

VOYAGER



**MUSEUMS BEYOND
EXHIBITS - HISTORICAL
MUSEUM IN PETRICH**

Photo by : Tsvetelina Dimchovska

**THE ART OF COMICS, MUSIC,
PHOTOGRAPHY, AND FASHION DESIGN**

**ARCHAEOLOGY FOR
BEGINNERS - SEASON 2024**

**ECHO ACADEMIES - CALL FOR
III ONLINE FORUM**

EDITORIAL STAFF

AUTHORS

PEPA PENEVA VELEVA
GHITA MALHI
TSVETELINA DIMCHOVSKA
MIHAIL PANAYOTOV
YASEMIN BALTACI

EDITOR

MIHAIL PANAYOTOV

DESIGNER

LARBI AIT SOUSSI

PRODUCER

OPEN SPACE FOUNDATION

REFERENCES

WWW.OPENSACEBG.COM

PUBLISHER



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HUMAN
RESOURCE
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Photo by : Tsvetelina Dimchovska



Editor's note

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the new issue of our magazine, which focuses on the power of art, culture, and social issues in today's world. In this edition, you will find a wide range of topics that not only inspire but also provoke thought.

As a team from the Open Space Foundation, we work together like a family, united by our passion for volunteering and the causes that drive us. Each of us puts energy, creativity, and heart into what we do. Our goal is to inspire and engage the communities we work with, and this issue of our magazine is yet another testament to the power of teamwork.

We begin with a meeting with 3 volunteers from archaeological excavations that we support this summer in 3 locations in Bulgaria. Cultural heritage and specially how it is presented in the museum is a topic that engage our minds so let see some good practices from museums that inspired us. The interview with Ralitsa Alexieva, a talented comic book artist, will show you her creative work and the personal challenges she faces. Next, we invite you to join the Academies of European Cultural Heritage on Stage project, a forthcoming event that promises to enrich cultural dialogue with a variety of art forms and topics.

We also look back at moments from the "Lab: Move Your Finger 2.0" this time in Sofia, an event that will focusing us on the green practices and sustainable behavior in our daily life.

Additionally, we discuss important social topics—such as the impact of internet addiction on family relationships and how social networks affect the self-esteem of young people. These issues are of great importance to our society, which is increasingly influenced by the digital world.

For fans of sports and personal development, you will learn how legendary tennis player Roger Federer can help you tackle perfectionism and overcome life's challenges.

We conclude with an analysis of the phenomenon of "Inspiration Porn", exploring how we as a society can change our attitude towards people facing challenges.

We hope that you will find not only interesting stories in this issue but also inspiration for your own journey. Each one of us on the team believes that through shared knowledge, experience, and support, we can create a more connected and compassionate society. Thank you for being part of our family and for joining us on this journey of ideas and causes that unite us.

Warm regards,

Mihail Panayotov
Editor-in-Chief of Voyager #8/2024

КРЪГЛА МАСА "МЛАДИТЕ ХОРА И ИСТОРИЯТА КАТО НАУКА И ПРОУЧВАНЕ"

с участници от Великотърновски университет
"Св.Св.Кирил и Методий"

и доброволци по програма
"Европейски Корпус за Солидарност"
от Испания, Италия, Франция, Турция,
Латвия, Литва, Египет, Коста Рика и България



в Археологически музей "Велики Преслав", гр.В.Преслав

15 август 2024 г.

Archaeology for Beginners

Inherited Culture Season 2024: The Story of Archie



PEPA PENEVA VENEVA

Welcome to the world of archaeology, where history comes alive! Today, we'll introduce you to a group of young people brought together by their shared passion for volunteering. Not only are they helping to excavate ancient treasures, but they are also bringing the spirit of Bulgarian history to the world. One of the characters in this story is **Archie**, a mysterious figure about whom we have yet to learn more. We'll also hear about the adventures of our volunteers from "Inherited culture season 2024" project, the discoveries they made this summer, and how they view their role in preserving our cultural heritage. Volunteering can change the world, and when it comes to archaeology, the impact is even more significant.

Introducing **Archie** ([@Archie the Archaeologist](#)). He is the youngest aspiring archaeologist in the group, created by our PR team: @Riccardo (Italy) and @Hale (Turkey). The first site he visited this year was [Veliki Preslav town](#), the second capital in Bulgaria's history.

Archie is actually one of the most important tools in the hands of archaeologists. If you see this pointy spatula, you know you're in an archaeologist's field. Prepare for time travel and feel free to ask your questions about how people lived before us.

Archie is inquisitive and seeks out not only historical sites but also people with whom he can share his passion and discoveries. Let us introduce you to some of the young people he met this summer in Veliki Preslav and Targovishte town.



Archie, photo: Hale Nur



Our PR team: Mia (BG), Lia (BG), Riccardo (IT), Hale (TR), photo: Hale Nur

Mohamed

(originally from Egypt, currently living and studying restoration in Italy).

What motivated you to participate? Why did you choose Bulgaria?

Mohamed: My passion for cultural preservation and my desire for practical experience in archaeology motivated me. I've always been fascinated by history, and when I learned about the Inherited Culture Project, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to immerse myself in a meaningful initiative that aligned with my interests. The chance to work directly with historical artifacts and help restore ancient sites was incredibly appealing. I chose Bulgaria for its rich and diverse history, particularly Veliki Preslav, an important archaeological site culturally for Bulgaria. It was a unique opportunity to contribute to the preservation of a lesser-known but culturally invaluable part of European history.



Tell us about the atmosphere in the group.

Mohamed: The atmosphere during the excavation and the entire project was incredibly collaborative, supportive, and full of enthusiasm. Working with passionate volunteers and professionals, we all shared a common goal of preserving Veliki Preslav's cultural heritage, which fostered a strong sense of unity. Despite our diverse backgrounds, countries, and experience levels, we bonded over our love for history and archaeology. The group interactions were lively and engaging. Experienced archaeologists mentored volunteers, and we all contributed ideas on how to best tackle the tasks at hand. One of the most significant lessons I learned about teamwork was the importance of communication and collaboration. Each person brought unique skills, and success depended on our ability to work together effectively. Archaeology is unpredictable, so we had to rely on each other's strengths and remain flexible when faced with challenges. This experience reinforced the idea that when everyone is invested in a common goal and willing to learn from one another, the results far surpass individual efforts.

What was the most interesting discovery or experience for you?

Mohamed: The most interesting discovery for me was finding fragments of ancient pottery and architectural remains from the time when Veliki Preslav was a thriving medieval capital. Holding these artifacts in my hands, knowing they were part of everyday life over a thousand years ago, gave me a deep sense of connection to the past. This experience changed my understanding of history, making it feel much more tangible and alive. Reading about ancient civilizations is one thing, but physically uncovering remnants of their existence provides a new perspective. I realized that history isn't just a series of dates and events; it's a collection of stories about real people, their lives, and their contributions to our shared heritage.

How have you changed as a result of this project?

Mohamed: Participating in this project had a profound impact on me. I gained a deeper sense of responsibility toward cultural preservation and heritage conservation. It reinforced my belief in the importance of preserving history for future generations and helped me understand the patience, detachment, and attention to detail required in such work. I also developed practical skills in archaeological excavation techniques, artifact handling, and site restoration, which gave me hands-on experience in a field I've always been passionate about. Additionally, archaeology often presents unexpected challenges, which improved my problem-solving abilities. Working in a diverse team helped me communicate more effectively across cultures, and I learned that flexibility and teamwork are essential for success. This project strengthened my commitment to preserving the past for future generations.

What is the role of history in your life?

Mohamed: This experience will undoubtedly influence my approach to future restoration projects. It reinforced my commitment to ethical practices in cultural preservation and highlighted the importance of collaboration. I'm now more inspired to integrate my passion for archaeology with community engagement, ensuring that the stories we uncover resonate with people today and help them appreciate our shared history. This hands-on experience has transformed my theoretical knowledge into a deeper, more personal commitment to preserving history.



Mia, photo: personal archive of Mia

Mia (Bulgaria)

What motivated you to participate? Why did you choose project in Bulgaria?

Mia: Since I live in Bulgaria, I thought this would be the best option for my first project. Besides, I couldn't wait to meet different people with completely different perspectives than mine.

Tell us about the atmosphere in the group?

Mia: I was part of the PR team and it wasn't every day that I was on a dig, but what I saw was that people were able to get their work done and have fun at the same time. In one of the subgroups, volunteers were dancing and listening to music, which added to the warm atmosphere. Overall everyone enjoyed each other's company, although problems did arise, but that is normal.

During the project I talked to each of the participants. Everyone was welcoming and I never felt unwelcome or uncomfortable. The Spanish volunteers were always together - like a big family, as if they had known each other for years. The Turks were also very close to each other. In general there was a separation into small groups. It is normal to get absorbed with the people closest to you. However, this did not prevent us from communicating with each other. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to share a room with a Turkish girl - otherwise I don't think our friendship would have even formed.

Most interesting discovery/experience for you?

Mia: On the very first day of the project I stated that I like history but not archaeology. However, that has changed and now I am fascinated by it. Now, when I read anything related to history, I always have in mind the process of discovering the past. In addition, I have come to appreciate artifacts and historical evidence because of the difficult process of excavation, restoration, and conservation. "We discover history by destroying it" - I find this belief very thought provoking.

What has changed for you?

Mia: It might sound a bit exaggerated and clichéd, but I am not the same person I was before this project. I had never met people that I was so much alike with. And I always thought my character was too difficult. But these people have proven to me that I don't need to change. They really appreciated me and gave me the confidence and self-esteem I was lacking. Something else that had a significant impact on me was that these people made me forget about my insecurities and even made them a beautiful part of who I am. Solène (France) told me that I had a unique style. Paula (Latvia) showed me what true beauty is. Sophie (Costa Rica) taught me to be authentic and honest and to not try to please people but still show that I care. Mohamed (Egypt) taught me to always look for the good in people. Juan (Spain) taught me that it is good to share your feelings. And many others. I feel more mature after this experience. Because I went through many situations for the first time in just a month.

What is the role of history in your life?

Mia: I've always been fascinated by history, how the current world has been formed. From ancient civilizations to the Middle Ages to modern times, I always find something intriguing. However, I wasn't interested in archaeology and ancient history until this point. Perhaps because of the people who made this more important to me, I will always make the connection between archaeology and the project. Now that I am fully aware of the process of discovering history, I feel a deeper connection to it.

Bulut (Turkey)

What motivates you to participate? Why did you choose Bulgaria?

Bulut: The country is a crossroads of cultures, with a heritage that spans ancient Thracian, Roman and Byzantine civilizations. I was particularly drawn to the opportunity to uncover artifacts that could shed light on lesser-known historical narratives.

Most interesting discovery/experience for you?

Bulut: The most fascinating discovery was a set of ceramic fragments that suggested trade links between ancient cultures. Analyzing these artifacts changed my understanding of historical interactions; it highlighted how interconnected societies were, far beyond what I previously thought. This discovery illustrates the complexity of cultural exchange and the importance of trade in shaping history.



Bulut, photo: personal archive of Bulut

What changed for you?

Bulut: Participating in this project has greatly influenced my personal development. I gained practical skills in excavation techniques and artifact analysis, but more importantly, I developed qualities such as patience and resilience. Working under the sun, facing unexpected challenges and collaborating with others has helped me become more adaptable and confident in my abilities.

What is the role of history in your life?

Bulut: This experience deepened my appreciation for historical narratives and the stories behind artifacts. I now feel a stronger connection to the past and a responsibility to share these narratives, fostering a better understanding of how history shapes our identity and society. This project will undoubtedly influence the way I approach historical study and storytelling going forward.



For more on the project, the findings and how to get involved next year - keep an eye on the website: www.inheritedculture.com



The project is funded by the EU, European Solidarity Corps Programme - Projects in High Priority Areas, 2022 - 2025



Inherited Culture



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HISTORICAL GAMES



ADVERTISING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE



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Excavations in 3 locations in Bulgaria:

- Heraclea Sintica close to Petrich
- The second capital of Bulgaria - Veliki Preslav town
- Fortress Missionis close to Targovishte town

Volunteers from Bulgaria, France, Italy, Greece, Latvia, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands, Turkey

2023 | 2024 | 2025

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Museums beyond exhibits: Historical Museum in Petrich and Museum stars "Michelin"



TSVETELINA DIMCHOVSKA

The year is 2024. The summer was hot, the political situation in Bulgaria is equal to a cataclysm, the news every day told us about countless many tragedies, not because that is the only thing that happens, but because those are the things that carry a higher rating. And yet, one team of people managed to intrigue not only mature people, not only adults, but also young people - the team of archaeologists working on the excavations of Antic town Heraclea Sintica. The discovery of artifacts that attracted the attention to Bulgaria around the world or the novel "The Mysteries of Heraclea Sintika" written by Irina Vagalinska, the wife of the chief archaeologist prof. Ludmil Vagalinsky are a significant part of the efforts to show Bulgarian cultural heritage. But the artifacts found there have to be displayed somewhere, right?



Historical museum Petrich, photo: Tsvetelina Dimchovska

And this is where the history of the History Museum in the city of Petrich begins. The town itself is small, known for its warm weather and fertility, but also, with the illegal activities, that time to time become "heroes" in the primetime of our TV news. However, the museum that I invite you to see is new, built especially to host the significant artefacts from the site Heraclea Sintika. The museum, however, also is an houses history from the Bulgarian revival, from the Liberation of our country, and there is also an ethnographic section. But what makes it so much more interesting for young people?

The archaeological part of the museum presents not only the already so popular statues found at the nearby site, but also a variety of small and whimsical figures that can evoke a variety of emotions in visitors. The museum is large, there is an interactive activity that is interesting not only for the smallest, but also for teenagers. Games that develop historical knowledge, but also make you think about why we sometimes lack such supposedly elementary knowledge.



In this archaeological part, besides statues and various whimsical figures, we can also find beautiful ornaments and jewelry. Here, for example, is this necklace, the photo of which I gave today to a jeweler close to me, who will try to make the same one for me. (Photo 3) Naturally, it won't be gold, but it is a replica of the story of Schliemann's wife (the discoverer of Troy), who wore a gold ring dug there... It sounds sad, but museums evoke all kinds of emotions in people dealing with history, and not only. I do not intend to share with you all the artifacts that are on display there, because there are many, and also because it is much more interesting to go and see them yourself.



What I want to share with you, however, is that you can touch the real work of restorers and archaeologists. The comparison may seem silly to you, but did you know that Michelin stars are awarded to restaurants where the customer can peek into the restaurant's kitchen to see how the chefs work? Well, it's the same here. You can see how the restorers work, how they clean, glue and recreate the artifacts found in the field. This is precisely why this museum deserves our Michelin museum star!

Historical museum Petrich,
photo: Tsvetelina Dimchovska



And not to mention that the fortress of Tsar Samuil is adjacent to it, where unfortunately the untrained eye cannot see the scale of the fortress, but that is precisely why the historical museum in the city of Petrich has built a facility with interactive maps that show you where you are, how high are the walls, what are the artifacts found there. I heard from one of the tour guides that a VR tour of the fortress is currently being developed.

During the vacation, a special museum workshop was created for the students, where they can feel like real archaeologists! And a kiosk in the Archeology Hall allows you to walk through the museum artifacts and learn much more than their name written in the display case.

That's why we're starting our column! We will present you the museums that impressed us, so that the experiences, emotions and knowledge reach more people!

You also could share your favorite museum/s. Send us pictures and a short text: "Why we must visit this museum?". The materials send us on: info@openspacebg.com



Historical museum Petrich, photo: Silvia Velcheva



Historical museum Petrich, photo: Silvia Velcheva



Historical museum Petrich, photo: archiv Historical museum Petrich



Historical museum Petrich, photo: Tsvetelina Dimchovska

The Art of Comics, Music, Photography, and Fashion Design

A Meeting with Ralitsa Alexieva



PEPA PENEVA VENEVA

Comics is an art that has the power to tell stories, provoke thoughts and transport us to other worlds. Today we talk to Ralitsa Alexieva, who through her comics shows us how rich and diverse this art form can be. Last year she participated in the ECHO Academies project in Athens (Greece), one of the 4 locations where we welcomed artists. The project aims to promote young and emerging European talents in the fields of comics (Greece), fashion design (Bulgaria), music (North Macedonia) and photography (Hungary). Our work focuses on issues of visibility, networking, employability and art market entry opportunities for new European talent. And our provocation to artists is to use heritage as a source of inspiration. In Greece, 10 artists from Europe were invited last year to get to know the Karagözis Shadow Puppet Theater in Greece, then create their own stories, but told in comics. Three of them were financially supported to realize their ideas.

Today we met one of the awardees: Ralitsa Aleksieva - comic artist from Bulgaria, who presented her project "Dara" to the audience in Sofia.



HEvent in Sofia, photo: Single Step

Briefly introduce yourself and the project you have been working on for the past months?

Rali: I'm a comic artist, illustrator, animator. I studied illustration at art school and animation at Vancouver Film School. I am currently an illustrator at Chase a Cloud. I have a few comics behind me, one of the biggest is Tea Reflection. During the last year, I developed and created the first part of the comic "Dara", which was published and presented on September 19th. The comic touches on the topic of being part of the LGBTQ+ community in Bulgaria and the various obstacles you may encounter on your way. But it also tries to show the strength and will of many of these characters.

What attracted you to the ECHO Academies project and what expectations did you have before you started?

Rali: I was drawn to the idea of doing a comic book residency. Until that moment, I had never heard of such a thing, and I was endlessly inspired. I didn't have very clear expectations except that I would meet a lot of cool people.

How would you describe the atmosphere and the interaction with the other participants and mentors during the project? What did you learn about yourself through this interaction?

Rali: I would say that it was one of the most fun and enjoyable 3 weeks of my life. The artists I was surrounded by were very talented, but mostly understanding, kind and funny people. We got along great and shared a lot of knowledge and inspiration. Our mentors were comprehensive and the organization of Inter Alia was good. The organizers, Veroniki and Nikos themselves, were extremely radiant, kind and wonderful people. I'm not sure if I learned anything new about myself, but I certainly got in touch with a long-forgotten part of me. The part of freedom and inspiration to create for myself. To search and try. So it was extremely valuable for me to go there and connect with these people.

How has the ECHO Academies project supported you in the realization of your personal project? Which of the projects was the most useful for you?

Rali: The truth is that, during a large part of my project, I did not have constant communication with the organizations that supported me. But that was mainly because I had chosen such a project. Writing scripts and then drawing a comic is something you pretty much do yourself. But whenever I needed help, whether it was for an opinion, advice, funding or help with organization, I got help from both Inter Alia and Single Step. I think the most valuable thing for me has been the connections I've made over the past year with people from these organizations, artists in residence, and festivals I've been to because of that initial inspiration.



Event in Sofia, photo: Single Step

How do you think participating in the project has affected your personal and professional development as a comic book artist? What new skills or perspectives have you gained?

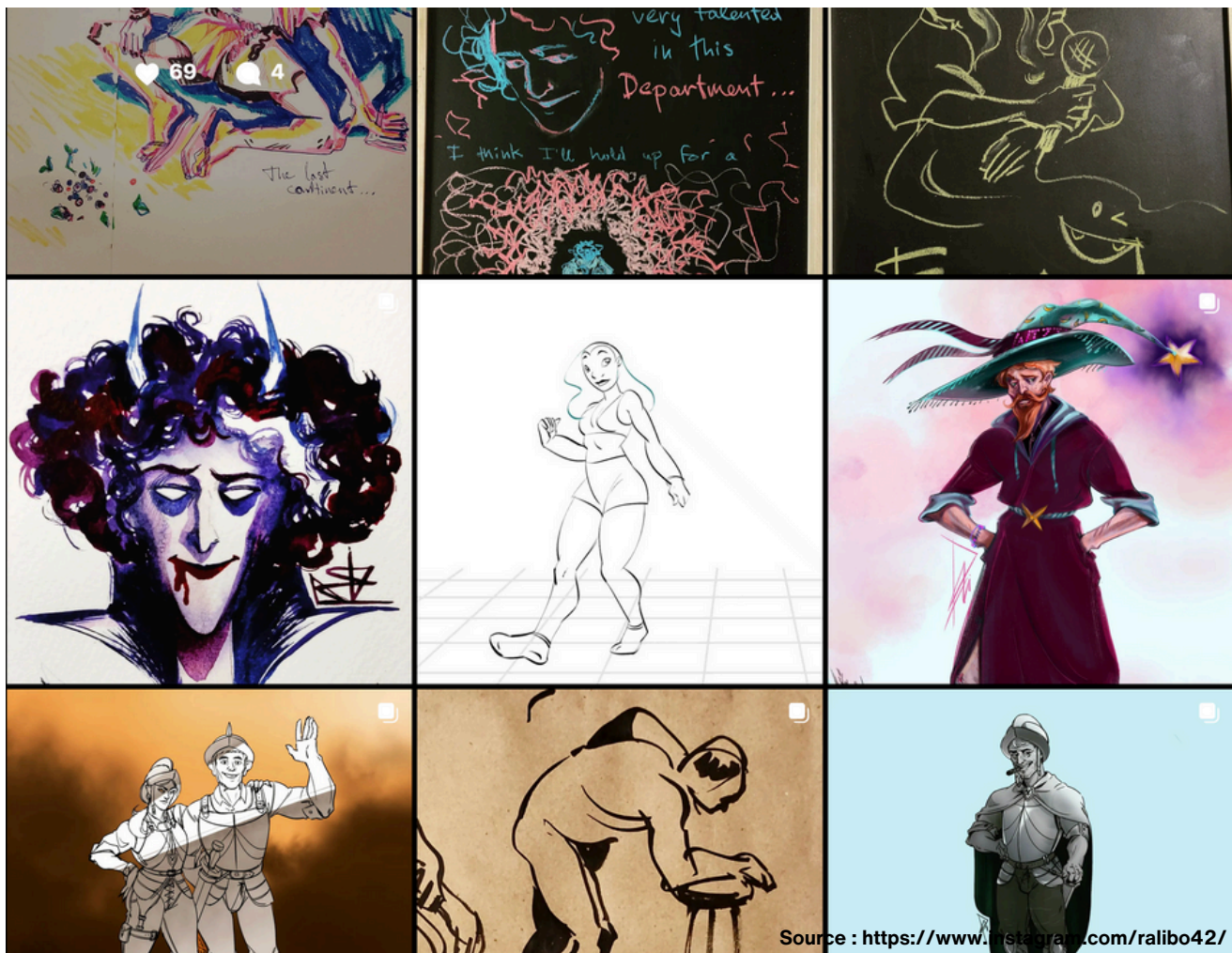
Rali: Certainly, on a personal level, it affected me a lot because at the residency I met my boyfriend, with whom we are currently together. On a professional level, I would say it inspired me to draw comics and tell stories again. It gave me a much-needed glow. I would say that I started to develop the skill of writing comic book scripts bit by bit. This is something that I underestimated for a long time and only now, thanks to this project, have I begun to realize and explore.

What do you dream about from now on? (What are your next steps as a comic book artist?)

Rali: From here on out, I dream of having the strength and inspiration to finish my work on the Dara comic. And above all, to have the patience to spread her story. I want it to reach people who may not agree with my point of view and start a dialogue rather than a conflict. I also have a few more ideas for comics that I dream of creating or finishing in the coming months, but one at a time. First we need to translate and print "Dara" in English and upload it to all the online platforms I had planned on and to find the right way forward with her story. And in the meantime, let's vote for those listed for Parliament! That is important!

More about Rali, you can check her [Instagram](#) profile [@ralibo42](#), and we wish success to her project, and we will be waiting for the comic.

The [ECHO Academies](#) project is funded by the Creative Europe program and National Culture fund of Bulgaria. Implemented in partnership with Inter Alia (Greece), Open Space Foundation (Bulgaria), Pro Progressione (Hungary), Sfera International (North Macedonia), CUMEDIAE: Culture & Media Agency Europe (Belgium).



ECHO Online Forum Vol.3

Legitimacy of Art Nouveau Today



Co-funded by
the European Union



CUMEDIAE



Invitation for online forum

ECHO (European Cultural Heritage on Stage)



PEPA PENEVA VENEVA

Invitation to professionals from the field of culture and arts, as well as to future experts in cultural management on October 31st will happen our 3rd online forum, themed: Cross-Sector Dialogue in Music, Comics, Fine Art and Fashion Design.

The third ECHO Academies online forum is not only the closing event of the ECHO Academies artist residency program; it is also a platform where experts and creators from various artistic fields can meet and share their experiences!

The forum's theme, "Legitimacy of Art Nouveau Today: Cross-Disciplinary Dialogues in the Arts and Crafts," is inspired by the Art Nouveau movement— a movement, which sought to dissolve the boundaries between fine and decorative arts, integrating art into everyday life by applying aesthetic principles to practical and decorative objects. It emphasized harmony, organic forms, and curvilinear shapes, promoting a seamless flow between nature and design, and erasing hierarchical distinctions between art forms.

A key question to be addressed is how interactions between different art forms can foster artistic innovation while addressing modern sustainability challenges. Although the concept of sustainability, as we understand it today, did not exist during the Art Nouveau period, the movement was already a response to issues such as the rise of mass production and the loss of craftsmanship—challenges that have become more pronounced in our contemporary, even more, industrialised world.

Participants will engage in discussions and presentations, highlighting projects developed through ECHO Academies. This will showcase how cross-disciplinary dialogue can create new opportunities and perspectives in the creative sector.



If you'd like to join us, please, register [here](#).

Programme:

Part 1: Interdisciplinary Conversation (6:00 PM - 7:00 PM)

*Introduction

*Panel discussion on artistic intersections and contemporary challenges

*Audience Q&A

Introduction of the panel:

Aristaios Tsousis, Anastazia, Saso Popovski, Ana Paula Almeida

Part 2: Project Presentations and Discussions (7:00 PM - 7:45 PM)

*Presentations by 12 selected artists in four subgroups, followed by discussions.

a. Music (Facilitated by SFERA International)

Carlos Hurtado Múnera, Nikola Andrejić, Emil Ejupi

b. Comics (Facilitated by Inter Alia)

Ralitsa Aleksieva, Evi Magavetsos, Gus Moystad

c. Fine Art (Facilitated by Pro Progressione)

Jacopo Brunello, Diogo Pereira, Oleksandra Khalepa

d. Fashion Design (Facilitated by Open Space Foundation)

Yllka Haxhiu, Yordan Mihalev, Jose Marie Sta Iglesia



The [ECHO Academies](#) program is an innovative initiative supporting emerging European talents in the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). Focusing on fields like music, comics, architecture, fashion design, and photography, the program aims to enhance resilience and employability by exploring European cultural heritage. It facilitates exchange between the Balkan region and the EU, promoting cross-cultural collaboration and increasing artists' international visibility and impact.

ECHO Academies project is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union and National Culture fund of Bulgaria.

Project partners:

Inter Alia (GR)

Sfera International (MK)

Open Space Foundation (BG)

CUMEDIAE (BE)

Pro Progressione (HU)

Демократична мозайка

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civitates

On October 19, we will be waiting for you at Slaveykov Square in Sofia, where we will be part of the "Democratic Mosaic" festival.

The festival is a civil society scene filled with interactive activities, useful discussions and inspiring personalities.

What awaits you?

- Exhibition
- Discussions and panels
- Creative workshops

The "Democratic Mosaic" project is implemented with the financial support of the Capital City Municipality - "Europe" 2024 Program from the Civic Participation Forum, in partnership with the National Youth Forum and the "Lozenets" District of Capital City Municipality.

It is co-financed by the "Civitates" fund of the Network of European Foundations.





Effects of Internet Addiction on Family Relationships Among Teenagers



GHITA MALHI

Internet addiction among teenagers has become a growing concern, not just in terms of personal well-being but also in its profound impact on family relationships. In today's digital age, teenagers spend a significant amount of time online, whether for socializing, gaming, entertainment, or educational purposes. While the internet offers numerous benefits, the line between healthy use and addiction can blur quickly, especially when teens lose control over the amount of time they spend online. This over-dependence on the internet affects family dynamics in subtle but powerful ways, often leading to emotional distance, misunderstandings, and an overall decline in family cohesion.

The core issue with internet addiction is that it alters how teenagers engage with their families. In homes where teens are excessively online, family dinners, conversations, and bonding moments take a backseat. Teens may feel more connected to their online world than their real-life relationships, leading to a gradual emotional withdrawal from parents and siblings. As a result, family members may start to feel neglected or misunderstood, as their efforts to engage are often met with distracted responses or the ever-familiar, "Just a minute," that rarely comes to fruition. This persistent detachment erodes the quality of interactions within the family, creating an invisible barrier that can be hard to break down.

Research supports these concerns. Studies have found that families of adolescents with internet addiction tend to experience higher levels of emotional conflicts and a sense of disconnection. A study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) highlighted that these families are more likely to deal with emotional difficulties and dysfunctional dynamics. Teens who are addicted to the internet often come from families that experience greater stress, less communication, and more misunderstandings. The digital divide becomes not just a metaphor for access to technology but a literal separation between family members who are physically together but emotionally distant.

In addition to emotional detachment, internet addiction can also lead to mood swings and stress, which often spill over into family interactions. Constant exposure to social media, online games, and other digital distractions can leave teenagers feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or irritable, especially when their expectations—such as getting likes, winning a game, or staying connected—aren't met. This stress can cause teens to lash out at family members, leading to unnecessary arguments or emotional breakdowns, which further strains the family unit. Parents, in turn, may not understand the root of their teenager's behavior, leading to frustration and a breakdown in communication.

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How to solve the issue of internet addiction and its impact on family relationships?



GHITA MALHI

Solving the issue of internet addiction and its impact on family relationships is not easy, but it is possible with intentional steps and understanding. The first key to addressing the problem is recognizing the signs of internet addiction. Teens and their families should be aware of the behaviors that signal addiction, such as an inability to limit time spent online, neglecting real-life responsibilities, using the internet as an escape from problems, or feeling anxious when not connected. Once these signs are recognized, families can begin working together to find a solution.

One of the most effective ways to tackle internet addiction is to establish clear boundaries. Families should work together to set reasonable limits on screen time, ensuring that there is dedicated time for offline activities, especially family-related ones. For instance, implementing a "tech-free" policy during meals or before bedtime can help foster better communication and stronger bonds within the family. This allows teens to be present in the moment, making it easier to reconnect with family members and engage in meaningful conversations.

Additionally, open communication is essential in addressing the emotional distance caused by internet addiction. Teens should feel comfortable discussing the challenges they face, whether online or in their personal lives, without feeling judged. Parents, on the other hand, need to be open to listening without being overly critical or dismissive of their teen's experiences in the digital world. By creating a supportive environment where both parties can share their concerns and feelings, families can begin to bridge the emotional gap caused by excessive internet use.

Another important solution is finding a balance between online and offline activities. The internet, while a source of entertainment and social connection, should not completely replace real-world experiences. Families can encourage teens to participate in hobbies, sports, or other activities that promote interaction and collaboration with others in the physical world. This not only helps reduce screen time but also allows teenagers to develop skills and build relationships outside of the digital realm, fostering a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

In conclusion, while the internet plays an integral role in the lives of today's teenagers, its overuse can lead to significant challenges, particularly when it comes to family relationships. Internet addiction can cause emotional detachment, increased stress, and breakdowns in communication within the family unit. However, with awareness, open dialogue, and a commitment to balancing online and offline life, families can overcome these challenges and rebuild stronger, more connected relationships. By working together, teens and their families can navigate the digital age in a way that preserves the closeness and support that every family needs to thrive.





Image From Unsplash

The influence of social networks on the self-esteem and personality formation of young people.



MIHAIL PANAYOTOV

Social networks play an important role in the lives of teenagers around the world. These platforms provide opportunities for communication and self-development, but also pose risks to the formation of identity and self-esteem. Constant exposure to idealized images on social media can have a negative impact on young people's self-image, especially when it comes to appearance and success.

One of the main problems of social media is the creation of false standards of beauty and well-being. Teenagers in Bulgaria, as in many countries, are daily exposed to images of edited photos of bloggers and celebrities whose lives are presented as flawless. Such images instill in teenagers the wrong idea that external beauty and material success are the only criteria for a successful life. Young people who spend several hours a day on social media begin to compare themselves to these unattainable ideals, leading to lower self-esteem.

According to the European Commission, Bulgarian youth spend an average of 3-4 hours a day in front of a screen, interacting with various digital platforms. This is higher than the average for the EU, which emphasizes the importance of this problem in Bulgaria. Spending a long time on social networks increases dissatisfaction with appearance and lowers self-esteem. Many young people develop distorted ideas that success is based on the number of likes and followers.



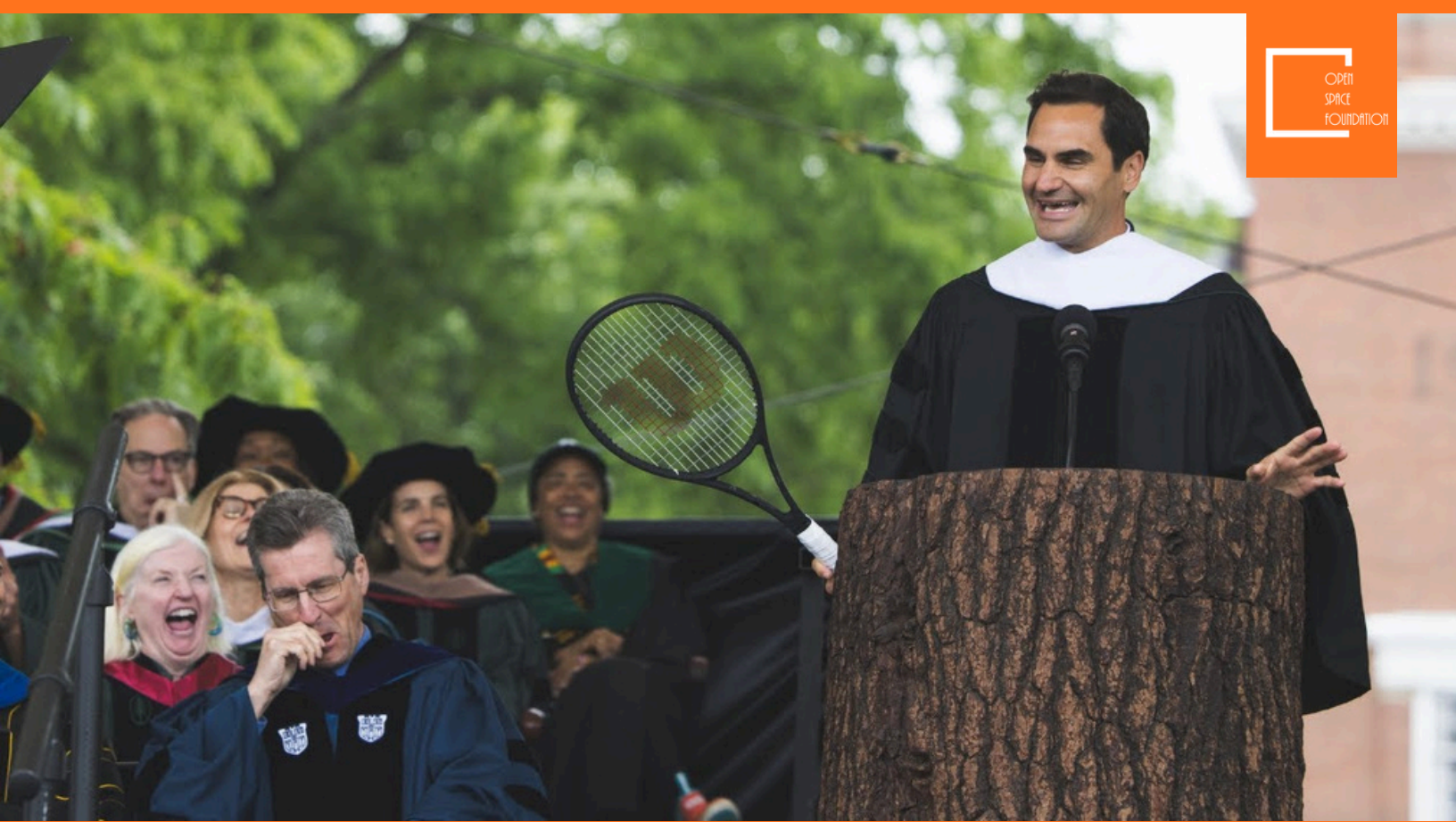
The influence of social networks is not limited to self-esteem; Constant comparison with illusory images and the desire for virtual popularity crowd out real life values. For example, many Bulgarian teenagers focus on creating an "ideal" appearance in the virtual world, forgetting about the importance of developing personal qualities and real relationships. Because of this, young people often find it difficult to communicate in real life. Instead of communicating face-to-face, teenagers spend more time in virtual space, which is a shortcut to loneliness and social isolation.

In order to prevent the negative impact of social networks, it is important to teach Bulgarian youth to consciously approach the consumption of content. This involves developing critical thinking that will help teenagers distinguish reality from edited images. Parents and teachers should discuss with teenagers how these idealized images are created and explain that there is often an artificial image behind them. They also need to encourage young people to subscribe to content that cultivates healthy values and real achievements. There are many examples of bloggers in Bulgaria who share their experiences of personal growth and desire for self-improvement, instead of creating a false image of success. This can be more of a source of inspiration than a comparison for teenagers.

It is also important that the adults in Bulgaria become an example of conscious use of the Internet. Parents, teachers and the education system of the country need to show how social media can be used for self-education and finding useful information, instead of judging its worth based on likes and comments.

Social networks have a significant impact on the development of self-esteem and personality of adolescents in Bulgaria. The pressure of idealized standards of beauty and success negatively affects their mental health. However, by consciously using social networks and developing critical thinking and analysis, young people can avoid these negative consequences and learn to value themselves based on real achievements and their personal qualities that contribute something to this world .





How Roger Federer can help you deal with perfectionism?



YASEMIN BALTACI

Perfectionism... nowadays we hear about this word more than before... 'What is your biggest weakness?' interviewer asks, and the answer is 'I'm a perfectionist.' Is that really work in this way? If being a perfectionist doesn't serve as accomplish better achievements in our lives, why we keep it than? Maybe a better question would be: How we keep it?

You might be experienced having a task to complete and you may be really excited or ambitious to get this thing done. However somehow it's impossible to finish it... In some cases even starting is challenging too! If you heard about such quotes like:

"Believe you can, and you're half way there."

It may be even more disappointing for you. You question yourself, your talents, skills and desire and start thinking: 'Maybe I'm not good enough, not capable of doing it. Maybe I shouldn't do it at all...'

In some other cases you may start doing the task, but you may loose yourself finalizing it, struggle with details and not able to see big picture. It may lead you to losing the time management and deadlines. You may start thinking maybe you don't want to do it at all...

Now, I want to tell you about a speech legendary tennis player Roger Federer gave in his graduation ceremony that he received a Doctor of Humane Letters degree. With beginning his professional tennis career at 16, Federer never attended college. So it was his "most unexpected victory ever."



While everybody define his game 'effortless' he reminds all the time he worked really hard while nobody is watching. So he emphasizes that "Effortless is a myth" and continues "I had to work very hard to make it look easy. I spend years whining, swearing, throwing my rackets before I learned to keep my cool." So as a champion today, he had a lot failures to achieve his success. But you're already familiar this concept right: Work hard and be successful!

I would like to tell you about something else. He played in the 1526 singles matches in his career and he won almost 80% of those matches. -Suits to the champion, huh?-

Now, I would like to forward you the question Federer asked to audience: "What percentage of points do you think I won in those matches?"

Remember; he is a champion, a legendary athlete with grand slam and olympic medals, a tennis player was ranked world no.1 for 310 weeks... The answer is: "Only 54%."

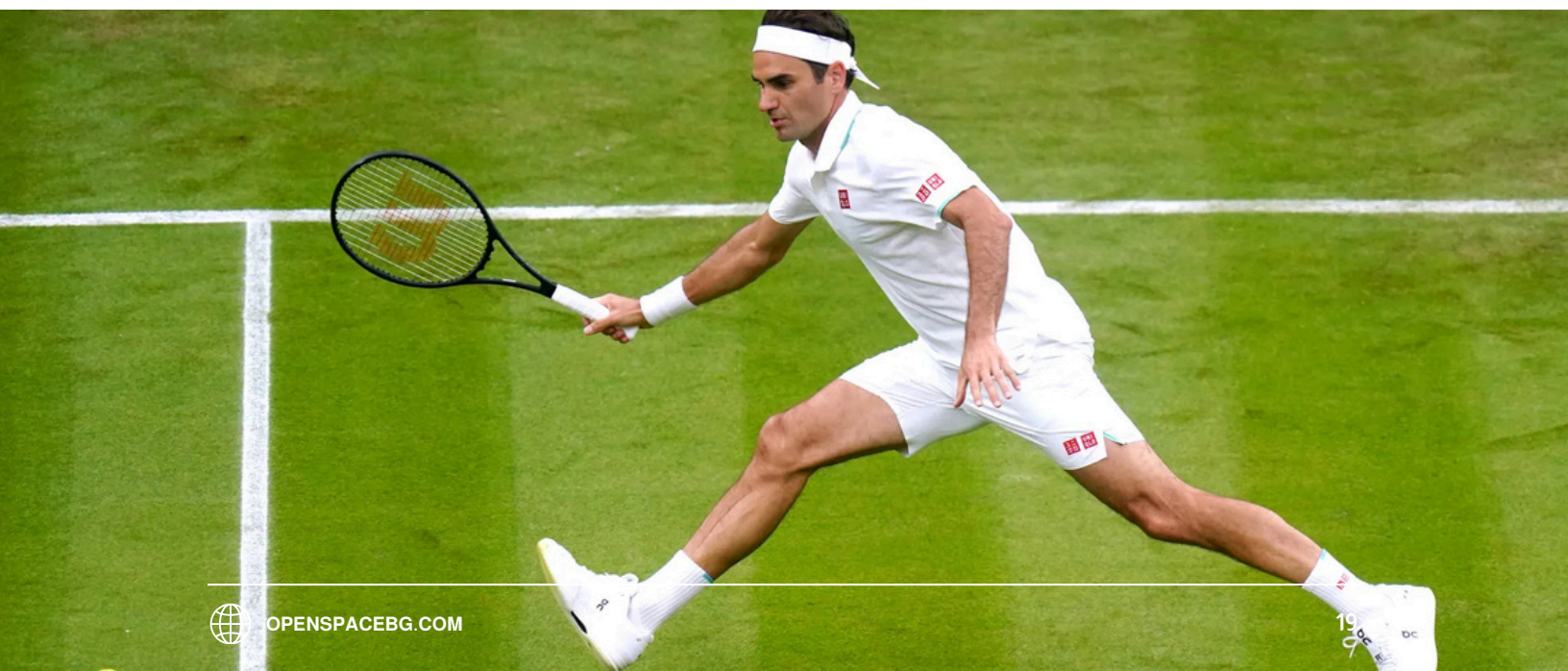
He explains humbly as always "In other words, even top ranked tennis players win barely more than half of the points they play." And continues: "When you lose every second point on average, you learn not to dwell on every shot. You teach yourself to think, 'Okay, I double faulted. It's only a point.' 'Okay, I came to the net and got passed again, it's only a point.' Even a great shot, an overhead backhand smash that ends up on ESPN's top 10 playlist, that too, just a point. So here's why I'm telling you this. When you're playing a point, it has to be the most important thing in the world and it is. But when it's behind you, it's behind you. This mindset is really crucial 'cause it frees you to fully commit to the next point and the next point after that with intensity, clarity, and focus."

What Federer meant is in non-tennis terms, whatever your work is there will be ups and downs. It will be the rollercoaster of your life path. Sometimes you will get promotion, sometimes you will lose your job, fail a class, miss a course. In those moments that you're down, you may feel disappointed and doubt yourself and it's totally natural. If you're in one, please remember his words:

"Negative energy is wasted energy."

In order to achieve 'perfect' results, you should become a master at overcoming those hard moments. Even if they're related to your task or consequences of your actions, you have to accept it and focus on new challenge. If you would like cry, punch some pillows, do it. But get up, get back to work and do your best for this next 'point'.

"Work harder but remember, work smarter."

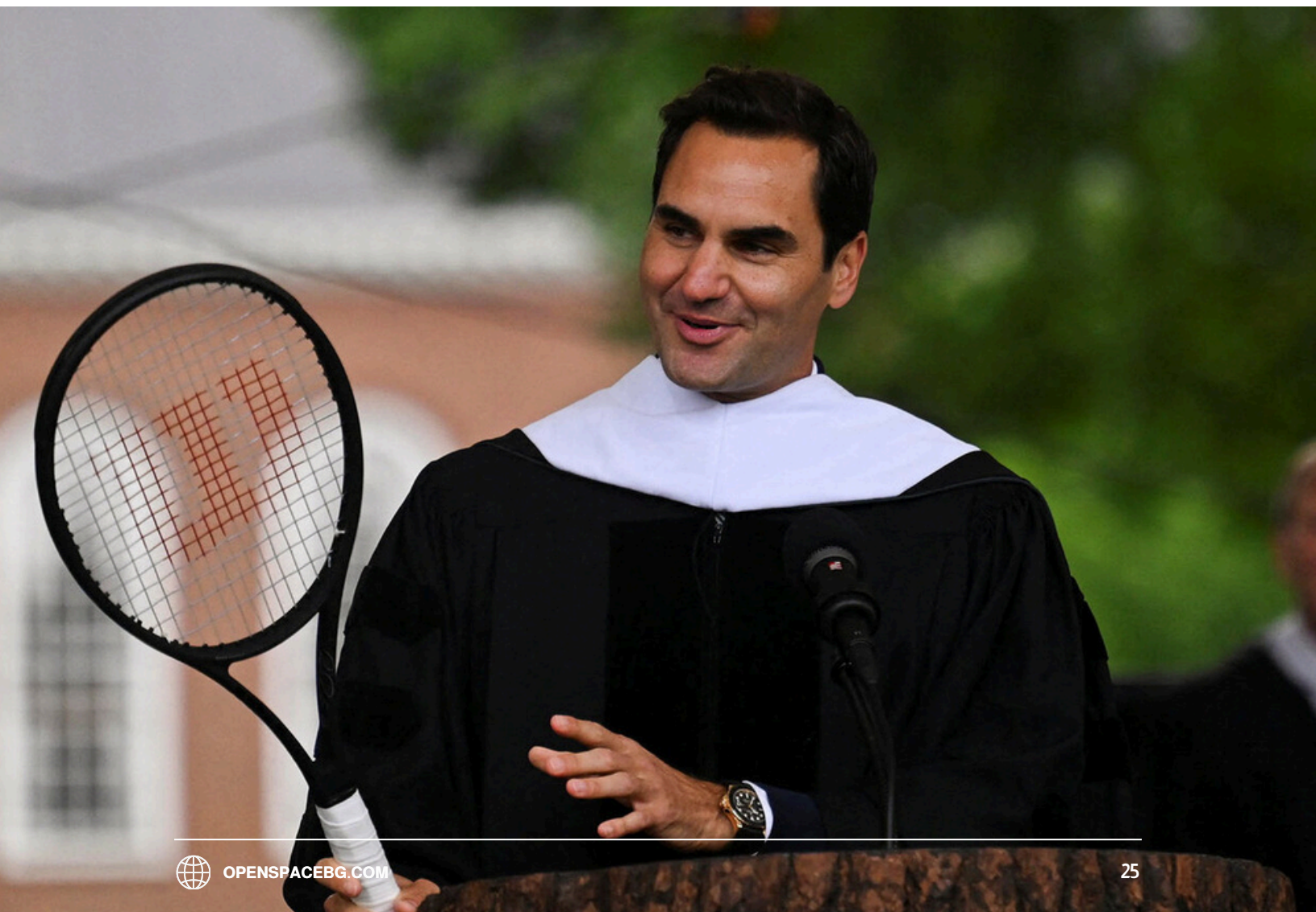


While we emphasize working, some might ask, what about talents and gifts? It may lead lots of people to success (or perfection in our case). And you may also think that you don't have it when you want to give up the task. But discipline, patient, trusting yourself, loving the process, managing life balance and managing process are also talents. Some were born with it, while others have to improve it. The good thing is even if you don't have it, these are the talents you can work on.

Champion says "Life is bigger than the court." Even he wrote a history on this very court, he states "I knew that tennis could show me the world, but tennis could never be the world." You may like what you do, furthermore love your job and feel everything is depend on what you do, it's not. There's a whole world out there, non related your 'court'. There's also more important parts of our lives like family and friends; loved ones we don't care about 'perfectionism' with. There are things fulfill our lives with: culture, travelling, art, sports and other joys.

Please remember these enriching pleasures in your life. Embrace and enjoy them. Even though accomplishing things perfectly seems really shiny; feeling happy and content is never about perfection. Of course, you may feel pretty good with 'perfect' results and it's great. But my point is not to expect it as a normal state and oblige yourself with perfection all the time. Trying to embrace failures as quick as possible would also give you the flexibility on your mind. Wish you happy failures that will lead you the champion's mindset.

Thanks Federer, for wonderful play and inspiring speech.





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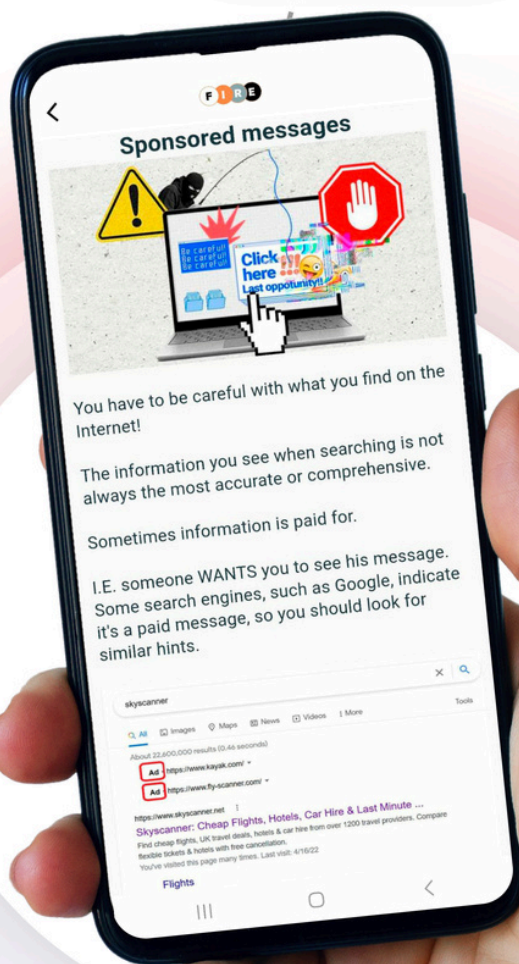


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People with disabilities - does it hurt to be someone's muse?



TSVETELINA DIMCHOVSKA

After the end of the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games began. What is the difference between the two is more than clear not only to sports geeks, but also to any other person who has little interest in sports, but nevertheless watches the news, morning blocks, podcasts or simply observes the advertising billboards or posters on the streets of cities. From an early age, most parents educate their children in empathy, warmth, charity and other virtues that will turn the young child into an adequate adult who can make a clear assessment of his own difficulties and those of everyone else. Think about how often you tell yourself that your life is very hard and difficult, that it is full of challenges, or just boring paperwork that you have to overcome every day. Don't you think when you throw away food for, as everyone says, "the hungry children of Africa"?! Yes, we all think we are facing something spectacular at that particular moment, but often times it comes down to a simple chore, sending a boring email or just walking to a certain place when it's raining outside. And yet, when we see a person who is unwell, whether they are in a wheelchair, have difficulty with physical actions, or have difficulty speaking and having an orderly line of thought, we secretly give thanks that we are not in their place, that we are alive much easier than their lives. This is exactly the topic of today's post - inspiration based on someone else's suffering, misfortune, difficulty

To begin the topic, we will need to make a clarification that a large number of people who have some complication claim that they do not feel unhappy. They say they didn't really feel as miserable as we "normal" people think. In fact, bullying at school is not something that only happens to them, on the contrary, many children who are thinner, fatter, taller, shorter or whatever you can think of are bullied at school. That is, the bullying does not pile up only and only on the children with complications. In this text, I will also talk about these Paralympic Games, which led to the dissatisfaction of the participating athletes, because the ads, it turns out, were, according to them, outrageous. Why? A Channel 4 ad in the US says "It's fast for a wheelchair user!". Despite the claim that it is made to reproach and insult the disadvantaged, it is clear that global policies proclaim the exact opposite - an equal start and equal treatment for all. That is, this statement is invalid.

However, the point is not just about this ad, which implies exactly that - that such statements are more than superfluous, but rather that we cannot constantly show pity or sympathy. It turns out that in fact, people who have any health complications resent this kind of attitude and behavior. They see it as inspiration porn, which means that an attitude that is laced with constant sympathy and words like "I don't know how you do it, I couldn't" or "I'm blessed to be healthy" actually pisses them off.

Imagine waking up in the morning and being the only person with blue eyes. Every day you'll get unsolicited sympathy for being different, but you'll get used to it, after all, it's always been that way. Would you like it when you are in a hurry to have people stop you to help you with everything? "Oh, don't cross alone, I'll help you!" should be a frequent phrase to which you should respond with thanks and almost honors. Well, you will surely get bored. The claim that if a person with blue eyes can look through a microscope, then you can too is supposedly inspiring, but only for yourself, and for the blue-eyed - another cliché.

This is how we arrive at the point of view of people who have some health complications, either at birth or later acquired, namely that these are also athletes who engage exclusively in physical activity. The point is that their category is different and so are their competitors.

The problem so far seems clear, resolved, and not all that painful, but it turns out that's not really the case, or at least not in my opinion. If we base it on all these slogans that all people regardless of whether we have health problems or not, whether we are overweight or not, it means that tomorrow our boss can decide that the office will be located on the sixth floor of a building without an elevator, and people with mobility difficulties will either have to comply or look for another job. Yes, this could be condemned as discrimination, but if you are a person who likes to eat and are overweight, then the stairs do not discriminate against you, because your health condition is not problematic in itself, that is, there is no problem to you also get on the roof, as long as you leave a little earlier if you stop for breaks.

So the problem in my eyes is now completely different. The stairs and their ascent are the smallest case study, on the contrary, everything else became a problem. And why? Because at some point a choir that has a mental problem will be placed side by side with people who don't have one. The problem also comes from school X, where I witnessed a situation in which a child on the autism spectrum decided to jump out of the window because he was supposed to please the others. Well, no, there isn't. A teacher caught him at the last moment. But the fault here is not only in the classmates of this child, on the contrary - it is in the whole system, because we try not to reject people with health problems, which is acceptable, but the question is to what extent? Should every school have a screen at the windows, under every tall building - a net to catch people who throw themselves? Well, no.

The question here is about a correct attitude, because even in Bulgaria, in Varna, there are companies that work exclusively with people with difficulties. The question here is about limits, more precisely - how do you set limits for something like this?



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