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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: JULY 31, 2023

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SUBJECT: SOULAF ABAS AT THE THYEN-CLARK CULTURAL CENTER

EXHIBIT DATES: AUGUST 3 – OCTOBER 22, 2023

Jasper Community Arts is pleased to present the work of Terre Haute, IN artist, Soulaf Abas for the months of August, September, and October 2023 at the Thyen-Clark Cultural Center.

Abas' exhibit, 'Boundaries II' features large watercolor and ink paintings created from her memories of when home, Syria was only 10 minutes away across the Syrian border....yet it was so much easier to just go back to the US, 10,000 miles away.

Abas' states, "I was in Jordan in 2014 working with Syrian children in refugee camps. One of my visits took about 6 miles from the Syrian border. Home was right there; 10-minute drive at most. My mom, dad, brothers, nieces, everything I know, the roots that made me were 10 minutes away yet impossible to attain. I thought: what if I drove there? There will be a border. I can go through the Jordanian border but then what do I do at the Syrian border? If I go in, how would I get out? My thoughts were interrupted by doctors and nurses on the same humanitarian mission taking turns to have their picture taken under the sign that read: Syrian Border.

I was hurt by that. It wasn't their fault. It was no one's fault but that was home; my home. That sign represented everything that was impossible in my life and little to any of them. Syria was 10 minutes away, yet it was so much easier to go back to the US 10,000 miles away. There, I was welcome. Here, I am not.

Watercolor by nature flows. Water runs to meet water. If not directed otherwise, colors blend and make other colors and textures. It's hard for most people to accept that, to let edges melt and flow. The natural tendency is to set boundaries instead of discovering them.

As far as painting goes, watercolor is where I feel at home. It's the medium that taught me about myself without trying. I learned about it without knowing. In my watercolors, abstractions represent places; imaginary, remembered or real. They are a blend of memories and wishful thinking and the paint needed in between to complete the scene.

As far as landscape goes, for at least a few miles, you can't tell where Jordan ends, and Syria begins. We cross borders everyday between states, cities, countries or even neighborhoods. We don't necessarily sense those boundaries; we flow through them like water. We change color without knowing where the edges are.

That day, when Syria was 10 minutes away, I felt the border. It was loaded with memories and weighed down by its own impossibility. The black outlines in my watercolor are there to slow the

flood of memories but not to stop them. Those boundaries are created out of necessity to parse that moment, and moments like it, when the flow of water drowns us.

Soulaf Abas is currently an Assistant Professor of Art at Rose Hulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, IN. She holds a MFA in Painting, along with a BFA in Painting, both from Indiana State University.

Abas' solo exhibition will be on display from August 3rd through October 22nd, 2023. First Thursday Receptions will take place on Thursday, August 3rd (with a Gallery Talk at 5:30pm), Thursday, September 7th, and Thursday, October 5th all from 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm.

The galleries at the Thyen-Clark Cultural Center, located at 100 3rd Avenue, Suite A, Jasper, IN 47546, are open to the public Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Saturday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, and Sunday from noon to 3:00 pm. School groups, clubs, and students are welcome. Admission is free. Donations appreciated.

For more information, please call 812-482-3070. Jasper Community Arts is a department of the City of Jasper. JCA is supported in part by Friends of the Arts, Inc., the Indiana Arts Commission, The Arts Council of Southwestern Indiana, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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