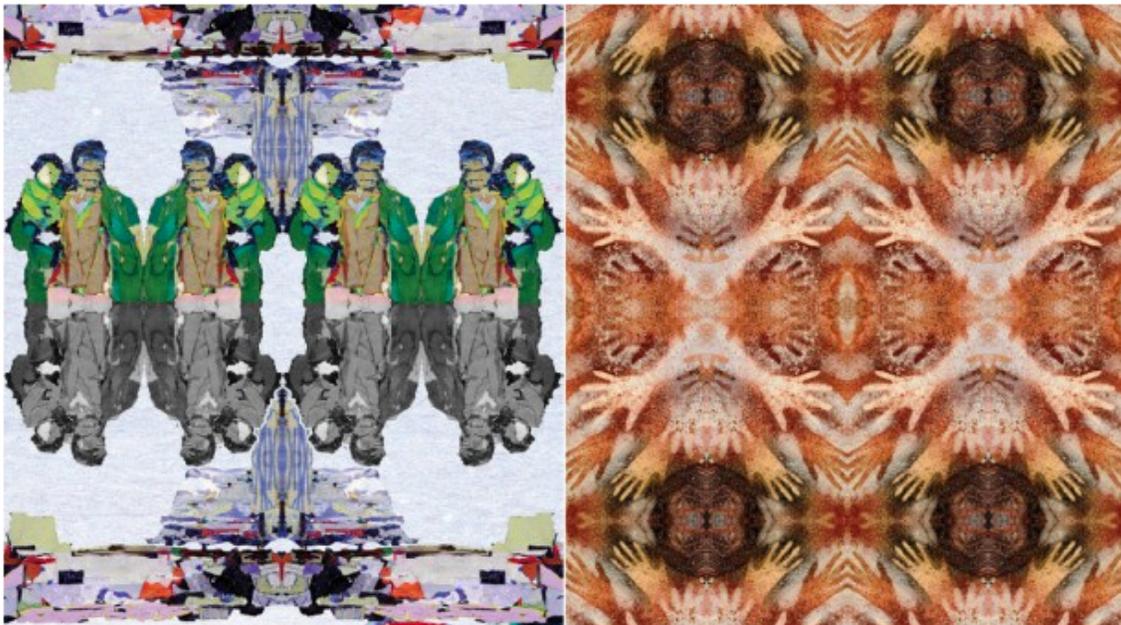


## How 36 Artists Are Making a Sanctuary Out of Rugs

Ian A. Stewart | Photo: Courtesy of the Artists | September 28, 2017

**A new art exhibition offers refuge.**



*Two of the 36 rug designs to be displayed in Sanctuary, by Tammam Azzam, of Syria (left), and John Akomfrah, of Ghana (right).*

San Francisco is a sanctuary city, but what does that really mean? For celebrated international gallerist Cheryl Haines, it's a question with ramifications beyond just ICE jurisdictions and deportation hearings.

Haines's latest project, [\*Sanctuary\*](#), opens in October inside the chapel at Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. Like the other exhibitions she's overseen through her For-Site Foundation—most recently last year's *Home Land Security*, housed inside the shuttered military barracks at Fort Scott, and the 2014 Ai Weiwei show *At Large* on Alcatraz Island—*Sanctuary* is a political meditation housed in a repurposed public venue with its own loaded history.

In *Sanctuary*, 36 artists from 22 countries (including Ai Weiwei and Hank Willis Thomas) have been invited to design patterns for four-by-six-foot rugs that will be

displayed inside the chapel. Each of the rugs is being handwoven in Lahore, Pakistan, using traditional materials and techniques. But Haines is quick to note that the rugs aren't prayer rugs, even though many of the participating artists are from Muslim countries. Rather, they're "rugs that have been designed and created to be conceptually viewed as movable providers of sanctuary." They lend a unifying theme that transcends religion, race, and ethnicity.

The exhibition was first conceived during last fall's *Home Land Security* show and reinforced by the ongoing controversy over President Trump's proposed ban on Muslim refugees. "That to me is a social-justice issue," Haines says. "We're thinking about what we're preventing these people from finding: safety and security."

Asked about the logistics of coordinating with so many artists in so many countries, Haines practically shrugs—she's faced worse. "After *At Large*, let me tell you: We can get anything anywhere." *Oct. 7–Mar. 11, 2018*

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