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117 N. Sycamore, Santa Ana, CA 92701  
Open Thursday - Sunday 12-5 PM

## SEEN FOR SYRIA

Curated by Soulaf Abas & Alyssa Arney

**2-30 January 2016 | Opening Reception: Saturday, 2 January, 6 - 10 PM**

Santa Ana, CA, December 25-26, 2015 — The Orange County Center for Contemporary Art is very pleased to announce *Seen For Syria*, a traveling exhibition featuring the works of **Soulaf Abas** and **Muzaffar Salman** as well as the children of the *Seen For Syria* art therapy program, on view from the 2nd of January through the 30th of January 2016. A public reception will be held on Saturday, the 2nd of January from 6:00 to 10:00 PM in addition to an **artist Q&A with Abas in conjunction with the opening**.

"I think art is important for everyone everywhere. We never realize, especially in the region, and for educational and cultural reasons, the incredible therapeutic component of creating anything. Even when one is not doing specifically art therapy, one is still healing when they are being creative, and this comes from my personal experience," says Abas. Jointly their works address their experiences with their homeland and refugees by creating a visual memoir of their beloved country and by depicting the struggles of the Syrian community as well as their personal and internal passions, love, and sadness through photographs, paintings and sundry printmaking methods.

*Seen For Syria* was realized after Abas imagined it while on a bus ride from Washington DC to New York City in August of 2013. The entirety of *Seen For Syria* is comprised of three segments: a traveling art exhibition to raise awareness about the ongoing conflicts in Syria, an art education program that utilizes art therapy with Syrian children to express their traumas, and an art exchange between disadvantaged US children, who were able to escape rough neighborhoods, drugs or abusive homes, and displaced, disabled Syrian children. 50% of the art sales will go directly to the outreach programs. The exhibition amplifies the powerful voices of Abas and Salman by creating a unique use and interplay between their lives, work and meaning of their art. The exhibition is organized by Soulaf Abas and Alyssa Arney.

Soulaf Abas was born and raised in Damascus, Syria for 20+ years and lives in Terre Haute, IN. She graduated from Indiana State University in 2008 with a bachelors in Fine Arts and then her masters in 2013. She currently teaches in the art department at ISU. *Seen For Syria* has traveled to Jordan, Indiana, and Washington DC all in 2014.

Muzaffar Salman was born in Homs, Syria and currently lives in France. He began photography as a hobby and commenced college with an intent to study tourism. His education was interrupted to fulfill his mandatory 2 1/2 years of military service, but upon returning home he earned a diploma in Photography from the International Craft Center in Homs. He has been a freelance photographer for Thomson Reuters and the Associated Press and has exhibited his work in Rome, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunis, Algeria, and Turkey.

The art and letters exchanged by the US and Syrian children have been condensed into *Me and You*, organized by Abas and published by CreateSpace in 2014. The book will be available for purchase at the OCCCA with 100% of the proceeds going directly to the outreach programs.

For inquiries, please contact the gallery at 714 667 1517 or [info.occca@gmail.com](mailto:info.occca@gmail.com).



Soulaf Abas, *In Syria*, 2013, Oil on Canvas, 30" x 30"

Muzaffar Salman, *Look! Can You Help This Bird?*, 2013, Digital print, 13" x 20"



Soulaf Abas, *Explosion*, 2012, Oil on Canvas 16" x 20"

Soulaf Abas, *Damascus I*, 2012, Etching, 21" x 27"