

The underlying inspiration behind “Performing Ideality” is the very neighborhood that Gallery8 is strategically located in: Budapest’s eighth district. In line with the gallery’s aim to serve as a co-creation community platform, we examine the recent development of the eighth district’s cultural map in a collaborative exhibition.

The scope of our research is influenced by the emergence of numerous cultural and civil initiatives in the area that are helping to dispel the longstanding stigma associated with the neighborhood. Thus, our objective is to introduce the eighth district through the eyes of local civil society – an increasingly active group of young professionals and enthusiasts, who are engaging with the local community on a daily basis – and accentuate the performativity of their action. We borrow from Jean-Luc Nancy’s “creation”¹ of the world, and view their enterprise as an enactment of “ideality”² that has a tangible impact on our present. While the exhibition necessarily addresses issues of prejudice and social exclusion, it also offers strategies for destabilizing such constructions. Therefore, the exhibition can be viewed as a conscious affirmation of the district’s positive identity, and an ambitious first attempt to capture the “here and now”³ in a period of profound transformation.

Amongst our collaborators are Aurora, Gólya Community Place and Cooperative Pub, Kesztyűgyár - Rozi Csámpai Painting Workshop, School of Public Life, MICRO Magdolna, Pneuma Szöv. - Mókus Maxi and Uccu Roma Informal Educational Foundation. Their mission statements are displayed alongside personal accounts that respond to questions like “How do you actively involve the locals?”, “What kind of new resolution or decree would you like to see enacted in the district?”, “Which square would best characterize the district in your opinion?”, “Nominate a mayor!” or “List a few ‘fun facts’ about the district!”.

These narratives are further exemplified in the quotations exhibited near the entrance of the gallery – “How would you describe the district to a newcomer?” and “What have you learned from the locals?” – as well as in the word cloud which features the most common expressions used by our participants to describe the eighth district. The juxtaposition of personal impressions is aimed at uncovering similar experiences, encouraging a dynamic exchange of ideas and bringing about future collaborations.

To counterbalance the informative nature of these displays, the participants also convey their work in a more figurative way; hence, the lost and found box or the modular furniture, for instance. Lastly, participants and visitors are encouraged to reflect on their personal interactions with the eighth district, mark their favorite spots on the projected map, and contribute to defining the neighborhood’s current shape.

In the spirit of the holiday season – and as a friendly gesture to strengthen our newfound partnerships – an exchange of symbolic gifts will take place during the opening ceremony among those featured in the exhibition.

¹ Nancy, Jean-Luc

2002 *La creation du monde ou la mondialisation* [The creation of the world or globalization]. Paris: Galilée.

² Martinon, Jean-Paul

2005 *Strategies of (In)visibility*. Paper presented at the *Strategies of (In)visibility* conference, Camden Arts Centre, London, 3–4 February.

³ Martinon, 2005.

