FOR-SITE launched Sanctuary only 10 months after closing Home Land Security. It was a turnaround we had vowed not repeat following the equally tight timeline of Home Land Security (nine months from inception to opening). However, in the face of President Donald Trump’s January 2017 proposed travel ban, barring people from Muslim-majority countries, FOR-SITE felt compelled to mount another exhibition. The idea for what was to become Sanctuary had already been developing, but it wasn’t until then that the exhibition fully crystalized. We needed an antidote to the fear and extreme nationalism churning within this country and abroad—a sanctuary.

Sanctuary opened in Fort Mason Chapel on October 7, 2017, and ran through March 11, 2018. During those months, the exhibition saw more than 6,000 visitors engaging deeply with the work of 36 artists from 21 countries. Some of those visitors took a quiet turn around the perimeter, while others dove right in, getting cozy by sitting or even lying down on the rugs. Some discussed the exhibition with the Art Guides, and others simply came to read or write a while. Everyone experienced a piece of sanctuary in a personally relevant way.

Most astounding, considering the compacted exhibition timeline, was the number of firsts that FOR-SITE was able to accomplish with Sanctuary. For example we launched a series of public
programs—19 events in total—most of which were free to the public. Sanctuary was the first FOR-SITE exhibition to feature an education program developed fully in-house, including free K–12 curricula and funded transportation for groups requiring assistance. And we produced our first entirely in-house exhibition catalogue, a publication that will accompany Sanctuary when it tours (another new venture for FOR-SITE) in 2019. I invite you to learn more about each of these programs and initiatives in the following pages.

For nearly six months, the Fort Mason Chapel was indeed a sanctuary—a place for reflection and, most importantly, connection to each other and to the art and ideas that spark new understanding of the issues facing society today. FOR-SITE is incredibly grateful to the artists, supporters, and visitors who made that possible.

Cheryl Haines
FOR-SITE FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By the Numbers

36 artists
from
21 countries

15,300,000 million knots
hand-knotted by
54 artisan weavers

19 events and public programs
featuring more than
70 artists, dancers, poets, activists, and scholars

6,095 visitors
paying
0 dollars in underwritten admission

439,407 dollars raised
from
82 generous donors + countless on-site contributors
The notion of sanctuary—both physical and psychological—has been fundamental in shaping a sense of selfhood and social identity throughout human history. But in an era of increasing global migration and rising nationalism, the right to safe haven is under threat, and the necessity for compassion is greater than ever. Seeking to address these issues and ideas, FOR-SITE invited 36 artists from 21 different countries to design contemporary rugs reflecting on sanctuary, offering visitors a multiplicity of perspectives on the basic human need for refuge, protection, and sacred ground.

The participating artists represented diverse ideologies and backgrounds (many including experiences as migrants and refugees), but their contributions to the exhibition—spectacularly varied in content and design—conformed to a single format, lending a unifying element that bridged racial, cultural, and religious differences. Installed on the floor of the historic Fort Mason Chapel, the four-by-six-foot wool rugs—woven in Lahore, Pakistan, using traditional materials and hand-knotting techniques—called to mind traditional prayer rugs, but they transcended religious connotations, encompassing thoughtful viewpoints on cultural identity, sense of place, and belonging. The rugs were meant to be appreciated by touch as well as sight; visitors were encouraged to remove shoes and walk, sit, and recline on the artworks—to quietly contemplate our shared humanity and the space of sanctuary.
About the Exhibition

01 Mona Hatoum (b. 1952, Lebanon)
02 Sanaz Mazinani (b. 1978, Iran)
03 Jamal Cyrus (b. 1973, United States)
04 Uman (b. 1980, Somalia)
05 Hayv Kahraman (b. 1981, Iraq)
06 Ranu Mukherjee (b. 1966, United States)
07 John Akomfrah (b. 1957, Ghana)
08 Thaier Helal (b. 1967, Syria)
09 Shiva Ahmadi (b. 1975, Iran)
10 Adel Abidin (b. 1973, Iraq)
11 Marcos Ramirez ERRE (b. 1961, Mexico)
12 Susan Hefuna (b. 1962, Germany)
13 Ana Teresa Fernández (b. 1981, Mexico)
14 Cornelia Parker (b. 1956, United Kingdom)
15 Ala Ebtekar (b. 1978, United States)
16 Emily Jacir (b. 1972, Palestine)
17 Sandow Birk (b. 1962, United States)
18 Alfredo Jaar (b. 1956, Chile)
19 Hamra Abbas (b. 1976, Kuwait)
20 Arwa Abouon (b. 1982, Libya)
21 Diana Al-Hadid (b. 1981, Syria)
22 Hank Willis Thomas (b. 1976, United States)
23 Ammar al-Beik (b. 1972, Syria)
24 Nicholas Galanin (b. 1979, United States)
25 Ai Weiwei (b. 1957, China)
26 Tamnam Azzam (b. 1980, Syria)
27 Mohammad Bozorgi (b. 1978, Iran)
28 Aimé Mpane (b. 1968, Democratic Republic of the Congo)
29 Shirazeh Houshiary (b. 1955, Iran)
30 Rashid Rana (b. 1968, Pakistan)
31 Miguel Angel Ríos (b. 1943, Argentina)
32 Sherin Guirguis (b. 1974, Egypt)
33 Julio César Morales (b. 1966, Mexico)
34 Jeffrey Gibson (b. 1972, United States)
35 Meleko Mokgosi (b. 1981, Botswana)
36 Brendan Fernandes (b. 1979, Kenya)
Perhaps when we speak of a sanctuary, what we are referring to is a concentration of beneficence, where you can safely commune. By separating yourself from what troubles you, you can then connect to your own power, and finally to the powers in the world that elevate you, that strengthen you, that you work with, that you engage with—your values, your ideals, your institutions, and your communities.

—REBECCA SOLNIT, FROM “ON THE REALITY OF SANCTUARIES AND THE FICTION OF BORDERS” IN THE SANCTUARY CATALOGUE

During the exhibition’s five-month run, the 36 artist rugs of Sanctuary held visitors in various states of quietude, contemplation, and exchange. Imbued with and transmitting stories of identity, belonging, history, and place, each Sanctuary rug acted as both a mirror and a portal, allowing access to—and the space to reflect upon—the hidden corners of our common humanity, and providing a compass by which to explore the far reaches of the vast and complex landscape of the human experience.

Central to the ethos of the exhibition, and vital to its engagement with and connection to local audiences and communities, Sanctuary public programs brought together more than 70 local artists, poets, and thinkers to unravel, reveal, and amplify the myriad personal and cultural narratives woven into each artist’s rug. Providing audience members and participants the opportunity to engage deeply with the themes underpinning the exhibition, Sanctuary public programs were as diverse and varied as the rugs that were their platform.

In our current sociopolitical climate of divisiveness and isolation, FOR-SITE’s commitment to bringing people together in ways that build bridges within and across communities has deepened. Sanctuary’s collaborative and artist-driven programming not only extended FOR-SITE’s reach to new audiences, but transformed the exhibition into a site of profound human connection. In the
same way that the exhibition Art Guides were encouraged to be participants in two-way conversations rather than specialists delivering one-way content, Sanctuary’s programming embraced a mindset of openness, participation, and connectivity, stimulating audience members not only to consider the meaning of sanctuary in their own lives, but to tap into their power as catalysts for empathy and social change. —JACKIE VON TRESKOW, FOR SITE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

SANCTUARY SALON SERIES

Echoing the project’s ethos of plurality, the Sanctuary Salon series—a cornerstone of the exhibition’s public programming—wove together the voices of local artists whose practices span creative disciplines, including spoken word, music, dance, and performance. Invited guests presented and performed new or existing works that resonated with the thesis of the exhibition, allowing visitors to engage with and reflect on these themes in new and compelling ways.

DECEMBER 14, 2017

Rachelle Escamilla (poetry), Persis Karim (poetry), Mostez Massoudi (music), Jessica Mejia (poetry), Hafez Modirzadeh (music), excerpts from *The Pleasant Pain* (dance choreographed by Aisan Hoss and performed by Basma Edrees, Aisan Hoss, Asaf Ophir, and Adrienne Swani).

JANUARY 26, 2018

Jacques Ibula and Adam Bowers (music), Deema K. Shehabi (poetry), Excerpts from *Within These Walls* (dance performed by Lenora Lee Dance and featuring Yi-Ting Hsu, Lynn Huang, Hien Huynh, Eric Kozl, and Shannon Preto), Hope Mohr Dance and Sanctuary Artist Ranu Mukherjee (dance featuring Marlie Couto, Cylie Kindvai, Hope Mohr, and Karla Quintana).

BETWEEN CLOCKWISE Musician Keenan Webster performs at the February 23 Sanctuary Salon; Dancers performing Brendan Fernandez’s *Safely*; Lenora Lee Dance; Sanctuary Print Shop.

The rugs send a powerful message.
We are one, and we need to act like ONE!

—SANCTUARY VISITOR
A thought-provoking and material way to contemplate an important concept.
—SANCTUARY VISITOR

SANCTUARY PRINT SHOP
Created by artists Sergio De La Torre and Chris Treggiari, Sanctuary Print Shop was a mobile print shop that served as a community engagement tool aimed at raising awareness about recently enacted immigration politics and how they impact our communities. Visitors had the opportunity to silkscreen their own exhibition-specific prints and learn about the history of the sanctuary ordinance.

THE SOUND OF SANCTUARY
Sound has been used as a powerful tool for healing and introspection in myriad cultures and spiritual practices throughout human history. The Sound of Sanctuary was a sound meditation series led by Somatic Experience and Certified Sound Healing Practitioner Loriel Starr. Participants were invited to lie upon Sanctuary artist rugs, immerse themselves in the restorative sonic space, and tune in to their inner sanctuaries.

SAFELY
As part of his commission for Sanctuary, Brendan Fernandes presented a site-specific durational performance exploring themes of reverence and sacred space. Titled Safely, the performance utilized improvisational choreography—including meditative gestures of cleaning and falling—to evoke the physical act of cleaning and the fallen body, suggesting larger notions of devotion, humility, trauma, and safety. The rugs thereby became indexical sites where the body met the ground, or spaces of soft refuge where the body was welcomed and protected: sanctuaries.
STATELESS
Stateless convened eight percipient, creative voices to perform a durational, improvisational score that traced the boundaries and liminal spaces of place and identity, nation and self. Participating artists included Rachel Aiello, Larry/Laura Arrington, Robert Crouch, Jesse Hewit, Debby Kajiyama, Marc Kate, José Navarette, and Samantha Weinert.

ESSENCE OF THREADS
Presented by artists Shaghayegh Cyrous, Laura Elayne Miller, and Shirin Abedinirad, Essence of Threads was a daylong multimedia installation that reimagined the notion of sanctuary as the poetic space of weaving—a place of both nature and refuge. The art of weaving exemplifies the four elements in both its process and its essence; Essence of Threads invited the viewer to experience the craft of weaving as expressed through these elements.

ABOVE THE RUG
Moderated by the Fine Arts Museums’ Curator of Costume and Textile Arts Jill D’Alessandro, this panel discussion considered the rug’s myriad secular and sacred uses, and the ways in which contemporary artists are approaching the rug as a critical form in their practices. Panel participants included artist Ala Ebtekar, Assistant Editor at Hali Publications Limited Malin Lonnberg, artist Sanaz Mazinani, and scholar and Sanctuary catalogue contributor Minoo Moallem.

REFLECTIONS ON THE BORDERWALL
Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, Ronald Rael discussed the ideas explored in his recent book Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary. Rael’s presentation was followed by a screening of Rodrigo Reyes’s 2013 essay film Purgatorio: A Journey into the Heart of the Border.
What a gift to experience this exhibit. To all involved, I am grateful. God bless.

— SANCTUARY VISITOR

SANCTUARY FAMILY DAY
Sanctuary Family Day was an opportunity for children and families to explore the exhibition together through hands-on activities, including “Look Closer at Art,” a family-focused workshop led by A Little Culture that promoted intergenerational conversations about art and culture. Children and their parents were invited to consider the Sanctuary artworks that resonated with them, and gain insight into each other’s world through various collaborative, creative activities.

ART + FEMINISM EDIT-A-THON
In a 2011 survey, the Wikimedia Foundation found that less than 10 percent of its contributors were women. In response to this disparity, Art Practical and FOR-SITE hosted a communal updating of Wikipedia entries in the exhibition space on subjects related to gender, art, and feminism, focusing specifically on Sanctuary participating artists. Contributors of all gender identities were invited to participate.

AL-MUTANABBI STREET STARTS HERE
On March 5th, 2007, Al-Mutanabbi Street—a “booksellers’ street” that was the nucleus of Baghdad’s literary and intellectual community—became the target of a car bombing that destroyed the historic district. In response to the bombing, Beau Beausoleil, a San Francisco–based poet and bookseller, started Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here, an art and literary project commemorating Baghdad’s devastated cultural center. On March 5, 2018, FOR-SITE joined more than 20 individuals and organizations across the world—from Washington, DC to Mosul—in hosting a commemorative evening of readings at Sanctuary.

AI WEIWEI: HUMAN FLOW
FOR-SITE and ArtsEd4All presented a special free screening of Sanctuary artist Ai Weiwei’s documentary Human Flow—an epic film journey that gives powerful visual expression to the current refugee crisis, further elucidating the themes underpinning Sanctuary.
Accessibility has always been an important aspect of FOR-SITE’s work. With Sanctuary, though, accessibility was paramount. The idea of sanctuary as a basic human need isn’t an abstract concept to many in the Bay Area. For our undocumented immigrants, homeless, members of the LGBTQ community, and many more, the need for refuge and security is a daily reality. Through the generosity of our donors, FOR-SITE was able to reach these communities in ways we haven’t before. This expanded outreach gave us the opportunity to work with groups like the Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI), which provides social services to refugee and immigrant families; Street Soccer USA, which aims to fight poverty and empower underserved communities through soccer; and Larkin Street Youth Services, which works toward ending youth homelessness. In addition to community groups like these, FOR-SITE worked with schools from across the city. FOR-SITE also partnered with A Little Culture to produce Sanctuary curricula for grades K–12, which were available for free download.

The Bay Area is full of organizations doing incredible work to raise social consciousness and address the pressing issues of our time. As FOR-SITE continues to present place-based exhibitions that encourage new ways of looking and thinking about these issues, we are committed to engaging more deeply with these groups to ensure accessibility for all.

—Alison Konecki, FOR-SITE Communications and Development Manager
We are deeply grateful to the individuals and organizations whose leadership made the presentation of Sanctuary possible.

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Designer
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Visitor Engagement Manager
Florie Hutchinson
Public Relations Consultant
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