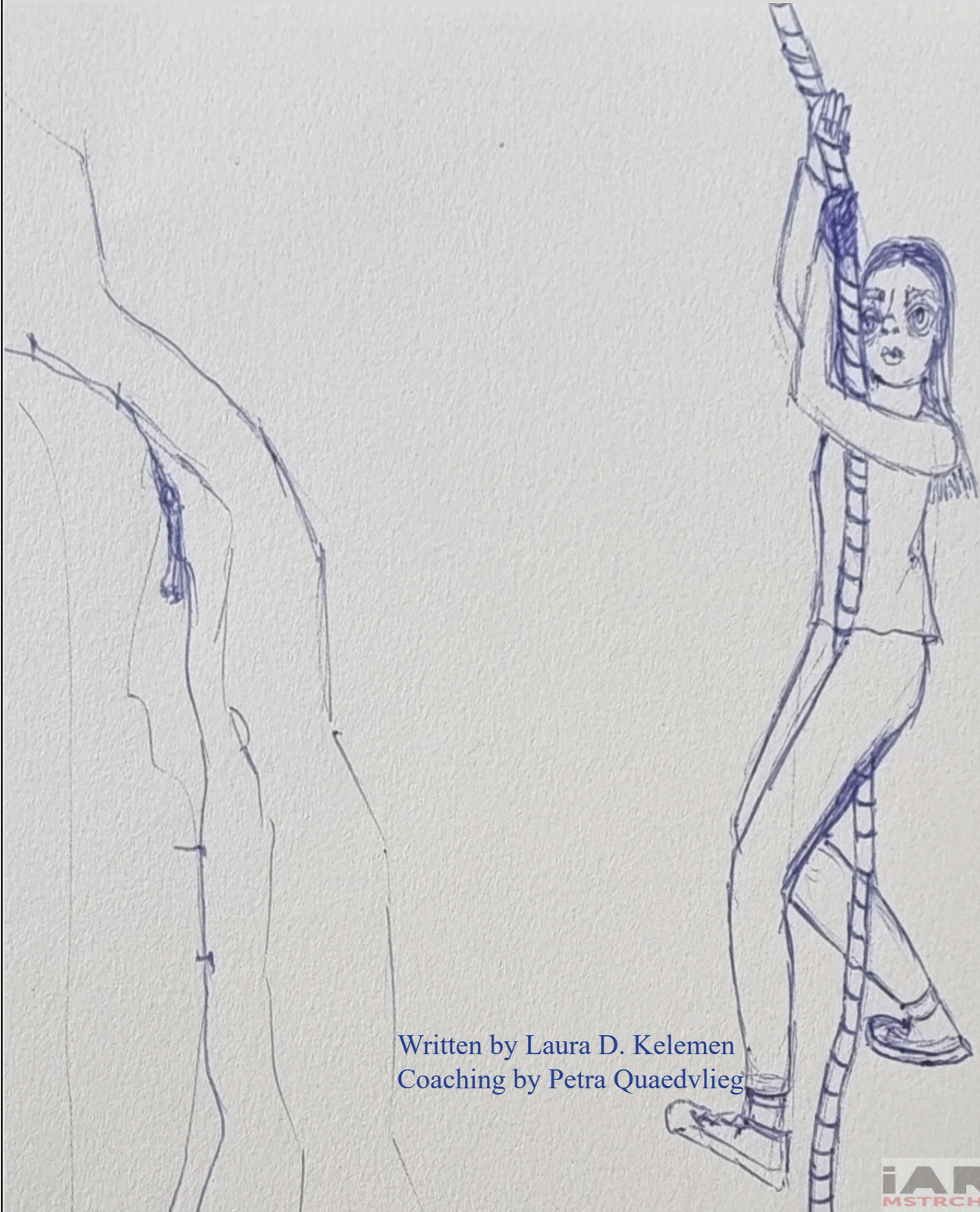


BECOMING WESTERN

ARTISTIC CONCEPT



Written by Laura D. Kelemen
Coaching by Petra Quaadvlieg

ABSTRACT

Over the past 25 years, about 20 million primarily young and competent Eastern Europeans have emigrated abroad in search of better opportunities. This is equivalent to the population of the Czech Republic and Hungary put together. Thinking upon these antagonizing facts, I thought about what I could bring to the table as an artist and how I could amplify the stakes surrounding this topic, therefore I have chosen to undergo the civic integration procedure in the Netherlands and design my process as an artistic tool to then make a translation about what I've personally gained from this experience. My aim is to raise awareness about the inequality that exists in the European society by making a multimedia experience which can resonate with people on a personal level.

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INTRODUCING MYSELF

I am Laura D. Kelemen, a Hungarian maker and artist. I collect stories through my own experiences and encounters. My work bases itself on and often consists of socially engaged projects and works its way through research, experience, and creation. I express my social engagement through writing, film and visual expression. My critical thinking is influenced by growing up in an illiberal democracy. From an early age on I have had felt the urge to be the maker of things, but I was discouraged to create with the help of art. Where I come from, art is an undervalued part of life, and to build dreams upon it seemed surreal for everyone around me, therefore I first started studying the fields of politics and law. I wanted to understand the rules of the world we live in. When it comes down to life, I feel like we are forced to live in a manmade society from which we cannot escape from. I moved to the Netherlands in 2018 and I at once started questioning the differences between Hungary and the Netherlands. How can we belong to the same economic union with such economic differences? I embrace this question and it fuels me to stay motivated. Through my artistic practice I aim to make the audience aware of the illiberal democratic state I come from, and the imbalanced economic and cultural union we live in which drives increasingly more people away. I approach societal problems from both Eastern and Western European perspectives.

INTRODUCING MY PROJECT

In this project I am using my personal experience going through the civic integration process in an artistic context to show how it impacts the life of foreigners wishing to remain in this country. I aim to express the difficulty of leaving a country for better opportunities by specifically comparing the Netherlands and Hungary, my home country, using self-observation, journaling and visual translation as the main artistic tools. By choosing to be settling in this country and developing my artistic practice, I aim to broaden my audience by working towards showcasing my materials collected throughout this integration process.

URGENCY OF THE PROJECT

Hungary has been part of the European Union (EU) since 2004. The EU has noticed the non-democratic processes that influence and switch the values in Hungary and tried to step in by initiating the Article 7 procedure in 2015. This procedure is conducted to suspend certain rights from a member state and would be enacted when another member persistently breaches the EU's founding values (respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities). Now, in 2022 it is a fact that Hungary is an illiberal democracy but the EU is doing barely anything to prevent any further anti-democratic actions or human rights violations. People who can afford to leave the country do so, having the west of Europe as their closest option. I believe that with my artistic practice I will be able to give an insight to how this transforms a common person's life.

THEORETICAL RESEARCH (CONCLUSION)

For Eastern Europe, better institutions and economic policies in home nations would encourage residents to stay, emigrants to come home, and citizens of other nations to look for employment in Eastern Europe. Further immigration regime liberalization, particularly for skilled workers, may also be taken into consideration. Governments may do more to collaborate with diasporas abroad to take use of their knowledge and to increase incentives for people to invest their remittances rather than consume them. However, more may be done to keep and utilize the current workforce, for instance by better matching educational options to job requirements and expanding opportunities for work training. It is important to choose the right policy responses to the budgetary pressures brought on by emigration; avoiding increases in labor taxes and relying more on consumption taxes which would promote investment and long-term prosperity.

For the European Union, given that the benefits of East-West migration have been felt throughout the Union, there is a case to be made for more equitable distribution of the profits, however the Union needs to watch out for corruption in the more underdeveloped areas. The size and make-up of the structural and cohesion funds of the European Union, transfers from richer to poorer regions of the EU, may expressly take into consideration the consequences of emigration on the economic potential of funding nations. This would be in line with the objectives of the European Union, which include supporting sustainable development and minimizing economic and social inequalities between regions.

Through my theoretical research I realized that I am not ready to fight the whole regime of Hungary or the European Union just yet. Eastern Europe is trying it's best to keep up with the current economic crisis, and now harder than ever it seems pointless to take away the positivity from people for feeling a longing for a better life in Western Europe. Therefore, after conducting my theoretical research on the topics of Eastern European history and circular economy, my conclusion was that I have to shift the focus to the singular, and with singular I mean towards personal identity and towards grasping the complex personal feelings revolving around this topic. To me, what I need to translate, essentially comes down to a complexity of emotions. This process made me face my own identity and therefore my own emotions. I realized I blamed myself for my emptying country because I am one of those people who left for a better life. I wanted to fix the past so badly, I forgot about where I was currently heading. I have to give myself the chance to take that advantage of a better life instead of trying to revisit the old life I left behind. Becoming Dutch for me is a process, and looking at it from other people's perspectives whom I've encountered, the project seemed like a negative topic to grasp and tackle, therefore, in the upcoming period I want to focus on bringing the positivity out about moving away from home, on expressing the complexity of feelings that come with migration, on the experiences life can give and the impacts these experiences can bring to one's self, because that's what happened to me during this process and it changed me for the better.

ARTISTIC RESEARCH TOOLS

Journaling

In the upcoming period as well as looking towards the CPE, I am overviewing my positive and negative experiences of becoming Dutch and reflecting upon these experiences with artistic mediums such as writing\spoken words. I put together a collection of notes, essays, thoughts, phrases that explain my findings, give insight into my experiences and to my artistic self. These writings will be presented in a form of a story at the opening of the CPE followed by some elements presented within the multimedia experience. The story will be able to played again through my website if a QR code is scanned.

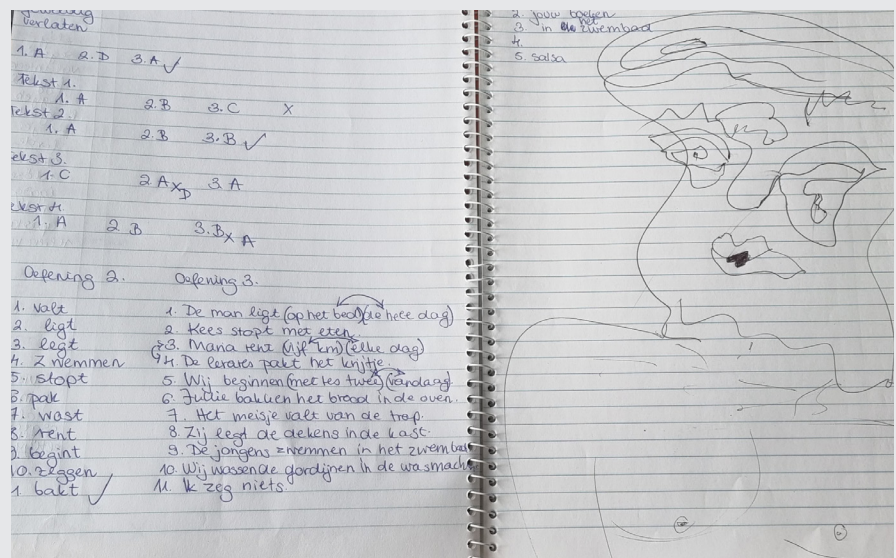
Repetition

Civic integration comes with a pressuring language exam. By learning Dutch, I realized I have difficulties remembering words, even though I'm repeating them over and over again. I find it quite interesting to observe how I use this method of repetition both mentally and expressed in my artistic work, which can make the audience feel like the work is never finished, or it can make me feel like the language can never be truly learned. Repetition allows an artist to place emphasis on things they choose as significant. It tells the audience that what is being expressed is important enough to be repeated and lets them know when to pay special attention. Repetition plays an important role in my works and this is something I want to express in this project as well.

Self-observation

Doing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), meditation and taking notes of my emotions has helped my development of this project. By analyzing and revisiting the audio recordings I made during the CBT sessions I realize a lot of patterns I have in my identity which are related to the society I grew up in.

These patterns heavily influenced who I have become and what my goals and values are. I use self-observation to learn about myself and as an inspiration to fuel my artistic creations. This tool will help me in the future deciding when to take a step back and when to keep pushing forward.



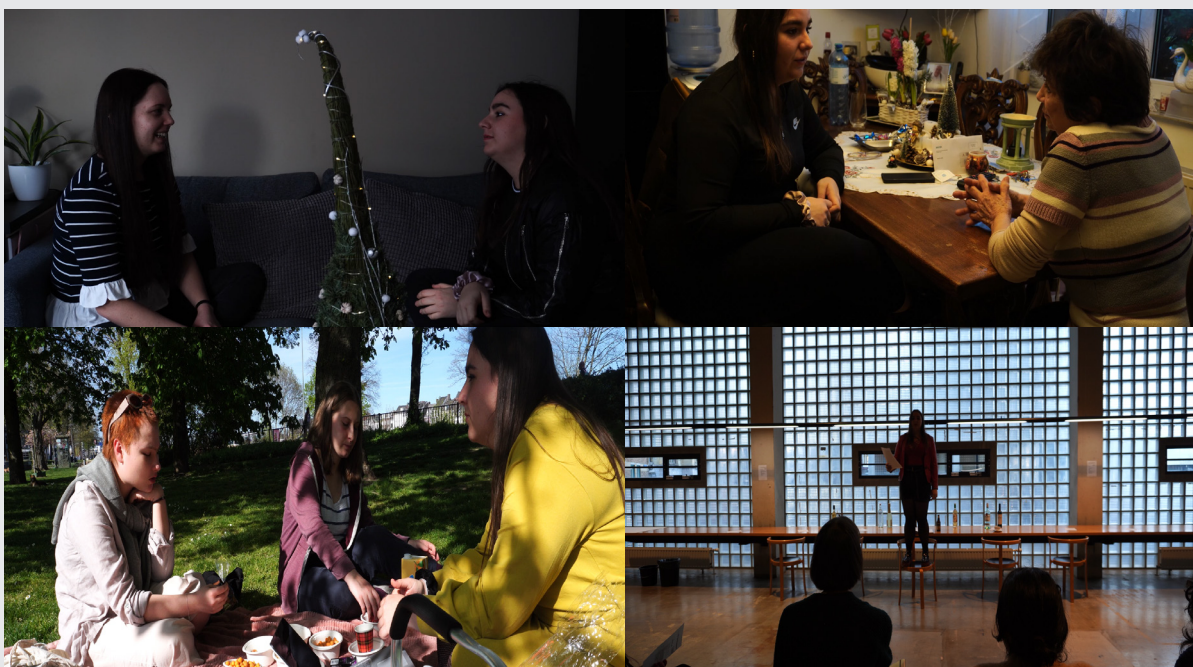
'Moge ik de moed hebben om te veranderen wat ik kan veranderen
De kalmte om te accepteren wat ik niet kan veranderen
En de wijsheid om het verschil tussen beide te kennen'

Interviewing

I have collected material (voice recordings, film, notes, visuals) over the past years about people leaving Eastern-Europe. I want to showcase these in a certain way at the CPE. In addition to this I am arranging an interview with Jeton Muja, an artist from Kosovo who is integrating in the Netherlands similarly to me. I reached out to Sergei Kreso for a possibility of collaboration. He is a well-known Eastern European film producer living in the Netherlands and is very connected to the topic of migration. He made several documentaries on this topic, such as “Asylum Seekas” and “Here we move here we groove”. I also reached out to an independent performing arts organization in Hungary to contact an artist couple who worked on a political social experiment for the March 15th National Day in Hungary¹.

Visual translation

Bink van Vollenhoven is going to coach me towards my CPE about how to make an artistic translation based upon my process. We are going to test materials which I already have and will be trying out different ways of showcasing these materials which could suit my project and the translation of the content. We will decide upon exactly how many hours I need to take from them along the process. Throughout my external coaching sessions with Bink, I am learning about the methods of visually translating the notions I have encountered through my process and then transform it into a multimedia experience. I imagine towards the CPE I will have a wider collection of experiments which will be shared on social media (Instagram) and my website (gardenofdreams.info) before the event to reach and attract a broader audience.



1 <https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/03/15/tojas-szabadsagmenet>

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Location

I have contacted fellow peers, Maria Karamaouna and Naomi de Groot about the CPE event in August and we discussed with Maria that she maybe interested in hosting the event in collaboration at AINSI. The AINSI would suit my project's style as the building is a great place for a multimedia experience.

Event

A multimedia experience beginning with an introductory talk/presentation, a talk with communications-unlimited (which is an international journalism center in the Netherlands focusing on Central and Eastern Europeans) then an open experience where I imagine to be therapy recordings, snips of interviews, paintings, objects that express the complexity of emotions that come with the topic of migration (exact visual and auditory expression will be tested out with Bink).

How?

I will be testing out with a beamer and my materials, film, recordings, notes, objects and drawings at the academy in order to properly express the message and content of this project. In the meantime I will be looking through my previous materials selecting, testing, carefully playing with it. I will have a talk with the Hungarian artist couple for further inspiration. I will also be using methods of CBT for self-observation and doing CBT weekly as well as daily meditations.

With whom?

I reached out to Communications-unlimited.nl (an international journalism center for only Central and Eastern European focus). I want to collaborate on an article with them and interview them about their experience here in the Netherlands. I am in contact with Jeton and Sergei for possible collaboration as well. In the CPE I would like to include external perspectives with experts who are working with or close to this topic.

Audience

This project is for the general public. It can be especially impactful for people who want to get to know more about people in the EU, people who had to move and let go before and would like to revisit the complexity of feeling around the topic of migration. I will be creating content twice a week on Instagram and sharing it on my website with stories/insights and messages I want the public to receive in order to build a broader audience.

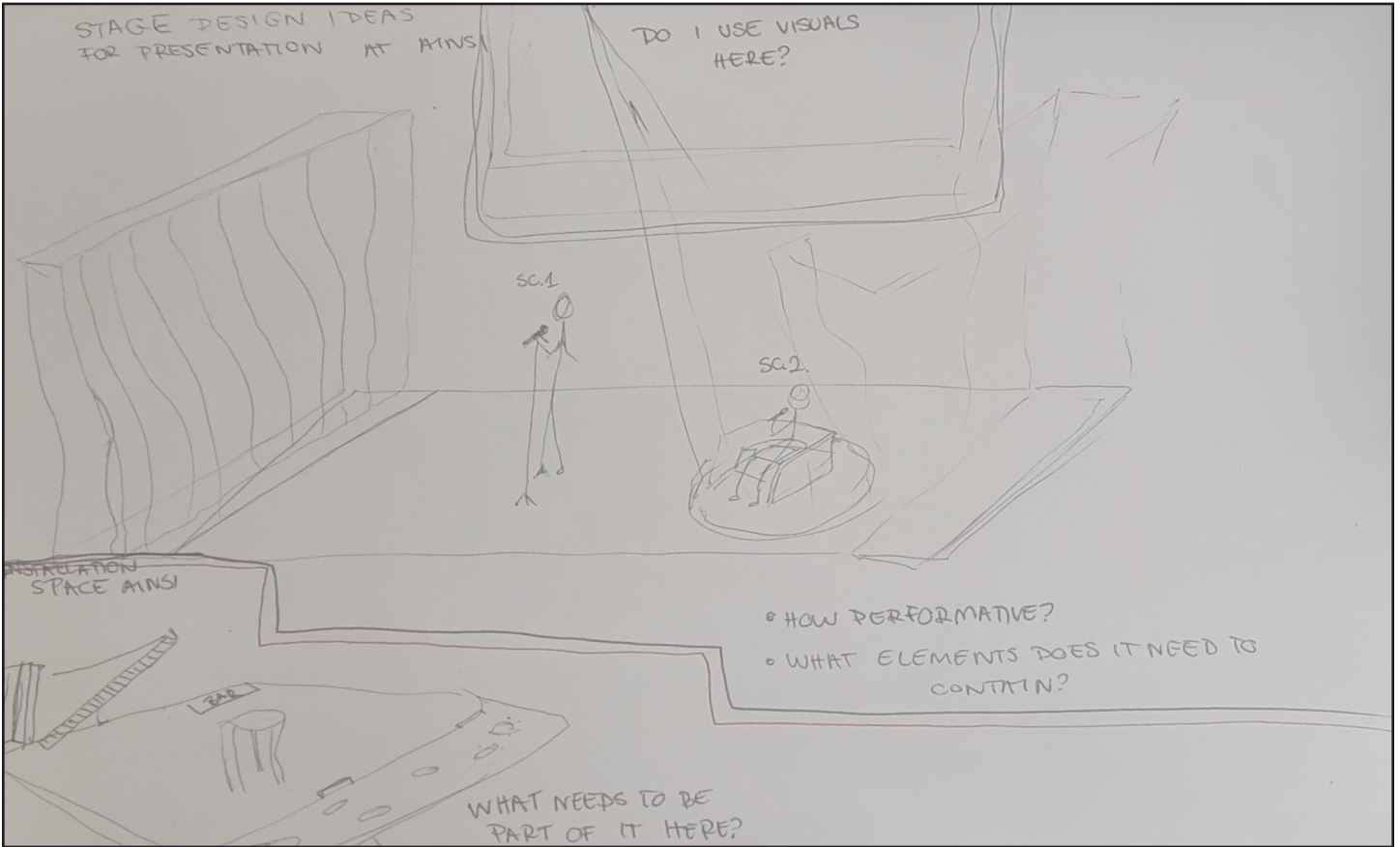
Information

Website: gardenofdreams.info

Instagram: [thegardensofdreams](https://www.instagram.com/thegardensofdreams)

STAGE DESIGN IDEAS
FOR PRESENTATION AT AINSI

DO I USE VISUALS
HERE?



- HOW PERFORMATIVE?
- WHAT ELEMENTS DOES IT NEED TO CONTAIN?

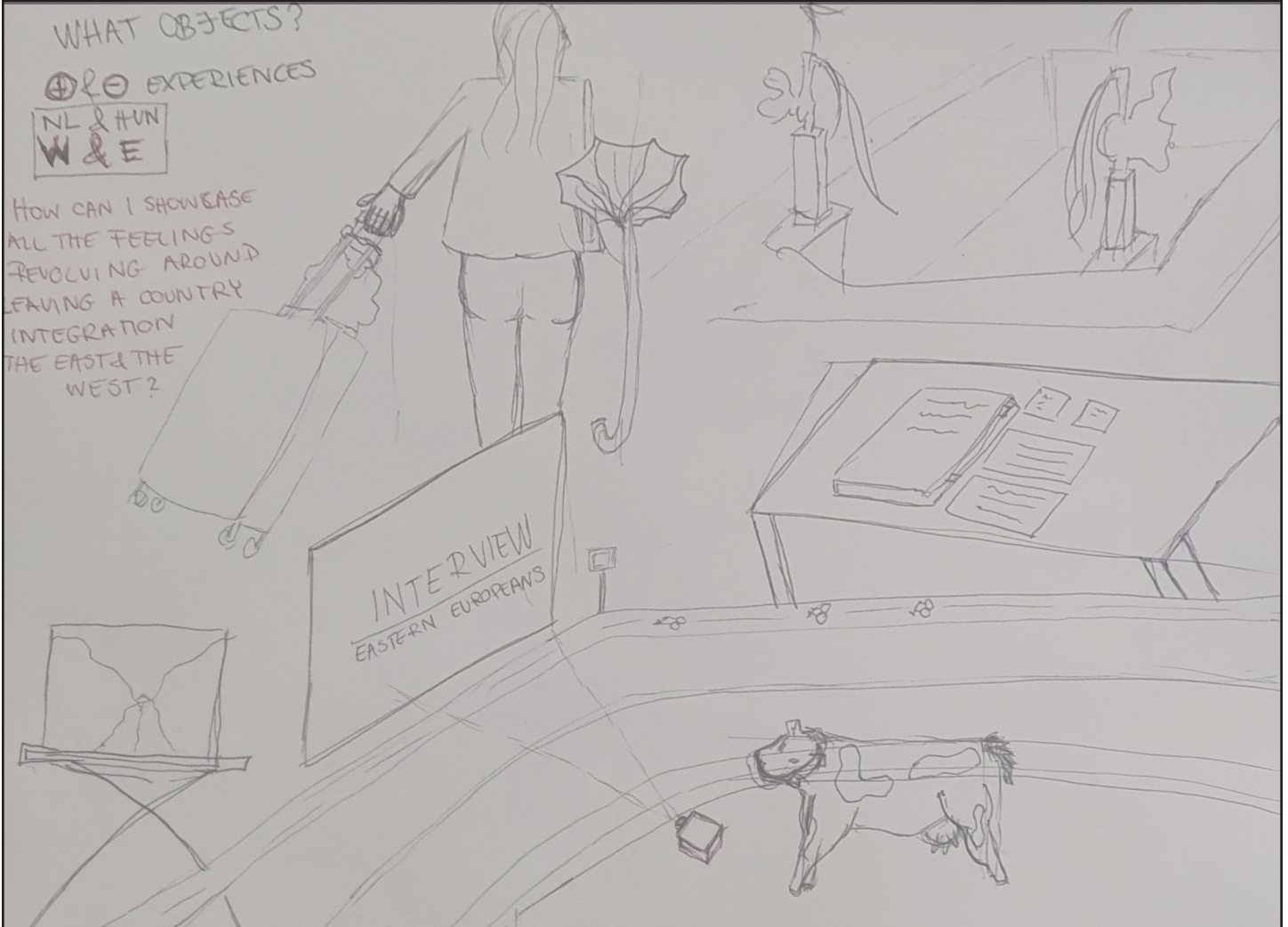
WHAT NEEDS TO BE
PART OF IT HERE?

WHAT OBJECTS?

⊕ ⊖ EXPERIENCES

NL & HUN
W & E

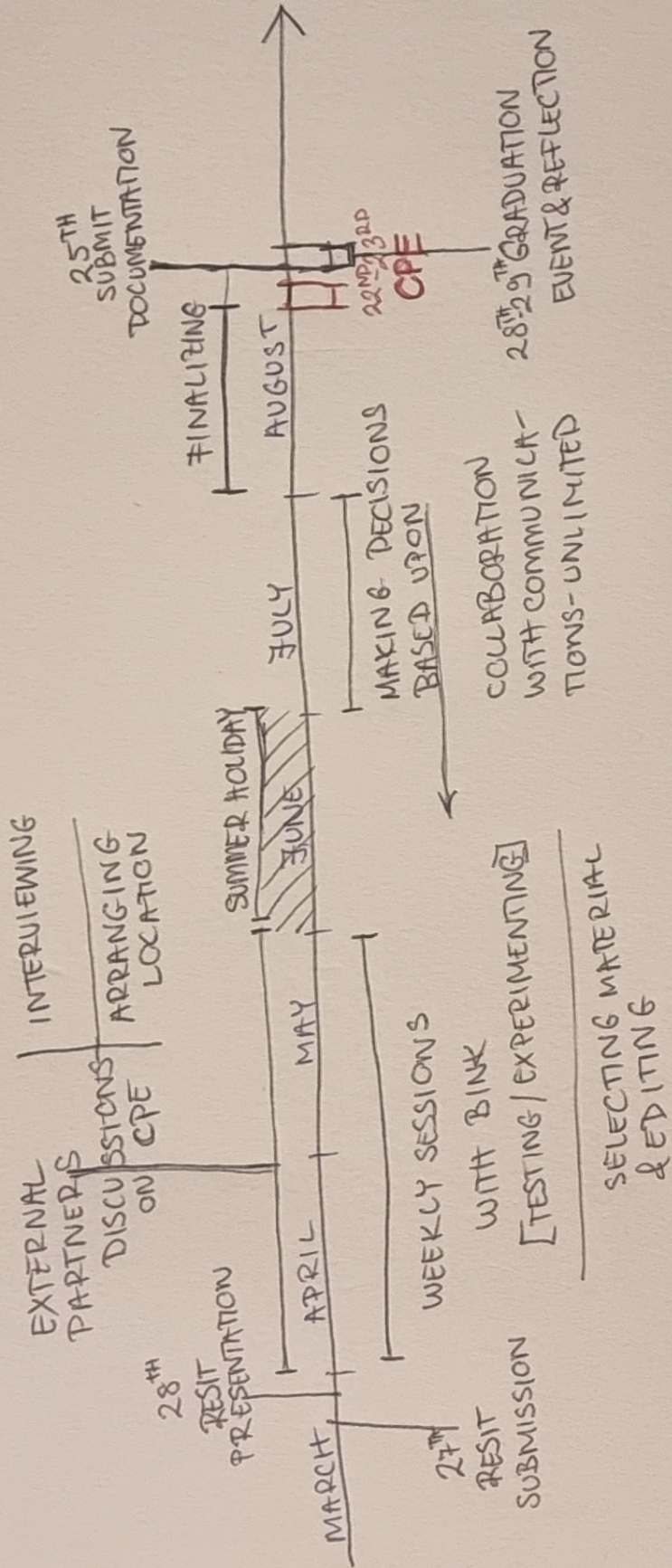
HOW CAN I SHOWCASE
ALL THE FEELINGS
REVOLVING AROUND
LEAVING A COUNTRY
INTEGRATION
THE EAST & THE
WEST?



INTERVIEW
EASTERN EUROPEANS

TIMELINE

2023



BUDGET

EXPENSES:	IARTS	PERSONAL INVESTMENT	EXTERNAL PARTNER
Material costs (paint, canvas, skechbook, notebook, SSD)		€ 200 € 234	
External coaching (Bink, number of hours will be decided during the process, approx. 8)	€ 400		
Production (testing materials)		€ 100	
Rental costs (AINSI:375excl.BTW divided with Maria; beamer from iArts)	€ 187.5(-200) € FREE		
Travel costs (8x drive from Gastel to Maastricht 75km+parking)		€ 320 € 80	
Unforeseen costs	€ 50		
REVENUES:			
Contribution iArts Contribution external Personal investment	€ 250+ € 1000 coaching	€ 934	
TOTAL ESTIMATED EXPENSES € 1584			
TOTAL REVENUES € 2184			