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World Health Organization, NYU Steinhardt, Community Jameel and CULTURUNNERS launch the Jameel Arts & Health Lab to measure the Impact of the Arts on Health

- With emphasis on equity, the lab aims to radically improve global health through arts-related research and advocacy to drive policy implementation across 193 UN member states.
- This collaboration marks the first major arts and health initiative in the history of the WHO.

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The Jameel Arts & Health Lab was launched at The National Arts Club in New York today following the signing of agreements between the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, the Steinhardt School at New York University (NYU), Community Jameel, and CULTURUNNERS. Focused on overlooked and underserved communities, the lab will coordinate and amplify scientific research into the effectiveness of the arts in improving health and wellbeing to drive policy implementation across 193 UN member states. The lab represents the first major arts and health initiative in the history of the WHO and follows its [2019 report](#) on the role of the arts in preventing illness and promoting health.

Based between NYU Steinhardt and WHO's Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, the lab will highlight arts and health research to promote the broad integration of the arts into mainstream care. Initial projects will look at music's effect on mothers who experience postnatal depression, the potential of cultural archives in promoting post-conflict mental health recovery, and the effectiveness of the arts in dementia care. It will also launch an international research coalition investigating the benefits of the arts in hospitals and care communities.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, commented, "The arts can be a powerful ally in our quest to improve health for all. I have seen the impact of the arts on community wellbeing, and I'm very pleased that this collaboration will help us understand the science of that impact in order to improve the lives of people from all backgrounds."

Fady Jameel, Vice Chairman of Community Jameel, said: "The pivotal role of the arts in health and care continues to be highlighted through an ever-expanding body of research. With the establishment of the Jameel Arts & Health Lab, we hope to leverage this research in order to advance the integration of the arts into mainstream care and improve the health and wellbeing of millions of people across the world."

Added NYU Steinhardt's Gale and Ira Drukier Dean, Jack H. Knott, "The Jameel Arts & Health Lab will continue the Steinhardt School's longstanding commitment to researching the health benefits of theater, music, dance, and visual art. We continue to discover how the arts contribute to learning and healing, but we have not yet leveraged the full potential of this research. The Jameel Arts & Health Lab will lead efforts to transcend the disciplinary silos that often prevent researchers, arts practitioners, and policy makers from working together to advance understanding and impact."

The lab will be led by Christopher Bailey and Nils Fietje at WHO, Dr. Nisha Sajani at NYU Steinhardt, and Stephen Stapleton at CULTURUNNERS, while UCL's Dr. Daisy Fancourt will chair the Lab's expert steering committee. Its "Healing Arts 2023" campaign will build on previous programs, including a 2021 [Symposium](#) at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and participation at the [Venice Biennale](#), with activations at Trinity College Dublin (Creative Brain Week), WHO Headquarters in Geneva (WHO75 concert), King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Jeddah (co-hosted by Aeon Collective and the G20 Global innovation Hub), Lagos (Nigeria National Arts and Health Week), and Cop28 in Dubai.

While evidence of the health benefits of the arts has existed for years, the lab's global reach, and unique model combining research, outreach, and policy implementation, will allow it to drive systemic change around the world.

Notes to Editors

ABOUT JAMEEL ARTS & HEALTH LAB RESEARCH PROJECTS 2023

Music & Motherhood

Postnatal depression (PND) affects around one in seven women globally. The benefits of singing for maternal mental health has a long history, which is increasingly backed up by rigorous clinical research. For instance, a randomized controlled trial looking at the effects of a specifically designed 10-week singing program for 134 mothers with PPD symptoms found that the intervention reduced symptoms by 38%, with a particularly strong impact on those with moderate to severe PND symptoms. The intervention is being scaled up to support new mothers in the United Kingdom, but further research is required to better understand how it can be translated into different cultural contexts. The Lab's *Music and Motherhood* project focuses on exploring the feasibility of implementation and localizing the intervention in a number of countries, including Romania, Denmark, and Italy. The intervention is based on the WHO [Music and Motherhood protocol](#) originally conceived by the [Centre for Performance Science](#) and informed by the Breathe Melodies for Mums delivery model run by [Breathe Arts Health Research](#).

Yazidi Cultural Archives

As part of its mandate, the Jameel Arts & Health Lab is conducting an evaluation of the impact of the [Yazidi Cultural Archives](#), a digital archive made by Yazidi women survivors of the genocide perpetrated by Da'esh in Northern Iraq in 2014. The archive was launched in October 2022 on the United Nations Google Arts and Culture platform in collaboration with Yazda, Community Jameel, and CULTURUNNERS. The archives were developed over 12 months, with the aim of supporting female Yazidi survivors through a permanent digital repository of Yazidi culture, making use of the known psychological benefits of group support, artistic engagement, and cultural validation.

Arts in Dementia Care

As part of a broader focus on creativity, aging, and neurodegenerative diseases, the Jameel Arts and Health Lab will respond to the call put forward by the WHO to recognize [dementia as a health priority](#), with nearly 10 million new cases each year, and to advance research and innovation. Drawing on recommendations in a [landmark NYU-led evaluation](#) demonstrating the social and psychological benefits of making art accessible to people living with dementia and their carers, the Lab will conduct a review of the existing evidence of how the arts and creative arts therapies may serve to prevent, delay, treat, and manage symptoms of dementia with a view to identifying scalable, cost-effective approaches to care.

Art in Hospitals and Care Settings

In collaboration with global research partners, the Jameel Arts and Health Lab will undertake several initiatives in its first year to lay the foundation for increasingly rigorous research on the role of the arts in hospitals and care settings. Amongst these will be a pilot study of the role of participatory theatre in reducing bias in healthcare service delivery, a review of the role of the arts in healthcare staff wellbeing, participatory action research on ethical practice amongst arts practitioners working in care settings, an umbrella review and meta-analysis of the health benefits of creative arts therapies and arts with stated therapeutic intent, and an implementation study of [Hospital Rooms](#), an intervention involving the integration of visual art in mental health inpatient units in the UK, and also The Art of Healing, a not for profit using the Hospital Rooms model in Nigeria.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES:

Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Europe Regional Director said: "Good health requires so much more than tackling disease. We must also promote the conditions that allow people to thrive. Integrating the arts into health practice is increasingly recognized as a way of improving our wellbeing and is a priority for the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The Jameel Arts & Health Lab will help WHO and the project's partners to support countries in mainstreaming arts and health interventions."

Christopher Bailey, Arts & Health lead at the WHO, said: "We have known for some time that the arts can be an effective tool to promote health. But are the arts and creativity actually an intrinsic part of our wellbeing? An increasing body of evidence suggests that participating in the arts and creative practice may help us cope, improve our abilities, and help form bonds of community. The Lab will help us understand how this works and how to share the benefits as widely as possible."

Dr Nisha Sajnani, founding director, Arts + Health at New York University, said: "With its ability to engage, connect, and sustain us, the arts and the arts therapies show great promise in reducing isolation and helping people to recover their

creativity, imagine a better future, put ideas into action, and feel alive again. The Jameel Arts + Health Lab will provide needed coordination in order to scale promising interventions and translate evidence into effective intersectoral policy to alleviate burdened care systems and improve lives.”

Stephen Stapleton, Founder of CULTURUNNERS, said: “As a practical expression of the United Nations’ call for decade-of-action to address global challenges, the Lab represents a coalition of organizations who believe in the power of the arts to heal and create meaningful and systemic change.”

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS:

About the Jameel Arts & Health Lab

The Jameel Arts & Health Lab has been established by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, the Steinhardt School at New York University, Community Jameel, and CULTURUNNERS. Focused on overlooked and underserved communities, the lab will coordinate and amplify academic research into the effectiveness of the arts in improving health and wellbeing to drive policy implementation across 194 UN member states.

About Jameel Arts & Health Lab ‘Healing Arts’ Campaign

The Jameel Arts & Health Lab will lead ‘Healing Arts’ as a global outreach campaign to engage diverse audiences in arts and health. Healing Arts was established by CULTURUNNERS and the WHO’s Arts & Health Program in 2020, under the auspices of the United Nations’ 75th Anniversary Programme (UN75), as a cultural call to action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on societal mental health. Healing Arts activations to date have included institutional collaborations with the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#), [Museum of Modern Art](#), [The Art Newspaper](#), [Venice Biennale](#), [Christie’s](#), [Tate](#), [Brooklyn Museum](#), [LA Opera](#), [Institut du Monde Arabe](#), and [Contemporary Art Museum Houston](#).

About Community Jameel:

[Community Jameel](#) advances science and learning for communities to thrive. An independent, global organization, Community Jameel was launched in 2003 to continue the tradition of philanthropy and community service established by the Jameel family of Saudi Arabia in 1945. Community Jameel supports scientists, humanitarians, technologists, and creatives to understand and address pressing human challenges in areas such as climate change, health, and education. The work enabled and supported by Community Jameel has led to significant breakthroughs and achievements, including the [MIT Jameel Clinic](#)’s discovery of the new antibiotic Halicin, critical modeling of the spread of COVID-19 conducted by the [Jameel Institute](#) at Imperial College London, and a Nobel Prize-winning experimental approach to alleviating global poverty developed by the co-founders of the [Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab](#) at MIT.

About NYU Steinhardt

Located in the heart of New York City’s Greenwich Village, [NYU’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development](#) prepares students for careers in the arts, education, health, media and psychology. Since its founding in 1890, the Steinhardt School’s mission has been to expand human capacity through public service, global collaboration, research, scholarship, and practice.

About CULTURUNNERS

[CULTURUNNERS](#) is a non-profit social enterprise producing cross-cultural campaigns, partnerships, exhibitions, films, and live events. Founded by Stephen Stapleton at MIT in 2014, and established as a UK Community Interest Company in 2016, CULTURUNNERS’ prioritizes artists-led projects that transform communities, societies, and systems and inspire action on key sustainability issues. In 2019, CULTURUNNERS initiated [The Future is Unwritten](#) as a global initiative to rally the arts sector in UN implementation efforts; advocating for urgent cooperation between artists, cultural institutions, and United Nations Agencies in order to amplify and accelerate implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In 2020, CULTURUNNERS established Healing Arts as a cultural call to action in response to the pandemic and its effect on societal mental health.

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