



ALIENATION / SEPARATION: AN ARTIST'S BOOK BY MAUREEN CUMMINS  
BASED ON FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNTS OF REFUGEES / RESETTLERS



**ARTIST'S STATEMENT**  
The statements were excerpts from interviews with Syrian refugees who occurred during the College's Fall 2013 project. Paraphrases according to the artist(s) to be identified.

*You know about us? To America our boy under on not trying to my kids, a stupid life.*  
—A.J.,

*Nothin' Literally. The immigrants my mini plants. and birds.*

*w, country, be back to work, I can't understand, every one, people say. circle. [C] our kids now each*

**IRAQI MAN**  
*Have friends dead alien. schools need a They of it of been.*

*....dren in beggi We've lot of child say tha*  
—W.

*choole. Pe like, tliame in ere.*  
—A.J.

**SYRIAN MAN**  
*Once in Hom Who differen around because*

**IRAQI MAN**  
*If I walk Baghdad the hell ask ques photos, more. Wor place a et's jump technized*

*like gro many. Al litarized One par f that di zi German t would.*  
—A.J.

*sous, gi and m sad to le o see m got her*

**IRAQI MAN**  
*You ha came h that's re to fit in fit in ar did; the*

**SYRIAN WOMAN**  
*Then I undefin we ask tell us, calls fr It stopf nk,*

**OSAMA'S**  
*they k od have ai the house don't like, i between, they problem is, of the un like that I don't*

*y it — are*

*to the em le applied is over, wen All of th and that's al three sister look that in Lebanon sters. But no ple. They alive. wed with n be never i*  
—A.J.

**SYRIAN BOY**  
*depressio ss. I'm on thoughts. That's un g. My h mean, wba Our cult bilion and be wqole bi hopefull w*

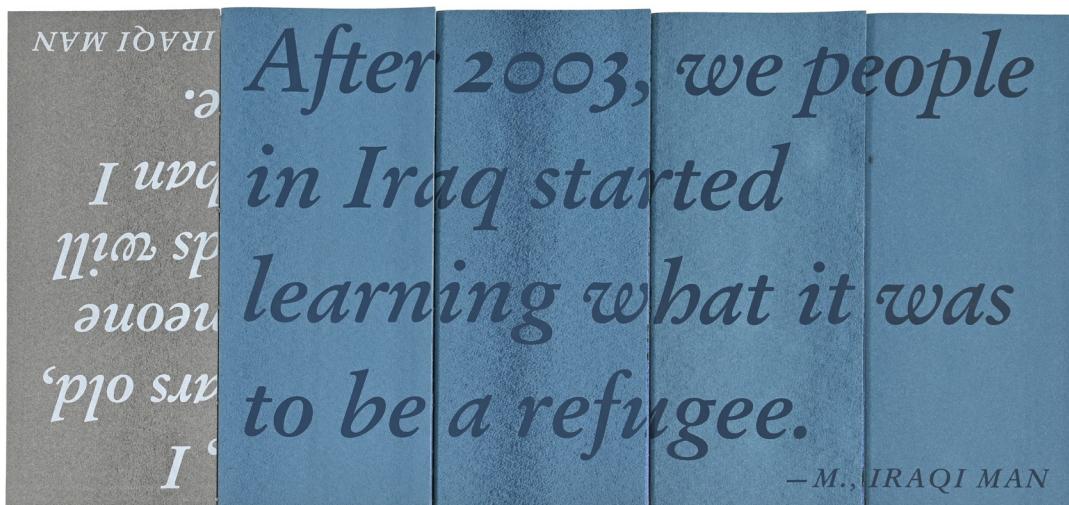
**SYRIAN BOY**  
*Honestl People afraidi a couple don't kei and tha after or electi*

**EPA RATI ON**  
*d of Sadd no Inter with a ce ail. If you would als go around*

**IRAQI MAN**  
*After in Ir da will neone to be*  
—I.

## ALIENATION / SEPARATION: PUBLICATION DATE: JULY 4, 2019

Alienation / Separation was produced by Maureen Cummins in the winter and spring of 2018/2019 as part of Swarthmore College's Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary project. Funded by The Pew Foundation for Arts and Heritage, Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary brought five artists into conversation with Syrian and Iraqi individuals resettled in Philadelphia. Driven by questions about displacement and refuge, history and experience, the project explores art's capacity to build empathy and create a deeper sense of belonging.

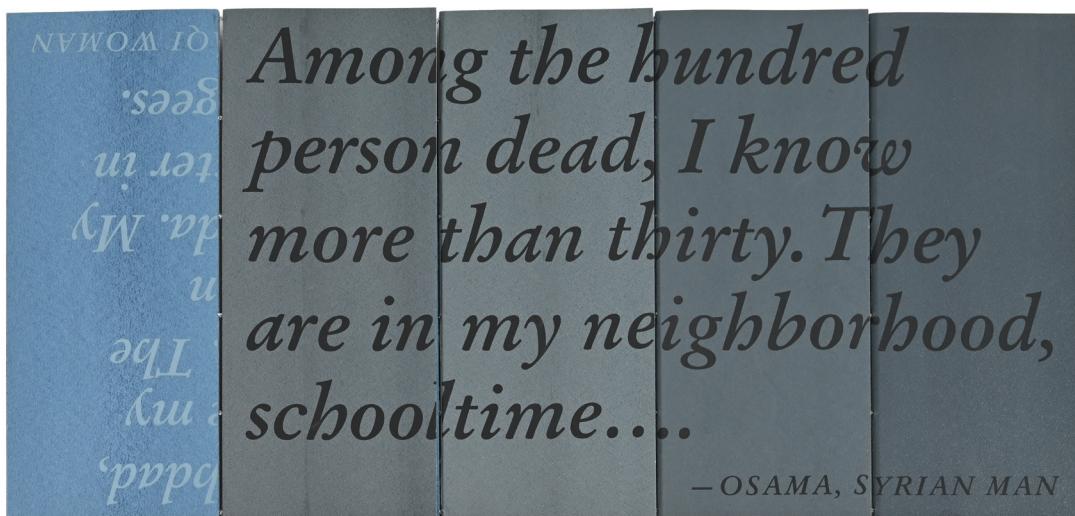


Cummins began the task of creating an artist's book for Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary by interviewing four participating families during the spring and summer of 2018. Having spent decades working with first-person accounts, the artist was drawn to the voices of the resettlers, their vulnerability in the face of unspeakable loss, and their ability to bear witness to harrowing wartime experiences: bombings; the loss of homes; the disappearance and/or death of family members; the struggle to adjust to new countries, new cultures, new languages, and the inevitable separation from loved ones. While several of the interview participants — Layla Al Hasani, Yaroub Al Obaidi, and

\* Additional support for Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary was provided by Swarthmore College Libraries, the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility, the William J. Cooper Foundation, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Osama Herkel—chose to be identified, others, tellingly, preferred to remain anonymous.

Out of over one hundred transcribed pages, Cummins selected forty-eight excerpts, which she then pieced together to create a narrative arc. This text collage is not chronological in the traditional sense. An Iraqi man's description of children being orphaned in his country, for example, is followed by a Syrian boy's description of losing half his friends ("Half my friends are dead."), despite the fact that the latter took place years after the previous. It is the internal, lived experience, rather than any external reality, that unites these stories. And while

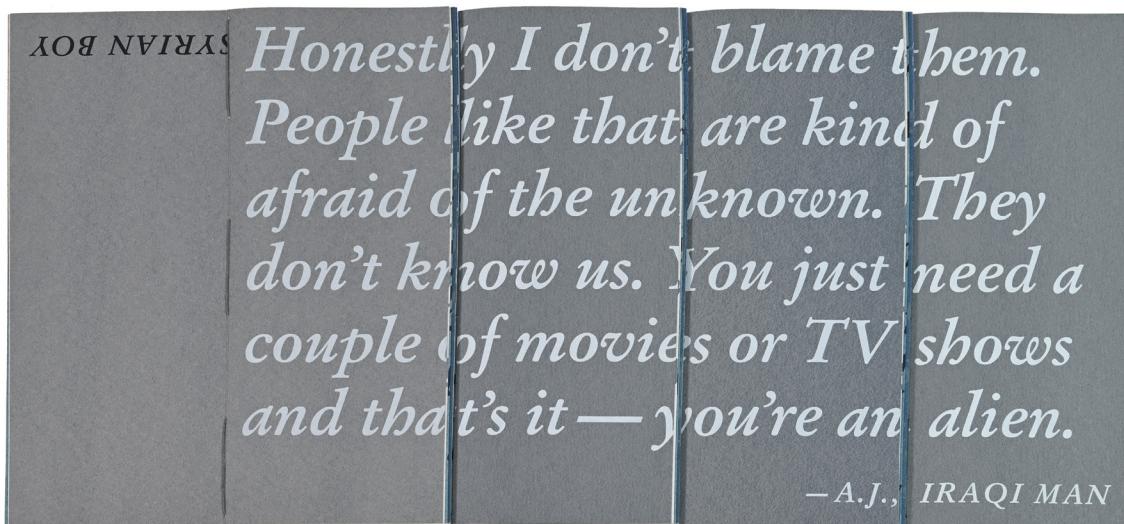


the text bears testament to individual points of view, it also speaks eloquently to the larger, epidemic experience of displacement, resettlement, and separation.

To house her text, Cummins created a structure that is visually startling, experimental, and conceptually driven—in the words of one collector, "Like no other book I've ever seen before." Text blocks are severed, then reprinted as quarto-sections on corresponding pages of four separate books. As in the case of the resettlers themselves, these stories must be reunited in order to be read, understood, and made whole again. Since the structure is also two-sided, with half the pages printed upside down, the reader is forced to puzzle out where and how to begin,

and what order in which to read the pages. Halfway through, s/he is compelled to turn the book around in order to continue reading. Throughout this bewildering process, the reader/viewer is forced to experience some measure of the confusion, alienation, dislocation, and separation that resettlers experience every day.

The making of *Alienation / SepaRation* spanned over a year and a half of work in five different locations: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, New York; Penland School of Arts in Penland, North Carolina; One Cottage Street in Easthampton, Massachusetts; and the artist's own studio in Mt. Tremper, New



York. During Phase One of the printing stage, deeply saturated flats of color were hand-squeegeed onto blank sheets of Arches Cover White. Blocks of text were then surprinted over these color fields, a challenging process that required masterful registration. The edition was bound by Lisa Hersey in the Coptic style, a structure that draws directly upon an early Middle Eastern binding tradition. Each set of four books is housed in a handsome plexiglass slipcase fabricated by SmallCorps, with laser-etched titling by Sarah Pike.

*Alienation / SepaRation* was produced in an edition of 50 copies. The four-volume set measures 17" x 7" x 2.5", contains 192 pages, and is priced at \$2,600.

