Editorial by Ricardo Dal Farra

Can the Arts Help to Save the World?

We live in a world that is reaching a critical point, at which the equilibrium between a healthy environment, the energy our society needs to maintain or improve this lifestyle and our interconnected economies could quickly change, from the current complex balance to a completely new reality wherein unbalance would be the rule and human beings would have to become more creative than ever before in order to survive. Have the arts a role in all this? Do artists have a responsibility in this context?

But who are the "we" in the preceding paragraph? Clearly not everyone on Earth. A large part of the population is living in uncertainty (regarding basic needs), with many barely surviving. How, then, can we do something from where we stand to become more *human*?

When the Balance-Unbalance international conferences began in Argentina some years ago (the original name in Spanish is Equilibrio-Desequilibrio), the project probably appeared to be a naïve, goodwill-based, utopian initiative, an attempt to join intelligence and forces from a variety of fields using [e]art as a catalyst to face a problem we all share: the complex environmental crisis [1].

This proposed catalyst, however, is beginning to bring people from very different sectors of society together. Today, Balance-Unbalance is working not only to prove that it is feasible to connect art creation and realistic tools for change but actually to make that happen [2]. The [e]arts as a driving force for . . . ? Yes, sometimes it happens that the unexpected but highly desired occurs: in this case, a project wherein artistic quality, knowledge-building and humanitarian action all come together in a balanced equation to confront unbalance.

The art!⋈climate competition for the creation of sound art miniatures [3] became possible as a creation-knowledge-action proposal to reach those who are already affected by or in imminent danger from the consequences of climate change and also those who are not yet directly touched by it. It can be seen as a tool, but it is not less artistic for being such. On the contrary, the idea for the competition grows from a cooperative effort to find powerful means based on artistic creation—with a value independent of its potential functionality—and simultaneously a tangible application in humanitarian action. It seems to be a true collaboration that can have an effect on "real people" while preserving the significance and meaning of each contribution and action. Art can be created with or without a specific goal, and this appears to be one of those cases in which both situations harmonize.

art!⋈climate has been developed—as part of the Balance-Unbalance initiative—by the Electronic Arts Experimentation and Research Centre (CEIArtE) at National University of Tres de Febrero and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre. It is a project with multiple stages, and we are just realizing the first steps, convinced of the potential "benefits" in a variety of ways. Please feel welcome to share your thoughts with us; we want to help build a network without duplicating efforts while still extending our possibilities and learning from others.

And because this first instance of the multi-stage art!⋈climate project/competition is devoted to the power of organized sound, I want to end by quoting Jacques Attali, from his seminal book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*: "All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community. . . . Music is prophecy" [4].

RICARDO DAL FARRA
Leonardo *Editorial Advisor*
E-mail: <ricardo.dalfarra@concordia.ca>
Web: <http://hexagram.concordia.ca/researcher/ricardo-dal-farra>

References

1. Balance-Unbalance 2011 <http://balance-unbalance2011.hexagram.ca>.

2. Balance-Unbalance 2013 <www.balance-unbalance2013.org>.

3. art!⋈climate (arte!⋈clima), <www.ceiarteuntref.edu.ar/art_climate>.

4. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985) pp. 6, 11.