


"I Am Syrian"

Written by Youssef Abu Yihea

Translated by Ghada Alatrash

I am a Syrian.
Exiled, in and out of my homeland, and
on knife blades with swollen feet I walk.
I am a Syrian: Shiite, Druze, Kurd,
Christian,
and I am Alawite, Sunni, and Circassian.
Syria is my land.
Syria is my identity.
My sect is the scent of my homeland,
the soil after the rain,
and my Syria is my only religion.
I am a son of this land, like the olives
apples pomegranates chicory cacti mint grapes figs ...
So what use are your thrones,
your Arabism,
your poems,
and your elegies?
Will your words bring back my home
and those who were killed
accidentally?
Will they erase tears shed on this soil?
I am a son of that green paradise,
my hometown,
but today, I am dying from hunger and thirst.
Barren tents in Lebanon and Amman are now my refuge,
but no land except my homeland
will nourish me with its grains,
nor will all the clouds
in this universe
quench my thirst.



I am Syrian: Art from Za'atari Refugee Camp

Curated by Rose Kane,
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service,
Gettysburg College '13

Featuring art that memorializes Syria,
by Syrian artists living in
Za'atari Refugee Camp in Jordan

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Deir ez-Zor - Created by Mohammed AlKholi

A suspension pedestrian bridge built in 1927 by the French construction company Fougerolle (then under Le Soliditit Françs) during the French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon. The bridge was built to allow pedestrians in this northeastern Syrian city to cross the Euphrates River, connecting the southern Levant with northern Upper Mesopotamia. It was destroyed by Free Syrian Army militia during May 2013.

Bosra al-Sham – Created by Ismail AlHariri

UNESCO World Heritage Site containing a citadel, ruins and well-preserved Roman theater. Located ten kilometers from the Jordanian border, it was once the capital of the Roman province of Arabia and a popular stopover on caravan routes to Mecca. President Bashar al-Assad’s troops had a stronghold on Bosra al-Sham for four years of civil war before the city was captured by rebels in March. The theater and citadel are reportedly undamaged, but the hospital was leveled and there was heavy damage in other parts of the town.

Nabataean City Gate – Created by Ahmad AlHariri

Located in the Syrian town Bosra al-Sham, this is the only Nabataean gateway located outside of Petra, Jordan. UNESCO has been tracking damage within this southern Syrian town and reported that the gate is still standing.

Umayyad Mosque – Created by Mahmoud AlHariri

The centerpiece of Aleppo’s walled Old City, the mosque is another UNESCO World Heritage Site in Syria. Shelling in 2013 destroyed the mosque, with blame shared by Assad’s government and the rebels trying to overthrow him. Built between the 8th and 13th centuries, it allegedly housed the remains of John the Baptist’s father.

Hilltop Shrine to the god Hadda – Created by Mahmoud AlHariri

Located on a rock mound looming over Aleppo, the hill was exploited for its military might beginning in 300 BC and served as a city defense until an 1822 earthquake reduced the fortress to ruins. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986, full damages can’t be assessed until war ends.

Statue of Saladin – Created by Iyad Sabbagh

A great Muslim leader, Salah al-Din Yusuf is remembered as a chivalrous warrior who fought fair. Unlike the murderous Crusaders, when Saladin captured Jerusalem in 1187 at the Battle of Hattin, he allowed inhabitants to leave the city safely. The actual bronze statue was designed by Syrian sculptor Abdallah al-Sayed and is located in front of the Citadel of Damascus in Damascus, Syria.

Palmyra – Created by Ahmad Athman

The ancient city of Palmyra, in Syria’s western province of Homs, was an ancient cultural crossroads city founded over 2,000 years ago. Its art and architecture unite Greek, Roman and Persian influences. UNESCO declared the city a World Heritage Site but has been unable to assess the damage since ISIS seized the city in May 2015.

The Giant Norias of Hama – Created by Temam AlNablesi

Norias, or ancient water wheels, lined the shores of the Orontes River in the city of Hama. Of the seventeen norias, none are as grand as the Great Noria, boasting a 21meter diameter. Hama’s norias precede the Ayyubid period (1169–93), when Saladin ruled.

Al Gahwat Al Murra – Created by Mohammed AlKholi

One of the traditional drinks of hospitality in Syria, bitter coffee ground and boiled with cardamom is a long-standing tradition. Depicted are the traditional coffee pot and cups.

Note of Gratitude:

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