

# *Per.Art*

## **Description**

Per. Art, a Novi Sad (Serbia) based independent organization established in 1999, has been working with artists, with and without learning disabilities along with people from cultural domain with its Art and Inclusion programme ever since. The programme's main idea is the production of artistic projects, providing artists with learning disabilities the space as authors, co-authors, and performers to promote their work at an equal footing within the local and international contemporary performing arts scene. Therefore, the programme was designed for creative work and the inclusion of persons with learning difficulties, under the aegis of the Contemporary Dance programme, using artistic research projects to develop the contemporary performing arts scene in Serbia. The organization is also involved in international networking.

Per. Art was founded by a group of actors and artists, dating back to the Ballet of the Serbian National Theatre, and was registered as an NGO in 2005. The organisation was conceived with recognition of and to promote the creative potential of disabled people with an intention of instigating artists, cultural workers, and activists to inspire their work and rethink existing social relations. In order not to imitate life in theatre and to provide the audience with a central role, the Art and Inclusion programme was set-up, creating an artistic group, and producing high-quality theatre performances and expositions that have been performed in Serbia and abroad. According to the organization, Per. Art is “a conjunction of words that can stand either as full words or as abbreviations – for art, or performative arts” (<http://portalinvalidnosti.net>).

Per.Art's efforts encompass the advancement of inclusion within the arts and culture sector, leading to the establishment of an extensive network. This network consists of artists, alongside individuals facing learning challenges, and experts in theatre, dance, visual and contemporary arts, special education, and rehabilitation. It also includes representatives from cultural and educational institutions. This reflects a significant aspect of the project: the endeavour was initiated independently of individuals who have a professional or personal connection to disabilities. The cohort of artists with learning disabilities currently comprises sixteen members. Among these artists, Dalibor Šandor and Natalija Vladislavljević are two contributors whose ideas form the basis for the plays created by Per.Art. Subsequently, the performances are crafted in collaboration with global artists, choreographers, and dramaturgs, consistently drawing from the artists' passions and concerns, which are further conveyed through dialogue. Central to the evolution of artistic endeavours is the profound regard and acknowledgment for each individual artist's viewpoints, talents, and desires. Convincing the audience that people with disabilities are capable of much more than many assume they are, has always been an aim of the NGO with their performances. This manner of producing art makes the NGO one of the few inclusive theatres in Europe where artists with disabilities appear as authors. However, the productions always derive from collective ideas. Similarly, their Art and Inclusion initiative significantly contributes to fostering inclusivity by means of performances, workshops, exhibitions, published books, and cinematic creations. This initiative also takes charge of arranging panel discussions, conferences, and symposia. Moreover, the group has established a network of

institutions dedicated to advancing inclusion, with the ultimate goal of enhancing institutional accessibility, amplifying the presence of individuals with disabilities, and elevating their artistic contributions within society.

The audience and the dynamic interaction between viewers and artists hold pivotal significance in Per.Art's productions. Within the group's perspective, the audience serves as a means to seamlessly integrate the imperative for inclusion within society while concurrently advocating for the programs and endeavours of both disabled and non-disabled artists. Through this approach, the audience serves as the primary vehicle for eradicating biases and reshaping perspectives, according to the NGO's viewpoint.

Per. Art is part of the Europe Beyond Access initiative.