

For Immediate Release
October 7, 2016

Never on Our Plate

October 20 – November 4, 2016
Opening Reception, Thursday Oct. 20, 6-9pm

Solo exhibition by Alexandra Ben-Abba at Repair the World, 808 Nostrand Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11216
Curated by Rebecca Pristoop

For this third iteration of the artist's "Always on Our Plate" series, Ben-Abba directs her attention towards the international refugee crisis. Motivated by her own identity as a Jewish descendent of displaced people from Slovakia, Germany, and Lithuania, the artist titles her installation "Never on Our Plate." The exhibition presents sculptural assemblages of the plates, bowls, utensils, cups and leftovers from her October 7th interactive meal hosted at A.I.R. Gallery, New York.

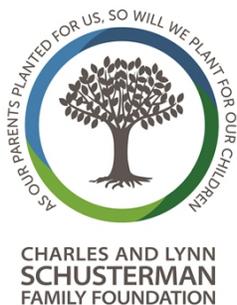
Ben-Abba's "Always on Our Plate" series grew out of investigations into her personal and national identity as a Jewish-Israeli sympathizing with the Palestinian plight. Through a series of participatory Shabbat dinners the artist brings the realities of conflict to various communities physically removed from places of discord. Her method involves serving culturally specific food on hazardous dinnerware, often broken glass and ceramic plates etched with images of war, that are always difficult to use. Her first two installations featured Middle Eastern cuisine.

"Never on Our Plate" shifts the artist's focus to the global refugee crisis and considers historical and contemporary displacement through interacting with a new set of dinnerware assembled with found materials, scraps, and place settings left over from previous meals. Some of the utensils are not functional and force diners to use their hands. In this way, Ben-Abba highlights the lack of material comfort that refugees endure. For "Never on Our Plate," the artist served Eastern European cuisine to reference the geographic displacement of her own family.

The sculptural assemblages exhibited at Repair the World are a new method of display for the artist. While previous exhibitions presented documentation of her series through video and installation of individual objects, or by staging the meal itself, this exhibition presents the transformation of an event into composite sculptures. Much like the "snare-pictures" of Daniel Spoerri, Ben-Abba affixes the remnants of her meals onto boards in exact relationship to their abandonment on the dinner table. In a single object Ben-Abba is able to loop the experience of experiencing loss.

Alexandra Ben-Abba employs performance, video and interactive installation as means to engage with process. The relationships explored in her time-based practice touch upon the uncertainty, aggression and helplessness often felt during times of conflict. Ben-Abba received her MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (2011) and her BFA from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design (2006). www.alexandrabenabba.com

This event was made possible through the [Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation's](#) #MakeItHappen initiative. Additional support from [Asylum Arts](#).



NEVER ON OUR PLATE

An interactive meal by Alexandra Ben-Abba

Friday October 7, 2016

7p, dinner @8

A.I.R. Gallery

155 Plymouth Street

Brooklyn, NY 11201

Through a series of participatory Shabbat dinners artist Alexandra Ben-Abba evokes the uncertainty, aggression and helplessness often felt during times of conflict. By serving culturally specific food on hazardous dinnerware she brings the realities of discord to unaffected communities. For this third dinner in her series Ben-Abba focuses on the international refugee crises by reflecting upon her own history as a Jewish descendent of displaced people. The meal considers historical and contemporary displacement through interacting with a new set of dinnerware and recipes sourced from places where Jews have been outcast. The dinner experience highlights the lack of material comfort refugees endure.

This event was made possible by the [Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation](#)'s #MakItHappen initiative. Additional support from [Asylum Arts](#). Nourished by [OneTable](#).

Some things to know about the world's refugee population

Nearly 1 in 100 people worldwide are now displaced from their homes. This is the highest percentage of the world's population that has been forcibly displaced since the UN High Commissioner for Refugees began collecting data in 1951. More than 1 in 20 people living in the Middle East (5.6%) are displaced. About 1 in 60 people living in continental Africa (1.6%) are displaced (not including Egypt). In Europe, 0.7% of the population is displaced, similar to levels following the collapse of Eastern Bloc countries in the early 1990s.

About six-in-ten Syrians are now displaced from their homes. This number is unprecedented in recent history for a single country. Today, an estimated 12.5 million Syrians are displaced, up from less than 1 million in 2011, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of global refugee data. Displaced Syrians worldwide include those internally displaced within Syria, refugees living in neighboring countries or relocated to other countries.

The countries of origin of refugees coming to the U.S. have shifted during the past three decades. The annual number of refugee arrivals in the U.S. peaked at about 210,000 in 1980 with a large wave of refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia. In the 1990s, an influx of refugees from Europe came to the U.S. due to political turmoil in the former Soviet Union and the genocide in Kosovo. After the 2001 passage of the Patriot Act, the annual number of refugees allowed into the U.S. dipped dramatically to fewer than 30,000 in 2002 and 2003. Upticks in refugee arrivals started again in 2004 with a wave of Somali refugees. Of the more than 70,000 refugees who have been admitted to the U.S. in fiscal year 2016, the largest numbers have come from the DRC, Burma (Myanmar) and Syria.

Nearly half of refugees entering the U.S. this year are Muslim. The U.S. admitted the highest number of Muslim refugees in fiscal 2016 of any year since data on self-reported religious affiliations first became publicly available in 2002. A slightly lower share of 2016's refugees were Christian (44%) than Muslim (46%), the first time that has happened since fiscal 2006, when a large number of Somali refugees entered the U.S.

The U.S. public has seldom approved welcoming large numbers of refugees. In the aftermath of the November 2015 Islamic State attacks in Paris, 53% of Americans said they didn't want to accept any Syrian refugees, an additional 11% said they would accept only Christian refugees from Syria. Americans have consistently opposed admitting large numbers of foreigners fleeing war and oppression, regardless of government policy.

The Obama administration admitted a total of 12,587 Syrian refugees during the just-ended fiscal year, exceeding the target of 10,000. Obama's announcement last month that America would accept 110,000 refugees from around the world in 2017, a 30% increase over this year, was met with fierce opposition by Republican lawmakers. More than half of U.S. governors have called for a ban on Syrian refugees until stricter national security screening is put in place, and Congress has introduced bills that would restrict funding.

(All information drawn from an article by Phillip Connor and Jens Manuel Krogstad for the Pew Research Center on Oct 5, 2016 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/05/key-facts-about-the-worlds-refugees/>)