



The Grass is Greener?

The ArtsLink Assembly 2022 Curatorial Team Statement

In 1984, Milan Kundera, writing about anti-Soviet protests in Central Europe, claimed that when the identity of a people “is threatened with extinction, cultural life grows correspondingly more intense, more important, until culture itself becomes the living value around which all people rally.”* Today, almost 40 years later, defending ourselves against the same enemy, we can observe with our own eyes this growth of Ukrainian cultural life both in Ukraine itself and beyond. But where and how should this growth take place? On which side of the border will our cultural community find the same greener grass?

Currently, we are not even able to comprehend all the damage that Ukrainian culture has suffered due to the war. However, even now we directly feel how the war revealed and exacerbated the unresolved problems of working conditions and the intellectual migration of cultural workers. What happened to them (us) during these nine months? Some have left the country, and we are glad that they and their families are safe. Some remained, and we salute their courage. Some are in constant motion between countries, projects and institutions — and we admire their energy. At the same time, we also understand that in addition to physical reconstruction, we already need to take care of the restoration of the infrastructure of the country's intellectual field.

The focus of the conference will be a conversation about how to build new, and maintain existing, relationships in the current conditions: between those who left and those who stayed, between cultural actors and institutions, within teams and within cultural communities.

Our first task is to document the requests of cultural actors, outline the challenges and think about ways to work with them, think about realistic and ideal scenarios. The second task is to talk about new opportunities for interaction and involvement of Ukrainian workers in

cooperation with each other, to look for new forms of cooperation with the involvement of the new foreign experience for some of the cultural community. We invited leading representatives of the cultural community of different levels and affiliations from different regions and with different experiences to join these conversations during the three days of Assembly.

The greener grass will be where we nurture it ourselves, and we hope that this assembly will be one of the important steps on that path.

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**The Tragedy of Central Europe*

Milan Kundera, translated from the French by Edmund White

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1984/04/26/the-tragedy-of-central-europe/>