear instructions on how to proceed and after which steps the consultations should take place. Teacher was also able to see only the online form of the created art, which often lacked depth and also required the student to take a picture and send it to the teacher through an agreed channel. Teacher then looked at the art and offered comments, reviews, suggestions or answers to the questions and the whole process could either repeat or to continue with other parts of the art project. This whole process seems quite difficult in comparison with traditional art lectures, however this was most of the time the only way how these lectures could partially continue. The quality of them was very often depending on the willingness of the teacher to spend their time in explanations and evaluations of the art. Unfortunately many teachers were complaining that they cannot interfere with students during the process of creation, which often led to the mistakes which were impossible to fix and forced the students to start all over again, which often became very frustrating and could become the reasons many of them gave up. In the following part you can find the different examples of teaching techniques which were used by the teachers or art professionals during the COVID-19 crisis.

1. This technique required lots of preparation from the side of the teacher at the start of the lockdown and remote teaching. Before starting any courses the teacher prepared the artistic kit from the materials and resources which were available at their ateliers and distributed it to the students. Students then had all the resources available and could continue with their courses without being forced to look for the materials or had to buy/order them. Teachers then send the instructions on what should be produced from the materials available in the kit and let the students deal with this task on their own time. Even though this method required a lot of preparation from the teacher from the start, in the end it was very time effective as it did not force





the teachers and the students to be constantly present online on zoom or other communication channels.

2. Another possibility often used during pandemic was to switch between online and offline teaching. The instructions were shared with the students through zoom and the students were switching from presenting the work online by pictures/videos and coming to the classes in person. This is unfortunately logistically very difficult as there could always be only one or two students in the classroom with the teacher and others were present online. It also had a reverse effect as the students who came for the classes in person did not feel comfortable to be in the classroom alone and later on they preferred to present their work also online.
3. Different approaches could be also taken when focusing more on the possibilities of modern technologies. Many art teachers decided that as all the students are sitting behind the laptops or tablets at home, that they could focus on the more technological side of art and started to create illustrations, graphics or pictures through different softwares or e-tools. This however could not be used under any circumstances as it requires art teacher who is skilled in thesis area and also it assumes that all the students have access not only to the internet and laptops/tablets but that these are also efficient enough to run such a softwares
4. For some teachers the solution was to record and share the video of producing/making art and share it with the students afterwards. This technique was less demanding on the teacher and also on the students as they could record the lessons any time and the students could also watch as they wished. Teachers were unfortunately forced to spend lots of time creating these videos, cutting them and learning how to work with editing programs. But on the other hand these videos can be used repeatedly and for different groups or individuals.
5. Changing the content of the art lessons was the solution of some teachers as they started to focus more on the presentation form of the art - preparing lectures about history, powerpoints about different artists or different art techniques. This could be seen as a lot easier than the other techniques, but puts lots of pressure on the teacher who needs to prepare for a completely different type of course than before. Teachers usually give students small assignments connected to what they have learned (painting



with oil paints, study of the body parts etc...). Students will share it with the teachers online and will receive feedback.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place for us to assess which technique is the most suitable or most effective. We believe that each teacher or professional will be able to choose for themselves the most suitable ones or develop their own.

## 1.4 The influence of the pandemic

Pandemic had undoubtedly influenced all the parts of our everyday life. Art is not an exemption. Artists are not being seen as the essential workers or someone whose job is necessary for our survival in the times of pandemic. As the employees or self-employed they were among the first ones who had to stop their activities or their jobs as the museums, concerts, theaters, art galleries etc. were shut down almost immediately when the COVID erupted and they are also the last ones who is going to work after the situations calms down a little.



As the field depends on the wide public and on the audience the art sector struggled massively and it is a fact that many shows, artists, performers did not professionally survive lockdowns. They were also among the last ones who received any kind of financial support or help from the governments, as it was not seen as important as the support for other sectors.

However on the other hand art was also seen by many people in lockdown as a safe escape from reality and the way to relax and focus on something more positive. Art can have many functions, which showed themselves to be very important and crucial for the mental well-being of some individuals. Some of the functions of the art are:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.artnet.com/opinion/art-advisor-op-ed-megan-fox-kelly-1984260>

<b><i>stress relief</i></b>	While creating a work of art, the focus turns to good, promising, and positive things. Art therapy therefore helps to turn negative energies into positive habits, which helps to create a healthy lifestyle and reduces everyday stress.
<b><i>confidence boost</i></b>	Seeing finished art work generally increases people's self-esteem. It gives you the feeling of being in control, which can affect all areas of your life.
<b><i>helps concentration</i></b>	Focusing on the subject of our creative process and improving the details will greatly improve our ability to concentrate. The more we lose ourselves in the process of creation, the easier it will be to work without interruption.
<b><i>encourages perseverance</i></b>	The process of making and finishing an art can teach you hard work and determination. And the desire for self-education and development can affect you in other areas of life as well.
<b><i>improves brain productivity</i></b>	By creating art people are strengthening the connection between the two sides of their brain, which causes better psychological resilience and productivity. In the procedure of creating something the brain releases more of a thing called dopamine, which promotes focus, concentration and readies the brain for learning.
<b><i>problem solving skills</i></b>	Through creation, we can test our own assumptions while implicitly learning that multiple good answers to a question are possible. Instead of following rules or thinking in a specific direction, our brains discover the world of "why and how".
<b><i>fine motor skills</i></b>	Motor skills cover the movement skills we are born with or have learned. Elaborating the small details of the works can improve movement coordination. Craftsmanship can become more sophisticated, coordination skills can be improved, and this can even be beneficial in sports.
<b><i>self-expression skills</i></b>	Those who struggle to express their emotions and thoughts often feel incomprehensible and excluded. Artistic activities can be a great solution for these individuals, as creative methods encourage self-expression and help develop communication skills.

These are just a few of the examples of how creative activity can positively contribute to our lives. According to the recent study done by the project Art Well Being from 2020 which collected more than 1500 responses in 20 countries in the European Union, more than 85% of the people turned to different parts of art during the pandemic if they could not cope with their own feelings.<sup>2</sup> As the benefits of including art in their lives during the pandemic they stated better self reflection, better imagination, getting into the desired mood, feelings of belonging, social connection, guidance through difficult times or experience of awe. This shows us not only how the importance of art was underestimated during the pandemic but also it proves that for the future there will be a need to implement more of art into our lives as one of the most effective, affordable and accessible tools for our mental well-being.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://art-wellbeing.eu/research-covid-19-pandemic/>



## 2. Good practices

Even though many challenges still remain, there has been a significant improvement in regard to gender equality and women empowerment over the last decades. However, as early as April 2020, the UN Secretary-General urged national governments to *“put women and girls at the center of their recovery efforts”* since the aforementioned progress might be *“rolled back due to the COVID-19 pandemic”*.<sup>3</sup> Although the significance of a role played by national governments and international organizations is unquestionable in this field, there are other actors who support the engagement of women within the society and shall not be overlooked.

In this Chapter we take a look at some of the initiatives which aim to support women by equipping them with knowledge, skills and tools for embracing their creativity. In addition, we did a separate research dedicated to the profession of art teachers to find out what kind of strategies are there for their professional and personal development. Finally, we also include those initiatives with a focus on women empowerment outside the artistic field because they might serve us as a source of inspiration.

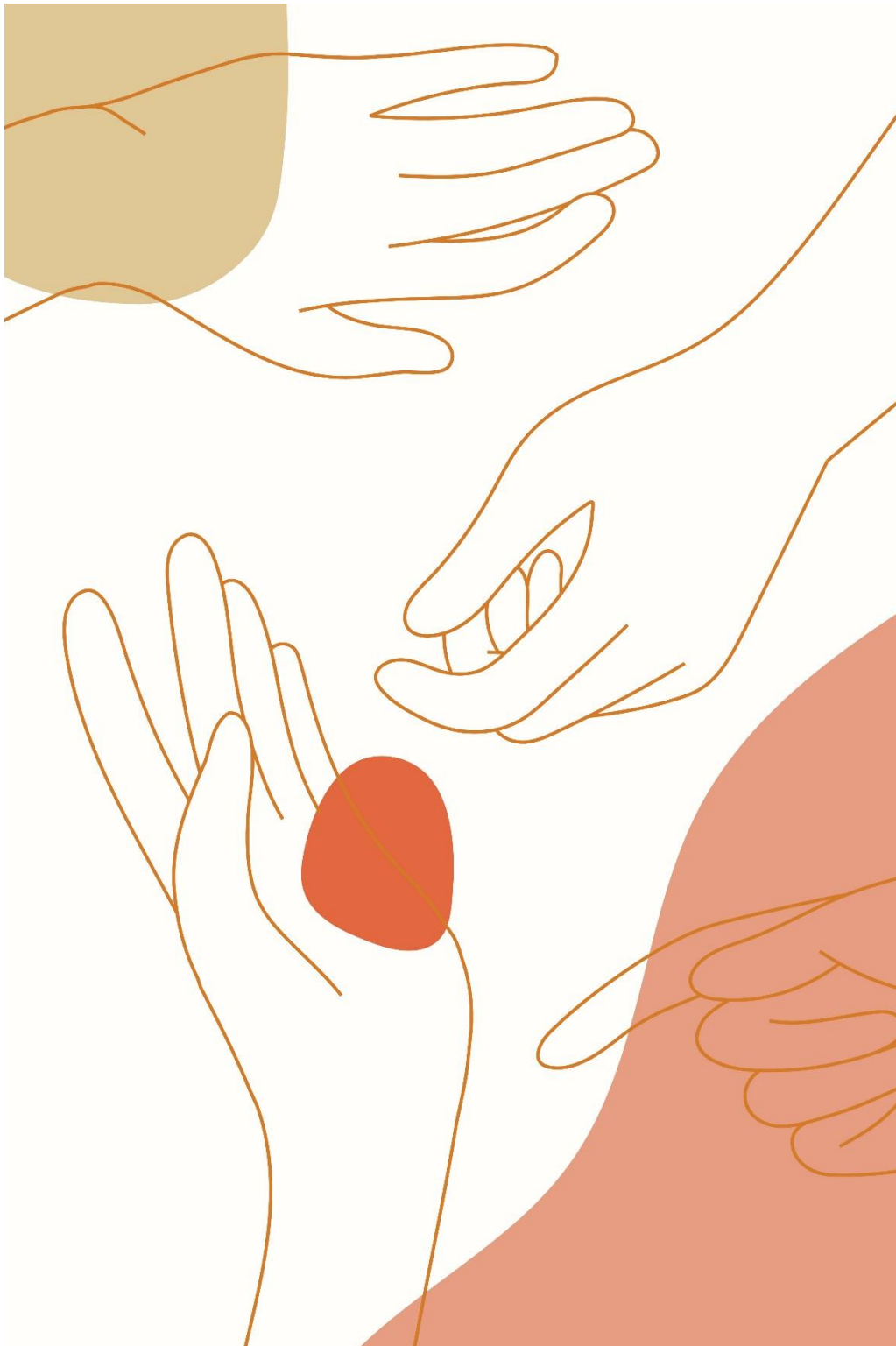
### 2.1 Engagement of Women In Arts

**E-books** are an excellent tool for both their authors as well as their recipients. To create an e-book, one does not need to have mastered a wide range of skills. All that is required is to turn one’s ideas into a .pdf document (or different formats) and share it with the online world. In this day and age, it certainly is not exceptional to own a device with an internet connection and a pdf reader which enable the user to access the ebooks published online. Lately, many women who work in the artistic field, do it as a freelancing or just in their free time, have seized the opportunity to share their skills and knowledge with others. Be it paid or free of charge, downloadable ebooks still provide quite a convenient way of improving one’s skills and embrace their creativity.

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<sup>3</sup>United Nations. (n.d.). Gender equality and women’s empowerment – United Nations Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goals. Retrieved November 27, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>





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One of the many examples is an e-book about crocheting created by Rimóczi Zsófi.<sup>4</sup> With help of step-by-step instructions, pictures, it is dedicated to people with no prior knowledge and experience of crochet work. Moreover, the added value of this ebook lies in the integrated video recordings.

Whereas e-books are predominantly focused on improvement of one's skills and knowledge about the usage of tools required for various types of artwork, there are many **courses and workshops** providing an opportunity for networking with other aspiring artists and for maintaining direct contact with educators. However, the situation regarding the Covid-19 pandemic has also affected this field. Many individuals as well as organizations were forced to find a way of holding such courses online. We perceive that as a successful move because people in general sought various activities, which would help them cope with quarantine life at home, and art was not an exception.

Although web portal *Future Learn* provides its visitors with courses in different subjects, we would like to highlight one focusing on *Women in Arts: From 1900 until today* developed by Centre Pompidou. After having enrolled, this 7-week course enables you to “*discover the women creators who shaped modern and contemporary art and those who continue to make huge impacts today*”. It dives deep into the history of women artists and puts an emphasis on why “*it is still necessary today to offer courses and exhibitions and to publish books or articles entirely dedicated to women artists*”. Moreover, we find this course to be particularly interesting due to the fact that it encourages women to engage in artistic activities and experiment their talents by doing artwork. Even though the ability to progress at one's own pace is an advantage of such online courses, we recommend sticking to the set schedule in order to get most of the experience.<sup>5</sup>

Another good practice example used to inspire (not only) women to actively engage in art, is a concept of art parties. In 2019, a company called *PaintPeople*<sup>6</sup> was established in Slovakia with the aim of organizing art parties, technique courses as well as team building activities. Although their initial intention was to hold the activities in the offline world, they have rather successfully managed to continue even in the online space. In comparison to the aforementioned course,

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<sup>4</sup>[https://rimoczizsofi.com/products/horgol-sapkat-egyszeruen?fbclid=IwAR2D\\_Kd\\_dbDvxoURPOA6WLpPzBLAvmzyW7dWhd5Ldz7A1c740SBLTzakJmw](https://rimoczizsofi.com/products/horgol-sapkat-egyszeruen?fbclid=IwAR2D_Kd_dbDvxoURPOA6WLpPzBLAvmzyW7dWhd5Ldz7A1c740SBLTzakJmw)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/women-in-arts>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.paintpeople.sk/en/>



networking plays an important role here. Furthermore, their events are open equally to both women and men but based on the board of lecturers and pictures taken during the events, a woman should not by all means feel discouraged to engage in artwork. Finally, this type of activity supports women by demonstrating their inclusion within the artistic field. Similarly, there is a company called *ArtDivino*<sup>7</sup> based in the capital of the Czech Republic.

In conclusion, ever since the second decade of the 21st century, social media has created a space in which people connect with each other, no matter where in the world they are. Based on their interests, they search for networking opportunities and often a place where they can share their own experience. For the purpose of this Chapter, we provide you with some examples of **social media initiatives** that are characterized by a solid base of followers (more than 10,000) and post or story interactions. In this case, these traits might serve us as a proof of a well-built online community which is successfully serving its purpose.

Instagram account with a username *@\_emaem\_*<sup>8</sup> is a common space dedicated to promotion of art created by women. Hosted by Ema Müllerová, a PR Manager and a Contributing Editor of the Czech Vogue magazine, the profile was initially created for the means of promoting her merchandise. However, today she also dedicates it to aspiring artists who can share their pieces of art there, connect with each other and reach out to potential supporters of their work.

All in all, based on the good practice examples introduced in this Chapter, we can see that thanks to the progressive technologies but also because of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, many activities and initiatives created with the purpose of women empowerment in the artistic field, had to be transitioned to the online world. However, we gather that this fact does not necessarily mean women encouragement initiatives have come to a halt. Quite the contrary. Even though many opportunities are easily accessible even from the comfort of one's home, we should take into consideration that there are still women who do not have a full access to the Internet connection or means required for respective participation. Therefore, it is crucial to pay attention to reaching out to women for whom the Internet connection and computers are not an integral part of their lives.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/artdivino\\_cz/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/artdivino_cz/?hl=en)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/\\_emaem\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/_emaem_/)

## 2.1.1 Art Teachers

With regard to how the artistic field does and should impact their studies, working hours as well as free time, we have decided to dedicate a part of this Chapter to art teachers. Following information was gathered from personal experience of three women who work as art teachers in Slovakia and, unfortunately, do wish to stay anonymous for the purpose of this publication.

The first experience reflects the situation in a kindergarten. The teacher claims that there are many opportunities to broaden their education in the artistic field - music and fine art lessons mainly. The number of online events increased especially in the period of a Covid pandemic. In addition, according to the teacher, the offers for new workshops tend to multiply after applying for some of them. Finally, the teacher concluded that she does not feel any difficulties finding opportunities to develop her art skills and agreed that she is receiving them without any need for a proactive search.

The second experience reflects the situation in a primary school which is less optimistic than the previous one. The teacher mentioned that she feels as if there are only several offers to broaden teachers' education. Moreover, the majority is dedicated to technical subjects. Another aspect that worsens the availability of artistic workshops is the fact that all offers are directly sent to the director which complicates the communication with the providers themselves. The teacher also added that they used to share the information among colleagues to stay informed. According to her, the most effective way is to follow artistic sites or join an artistic group on social media. She builds a network and often gains the most from personal contacts.

Another experience reflects the situation in secondary schools. Unfortunately, this example shows a deficiency in opportunities that benefits the teacher's education. The teacher conveys that she has no information about any workshops or webinars. However, it must be confessed that this school is mathematically oriented and art classes are rarely taught. Contrary to this fact, many students have a positive relationship with art and the teaching staff does not undervalue art as well.

Finally, it may be concluded that the higher the level of education, the less important the teaching art seems to be. With the decreasing importance of art lessons, the number of opportunities to participate in a workshop or a course



decreases. This conclusion, however, can not be generalized because of the low number of respondents. Verifying this hypothesis may be a subject of future research.

## 2.2 Good Practices Outside the Artistic Field

Although many initiatives focused on women empowerment in the artistic field have been on the rise, based on our good practices research, we generally perceive it to be rather insufficient in comparison to other fields. Therefore, we have decided to include activities and initiatives that aim to support women in other spheres of life since they seem to provide inspirational examples.

<https://www.womanup.sk>

**WomanUp** is a project founded by a then 18-year old Natália Pavlovská. As cited in her LinkedIn profile <sup>9</sup>, she “*decided to found WomanUp at the age of 18, because [she] felt the absence of a space where women could meet, inspire and help each other.*” Focusing on the topics of gender equality, career opportunities and authenticity, they organize various discussions, workshops or make podcasts aimed at providing women with inspiring stories and opportunities for their personal and professional growth. Last but certainly not least, their instagram profile is worth following as well.

<https://www.dareit.io/en>

**Dare.it** is an initiative to increase the number of women in the field of IT. The main goal is to help women win their first job in IT. The active community consists of 5,000 experienced female mentors and female IT beginners. The membership includes expert support, CV consultations, and event participation at book clubs. Moreover, this project offers a lot of webinars and training. By joining you can gain new knowledge and advice on the recruitment process in specific industry specializations.

Last but not least, let me introduce the mentorship program. The biggest individual three-month mentoring program in Poland led by female IT experts will broaden the education and ensure a regular dose of motivation and inspiration.

<https://www.helenebanner.com/>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/natalia-pavlovska-b47b08154/>

Helene Banner is the speaker, coach, and creator of a community called **Let's Just Be Imperfect, Ladies**. By sharing her own story of overcoming perfectionism and people-pleasing tendencies, she inspires women to find their very own path and their very own powerful voice as women. She left her career in the European Union and created her own mentoring business. She helps women to become more self-confident by being authentic and discovering their potential and passion.

<https://ajtyvit.sk/o-nas/>

The initiative **Aj ty v IT** was founded in 2012 in Bratislava. At that time the number of women active in the field of IT was critically low. Only 3 – 5% of the total number of IT students were women. Besides, the shortage of experts and the lack of women in IT is a persisting problem. For all these reasons, the current CEO Petra Kotuliaková decided to establish an association that helps women to start a new career in the field of IT. She claims that a job in IT is a great opportunity to harmonize a personal and professional life, especially for women. The main ambition of the initiative is to educate, motivate and create a supportive community in the field of IT. This project helps fight the prejudices and helps to build a more equal technical society.

<https://liviahelen.sk/blog/>

**Livia Helen** creates a platform to cultivate the integrity of a human being. She studied Traditional Chinese medicine and gained a lot of experience by observing her mother's skills in the field of alternative medicine. Livia works as a therapist and organizes various webinars, courses, and retreatments. She has started to devote herself to femininity recently. Livia believes that by rediscovering the essence of ourselves the well-being can be ensured. She educates about taboo topics such as nudity, having a period, or libido. She emphasizes mindfulness and aims to detaboo the intuition also known as the sixth sense of a woman.

<https://thebluzone.de/>

Over decades of experience in the model industry, Dominika Krčmáriková finds out that the key element of leading a healthy lifestyle is to understand how the body works. She created together with her boyfriend a project called **Bluezone**. Their mission is to provide knowledge to understand and control the personal health of their clients. Dominika communicates advice via her Instagram according to the motto „woman for women“. Her content is focused on topics such as nutrition, movement, regeneration, self-care, and mindset. Moreover, she posts photos from real-life to fight against the unreachable beauty standards made by



social media. Her aim is to support women and girls to lead healthier and happier lives.

<https://www.ladiesthatux.com/>

The main motivation to establish this platform resulted from the doubt of where the other women in the industry were. Lacking women in leading positions is a long-term problem and there are no role models as well. The support of women is needed especially in sectors with a high proportion of men. This initiative aims to strengthen the feminine voice, promote women's skills and talent. **Ladies that UX** creates a space for women from all levels to engage and talk about their experiences, both positive and negative, and get the support and inspiration that they are looking for. Sometimes informal meetings are organized or a speaker invited.

The atmosphere is relaxed and informal and provides a community with a growing number of local groups based in cities worldwide.

<https://www.femaleexpatsunited.com/about>

**Female Expats United** is a company that brings together women who work or live abroad. Leaving one's hometown is a significant emotional challenge that has a huge impact on mental health and relations as well. Moreover, migration requires a lot of bureaucratic duties. The organization supports and helps to stabilize life-and-work balance. Networking with other ambitious and successful women living abroad improves the quality of female ex-pat's life. Additionally, the organization offers the expertise which contributes to solving eventual difficulties.

<https://github.com/WiMLDS/starter-kit/wiki/Code-of-conduct>

**WiMLDS**'s mission is to promote women and gender minorities who are interested in the fields of machine learning and data science. Events include technical workshops, networking events, and hackathons. Opportunities are created to discuss difficulties and improve your work routines with respect to individual needs. By zero tolerance of offensive comments regarding gender, body size, age, race, or religion stands Github for a safe place providing an ideal environment for development.



### 3. QUARANTINART IN PRACTICE (ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE)

One of the crucial parts of our work on this project and especially on this guide was to figure out the current state of the low skilled women in their relation to the art, especially focusing on the art during COVID-19 crisis. We accomplished this step thanks to two questionnaires, which were created by the Quarantinart team. First questionnaire was focusing on the low skilled woman collecting all together 110 answers from all partner countries. Second questionnaire was focusing more on art teachers and professionals in the art fields and we were able to collect 67 answers. In this part we will not focus on the general knowledge and general assumptions as we did in the previous parts of this guide, we will solely focus on the results from the questions which we asked the low skilled women, art teachers and professionals in the field of arts.

**TABLE 1. Overview of the Questionnaire**

Questions asked from low skilled women	Questions asked from art teachers/professionals
1. <b>General information (age, nationality, level of education, actual working status, area of specialization)</b>	1. Please describe the main obstacles and barriers for women in general in the area of art (to be specified according to the interviewed individual background)
2. <b>Have you received an introductory training or orientation on gender issues? Y/N</b>	2. Please describe the main obstacles and barriers for women during the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 - 2021 in the area of art (to be specified according to the interviewed individual background)
3. <b>Have you taken training on women issues in the past 2 years? Y/N</b>	3. If you will have the power to change something in your area of interest that would help women to empower them in art what would it be?

**3.a If yes, please, specify (course name, topic, type of training)** open question

4. We would like to describe the best so-called “good practices” in your area of interest towards women empowerment and work.

**4. Are you taking any courses on women issues currently?** Y/N

**4.a If yes, please, specify (course name, topic, type of training)** open question

**5. Have you received support from your organization, community, local self-government unit, foundation or state for your work on women issues (mentoring, coaching, detailed assignment, etc.)?** Y/N

**5.a If yes, please, specify** open question

**6. To what extent do gender concerns influence your work life?**

- Not at all
- To a limited extent
- To a significant extent
- The whole focus of my work is concerning gender

**7. Could you please indicate which of the following skills you think that you are lacking, and which could improve your everyday work?**

- Technical skills required for this occupation
- Technical skills related to specific equipment or processes used in the establishment
- Technical, technological or scientific knowledge
- Understanding bureaucratic procedures
- Ability to calculate, read and use figures and tables
- Learning to learn skills
- Negotiation skills
- Acquiring, interpreting and communicating information
- Leadership skills
- Team working
- ICT skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills





- Efficient use of materials, technology, equipment and tools
- Organisational and planning skills
- Others (please specify)

**8. In the last year, have you visited or attended any:**

- Performing arts events (theatre, dance, music festival, live concerts, ...)
- Visual arts events at galleries, or exhibitions of things like paintings, craft, photography, fashion, textiles, ....
- Literary events (readings, book launches, author talks, ....)
- Others (please specify)

**9. In the last year have you:**

- Made any types of visual art
- Written any literary art
- Made an electronic, online or digital art work
- Participated in an event as a performer, dancer, musician, ....
- Others, please specify: ....
- No, due the Covid-19 pandemic and restriction to fight against it.

**9.a If yes, can you describe the event/activity?**

Open question

**10. In the last year did you work or volunteer in the arts? Y/N**

**10.a If yes, please specify** open question

**11. In the last year were you a member of an arts/ culture related society, club or organisation? Y/N**

**11.a If yes, please specify** open question

**12. Would you be interested in closer cooperation within this project? Y/N**

**13. Would you like to share with us any ideas, recommendations, opinions so we can improve our work within this area?**

If yes, please specify:

Our objective was to demonstrate what are the barriers that limit women from expressing themselves in an artistic way and identify the most effective methods



applied for engaging in them with the arts. We were also focusing on examining the skills that are needed on behalf of women in the participating countries, in an attempt to provide better quality services according to their needs even during emergency situations such as the pandemic - COVID 19, which affects our everyday activities. As for the impact we were aiming to enhance the motivation of low skilled women, increase their motivation, help them to develop new ideas, inspire them, help them to learn from others with the help of good practices and success stories, help them to learn how to handle difficult situations and expand their general competencies. For the art teachers our desired impact is to bring together expertise, knowledge and best practices, to create a virtual forum for exchanging ideas, how to teach and help the target group of low skilled women, develop their general competencies, develop social network space, make their work easier by helping them to achieve higher students performance and to promote collaborations about art teaching in community. It is also crucial to understand that this guide should be used as a probe of the current situation, which are facing both of our main target groups - low skilled women and art teachers or professionals.

### **3.1 Engagement in Art: the Obstacles and Limitations**

The collected answers help us not only to understand the situation of the low skilled women in their relationship to art, but it also helped us to understand their profile. In all 5 involved countries the description of these women is quite similar. As for the age we could mostly describe them as young or middle adulthood women. In Poland the age range was 21 to 42 years of age, in Slovakia 21-35 years of age, in Lithuania 20-44 years of age and in Cyprus it was 20-65 years of age. However the vast majority of collected answers were from women under 30 years of age. Majority of the women who took part of the questionnaire were also educated in Slovakia 40% of women finished school with a Masters degree and 31% finished secondary school with upper secondary school examination. In Lithuania 6% of respondents finished with a Masters degree and 37% of the respondents finished their school with a degree from University, in Cyprus 25% of respondents held a Master's degree, 47% Bachelor degree and 21% successfully completed degree from College. In Poland 38% of respondents finished with a degree from college, 23% with a Bachelor degree and 38% received an upper secondary school examination. In Italy 74% of respondents had a Bachelor degree, 10% a Masters Degree and 10% finished high school with upper secondary school examination.



As for the employment majority of the respondents were employed, 6 of them worked as freelancers and few of them were unemployed (13 cases). However in this case we consider as unemployed women also the women, who are currently on maternity leave and therefore they are not attending any job. In Slovakia there were 11 employed respondents, 4 freelancers and 1 unemployed, in Lithuania 9 employed and 6 unemployed, in Cyprus there were 31 employed and only one unemployed respondent, in Poland 16 respondents were employed, 4 were unemployed and 1 woman worked as freelancer and in Italy there were 16 employed, 1 unemployed and 1 freelancer. The character of their work varied, for example in Poland the majority of them were employed in the sales field (supermarket cashiers, retail shop sales assistants, restaurant staff), in Cyprus their specialization varied from finances, marketing, education, engineering, architecture or arts. In Italy substantial part of respondents worked in the social field (such as social workers, psychologists, etc.), or in the marketing area (sales, designers, media) or as office workers. In both Slovakia and Lithuania their occupation was a complete mixture such as accounting, cleaning services, croupiers, ceramic artists, project management, pedagogy, etc.

Considering the questions on gender issues the results were mostly poor in the majority of the countries. In the case of Poland only 3 of the respondents received an introductory training or orientation on gender issues and it was during their studies. Nineteen of them never took training on women issues in the past 2 years and 2 of them had some type of training, which was in the framework of their job requirements (a nurse and a sociologist). Also all of them answered negatively on the question if they are currently taking any course on women issues, which leads to the fact that there was not such an support offered during the pandemic. Three of the respondents also got some support from organizations, community, local self-government unit, foundation or state for their work, however when they were asked to specify what kind of support it was they identified it as Erasmus project or a seminar organized at their workplace. Majority of them also agreed that gender concerns influence their work life to a significant extent (90.5%).

In the case of Cyprus 19 of the participants have received an introductory training or orientation on gender issues, whereas 13 of them have not. However, the majority of them, with the exception of 3 participants, have not been trained on women issues in the past 2 years. The training that 3 participants received was through a summer school, lifelong involvement on gender issues as member of the parliament, and through a course on Leadership skills of women. None of the participants are attending any courses on women issues currently. Only 1 from 32



participants has received support from her organisation/ community/ local self-government unit/ foundation/ state for her work on women issues in the form of specialised training at her job. The participants were rather divided as to the extent to which gender concerns influence their work life. 12 of the participants claimed that their work life is influenced to a limited extent, while 12 of them claimed that it is influenced to a significant extent. 4 of the participants' work life is not influenced by gender concerns at all, whereas 4 of the participants have said that their job focuses on gender issues.

In Lithuania unfortunately none of the women answering questionnaires ever participated in training on gender issues and gender equality. All participants replied that they had not received any support from their organization, community, local self-government unit, foundation or state. Also the interesting answers were the ones which should state to which extent gender concerns influence their job, where only 19% out of 16 answers replied that gender concerns are significant to their work, none of them replied that the whole focus of their work is concerning gender. 31% stated that it was to a limited extent, and 50% replied that not at all.

In the case of Slovakia only 13,6% of women declared they had a special training before their employment focusing on the gender issue and gender equality. And the same number 13,6% reported that they took part in special training related to these issues in the past 2 years in their workplace (such as Gender equality in a workplace workshop, or political academy for women, or Erasmus exchange project). However, only one woman stated that she is attending some type of course concerning gender issues currently, which was Erasmus exchange. All participants of the questionnaire replied, except one, that they had not received any support from their organization, community, local self-government unit, foundation or state for their work on women issues. On the perception of their position as women, and if gender concerns influencing their work only 18% out of 22 answers replied that gender concerns are significant to their work, and only one replied that the whole focus of my work is concerning gender. 45,5% stated that it was to a limited extent, and more than 31% replied that not at all.

In Italy the situation was slightly more positive than in the rest of the states over half of the respondents said that they had received some kind of introductory training, but it can be deduced that these were sporadic or distant studies, since in the subsequent questions the majority stated that they had not participated in training on the subject of women's issues (work, discrimination, etc.) in the last two years and none are currently enrolled in courses or activities of this type. The topics of these trainings covered prevention of sexual and gender-based violence against migrants and the strengthening of victim support activities, history of women in contemporary age or gender communication, diversity and inclusion.



Focusing exclusively on the work context, all the women answered negatively when they were asked if they received some support from the company, community or from local government, foundations or the state in the professional sphere. On the other hand 26.3% stated that they do not feel that gender concerns influence their working life, while the rest ranged from limiting to significant influence.

As for the overall results we have to state that they are quite alarming especially on the overall fact that the gender issues are not important enough to receive overall support in any part of their lives. Most of them feel that it plays a role in their careers as well, but they act on it only if there are questions asked which dig deeper. We assume that there are still big stereotypes between women and men in their worklife - to which unfortunately women got accustomed and used to. There is lots of work which needs to be done in this area not only to help women to perform in their careers, hobbies, and personal lives but mainly to help them develop their self esteem and teach them their own personal values.

### **3.2 The State of the Low Skilled Women in their Relation to Art**

To be able to successfully identify the needs of the low skilled women we created two questions, which helped us to understand their passive and active relationship to the art. Firstly, we asked if they were able to attend any cultural/art event in the past year, taking into consideration COVID-19 crisis and secondly we were asking them if they were able to produce some art themselves also taking into consideration the pandemic situation. We have to assume that in the first scenario the results were mostly positive as most of the women did have a chance to attend such an event in the last 12 months.

In the case of Lithuania more than 57% of them attended a cultural performing art event, more than 35% visual art event and only 2 women did not participate in such event. In Poland around 60% of the participants attended cultural performing art events including going to the cinema, attending festivals, concerts or traditional dancing, 3 of them also went to the visual art exhibition including online virtual exhibition and photo exhibition. Also in Cyprus most of the participants have attended performing arts events (26 women) and some of them also attended visual arts events (14 women) or literary events (8 women), only one participant did not attend any kind of event. Regarding the active participation in cultural and artistic life of women in Italy , it was found that a considerable majority attended



these kinds of events, especially performing arts events (34% of women), visual art events (30.4% of women) or literary events (8.7% of women. In Slovakia more than 80% of participants attended a cultural performing art event and more than 54% attended a visual art event.

The active participation of women is a very different story as the pandemic took its toll on many professions with huge negative impact in the art sector. The numbers which we are showing you are also reflecting this negative trend. In Cyprus 75% of respondents did not make/produce anything artistic due to the COVID -19 restrictions. Very few of the participants were however able to produce some kind of visual art, paintings, literary works, digital art work or participated in performing arts events as performers. On behalf of volunteering 24 of them did not take part in any volunteering activity in the art sector, while 6 of them were able to organize lectures, events, discussions, provide services in theatre or museum or run a cultural foundation. We are looking at very similar numbers from Italy where 80% of women declared not to create any art during the past 12 months. Only a few of them have written some kind of literary work or created digital artwork. Same goes for their voluntary work as none of them was engaged in the voluntary activities related to art, however 15% of them have been active part of associations related to culture. In Poland 76% of women stated that they did not make/create any kind of art due to COVID-19 pandemic and only 5 of them did some kind of art at home, mostly knitting and doing embroideries. Only one respondent was involved in voluntarily organizing a local festival and only 4 of them were active members of an art/culture connected organization. The situation was similar in Lithuania, where 75% of women did not create any kind of artwork. Only one respondent was able to write a literary work and 1 participated in an event as performer. Surprisingly from the answers it was obvious that volunteering or membership in cultural/art organization is not common either under normal circumstances, however the women showed desire to become part of such organizations or volunteering networks. Slovakia was the most optimistic case as 10 women were able to create visual art even due to pandemic restrictions, 1 was able to write literary art, 5 created digital art and 2 were performing. On the other hand 10 of them were not able to produce any type of art. We assume that these numbers could be a result of long-term lacking support for female artists in Slovakia, which are not used to any kind of support overall. Despite the fact that these women were active even during the COVID-19 pandemic their level of participation in volunteering activities or membership in cultural/art organization is close to zero, the same as in Lithuania.





Very positive outcome from our questionnaire is the fact that participants are very clearly able to identify, which skills are they lacking and which would they like to gain, either through the activities connected with our project or in their professional lives. From all listed above was mostly highlighted decision-making and leadership skills, which shows that women feel that they have lack of knowledge and they have doubts in the higher ranked positions, where these kinds of skills are needed. Next in line was their wish to learn more about technical skills either related to the specific equipment or processes used in the facility, general technical or technological knowledge or the ability to use the materials, technology, equipment or tools more efficiently. Also the bureaucratic procedures seem to be the boogeyman for low skilled women. Other specific skills were picked by the women less often and therefore we do not consider them to be so important for our further work. As it is obvious from the results both from the questions asked about gender issues and the skills which women consider that they are lacking, there is a huge gap between men and women, which is not different in the art industry either. Women consider themselves to be weaker mainly in the set of skills which are mostly assigned to the men in their working positions (technical skills, leadership skills, etc..). We see it as the huge warning that this gap will need to be erased and if not erased at least minimized and hopefully our project will have such an effect at least on some of the participants, art community, relevant stakeholders and general public.

### **3.3 The Future Perspectives and Current Challenges through Eyes of Art Teachers and Professionals**

To be able to evaluate where we can go and what we should do to help the low skilled women to be able to find themselves in art, we also had to talk to professionals and art teachers, who see what is happening more clearly than anyone else. We asked various artists, teachers (from tattoo artists, photographers, designers, etc.) four open questions in an attempt to continue with our work in the correct path.

Firstly, we asked them about obstacles, which they think that women are generally facing in the field of art. Sadly most of the answers were connected with the inequality between men and women and with its connected gender issues such as mistreatment based on gender, sexual harassment/abuse, oversexualization of women, physical perfection expected from women or ageism.





*“All the barriers arising from gender discrimination (credibility, visibility, pay gap...), the lack of an adequate welfare that also supports mothers and women who are not housewives or dedicated to sacrifice and "natural care givers", for the rest, the obstacles of anyone in this country who decides to make culture and art, to live by this profession (which is clearly not yet considered as such).”*

### **Italian artist**

Another point stated was the inability of women to be able to find correct work-family balance. Artists also felt there are much less opportunities for them in the art community and they often feel like they can't find their space as they think that they do not fit into the art community at all.

For the obstacles and limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic, women stated that the obstacles stayed more-less the same. However, as the unemployment rate in the countries were growing they were more mentioning the obstacles connected with the financial insecurities and difficulties to create an art at home as many of them rely on performing art life, face to face to the audience. They also felt that the authorities and governments put them on the last place - as the art is not a crucial industry and it won't save lives, they did not gain as much support as other industries or fields. However, as one of the biggest downside of the pandemic was lockdown where most of them felt that they were required to take care of their families and as the mothers - and natural carers were expected to push everything aside to ensure well being of their relatives.

*“Again, women, and especially the low skilled ones your project is examining, faced an additional pressure during covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Not only were they expected to care for the family members and leave their artistic activities aside, but they also had to undergo additional psychological pressures as they were considered the ones responsible to hold the families safe. Again, gender discrimination and the position of women in our society, were evident during the pandemic and depicted in arts; women put aside their leisure art activities or did little work as they had to consider their families issues first.”*



### ***Polish artist***

There were many ideas among them how to improve the current negative situation and as in the previous section most of it was connected to more gender equality in the field of arts. For example equal opportunities and promotion of female-led projects and initiatives, discouraging sexism, promotion and raising awareness for working rights, introducing more content in schools regarding female empowerment and promotion of female participation through cultural awareness courses, raising awareness about equality or demanding more funded projects for female inclusion.

*“Art is very often a reflection of the age we are living in and the reflections of the negatives of society. To allow women to reach their rights and to make them feel safe is very difficult if we do not inform the people around us how important our situation is.”*



### **Slovak artist**

Another important aspect is to be more open towards community and support each other which is very rare especially in the field of art. The increase of civic participation, engagement of youth in the art communities, promotion and preservation of art, broadening participation in the civic agenda or more art at the schools are considered as the problems of the whole art sector and it is up to all the artists regardless their gender to work on these changes.

For the good practices many artists used the examples from abroad, especially from the western European countries or America, where they see more attempts to bring the women closer to the art. As an example we can mention work-home balance support or extended childcare. Very important role also plays the education about the importance of female art organized either in the form of programmes, community events, lectures, seminars or performing events. They also mentioned very good results from support groups either online or offline, artists union, organisations and groups of women or individuals supporting women and promoting their work in the art sector or promotion of interaction of women from different backgrounds.

*“Something positive that is being done is the fact that there are certain organisations or teams of women who host events to support other women and promote their work”*



### ***Cyprus artist***

As we can see one of the recurring and most important issues also for artists or professionals in this field is gender inequality. It is interesting to see that not only low skilled women, who are only on their way to become either professional or amateur artists see this as the biggest obstacle but also the women, which are already successful and well-known in the field, face the same obstacles. Our role therefore in this project is to take these findings into account and base our further work and activities on these issues.



## CONCLUSION

The COVID 19 undoubtedly had a terrible influence on us all. Lives of some of the individuals changed completely, struggling with the loss of their loved ones, their jobs, mental or physical health or social contact with others. While art itself showed to be one of the most effective ways how individuals can fight with the negative state of mind it stayed deeply underrated either by the governments or people themselves. Even when we know that art is not the answer to all the problems of the world, it could be useful to think about how to utilize it in the future.

This is also one of the main ideas behind this guide and we hoped that we were able to show not only how important it is to create art and stay in touch with it even during the hard times, but that we also successfully showed some techniques and solutions on how could be art taught and perceived during the time of crisis and during the time when individuals are not able to meet in person. We also hope that our target audience of low skilled women will be encouraged by not only our guides and best practices but also by the results of our small survey which shows how important it is to stay active if you have artistic soul.

