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## Assyrian diaspora blooms in virtual art exhibit



August 2020 | By Christina Salem | Photo contributed

**D**etroit – The online gallery of Assyrian art titled “Diaspora In Bloom” went live this month – “transcending borders” with a virtual format accessible to all. Inspired by a world on lockdown, it’s the very first of its kind for the global Assyrian community.

Featuring more than 30 works from six emerging Assyrian artists, artwork is showcased through a variety of forms including photography, painting, posters, drawing, pottery and graphic design.

“I hope that, no matter someone’s background, they leave the exhibition seeing that we all have so much more in common as humans than we’re sometimes led to believe,” said Nardin Sarkis, who, along with Akadina Yadegar curated the show. “[The exhibit] is a chance for them to understand what it means for a stateless people like Assyrians to navigate the world of borders and bans and nevertheless protect our culture and way of life.”

Last year [marked](#) the first “Diaspora in Bloom” event, hosted in San Jose.

Sarkis was inspired to use the phrase “Diaspora in Bloom” by an Assyrian idiom his grandmother taught him: “Nissan beh kha vardah leh haveh,” which translates to “Spring does not occur with one flower alone”.

When researching artists for this year’s event, Sarkis said that he and Yadegar sought fresh and forward looking artists.

“By listening and acknowledging the harsh reality of borders that continue to separate Assyrians around the world, they have created beautiful and meaningful artwork that deserves to be reflected on,” he said.

One of the six featured artists, Rabel Betshmuel, said his series of ancient Assyrian reliefs titled “Collected Fragments” was inspired by his nana Rachel after she made a quilt for him.

“The composition with the black cross is in remembrance of

my paternal grandmother,” he said. “I left some areas void of pattern and color to represent the ongoing cultural destruction in Iraq.”

For some Assyrians, the show validates lived experience and allows for some intermission by showcasing cultural beauty in a contemporary fashion.

Beneel Babaei, an Assyrian who viewed the virtual exhibit, said that older generations of Assyrians should experience updated and modern interpretations of the life they grew up having.

“Cultural preservation takes a new form with ‘Diaspora In Bloom’ every year,” Babaei said. “To walk the line between innovating and preserving is no small feat, and these [curators] have nailed it twice now.”

Yadegar and Sarkis took the opportunity to spotlight progressive Assyrian art that provokes thought, elevates modern over ancient, and inspires change.

“The show can speak to the political moment by challenging traditional conceptions of borders by shattering the illusion of ‘us’ and ‘them’” Sarkis said.

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The exhibition is free and open to the public to virtually attend, on view August 15-30.

To walk through the gallery (and enjoy a guided tour), click [here](#).

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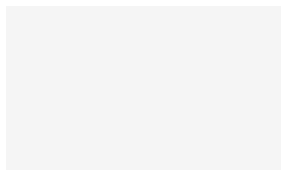


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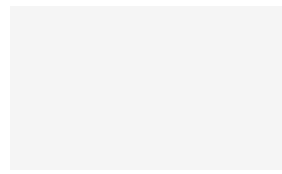
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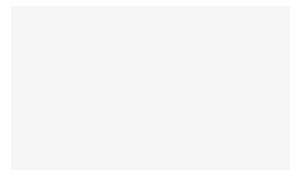
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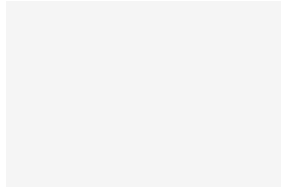
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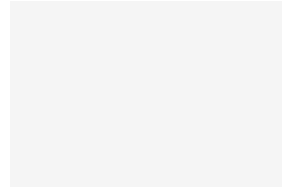
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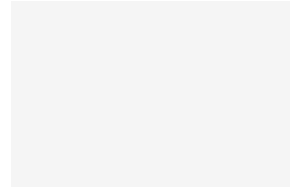
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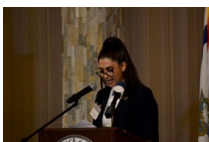
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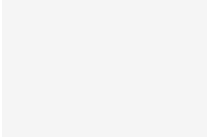
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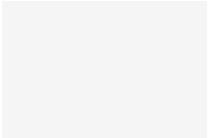
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