



ARTS
AND
REFUGEES
FORUM

19 – 20
August 2016

Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
#AaRF2016

Welcome to the inaugural Arts and Refugees Forum 2016

The Arts and Refugees Forum aims to connect people working in the intersection between arts and refugees through open discussions and critical reflections. The Forum also provides a platform for greater networking and development opportunities – a juncture to cultivate cross-sectorial collaborations and creative exchanges.

The Forum itself is the outcome of a collaboration between Settlement Services International (SSI), Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and CuriousWorks.

Plans for a major exhibition featuring world-renowned refugee artists were underway at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre when CuriousWorks approached the organisation with a complementary idea. Where Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre's *Refugees* exhibition would focus on established artists, the *Beyond Refuge: Citizens* exhibition would feature local artists of refugee and asylum seeker background who had recently participated in photography workshops run in partnership with SSI.

The staging of these two exhibitions at Casula Powerhouse – a major cultural institution in western Sydney – serves as the perfect backdrop for an unprecedented state-wide conversation about refugee-related arts practice. Every speaker, artist and attendee involved in the Forum offers a unique perspective that will make a valuable addition to that discussion.

The Arts and Refugees Forum also provides a great opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions refugees and people seeking asylum make to the arts community across the globe, while reflecting on the particular needs and challenges that artists from refugee backgrounds face in Australia.

Assembling the program was an inspiring and eye-opening process. Following an open call for presenters in May 2016, we received a significant number of proposals from a range of community and cultural practitioners that have shaped the panel discussions and presentations featured in the two-day program. There are also critical issues we are compelled to talk about and, thanks to the input of many artists and community representatives, we will see a robust program of panel discussions and presentations on those topics and more. We hope this will enable many more conversations, partnerships and collaborations in future.

Carolina Triana
SSI Arts & Culture Coordinator
Arts and Refugees Forum Producer

MC:

Kween G, Sydney's Hip Hop Queen.
@kweengz

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS:

Speaker biographies can be found on Casula Powerhouse's website.
www.casulapowerhouse.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

#AaRF2016

AH XIAN

Ah Xian's new performance-art piece, created in response to the Refugees exhibition and inspired by his characteristic and well-known bust works, will provide a silent but powerful layer to the Forum.
Friday 19 August, 10:30am.

IN THE PERFORMANCE SPACE...

A selection of works by newly arrived artists who are refugees or seeking asylum in Australia will be on display in the Performance Space during the Forum. Alongside the sharing of knowledge, experiences and conversations, the Arts and Refugees Forum is also an acknowledgement of art as the means by which many people deal with the emotional complexity of displacement and exile.
19–20 August, 8:30am–5:30pm
Performance Space.

YARNING CICLE

Gather around the fire, on Cabrogal land, under the stars, beside the great river that runs through Darug country. To 'yarn' is to share a story with friends; to weave stories of the land, the people and the cultures together around a fire. Join with local Elders to share a story of culture and connection. Bring a song to share, your music and your stories. Yarning Circle celebrates First Nations' connection to the land and welcomes artists and local people, refugees and asylum seekers to

the Georges River, to share journey stories, stories of friendship, longing and belonging. Food and drink will be served around a fire-bucket.

Friday 19 August, 5:30pm.

Outside the Clayhouse, opposite main entrance.
Produced by CuriousWorks and Heartdancers.

EXHIBITIONS

The Arts and Refugees Forum is presented in conjunction with two exhibitions at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. Delegates are free to enjoy the works on display.
19–20 August, 8:30am–5:30pm
Exhibitions continue until September 11, 10am–5pm.

Refugees

Refugees is a landmark exhibition that celebrates the invaluable contribution of world-renowned international and Australian artists who share a refugee background. Presented by Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre.

Beyond Refuge: Citizens

A collection of photo-media and video works made by local Sydney-based artists who are former refugees, current asylum seekers and first generation Australians whose family fled war to settle in Australia. Presented by CuriousWorks.

A BIG THANK YOU TO...

Toni Bailey and CPAC staff, Caitlin Newton-Broad and the CuriousWorks team, Dr Omid Tofghian, Lena Nahlous and Kultour, Kamalle Dabboussy, Shabnam Bhana, Jiva Parthipan, and the artists, presenters and thinkers who have given their time and expertise to bring this forum together.

Friday 19 August 2016

08:30am **Registration**

09:30am **Welcome**

Uncle Stephen Williams, Acknowledgement of Country
Violet Roumeliotis, CEO Settlement Services International (SSI)
Nikita Karvounis, Acting Director Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre

10:00am **Keynote: Artist in Focus**

Guo Jian, an exhibiting artist in *Refugees*, will share his views about the relationship between art practice and the notions of identity, exile and displacement.

10:30am **Morning tea**

11:00am **Against the clock!**

In three 10-minute presentations, speakers will endeavour to give a brief overview of their subject area before the clock runs out.

#1: War Child – a book presentation

Speaker: Annette Janic

#2: Heartdancers: Bringing Aboriginal and refugee artists together

Speakers: Binowee Bayles, Sandra Morales and Monik Rosales

#3: Strength and Resilience: An intergenerational oral history approach to refugee narratives

Speaker: Tim Carroll, Bankstown Youth Development Service

11:30am **The dialectics of displacement: aesthetics, encounters and community arts practice**

The opening panel will seek to answer questions including: what are newly arrived artists interested in creating? How are artists from refugee and non-refugee backgrounds creatively and critically exploring the refugee experience? How should their work be labelled, if at all? And, what protocols and ethical considerations are – or should be – put in place when creatively engaging with refugee communities and artists?

Speakers: Hani Abdile, Safdar Ahmed, Katie Green, Ali Mousawi, Hussein Nabeel, Tina Posunkina, Dr Omid Tofighian (Facilitator)

01:00pm **Lunch**

02:00pm **Mother's Spice – A case study of community creativity**

Producers, artist facilitators and community-based performers engaged in the Mother's Spice project – an initiative by Information and Cultural Exchange I.C.E. – will examine the process required to produce a community-focused performance (and culinary arts) project, driven by the experiences of refugee and migrant women in Australia.

Speakers: Eddie Abd, Yamane Fayed and Mouna Zaylah

02:45pm **Origin-Transit-Destination: The challenges and obligations of non-refugee artists creating work with refugee artists**

Through an open discussion, this session will explore the challenges artists and producers faced while creating *Origin-Transit-Destination* – a mobile performance the Australian Performance Exchange created in collaboration with people from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran who have sought asylum.

Speakers: Jamal A Al-Hallaq, Mohammed Alanezi, Annemaree Dalziel and Sally Sussman

03:30pm **Afternoon tea**

04:00pm **Breakout sessions**

(90 min)

Breakout one: The Confined Hearts Project

Join artist Penny Ryan in a hands-on exploration of her latest project making small terracotta human hearts – one for each person in detention on Manus Island and Nauru.

--

(45 min)

Breakout two: How can artists covertly express critical thought under repressive circumstances?

Iranian-Australian artist Mojgan Habibi – a ceramic and sculpture PhD candidate – will discuss the ways in which hidden meaning in artistic work can provide hope for everyday people in times of political repression.

--

(45 min)

Breakout three: Beyond Refuge

The Beyond Refuge project supports young and older artists with lived experience as refugees, or as children of refugees, to build their original artistic projects. Participating western Sydney artists will discuss their experiences in the project, a CuriousWorks three-year initiative.

(45 min)

Breakout four: Oral storytelling and the refugee community

Wollongong-based storyteller Lillian Rodrigues-Pang will share the structure of her storytelling approach and the role it can play in the refugee community.

--

(45 min)

Breakout five: Storytelling through photography

Can still image render the wholeness of the experience of seeking asylum? Join freelance photographer Nadine Koroleva as she seeks to answer this question and more.

05:30pm **Yarning Circle**

An open invitation to local artists, singers, storytellers, listeners and all Forum participants to join a story circle for an hour of sharing. See page one for more details.

Saturday 20 August 2016

08:30am **Registration**

09:30am **Treehouse Theatre: Stories that heal**

Young participants in Treehouse Theatre's drama therapy program will welcome back Forum delegates with a short performance, followed by an insightful Q&A session about the group's creative process.

10:00am **Making art on equal terms**

This panel will explore questions including, how do artists from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds gain access to employment and education opportunities? And, how do we, as arts and community sector practitioners, foster an inclusive, diverse and welcoming arts community?

Speakers: Eiman Al Ubudy, Guido Gonzalez, Herlina Massing, Andy Miller, Jeremy Smith, Lena Nahlous (Facilitator)

11:00am **Morning tea**

11:30am **A Dance, A Funeral and A Wedding – Dance Africa Dance**

A reflexive study about developing and programming an annual community showcase of African dance at Riverside Theatre, Parramatta, Sydney, presented by Jiva Parthipan from the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS).

12:15pm **The New Beginnings Exhibition: mentorship and artist development**

Artist Miriam Cabello will join with exhibiting artists to explore their experience participating in a 10-week mentoring program to develop works for the New Beginnings: Refugee Arts & Culture Festival.

Speakers: Mohammed Alanezi, Mohanad Al Ghezi, Damon Amb and Miriam Cabello

01:00pm **Lunch**

02:00pm **Breakout sessions**

(45 min)

Breakout one: Real fiction and real life

Sheila Pham from the Sydney Story Factory will explore key issues and considerations when undertaking creative writing with young people in both school and community development settings. This critical reflection will look at Sydney Story Factory's work in this space as well as Sheila's other projects involving writers with refugee experiences. The session will feature an interactive discussion where writers and practitioners can share ideas and experiences around working with young writers trying to find their voice in Australia.

02:00pm (45 min)

Breakout two: From grassroots to high profile – the long-term view

S. Shaktidharan and Caitlin Newton-Broad from CuriousWorks will present and discuss three types of arts projects centred around refugee themes. First, a grassroots arts program that enables asylum seekers and refugees to make their first artworks. Second, a large scale, highly ambitious play about four generations of a Sri Lankan-Australian family, a co-production with Belvoir Theatre. Third, a sensitive theatre work based on the experiences of people within the detention centre system.

--
(45 min)

Breakout three: I heart my body

Dancer Aruna Gandhi will share her experiences running the 'Creative Movement' workshop series with migrant and refugee women in western Sydney. This session will include a practical dance workshop.

03:00pm **Against the clock!**

In three 10-minute presentations, speakers will endeavour to give a brief overview of their subject area before the clock runs out.

#1: The silent past of the Buitenkampers

Speaker: Frances H.E. Larder

#2: Whispers in an empty room – an invitation

Speaker: Carlos Agamez

#3: Cooling Conflicts

Speaker: Kate Clarkson

03:30pm **Keynote: Artist in Focus**

Join Saba Vasefi – poet, filmmaker and Asylum Seekers Centre Ambassador – as she discusses feminism in exile and intersectional discrimination, followed by a poetry reading and the screening of her short film *Symphony of Strange Waters*.

04:00pm **Wrap-up, event close and refreshments**



Produced by Settlement Services International in partnership with Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and with the support of CuriousWorks.