

2020

CARAVAN

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



“The arts are one of the few ways you can transport people into someone else’s life, and create that commonality.”

SAMANTHA POWER

Former US Ambassador to the United Nations



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Building Peace during a Pandemic

This has certainly been an uncommon year. While there are surprises and new challenges every year, 2020 has of course been exceptional in terms of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on our programs, modes of operation and plans. It was also a year that unmasked the depths of inequality, racism and division that continue to exist in our world. Therefore, in the midst of the hurdles that the pandemic created, CARAVAN's mission of using the arts to build sustainable peace between diverse peoples, cultures and faiths was needed more than ever.

We quickly adapted to the new realities and embraced the move to virtual gallery settings, as well as reimagining our strategic peacebuilding artistic initiatives for online viewing and participation, which included adding more interactive aspects to our programming. Despite the unexpected challenges, we had a busy year using the arts to make our world a more harmonious place for all.



EXHIBITIONS

Many of this last year's scheduled in-person exhibitions had to be rearranged and re-envisioned, but the end result was that we were able to offer enriching, stimulating and transformational exhibitions virtually that have been accessible to global audiences online.



ABRAHAM: Out of One, Many

This timely exhibition, titled "ABRAHAM: Out of One, Many" (playing off of the Latin motto "E pluribus unum" / "Out of many, one"), focuses on what we can learn from Abraham's story about living together more harmoniously. For this exhibition, three celebrated Middle Eastern contemporary visual artists from the faith traditions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism each created five paintings that interpret Abraham's life and faith journey for us today, serving as a guide toward creating cultures of peace, harmony, justice and healing. What can Abraham teach us today toward freeing our world from sectarian strife? That is the question this strategic exhibition attempts to answer.

During 2019, the exhibition premiered in Rome, Italy in the spring of 2019, following by being showcased in Paris, France and Edinburgh, Scotland, Omaha, Nebraska and Boston, Massachusetts. Early in 2020, the exhibition was successfully shown in Jacksonville, Florida from January 15 – February 21. An array of associated programming was held around the exhibition that included:

- A public lecture at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) by participating Iraqi artist Qais Al Sindy titled *The Role of Art in Peacebuilding*.
- An "Interfaith Dialogue" panel event.
- A Religious Leadership event.
- A VIP Reception.
- A Public Opening Program and Reception.
- A Coffee & Conversation at University of Northern Florida's Interfaith Center about the exhibition's theme.

- A Civil Discourse event around the exhibition.
- A performance of *Ghosts on the Wall* Play at FSCJ Wilson Center for the Arts
- A “Pilgrim Walk” starting at the exhibition with presentation and discussion on the concept of pilgrimage with Scriptured readings from the three Abrahamic faiths regarding the concept of pilgrimage, followed by a walk to a Jewish synagogue and an Islamic mosque.

The exhibition tour then had to be revised due to the pandemic, and scheduled exhibitions in Atlanta, Georgia, Reno, Nevada, Washington, D.C. and Chicago, Illinois were unfortunately cancelled, while showings in Houston, Texas and Hartford, Connecticut were postponed to 2021.

To learn more about the exhibition, see: www.oncaravan.org/abraham



TO HEAL THE WORLD

An international online artistic reflection on mending the brokenness of our global family

In today’s world we are all intricately connected and interdependent; an inescapable reality highlighted in 2020 by the pandemic and other events around the globe. What happens in one part of the world affects others far away. Humanity has become besieged by many ailments that continue to drag us down; injustices, racism, prejudice, hatred, exploitation, inequality, conflict and abuse. We need to redouble our efforts to counteract this wave of negativity and erosion of values by expressing how we can each make a positive impact in our social groups, communities, countries and ultimately, in the world. TO HEAL THE WORLD was a visual expression by artists about mending the brokenness of our global family, toward creating a momentum of peace, love and healing to redress the balance toward making our world more whole.

Artwork was submitted through an open call to all artists globally for two or three-dimensional artwork representing their creative expressions about repairing our world. An independent jury selected 30 works from the 119 submissions, awarding 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes, as well as an Honorable Mention.

To view the exhibition, see: www.oncaravan.org/tohealtheworld



LINE OF DESCENT

Our first solo virtual exhibition featured celebrated Egyptian artist Hady Boraey who created work as a result of the pandemic and ensuing lockdown. Reflecting deeply into his spiritual imagination, Hady contemplated the challenges and hardships of life against the backdrop of ancient universal stories found in the spiritual traditions of the Abrahamic faiths.

The series of fourteen paintings explored central narratives and timeless questions that have shaped the path of humanity, beginning with Adam and Eve and the infamous tree, to their children, and the continuing journey of the human race, bringing us to today's contemporary context where we find ourselves now questioning what comes next.

To view the exhibition, see: www.oncaravan.org/lineofdescent



A NEW FUTURE

2020 CARAVAN Short Film Festival

The world we were all familiar with has been shaken and changed irrevocably. We now find ourselves in a situation where we are presented with a real opportunity to rethink, redress and create a new path going forward – “a new future.”

In titling our second annual short film festival A NEW FUTURE, we offered filmmakers and artists around the world the opportunity to share their opinions, reflections, insights, creative solutions and visions for how we can all contribute to a better future in a short film of 5 minutes or less in length. At the heart of A NEW FUTURE is the need to respectfully listen to each other, show compassion, and work together to create societies that embody social justice, equality, inclusion, harmony and community at their center, as well as address the environmental emergency that confronts us.

Filmmakers eagerly responded to our open call on FilmFreeway attracting over 3,000 submissions. An independent jury of selected 30 films for the festival’s Official Selection, and awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes, as well as an Honorable Mention.

To watch the festival’s short films, see: www.oncaravan.org/anewfuture

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Every year, to extend our artistic peacebuilding reach, we strive to develop new strategic partnerships, as well as strengthen existing ones. Through these relationships we enhance our offerings and more effectively serve diverse communities. Among our numerous cultural and faith-based partners this year were:

Center on Contemporary Art (Seattle, WA)

OneJax (Jacksonville, FL)

Museum of Contemporary Art (Jacksonville, FL)

SikhLens

GIVSUM

Community Cinemas

Universal Heritage & Resource Center

Strategic partnership examples. . .



GLOBAL CITIZEN Short Film Festival Award Winners at CoCA

From January 2 - February 22, 2020, the prize-winning films in our GLOBAL CITIZEN Smartphone Short Film Festival were screened at the Center on Contemporary Arts in Seattle, Washington (CoCA). These short films made on a smartphone had been selected by a jury after an open call during 2019, and were awarded prizes for their depiction of what it means to make our world more equal, compassionate, fair, peaceful, and sustainable in 3-minutes or less.

Around the screenings at CoCA, a panel and Q&A event was held to discuss and explore the themes in more detail with the participation of CARAVAN's Vice President, Dr. Bassem Bejjani.



Children's Art Show with ONEJAX

Around our *ABRAHAM: Out of One, Many* exhibition in Jacksonville, FL, in partnership with OneJax, the children's programs in Jacksonville's area mosques, temples and churches invited their children to create art inspired by the story of Abraham "welcoming the stranger." It was a unique opportunity to engage the children in these various Abrahamic religious communities in meaningful discussions of how important it is to welcome outsiders and those different than themselves into their own community and making them feel comfortable. Children submitted artwork that was displayed next to the *ABRAHAM: Out of One, Many* exhibition.

GIVING ARTISTS A VOICE FOR PEACE

One of our core aims is to give artists around the world a voice toward resolving today's conflicts, providing a global platform for their creative expressions. As natural change agents, we believe that artists can lead the way by providing new pathways of understanding that transcend borders and how one sees the "other."

Unable to hold our scheduled in-person peacebuilding exhibitions due to the pandemic, and with many artists in lockdown, we focused on providing maximum exposure online to artists through virtual platforms, so that they could share their distinct artwork created during this unusual time, as well as communicate important messages about making our world more harmonious. We did this by a new ART AND PEACEBUILDING BLOG, our ARTIST SPOTLIGHT interviews, and partnering with other organizations for WEBINARS.

AN "ART AND PEACEBUILDING" BLOG

Early in the pandemic we observed that many CARAVAN artists around the world were creating work that distinctly spoke to the new challenges and issues our world is facing. We therefore launched a BLOG to provide our artists a means of expressing themselves related to the events of the year. Throughout 2020 we held various topical blog series such as "Creativity in Crisis," "Pandemic Inspired Art," "Art to Lift Our Spirits," and "Checking In." The blog, with contributions from 59 CARAVAN artists from all over the world, has now become a record of both the year and the changing landscape of our lives.

To visit the blog, see: www.oncaravan.org/blog



WEBINAR ON “THE POWER OF ART TO CONFRONT RACISM AND PROMOTE INCLUSION”



Recognizing that we stand at a defining moment in history, we partnered with the Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP) to hold a free webinar to address how art can bring communities together to realize a racially equal society and a better future for all.



The webinar featured three renowned CARAVAN artists who shared their experiences of the transformational role that art plays. The webinar explored how artists and their work can play a strategic part in creating and sustaining a racially just and equal society. The participating artists used their own artwork as examples of how art can inform, challenge and heal all sectors of our communities, as well as serve as a catalyst that questions long held stereotypes, thereby facilitating discussion, deeper understanding, and ultimately, greater inclusion.



This webinar’s panel participants were:



- ALIA ALI - Yemeni-Bosnian-American multi-media artist and activist.
- PAUL-GORDON CHANDLER (Rev) - Founding President, CARAVAN
- JEROME MEADOWS - Celebrated artist and sculptor known for his large-scale public art projects focused on African American history and civil rights.
- HELEN ZUGHAIB - Internationally renowned Arab-American artist

“It is my sincere hope that the factors that are defining this current period of unrest and upheaval will indeed provide a tipping point with respect to enacting serious and sustainable change for the better. I try not to be too jaded having been a participant during the civil rights protests of the late 60’s while seeing many of the same issues still flaring up today. But the youthfulness of those now taking to the streets in support of the cause, coupled with their diversity, their courage and their persistent passion does provide a source of renewed hope.”

- JEROME MEADOWS, sculptor and artist

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEWS

As we seek to give artists a voice for peace, we are interviewing artists around the world that are playing a strategic role in building bridges between diverse peoples. These published interviews are shared through our various social media platforms. Among the selected artists we interviewed this last year during the pandemic are Yemeni-Bosnian-American artist and activist ALIA ALI, sculptor and artist JEROME MEADOWS from Savannah, Georgia, and renowned Iraqi sculptor AHMED AL BAHRANI.



“I profoundly believe that the message of art is critical for changing our world for the better. Artists have a voice that the world needs to hear.”

- AHMED AL BAHRANI, celebrated Iraqi sculptor and artist

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CARAVAN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization
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