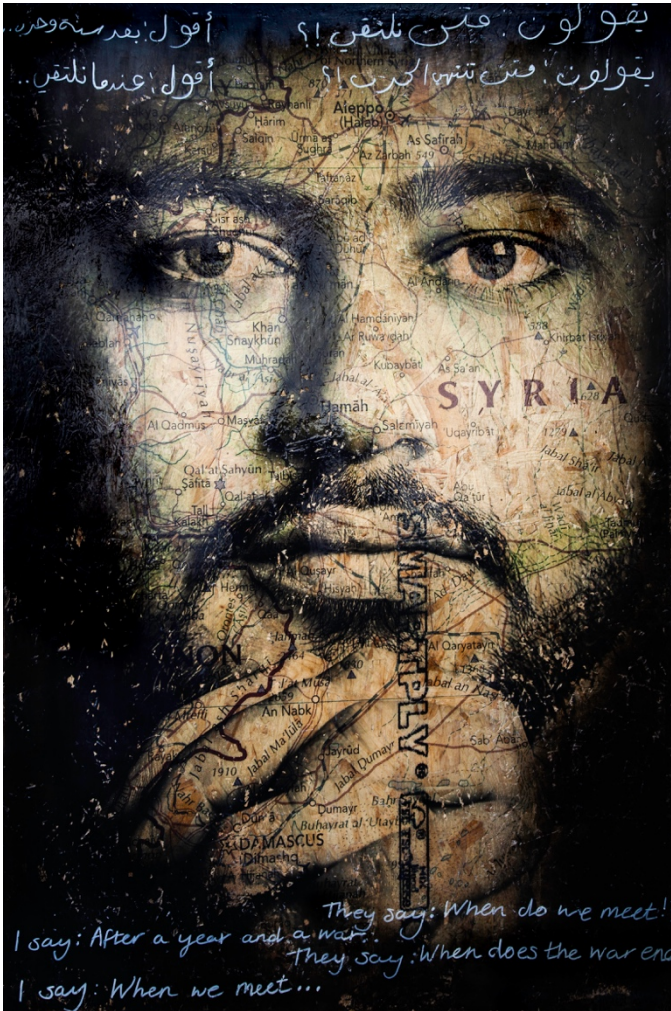


PRESS RELEASE

“Refugee Stories”

an exhibition from the heart



The 21st century has seen the rise of a global refugee phenomena where untold numbers of desperate people have fled from persecution, war and intolerance in their homes for an unknown future in unknown lands. This mass exodus has merged into a never-ending news story, a series of statistics, horrific images of people, children babies drowned at sea or just faces in the crowd. But besides the hardships of their perilous journeys all these people carry a heavy burden - their humanity. Refugee Stories, by award-winning photographer Gillian Allard is a snap-shot of the very real heart-ache and emotion, experienced by thousands of displaced people from across the world.

Rifaii (left) was born into a family of 11 siblings in the city of Homs, Syria. He fled with his mother and brother, but his remaining brothers and sisters are now scattered across the globe. They stay in contact via their smartphones.

Originally, Gillian Allard (maker of the work) asked him to write some words about his personal experience. After much deliberation he wrote a poem as if in conversation with his siblings.

They say: When do we meet?

I say: After a year and a war...

They say: When does the war end?

I say: When we meet...

“Once Rifaii had written his words he sent it to me by Messenger. I gave it an awful lot of thought, because I felt it

was so moving. Once I had decided on my approach, we met at his workplace and I photographed him. As the piece developed I kept him up to date with how it was going and got his feedback, then we met again and he added his words. We are both very proud of the finished piece”.(Gillian Allard)

Gillian is a photographic art photographer, a graduate of the Royal College of Art and the 2017 Winner of Sky Arts Master of Photography. She began to develop these works as a commission titled, ‘Belonging’, for the PhotoEast Festival 2018 in her home county of Suffolk. Working alongside the local refugee community Gillian made a portrait series. Using a specialist technique she physically bonded the photographic images to OSB board, often used in transportation, finishing with spray paints. The refugee participants then handwrote their personal stories on the pieces using acrylic pens. Since the festival, she has continued to produce further pieces and in that sense the exhibition is a work in progress.

The seven large scale artworks are currently on display in the shadow of St Pauls Cathedral in the beautiful Gothic St Mary Aldermary Church, also a Sir Christopher Wren creation. This unique public space shares its walls with The Moot Community and their hugely popular café and lunch time destination of City folk ‘The Host’. The exhibition runs until 10th May 2019. For more information on this work see the webpage:

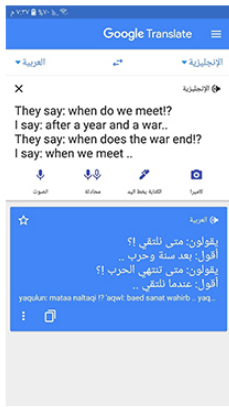
<https://gillian-allard.com/project/refugee-stories>

To discuss the exhibition in more detail, contact Gillian Allard:

Email: photo@gillian-allard.com Mobile: 07780-675449

BEHIND THE SCENES

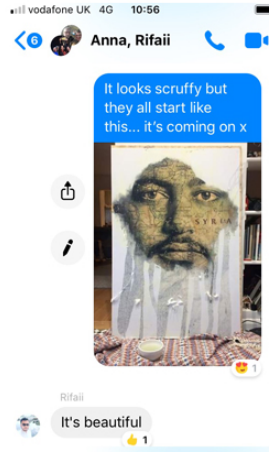
Rifaii's Poem from his phone



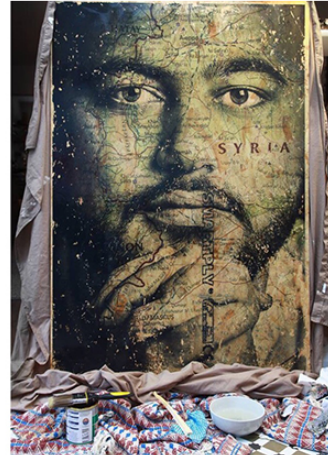
Shoot of Rifaii at his workplace



Feed back on FB messenger on FB messenger in process



Bonded portrait fully revealed



Rifaii ponders his words



Gillian and Rifaii with the completed artwork