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## Friends, Peace and Sanctuary: A Case Study

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# Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary

Peggy Seiden, Katie Price & Suzanne Seesman  
Swarthmore College

Colloquium on Libraries and Service Learning  
American University | August 10, 2018

# In Their Own Words

“He and his wife and children lived a quiet, normal life in the capital city...”

“This all ended abruptly... One day I took a bus trip. The bus was stopped by the army... The soldiers handcuffed me, blindfolded me and put me in their tank...”

“They tied my thumbs together and hung me by them over the branch of a tree. All night.”

“The people have no rights...”

# Libraries and Lang Center: Respective Contributions



Infrastructure	Community Partners
Archival Research Methods & Collections	Engaged Scholarship Best Practices
Knowledge of the Book Arts & Collections	Peace and Conflict Studies Special Topics Course
Financial and Human Capital	Financial and Human Capital

# The Project

- Brings together artistic, historical, and experiential knowledge to bear on contemporary challenges.
  - Artistic Knowledge: Renowned book artists
  - Historical Knowledge: Documentation in collections in the Friends Historical Library and Peace Collection as well as other archival collections on migration and refugees
  - Experiential Knowledge: Iraqis and Syrians in the NE Philadelphia Community
- Explores new artistic territory by bringing together socially engaged art practices with the book arts.

# Artists' Books

الأصدقاء  
السلام  
الملاذ الآمن

Friends  
Peace  
Sanctuary



# Guiding Questions

- In what ways can engaging with art inspire conversations, change perspectives, or increase **empathy**?
- How might sharing personal experiences through the process of making art about migration, displacement or refuge increase our senses of **belonging**?
- How might **historic stories** of displacement impact understandings of our **current moment**?

# Guiding Principles

- Give equal weight to participating artists and collaborators
- As much as possible, connect the project with research and teaching at the College
- Strive to be bilingual throughout the project
- Bring together academic, aesthetic, and experiential knowledges
- Extend the resources the College, and especially the Library, into the community



Project collaborator Abdul-Karim shares art inspired by the project.



# Applying Knowledge to Needs

## Community Needs

- Support beyond the three months after arrival
- Practicing English in professional environments
- Opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences
- Opportunities to share their skills and grow their skill set

## Swarthmore Assets

- History of Commitment to social justice
- Resources (expertise, archives, etc.)
- Cultural capital and name recognition
- Financial (stipends, space, translators, etc.)

# More than just a project...

- Engaged Scholarship course through Peace and Conflict Studies
- Student Translators
  - Students helping to increase access to Swarthmore archives through translating primary sources into Arabic while learning to do archival research and practicing language skills
- Faculty Advisory Committee
  - Arabic | Art | English Literature | Peace & Conflict Studies | Political Science
- Learning Community - Searching for Sanctuary: Borders, Migration & Human Rights
  - EDUC153: Latinos and Education (Allard)
  - ENGL 084: Human Rights and Literature (Patnaik)
  - PEAC 094: Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary (Seiden and Price)
  - POLS 031: Borders and Migration (Balkan)
- Mellon Grant
  - Group of 5 students, 5 faculty/staff, and 5 collaborators will co-make a book this Fall.

# Course Objectives

Students will leave this course:

- With an understanding of refugee experiences of people now living in the greater Philadelphia area.
- Having practiced community, archival, and humanities research methods and applied them to publicly-facing outputs.
- Able to understand the history and possibilities of the book arts as they relate to socially engaged art practices.
- Able to define public scholarship and produce examples of it as they pertain to contemporary issues.



Collaborators, book artists, and students share stories at an artist workshop.

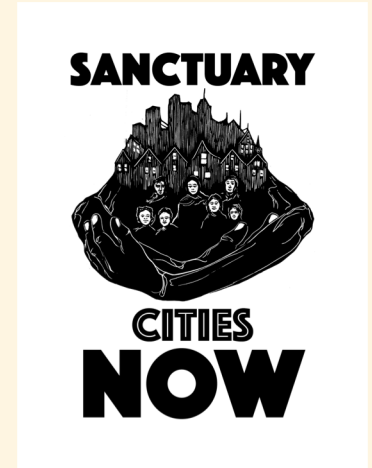
# Why do Engaged Scholarship?

## Challenges

- Atypical work
- Logistics
- Culture

## Rewards

- Combining theory and praxis
- Personally enriching - witness to positive impact
- Transforming higher education



Print by Erik Ruin, a book artist on the project.

# In Their Own Words: Student Reflections

- “As a student in a college that claims a commitment to social justice, **I am glad to have taken the opportunity to expand the role of Swarthmore College** as they engaged with communities outside of their own.”
- “However, it is not often that I am fortunate enough to find the same event documented in both academic settings and personal narratives. In fact, **the only time when this had happened [getting to read about an event from an academic and personal perspective] was during my archival search** in the Aydelotte Collection located in the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College.”
- “Friends, Peace and Sanctuary offers intertwined therapeutic, professional and educational value to the refugees in Philadelphia, book artists, and audience. This is particularly **essential in the current political climate** whereby much of the appeal for today’s United States’ president, Donald Trump, could be credited to the backlash against immigration and his normalization of xenophobia and Islamophobia. **The current political momentum indeed gives the project temporal urgency of great importance** to truly understand the human experiences of resettled individuals and negate the stereotypes that categorize them as ‘the other’.”

# In Their Own Words: Collaborator Reflections



“There is an impossibility to overcoming the deep sadness of displacement but the hope is that sharing stories through an art project could help fill this void and reflect on the experience differently.”

“Art can destroy stereotypes.”

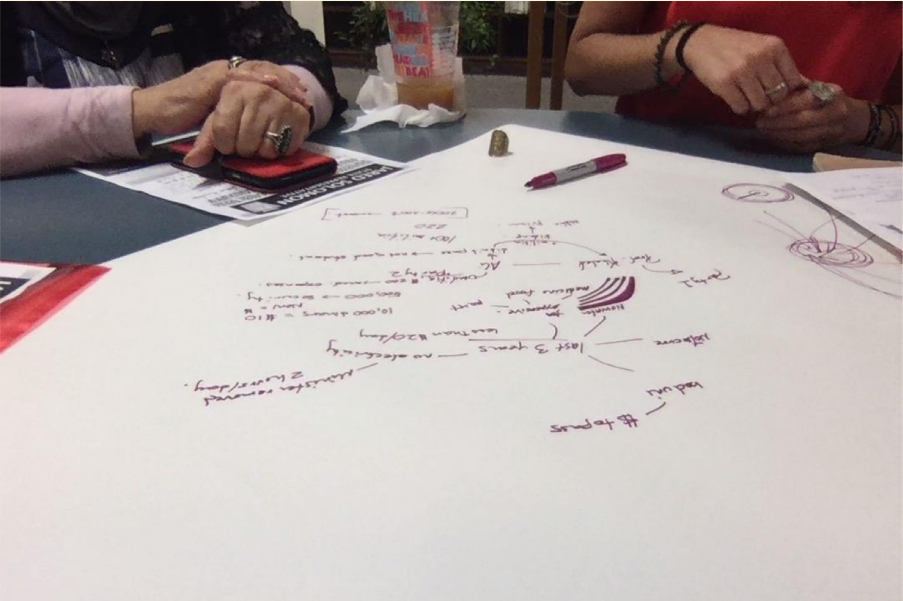
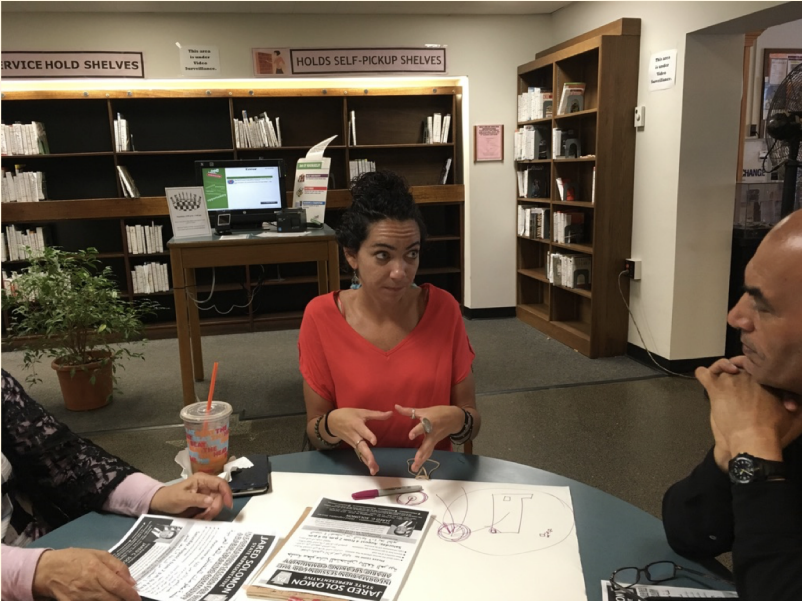
“Art creates a sense of love and belonging. We dream of peace for our future generations, for the future, and for our future generations to live in peace.”

--Quotes from February 11, 2018 lunch event.



Prof. Ben Smith talks with collaborators about the power of art.

# Collaborator Conversations



# Continued Student Engagement

- Translation
- Social Media



# Ossama Herkel, “His Smile is Moon”

## *Translated by Dana Beseiso '21*

There is always a mysterious thing directing our hearts  
There is always a secret that we die without knowing  
There, in our hearts, there is a beautiful painting of love  
One that we paint in our own world  
In our own world that is as white as snow  
There is always a rosy dream which we live for  
And also die for  
We travel in the depth of dreams  
To explore its mysterious glory  
There are always faces that we fall in love with  
Faces that paint hope for us  
Faces that light up the darkness of our lives  
For in this dark world  
We search for a small glimpse of light  
Light that we live within in silence  
And with the light of the sun  
And the smile of the moon  
We live loving life  
And we die [leave] in silence [without noise]

دائما هناك شيء غامض يوجه قلوبنا  
دائما هناك سر نموت دون أن نعرفه  
هناك على جدار القلوب لوحة حب جميلة  
نرسمها في عالمنا الخاص  
عالمنا الأبيض الذي يشبه بياض الثلج  
دائما هناك حلم وردي نعيش من أجله  
ونموت من أجله  
نسافر في أعماق الحلم.  
لنكتشف جماله الغامض  
دائما هناك وجوه نعشقها.  
وجوه ترسم الأمل لنا  
و تنير عتم حياتنا  
في هذا العالم الأسود  
نبحث عن بقعة ضوء صغيرة  
لنعيش بنورها بصمت  
ومع نور الشمس  
و ابتسامه القمر  
نعيش في حب الحياة  
و نرحل دون ضجيج

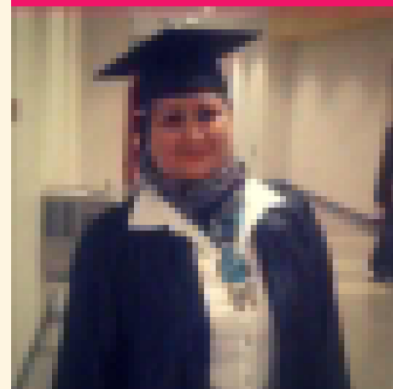
# Collaborator Spotlight: Fadaa

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Fadaa is full of life, energy, and ambition. Within her first month in the US she was taking English classes and by 2011 she was studying to be a pharmacy technician.



During her studies, Fadaa did an externship with Walgreens pharmacy, but has yet to get a permanent job in that field. Alternatively, she worked for 4.5 years as a daycare teacher.

# Community Partnerships

## Organizing and Outreach

- Nationalities Services Center
- HIAS
- Philadelphia Assembled at The Philadelphia Museum of Art



# Nationalities

## SERVICE CENTER



*Nationalities Service Center is Philadelphia's leading immigrant and refugee service organization empowering individuals to build a self-sustaining and dignified future*

*<https://nscphila.org/>*



HIAS Pennsylvania provides legal and supportive services to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers from all backgrounds in order to assure their fair treatment and full integration into American society.

HIAS Pennsylvania advocates for just and inclusive public policies and practices.

# Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary Launch with Philadelphia Assembled



# Community Partnerships

## Workshops and Public Programs

- Prince of Peace
- Second State Press
- Fleisher Art Memorial
- Free Library of Philadelphia

# Prince of Peace

**WORKSHOPS WITH  
ERIK RUIN**

Two full 2-workshops teaching paper-cutting techniques and silk screening.  
Each collaborator designed and created an accordion book about a chosen journey in life using these techniques.  
The silk screening workshop took place at Second Store/First.

www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks | www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks

**WORKSHOPS WITH  
COURTNEY BOWLES + MARK STRANQUIST OF  
THE PEOPLE'S PAPER COOP**

Mark + Courtney led a 2-workshop series teaching silk screening by using a poster you will find a few ideas around for the silkscreening. With collaboration, participants by working together they often brought the workshop process much richer than expected.

www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks | www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks

**WORKSHOPS WITH ISLAM  
ALY**

Islam has led 2 workshops through which he taught the techniques of creating multi-cover books. The last workshop was held at Peaches Art Memorial.

www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks | www.fps.org.uk/peacebooks



# Fleisher Art Memorial

Every year, more than 20,000 people experience the transformative power of art by participating in our classes, tuition-free classes, workshops, exhibitions, and community-based programs.

Founded in 1898, Fleisher is one of the country's oldest nonprofit community art schools.



<http://fleisher.org/about-us/>

# Fleisher Art Memorial

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# Second State Press

الأصدقاء  
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الملاذ الآمن

Friends  
Peace  
Sanctuary

Located in the Crane Arts Building, Second State Press is a nonprofit 501(c)3 communal printmaking workshop whose mission is to foster the development of ideas and innovation in printmaking by providing artists with a professional, affordable, and supportive workspace.



# Free Library of Philadelphia



The mission of the Free Library of Philadelphia is to advance literacy, guide learning, and inspire curiosity. Its vision is to build an enlightened community devoted to lifelong learning.



## Inclusivity Statement

The Free Library of Philadelphia is a welcoming and inclusive public space and strongly believes in promoting understanding and community engagement. All 54 of our libraries provide a safe haven for individuals of all ages and backgrounds, providing homework help, ESL classes, supportive job search assistance, and much more. We encourage and host conversations about differences and complex social issues. The library exists to provide opportunities for discussion supported by educational resources, access to a vast array of information, and ideas that transform communities, open minds, and promote inclusion.

# Community Partnerships

## Public Programs and Collaborator Connections

- Free Library of Philadelphia Culinary Literacy
- The Head and The Hand Press
- The Clay Studio
- Penn Museum and Al Bustan Seeds of Culture

# Free Library Culinary Literacy

The Culinary Literacy Center is a commercial-grade kitchen that serves as a classroom and dining space for Philadelphians. We are more than just a cooking school. Teachers can bring students to our hands-on lab, where we teach math via measuring, reading via recipes, and science via seeing what pops out at the end of the cooking process. Chefs of all ages can experiment with new foods, new tools, and new ideas.



# THE Head & THE Hand

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Friends  
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Click below to view chapbook descriptions and to purchase:



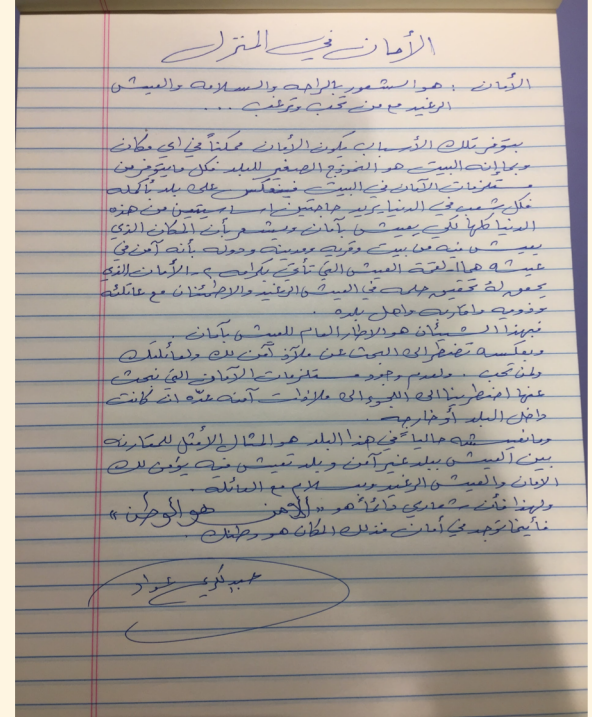
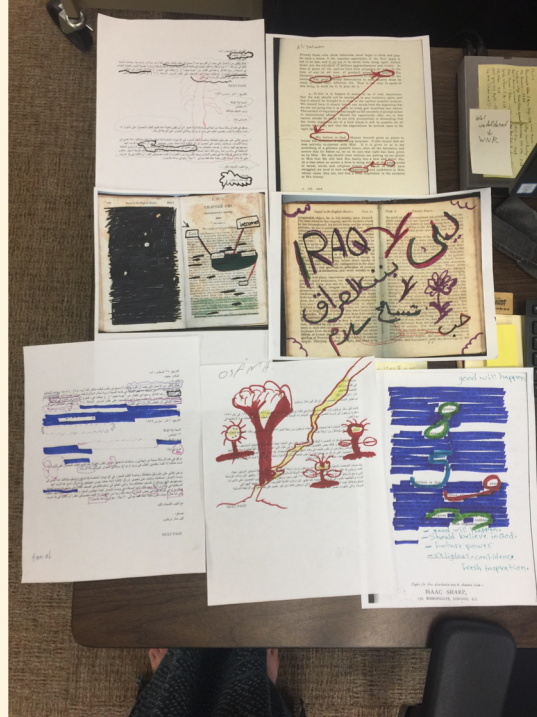
Shockwire Chapbook Series  
from \$3.00



# The Head and The Hand

Workshops with Maryan Captan

- Cut up poetry
- Five Senses Writing





# The Clay Studio



The Clay Studio inspires curiosity and discovery around the art and craft of clay, drawing together students, artists, and an engaged public into a welcoming community. Every day, in our classrooms, studios, galleries, and neighborhoods, we deepen the connection between people and clay with the highest quality programs and exhibitions. Founded in 1974, The Clay Studio continues in the belief that shared creativity, so fundamental to humanity, is a critical force for good.





# Community Partnerships

## Exhibitions

- Swarthmore College McCabe Library
- Twelve Gates Arts
- Free Library of Philadelphia

# McCabe Library at Swarthmore College



# Twelve Gates Arts

Twelve Gates Arts, established in 2011, is a non-profit organization based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The "gates" refer to the fortified gates that walled many ancient cities such as Delhi, Lahore, Jerusalem, and Rhodes - inside which lay the heart of each city's art and culture, and today this reference offers perspectives on history and possibilities.



# Free Library of Philadelphia

Second Floor of the main Vine St central library is an exhibition space dedicated to exhibitions of collections and community engaged art works.

Friends, Peace, and Sanctuary is a project that engages both.



# Thank You

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We hope you'll connect  
with us!

[fps.swarthmore.edu](https://fps.swarthmore.edu)

or

[@fpsbookarts](https://twitter.com/fpsbookarts)



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