



Creation of Peace, Zem Festival
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ringling College of Art and Design
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UWC in Mostar
<https://www.facebook.com/ZemFest?fref=ts>

The project, Creation of Peace, was realized as a summer camp, Zem Festival in the summer 2014, 17th-27th July in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). The organization of project activities had started in May 2014. Since Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country where ethnic affiliation is still a cause to many conflicts, one of the main goals of this project was to gather a population of young people, 15-19 years old, and work with them on the creation of a youth net through various workshops and lectures. The idea was to connect young people from all different parts of the country and instructors from B&H and the region in a natural environment, without any political influences, to be able to work on the creation of a peaceful community.

Creation of Peace was a project supported only by the Davis Projects for Peace Foundation. Other fundraising was planned, but the time before the realization of the project, a month and a half, did not allow such activities.

Zem Festival happened in duration of 11 days on a mountain (Rujište), in the southern part of B&H. As I was planning the project with a team of young artists and activists, we realized that the noun "Peace" should not be imposed to our participants, but rather practiced through the variety of workshops and group activities. Thirty participants from B&H met with 20 experienced professors and young activists and worked for ten days on connecting activities. Days would start with yoga and acrobalance exercises, then the participants would be engaged in workshops from the fields of arts, ecology and sports. The activities were led by experts in fields and every day had at least four different workshops held and would end with a group meeting with all the participants and teachers present. There were no special difficulties to encounter in the project preparation or duration; the only minor one was the pressure that came with the organization since the timeline was too short. Project Creation of Peace offered educative, practical and sport activities. Educative activities realized were: lectures about permaculture, self-grown edible plants, and global use of renewable energy; the role of art in everyday life and how to approach to making of artwork, youth activism and position of youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Practical part was based on art workshops such are painting, installation art, making art of recycled and collected materials, and jewelry making. Lectures about permaculture were followed by the practical part, making of compost, fieldtrips into the woods where we collected plants and learned about ways to preserve woods. As for sport activities, participants had a chance to get familiar with acrobalance, yoga, slag line, fire dance, football.

The workshops and lectures were organized in a way that all 30 participants were included in at least one activity at the time based on their preferences. Collective meetings at night helped the team realize all the strengths and weaknesses of the project realization and further expectations. Also these meetings helped in connecting both participants and the instructors on a friendly base.

Zem Festival had left a great impact on all the people who participated. The youth of B&H have suffered in many ways given the political and historical situation in the country. The project Creation of Peace has brought a fresh and long needed idea of togetherness to at least 30 young participants, 20 educators and not less than 100 people who have visited the camp while it lasted. Project Peace had a great media coverage, which gave the opportunity to anyone from B&H to engage and participate. Even though the initial plan was to work with participants and instructors only from B&H, as the project developed, more



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people were interested in visiting, and we had a wonderful opportunity to be working with people from 5 countries: France, Croatia, Austria, Netherlands and USA-California.

Bringing the international aspect to the project has added another dimension to the idea of peace building in B&H. It was an extraordinary opportunity for the young people from different parts of B&H to create friendships and work along with skilled instructors from various fields engaged in the work of the community.

Zem Festival was, and hopefully will be again, the place for young, creative, eager, positive young adolescents to meet, live together in a camp for 10 days, share their experiences, talent, fears, thoughts, skills, hopes and potentials; a unique opportunity to be in such a diverse environment where prejudices and judgments have no place to exist. The challenge of this project was to work with a group of 50 people with a goal to reach mutual understanding, respect and to create such connections that will create new opportunities for the youth. Many participants have described their experience at the Zem Festival as a life changing and enriching experience. I believe that the idea to realize this project in a way that will not impose, but rather practice peace was more than successful. As the name says, Creation of Peace, is in my opinion something towards we should all strive. Throughout conversations I had with people who have done similar camps in the past, I came to the conclusion that discussing issues such as war in a place where people are still very sensitive about such subject, would be less successful in peace building than introducing young people to new positive and encouraging, group and individual activities. In that way, peace is something they would feel inside and amongst themselves.

Creation of Peace is the first step of reaching out to young people in B&H. Considering the time I had to plan and organize the project, gather and instruct the people and work and live with them for 11 days, the initial idea for this project was not only realized, but was taken to another level where we created a 50 member family. Family, in which everybody had its rights and obligations, needed to learn and create, get to know, and accept. The concept that this project had was not something ordinary for Bosnia and Herzegovina, it brought curiosity to the people and later on, to those who were engaged. It was a life changing experience.

Getting the opportunity to be able to realize something like Creation of Peace, Zem Festival, has affected my life on many levels. I got the experience in organizing such a big event, I got to know more than a hundred people, motivated, inspired and willing to work on changes. I got to live in an environment as I've never experienced before. Peace is a word we use a lot in our everyday communications, but not so much in our everyday practices. This project was a time to start practicing peace in a healthy and creative way. Plans for continuation of work and sustainability of the idea are already happening. I have already worked with another artist that helped me organize Creation of Peace on another peace project in B&H. It was painting of a peace mural, the largest one in the country, in Gornji Vakuf in cooperation with Youth Center. Now I am engaged with a group of four people in starting an organization in order to be able to continue with our work on projects like Creation of Peace and more.

