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ART, CONNECTION, REFUGE: A TRIO OF CENTER CITY EXHIBITIONS

OPEN WINDOWS ON THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

The Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary Project Travels to City Hall, Old City, and the Free Library of Philadelphia

May 28, 2019 (Philadelphia, PA) — Connecting renowned book artists with individuals from Syria and Iraq who came to Philadelphia as refugees, a trio of Center City exhibitions will delve into concepts of human connection and sanctuary.

Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary, a project of [Swarthmore College Libraries](#) and Swarthmore's [Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility](#), creates and shares works that explore art's capacity to increase empathy and a sense of belonging.

After an initial exhibition at Swarthmore, the project moves to Philadelphia, showcasing works by resettled Syrians and Iraqis and by commissioned book artists. Three distinct exhibitions, each focusing on one aspect of the resettled experience, interweave historical and contemporary narratives and experiences to open up conversations about displacement and refuge, history and culture, art and life. The project highlights the ways resettled people define themselves, outside of restrictive labels like “immigrants” or “refugees.”

All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

Friends at Twelve Gates Arts: June 7–August 15

106 N 2nd St, Philadelphia, PA 19106

Visiting Hours: Thursday to Saturday, 12–6 p.m.

Major support for this project has been provided by:



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Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary participants opened their homes and hearts, sharing their histories, cultures, and personal stories. Yet a recurring question surfaced: “Why, when we [Syrians and Iraqis] know so much about American culture, do Americans know so little about ours?”

Can art help us to address that gap, and transform conflict into connection? Can we turn a gallery into a home? [*Friends*](#) invites you to experience works by fifteen unique artists that explore the relationships between personal experiences, culture, and history. Sculptures and dictionaries, archaeology books and paintings celebrate moments, conversations, personal stories, and most of all, friendships.



Events:

June 7, 6–8:30 p.m.: First Friday Opening Reception with live musical performance by artists Erik Ruin and Julius Masri

June 8, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.: Accordion book workshop and story share with book artist Islam Aly

Peace at the Free Library of Philadelphia, Parkway Central Branch: June 7–August 2

1901 Vine St, Philadelphia, PA 19103

Open during regular library hours (2nd Floor)

Peace is not simply living free of war; it is a sensation that comes with being close to one's support network of friends, family, and neighbors.

[*Peace*](#) brings together artists' books, archival materials, and more to tell the personal stories of people striving for peace during historical and contemporary conflicts.

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From archival materials from the Swarthmore College Libraries to a collaborative comic book inspired by stories of resettlement, to handmade works from *Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary* project collaborators and commissioned book artists, visitors will feel the lengths human beings will go to for peace, and the importance of working together.

Events:

July 13, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.: Open House + Reception (Heim Center for Cultural and Civic Engagement at Parkway Central Library)

Sanctuary at City Hall: June 7–July 26

Philadelphia City Hall: 1400 John F Kennedy Blvd, Philadelphia, PA 19107 (floors 2 + 5)

Visiting Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

What does it mean to resettle in a new country, where one's identity has already been defined by negative media portrayals and stereotypes? How might listening to resettled Syrians and Iraqis help policy-makers and residents realize our shared values as a Sanctuary City? What are the commonalities between the global refugee crisis and local issues like urban displacement, mass incarceration, education, and community economic development? How can we make Philadelphia a true place of sanctuary for all?



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Co-hosted by the Office of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy, [Sanctuary](#) presents multi-form artworks and new resources that explore the dynamics of power between the state, community, and the individual to challenge our understanding of the global resettlement process. Project collaborators who resettled from Syria and Iraq joined forces with commissioned book artists Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist to create collective and individual works that reflect both resiliency and the challenges inherent in navigating Philadelphia to re-establish their lives.

Events:

- **June 6, 5–6 p.m.:** Flag-raising kick-off of Immigrant Heritage Month
- **June 15, 2–5 p.m.:** [Beyond Borders and Binaries: A Conversation and Workshop](#) (at Asian Arts Initiative, 1219 Vine Street)
- **July 26 (evening, exact time to be determined):** Closing celebration with dinner, art-making, and projections (City Hall)

The exhibitions include commissioned works by:

- [Maureen Cummins](#), book artist
- [Islam Aly](#), MFA, PhD, book artist, teacher and researcher
- [Erik Ruin](#), printmaker, shadow puppeteer, and cut-paper artist
- Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist, co-directors of [The People's Paper Co-op](#)

Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary moves to [Brooklyn](#) in October.

Major support for *Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary* has been provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from the William J. Cooper Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Swarthmore College Libraries, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility. Learn more about the *Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary* project at fps.swarthmore.edu or on social media (@FPSBookArts on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)).

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