

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

MEDIA CONTACT:

Margaree Bigler, Communications Manager
602.257.2105 | margaree.bigler@phxart.org

Phoenix Art Museum collaborates with Free Arts to host workshop program for unaccompanied minors

Youth refugees create artwork inspired by Museum exhibition, Border Crossings: Mexico and the American Southwest

PHOENIX (August 30, 2017) – In collaboration with Free Arts for Abused Children of Arizona, Phoenix Art Museum presents an exhibition of original artwork created by young men currently living in an unaccompanied minors' shelter. Through November 14, *The Soul of My Roots/El Alma de Mis Raíces* will be on view in the Museum's Wolfswinkel Education Center Children's Gallery. The exhibition represents the second consecutive year that the Free Arts Professional Artist Series, in collaboration with Phoenix Art Museum and Phoenix-based teaching artist, Emily Costello, has led a Museum-based workshop for unaccompanied minors in Phoenix. During the series, a group of teenage boys, all refugees from Central and South America, visited Phoenix Art Museum every Wednesday for seven weeks. They explored the galleries to gather inspiration for original artwork, focusing on the themes of roots and place in the *Border Crossing: Mexico and the American Southwest*. The resulting exhibition demonstrates a series of rich narratives that demonstrate how each young artist connected with their roots through art.

"Phoenix Art Museum is proud to collaborate with Free Arts and the other community partners involved in this unique workshop," said Amada Cruz, the CEO and Sybil Harrington Director of Phoenix Art Museum. "This collaboration exemplifies the level of accessibility that the Museum aims for, allowing us to open our doors to those in our community who otherwise would not have had this opportunity."

The workshop was a transformative experience for everyone involved, said Erina Meneses, a staff representative from Free Arts. "During the first few sessions, we weren't sure if they were enjoying the project. All of us were uncertain. These young men were very reserved with their emotions. Like all the children we serve, they have experienced trauma, and this group also has a language barrier and comes from a cultural environment where stoicism is how men are taught to show pride, respect, and gratitude. Their artwork was our only guide to how they were feeling. From the colors and vivid images we saw them bringing to life on paper, we could see that they were enjoying themselves."

Over the course of the workshop, as they practiced sketching and learned painting techniques, the boys slowly began to open up, sharing their observations and interpretations with program staff. "It feels good to see history across the walls," said one participant of seeing the Museum galleries. They were also excited to see the diversity of works represented in the Museum's collection. "The culture of every country is important. It's important to share them," said another. "I'm grateful that there are people who have opened their doors to us here. With painting, I've learned to relax."

The paintings will be on view through November 14 in the Children's Gallery. Phoenix Art Museum and Free Arts plan to continue their collaboration in the future, holding a similar workshop next year with a new group of participants.

About the Exhibition

The Soul of My Roots/El Alma de Mis Raíces will be on view through November 14 in the Wolfswinkel Education Center Children's Gallery. Admission is free for Museum Members; veterans, active-duty, and retired military; Maricopa Community College students, staff, and faculty (with ID); and youth aged 5 and under. Entrance to the exhibition is included in general admission for the general public. During voluntary-donation, free-access times, the exhibition is offered free to the general public. Free-access times include Wednesdays from 3 – 9 pm, the first Fridays of every month from 6 – 10 pm, and the second weekend of each month (Saturday from 10am – 5pm and Sunday from Noon – 5pm). For a full breakdown of general admission prices and hours, see bit.ly/VisitPhxArt.

To request interviews and high-resolution photography, contact Phoenix Art Museum's Marketing and Communications Office, at 602.257.2105 or email margaree.bigler@phxart.org.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for more than 50 years and is the largest art museum in the Southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum's permanent collection of more than 18,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, Western American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit PhxArt.org, or call the 24-hour recorded information line at (602) 257-1222.

About Free Arts for Abused Children of Arizona

Founded in 1993, Free Arts for Abused Children of Arizona is a non-profit organization which heals homeless and abused children through artistic expression. Free Arts programs include creative elements that promote safety, self-expression and a sense of belonging. Free Arts programs are delivered by 900 volunteer mentors and artists who serve more than 8,000 children annually through partnerships with 43 social service child welfare agencies at 100+ sites across Maricopa County. For more information on Free Arts, visit: www.freeartsaz.org.

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