

# {SANCTUARY}

SITE-RESPONSIVE EXHIBITION AT FORT MASON CENTER FOR ARTS & CULTURE BRINGS TOGETHER VOICES OF 36 INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS TO SHARE UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES ON IDEA OF SANCTUARY

Artist-designed rugs offer meditations on refuge, identity, and the times in which we live, in decommissioned military chapel

FOR-SITE Foundation's *Sanctuary* runs October 7, 2017–March 11, 2018



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (July 18, 2017) – For its latest presentation of art about place, FOR-SITE Foundation invited 36 artists from 21 different countries to design contemporary rugs reflecting on the idea of sanctuary. The exhibition—titled *Sanctuary*—displays these rugs in the historic Chapel located on the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture's upper campus in San Francisco, where they are on view from October 7, 2017, through March 11, 2018.

The 4-by-6-foot wool rugs—woven in Lahore, Pakistan, using traditional materials and hand-knotting techniques—offer visitors a multiplicity of perspectives on the basic human need for refuge, protection, and sacred ground. In an era of increasing global migration and rising nationalism, the right to safe haven is under threat: racial, ethnic, national, and cultural differences have become seemingly intractable divisions, prompting insulation, isolation, and mistrust of the “other.” The participating artists represent diverse ideologies and backgrounds (many including experiences as migrants and refugees), but their contributions to the exhibition—spectacularly varied in content and design—conform to a single format, lending a unifying element that bridges racial, cultural, and religious differences. Installed on the floor of the Chapel, the artworks call to mind traditional prayer rugs, but they transcend religious connotations, encompassing thoughtful viewpoints on cultural identity, sense of place, and belonging.

Rugs embody the geography and values of the people who make them; their iconography, patterns, and materials reveal deeply personal narratives. They serve as sites of religious devotion, records of cultural heritage, symbols of global trade and exchange, and emblems of migration and self-sufficiency. As a prayer rug defines a sacred space and mediates between the material and the spiritual, the rugs in this exhibition create a distinct material boundary that encloses a safe space for contemplation, introspection, and interpretation. The space of the rug is necessarily mobile, temporary—able to be rolled up, transported, and deployed as needed. The rugs on view are meant to be appreciated by touch as well as sight; visitors are encouraged to remove shoes and walk, sit, and recline on the artworks—to quietly contemplate our shared humanity and this space of sanctuary.

“Rugs speak broadly to cultural heritage, family history, and transportable identity,” says Cheryl Haines, FOR-SITE executive director. “At a moment in time characterized by growing nationalism and isolationism, we must acknowledge the importance of recognizing our common humanity, as well as the need for compassion and the provision of safe harbor for the displaced.” In addition to exposing viewers to diverse perspectives on timely social issues, the exhibition prompts consideration of relational belief systems by highlighting the layered histories and symbolism embedded in both the exhibition venue and the art objects themselves.

The full list of exhibition artists:

Hamra Abbas (Kuwait)	Mona Hatoum (Lebanon)
Adel Abidin (Iraq)	Susan Hefuna (Germany)
Arwa Abouon (Libya)	Thaier Helal (Syria)
Shiva Ahmadi (Iran)	Shirazeh Houshiary (Iran)
Ai Weiwei (China)	Alfredo Jaar (Chile)
John Akomfrah (Ghana)	Emily Jacir (Palestine)
Ammar al-Beik (Syria)	Hayv Kahraman (Iraq)
Diana Al-Hadid (Syria)	Sanaz Mazinani (Iran)
Tammam Azzam (Syria)	Meleko Mokgosi (Botswana)
Sandow Birk (United States)	Julio César Morales (Mexico)
Mohammad Bozorgi (Iran)	Aimé Mpane (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
Jamal Cyrus (United States)	Ranu Mukherjee (United States)
Ala Ebtekar (United States)	Cornelia Parker (United Kingdom)
Marcos Ramírez ERRE (Mexico)	Rashid Rana (Pakistan)
Brendan Fernandes (Kenya)	Miguel Angel Ríos (Argentina)
Ana Teresa Fernández (Mexico)	Hank Willis Thomas (United States)
Nicholas Galanin (United States)	Uman (Somalia)
Jeffrey Gibson (United States)	
Sherin Guirguis (Egypt)	

Built in 1942, the Fort Mason Chapel served as a nondenominational place of worship and familiar gathering spot until the post was decommissioned and acquired by the National Park Service as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in the 1970s. Post chapels provided valuable sources of comfort and uplift during difficult times for servicemen and -women of different backgrounds and faiths, who were often stationed far from home. The history of the now-desanctified Chapel, as well as the warmth and simple beauty of its interior, render it an ideal site for *Sanctuary*.

As a complement to the exhibition, FOR-SITE will present a series of public programs in the exhibition space that will include musical performances, artist talks, and film screenings. The space also will be made available to local community and activist groups in need of a place to meet, organize, and strategize. The exhibition and public programming are presented in cooperation with Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, which includes multiple programming sites—in addition to the Chapel—across its 13-acre waterfront campus.

**Exhibition catalogue:** FOR-SITE is pleased to offer a comprehensive, full-color exhibition catalogue that includes contextualizing essays from writer, historian, and activist Rebecca Solnit, and author and scholar Mino Moallem; a photo essay chronicling the rug-making process; and rug images and descriptive texts for each of the

36 featured artists. The catalogue will be available February 2018; advance orders can be placed through the FOR-SITE website.

**About the FOR-SITE Foundation:** Established in 2003 by curator Cheryl Haines, the FOR-SITE Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation, understanding, and presentation of art about place. Recent projects encompass commissions, artist residencies, and educational programs, and include the acclaimed exhibitions *Home Land Security* (2016); *@Large: Ai Weiwei on Alcatraz* (2014); *International Orange* (2012); *Presidio Habitats* (2010); and a series of land-art installations by Andy Goldsworthy currently on view in the Presidio. Visit [for-site.org](http://for-site.org) for more information.

**About Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture:** A national pioneer in the adaptive reuse of decommissioned military and industrial installations, Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (FMCAC) has long been host to a lively mix of arts, educational, and cultural programming. Each year FMCAC provides more than \$2.5 million in support to local arts organizations, empowering artists to produce diverse and innovative artworks at its historic waterfront campus. With a nearly four-decade history as an arts and culture destination, FMCAC is now focused on reinvigorating its programming and amenities to better engage the evolving and dynamic Bay Area creative community. Central to this new vision is the commissioning and presentation of adventurous and unconventional artworks best realized in nontraditional or historic settings. Visit [fortmason.org](http://fortmason.org) for more information.

**Notes to Editors:**

Exhibition dates: October 7, 2017–March 11, 2018

Location: Fort Mason Chapel (Upper Fort Mason, Franklin and Bay streets)

Hours: Wednesday–Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

Admission: Free

Information: [www.for-site.org](http://www.for-site.org)

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#Sanctuary

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Photo: Rug design by Tammam Azzam for *Sanctuary*; image courtesy the artist