

*“MOM, AM I
BARBARIAN?”*



**SCHOOL
OF KINDNESS**
OPEN CALL

In a time when we are living on the edge, both in the so-called West and non-West, in real, virtual, and psychological wars, being kind is a radical form of action. Now more than ever we need to embrace coexistence to cope with high levels of anxiety and psycho-somatic post-states. As humans, we are often connected by the wrong ideas and it seems kindness could be one way to address this contemporary default. To arrive to kindness is to embrace friendship and kinship. This is the quest of the *School of Kindness*.

**SCHOOL OF KINDNESS
CALLS FOR APPLICATIONS
TO PARTICIPATE IN
ITS 2ND EDITION TAKING PLACE
IN (AND SURROUNDING)
SOFIA, BULGARIA,
FROM 23 JUNE — 10 JULY 2022.**

School of Kindness is a ‘non-disciplined’ performative, educational and discursive program that takes place yearly in Sofia, Bulgaria, and its surroundings. *School of Kindness* is a summer school, a workshop, a residency program and a research platform, bringing together (artistic) practitioners, thinkers and social workers.

The program is intended for participants from different social and artistic backgrounds, especially those coming from disadvantaged communities and those who work from experiences of individual or collective trauma. Over the course of two-and-a-half weeks, participants engage in a program of workshops and seminars provided by artists, theorists and activists.

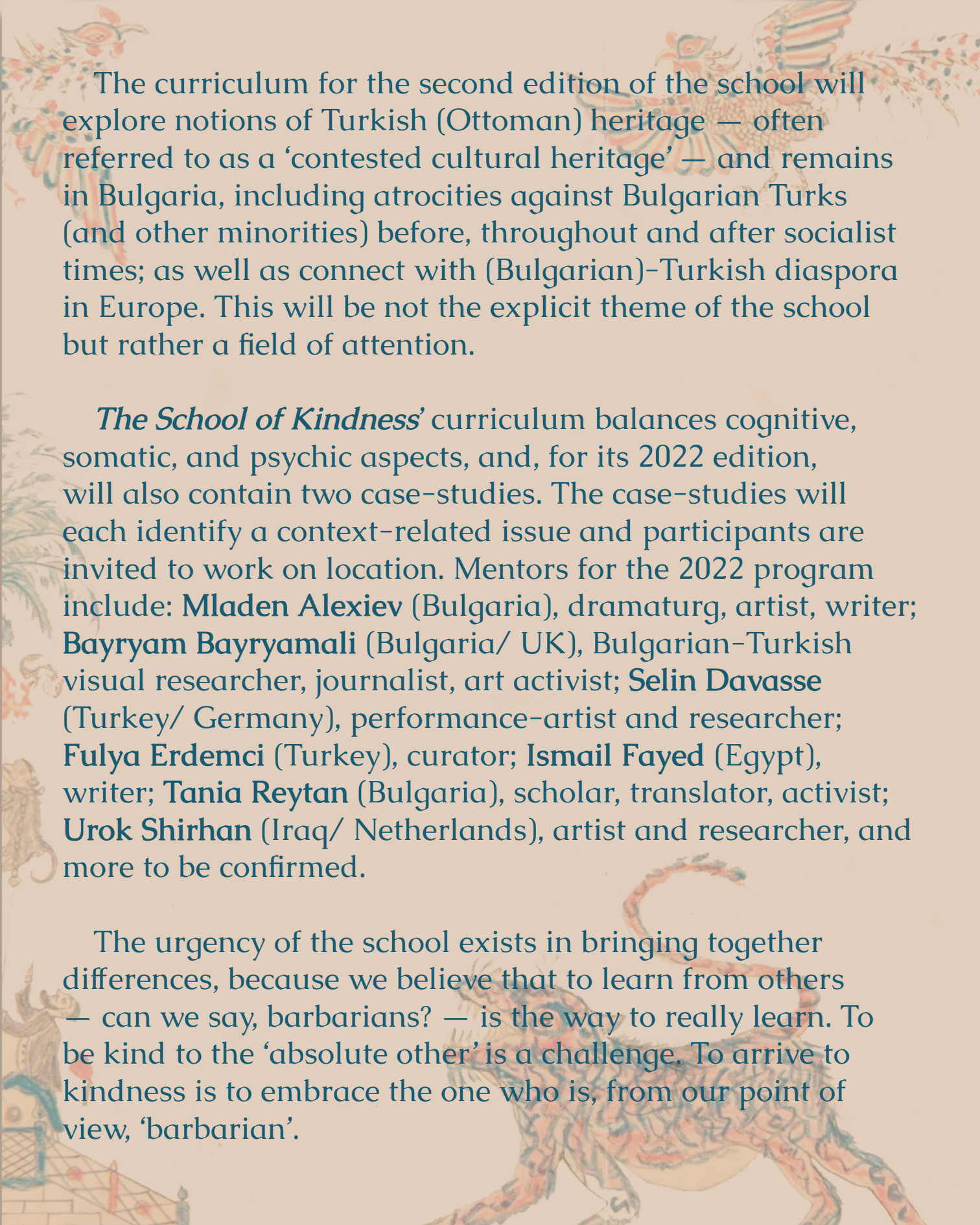
School of Kindness focuses on social and cultural narratives of migration and displacement and develops emancipatory tools to confront economic, cultural and political inequality and antagonism in Europe — between the so-called west and non-west — through theoretical and practical-artistic learning.

School of Kindness operates in the context of a set of interrelated issues that overwhelmingly permeate daily life in Bulgaria: political transformation and living in the post-socialist state; labour migration; poverty; the rise of nationalism and racism; the environmental crisis; depopulation. The program looks at historical and contemporary forms of conviviality — to take inspiration

from what typifies the Balkans as the meeting point between West and East, between Christian and Islamic influences.

While the first edition of the *School of Kindness* (2021) was targeted towards unpacking the multifaceted understanding of ‘kindness,’ the second edition will focus on the notion of (the) ‘barbarian’ (arguably, two sides of the same coin). We understand the concept of the ‘barbarian’ as someone (something) who both doesn’t meet and exceeds dominant social, cultural, or juridical norms. The aim is to delve deeper into issues of inclusion and exclusion, of citizenship and rights, of homeland, heritage and otherness. To even pose the dialectic is to address a ‘clash of civilisations’ of sorts — between west and non-west; between classes; religions; between culture and nature; human and non-human; ownership and debt.

Subtitled *Mom, Am I Barbarian ?*, the second edition of the *School of Kindness* (literally so) takes the title of the 13th Istanbul Biennial (2013) curated by Fulya Erdemci, who borrowed it from the eponymous book by Turkish poet Lale Müldür. Coming from the Ancient Greek *βάρβαρος* (‘foreigner/stranger’) ‘barbarian’ was the antonym of ‘citizen’. For her biennial, Erdemci evoked the concept of ‘barbarian’ to ask what it means to be a good citizen today. We will take up on that question, in collaboration with Fulya Erdemci herself, the idea being to emphasise the relevance and urgency of this question today; to revisit the biennale’s address and research and pass on that knowledge.



The curriculum for the second edition of the school will explore notions of Turkish (Ottoman) heritage — often referred to as a ‘contested cultural heritage’ — and remains in Bulgaria, including atrocities against Bulgarian Turks (and other minorities) before, throughout and after socialist times; as well as connect with (Bulgarian)-Turkish diaspora in Europe. This will be not the explicit theme of the school but rather a field of attention.

The School of Kindness’ curriculum balances cognitive, somatic, and psychic aspects, and, for its 2022 edition, will also contain two case-studies. The case-studies will each identify a context-related issue and participants are invited to work on location. Mentors for the 2022 program include: **Mladen Alexiev** (Bulgaria), dramaturg, artist, writer; **Bayryam Bayryamali** (Bulgaria/ UK), Bulgarian-Turkish visual researcher, journalist, art activist; **Selin Davasse** (Turkey/ Germany), performance-artist and researcher; **Fulya Erdemci** (Turkey), curator; **Ismail Fayed** (Egypt), writer; **Tania Reytan** (Bulgaria), scholar, translator, activist; **Urok Shirhan** (Iraq/ Netherlands), artist and researcher, and more to be confirmed.

The urgency of the school exists in bringing together differences, because we believe that to learn from others — can we say, barbarians? — is the way to really learn. To be kind to the ‘absolute other’ is a challenge. To arrive to kindness is to embrace the one who is, from our point of view, ‘barbarian’.

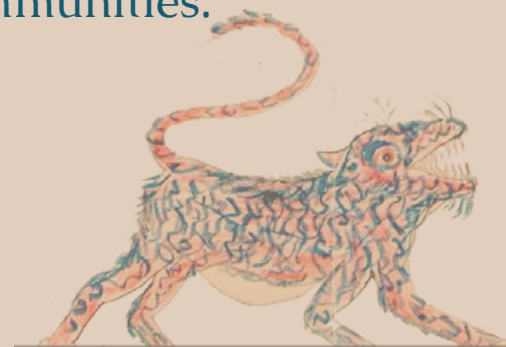
WHO?

We invite artists, writers, poets, performers, scholars, researchers, activists to apply to participate in the *School of Kindness* and engage in a two-and-a-half weeks program of practical and theoretical experimentation.

We are looking for approximately 25 participants from different social/artistic backgrounds, cultures, and generations, who are willing to work collectively, learn together and share their (artistic) practices and research in regard to different forms of migrations, in order to arrive to new cognitive states of political imagination.

School of Kindness is open to anyone interested and motivated to participate, however, we particularly encourage to apply:

- * Early career artists and other young professionals working in culture, education and/or social organisation with a migrant background.
- * Participants from disadvantaged communities, especially Bulgarian-Turks and Roma.
- * Participants from LGBTQIA+ communities.



FEEs

For its 2022 edition, the tuition fee for the complete program is 350 Euros. For participants from Bulgaria, south-east European countries as well as the global south, the tuition fee for the complete program is 350 BGN (approx. 175 Euros). The fee needs to be paid before entering the program. We encourage all motivated participants to apply, even if you're faced with difficulties funding your participation — in which case, do reach out to us. You will need to finance your own travel to Bulgaria and stay in Sofia for 17 days. Two excursions to respectively Vitosha mountain and the village of Brestnitsa are included in the program, as well as home-cooked plant-based daily meals for low prices. Participants are expected to be present for the full period and give a (semi-public) presentation during the program.



HOW TO APPLY

We invite you to send your application to:
contact.schoolofkindness@gmail.com

no later than April 15 2022.

The application should include:

- * **A letter of motivation:** why do you want to be part of the program, what do you expect to learn, and what could others possibly learn from you?
(PDF, max. 1 page)
- * **A biography:** where are you from and what do you do? What are you engaged with at the moment?
(PDF, max. 1 page)
- * **A selection of works:** images or other visual material; a text or publication (PDF, 1 file)

CONTACT AND ORGANISATION

School of Kindness is a project by Voin de Voin,
Anna Loungvine and Lisette Smits,
and is organised by *Æther Sofia*.

Email: contact.schoolofkindness@gmail.com

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

Æther Art Space

Ul. Knyaz Boris I, 39

Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

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

Æther Sofia is a self-organised platform for exhibitions, discussions, community gathering, experimentation, workshops and publishing in Sofia, Bulgaria. *Æther* partners with LGBT+, anti-fascist and human rights organizations in Bulgaria to oppose anti-democratic developments, specifically issues regarding violence against women, hate speech, same-sex marriage and discrimination of minority groups.

Credit image / visuals:

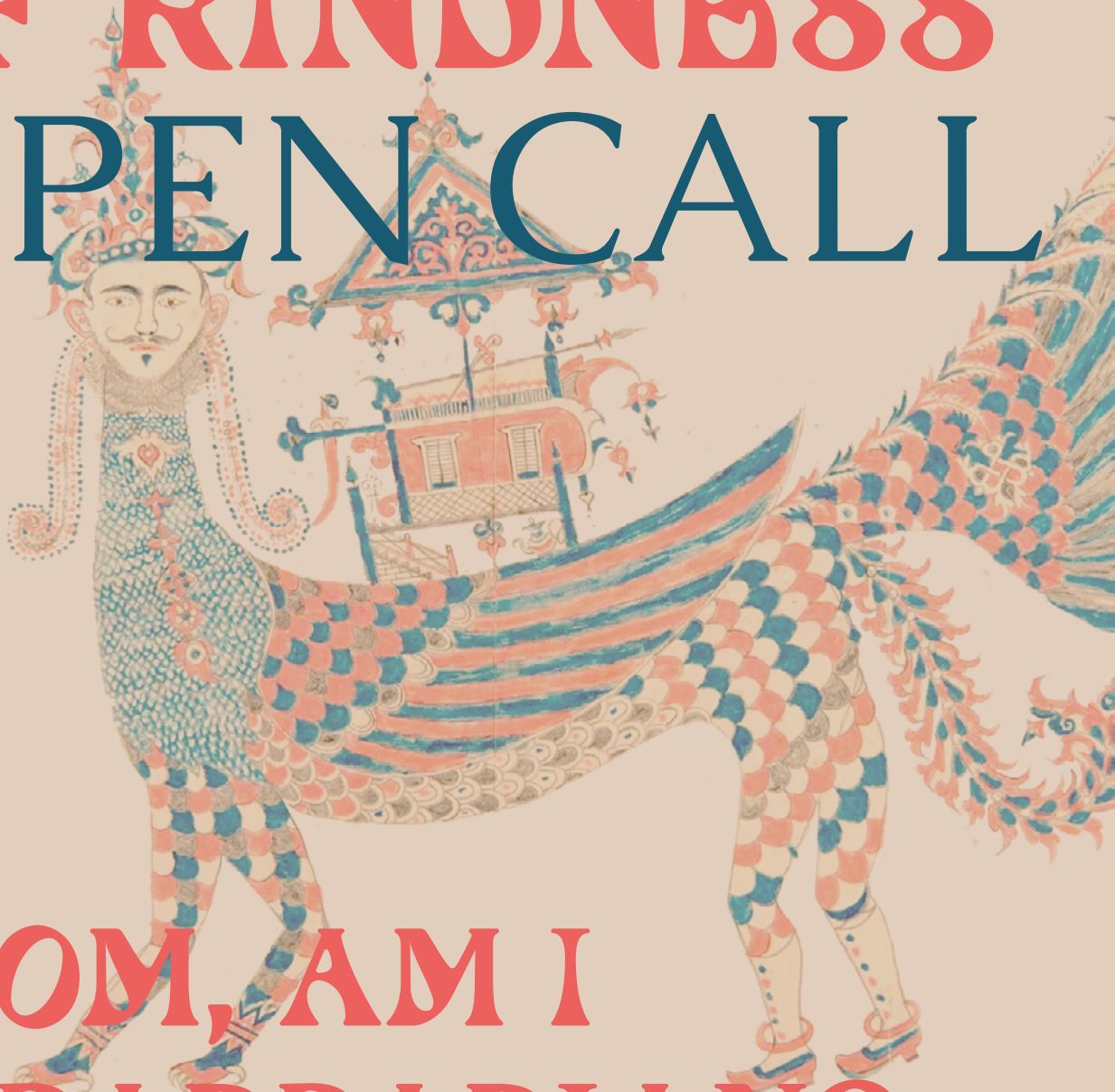
*Painting of a Buraq that was made by Teuku Teungoh while he was in prison
in 1903-1904 during the war in Aceh, Indonesia.*

Stichting Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen. Coll.nr. RV-1429-134

*Graphic design by Victoria Kieffer
Text set in Caudex and Douglas typefaces.*



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