

Postcards For Peace Arts Project 2017/18

Postcards for Peace is a new project by The Friend Ship, working with The Forum Trust, enabling Norfolk artists to work with displaced people living in the county. Postcards for Peace aims to use art and creativity to cross cultural and language barriers, challenge prejudices, help displaced people feel welcome in their new home and aid community cohesion.

The Friend Ship is a Community Interest Company run by artists/volunteers Emma Skeet (City of Sanctuary Arts stream) and Jack Godfrey. Started a year ago we have run workshops with schools and the Millennium Library exploring issues of persecution and welcome through the arts, resulting in an exhibition at the Millennium Library during Refugee Week this year, now touring throughout Norfolk Libraries. The Forum Trust is a self-financing, independent, educational charity which runs the Millennium building in the centre of Norwich, which is open to the public and free to access seven days a week. The Trust has a charitable commitment to supporting the creative arts. Jayne Evans is Events and Partnership Manager at The Forum Trust.

Postcards for Peace participants will be able to express their lives, hopes, dreams and cultural heritage, either using their existing artistic skills (which they can share with the group) or as a result of learning new skills, taught by the local artists (including painting, photography, printing, drawing, embroidery, weaving, quilting, glass work and ceramics) in a number of locations and studios. They can produce a postcard sized artwork (A4 or A6) in their chosen art form with anything on it including a poem or letter of welcome, photograph, weaving, embroidery, painting, drawing etc of anything they choose, or representing a 'picture' of the future everyone deserves, or (in big letters filling the postcard and decorated/coloured) the words CHOOSE LOVE or WELCOME.

The workshops will take place at New Routes Art Club on Thursdays (in collaboration with Coral who runs the group) and at artist studios (Aviva Leigh in Norwich and glass studio outside Norwich). Once workshop dates are finalized, participants will also be invited from English+, Bridge Plus, NIYP and People from Abroad in order to promote a unified, collaborative working group, enabling displaced people from all groups in Norwich to meet and support each other. We hope that once the group is established participants will also want to meet monthly at The Forum in a private space for sharing work created so far, ideas, conversation, friendship and food.

As with our previous project working with schools where we talked about the importance of Norwich becoming a City of Sanctuary, the history of displaced people in Norwich over the years, and included a poster and leaflets for Norwich CofS in the Refugee Week exhibition, The Friend Ship continues to work to support the aims of Norwich City of Sanctuary. As such we hope to be able to raise the profile of Norwich

CofS through the Postcards for Peace project and would welcome feedback from the steering committee on ideas for this.

As part of Norwich Schools of Sanctuary initiative, local schools will be invited to participate by submitting postcard sized art works, in any medium, using the 'themes' described above.

We also have displaced artists taking part who are now living in Athens and Austria. Once the project starts the charity Help Refugees has agreed to publicise and share it on their website, through their volunteer networks and groups working with displaced people abroad, so we can open the project up to individuals and groups (schools, workplaces, universities, displaced people art/community/friendship groups in camps and their new homes and via other UK Cities of Sanctuary) asking for people to create their own Postcard for Peace and send it in to join the collaborative exhibition, contributing to make one MASSIVE postcard creative message of welcome and love. A two-way world conversation of welcome and support so that we are not just 'helping' displaced people but working with them on an equal platform to show that we are all the same - people who love art/colour/beauty/friendship.

The finished art works will create a mixed media exhibition for Makers' Month, at The Forum in March/April 2018. While at The Forum the artists and some participants will work together to encourage members of the public to add to the exhibition, creating individual postcards and messages of welcome, also in a variety of media.

The enhanced, collaborative exhibition will be shown at Refugee Week events in June 2018 (locations to be decided) and be toured via Norfolk Library Service, where schools and community groups will use the exhibition to inspire further multicultural artistic activity.

We aim to use the project to help raise funding for the vital work of global and local groups working with displaced people, including Help Refugees and local groups put forwards by Norwich CofS. For all 'entries' of postcard artworks (excluding those from displaced people) we will ask for a £1 entry donation. Some work will be photographed and postcards produced for sale, alongside original artworks being sold to further raise funds.

Emma Skeet

The Friend Ship

thefriendship.wixsite.com/thefriendship