

# HEAR MY VOICE



Migrants and refugees share  
their experiences through art

This exhibition seeks to enable migrants and refugees to have a voice by sharing their experiences and perspectives through art. In creating Hear My Voice, migrants and refugees have used art as an aid to restoring their own wellbeing, recovery and integration into host communities. The messages conveyed through the exhibition promise to make a significant impression on all who see them, in Italy and beyond, as it goes on tour.

Art can be used as a therapeutic tool and help bring healing through the process of remembrance, mourning, reconnection, and integration into a new life.

Our approach helped build a sense of solidarity and belonging, in addition to being a fun creative outlet. Other processes that took place were: self-discovery, emotional release, self-esteem and stress relief.

## SELF-DISCOVERY

Creating art can help discover feelings that have been lurking in your subconscious.

## EMOTIONAL RELEASE

Making art may serve as an outlet for releasing complex emotions that cannot be expressed with words.

## SELF-ESTEEM

The process can help artists feel accomplished, which is key to building confidence and self-appreciation.

## STRESS RELIEF

Creating art can be used to relax the body and relieve stress such as emotional trauma or anxiety.



# WHERE DOES THE ART COME FROM?

- 13 workshops.
- 3 different locations.
- Dozens of migrants

The art was produced in January 2022 by migrants in Calabria and Sicily.

In these two places, migrants are welcomed to settle and make a new community.



## MANI E TERRA (SOS ROSARNO) CALABRIA

This workshop took place in the Mani E terra (SOS Rosarno) Calabria. The participants were immigrants from Ivory Coast, Senegal, and The Gambia

## CAMINI, CALABRIA

This workshop took place in Camini, Calabria. The participants were immigrants from Sudan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Syria

## FCEI'S CASA DELLE CULTURE SCICLI, SICILY

This workshop took place in FCEI's Casa delle Culture Scicli, Sicily. The participants were immigrants from Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea.



# MIGRATION

According to UNHCR, by the end of 2021, 89.3 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide. 53.2 million of these were displaced internally within their own countries and the remainder externally. 72% per cent of refugees were displaced to neighbouring countries.

Of that total, 21.3 million fall under UNHCR's mandate, by meeting criteria fixed within Article 1 of the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or "Geneva Convention." Specifically, such a person "...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." People in this category are commonly referred to as "refugees."

As statistics show, many refugees choose to remain in their own country even if displaced. Those who seek to migrate further face significant challenges. The world's population does not currently have the right to cross national borders freely. Programmes such as resettlement and "complementary pathways" (such as humanitarian corridors) enable entry to other countries but the number of places available is far outstripped by need. Permits for work and study are often limited in number or are subject to strict eligibility criteria.

## **What are those in desperate need but without access to formal migration pathways to do?**

For some, the only possibility is a life-threatening journey with little certainty as to a successful outcome. Vulnerability heaped upon vulnerability — exposure to violence, exploitation and, ultimately, a hostile response from the host society.

Migration, at its simplest, is movement from one place to another. At its most complex, it is a highly politicised concept which polarises public debate and rarely places those directly affected at the centre.

"Hear My Voice" provides an opportunity for refugees to articulate something of what it is to be migrant — what has been left behind; the journey; the reality of vulnerability — and hope for the future.



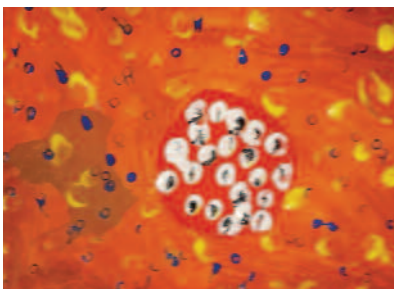
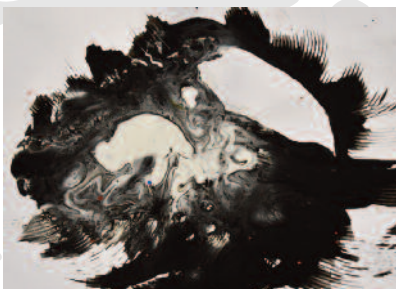
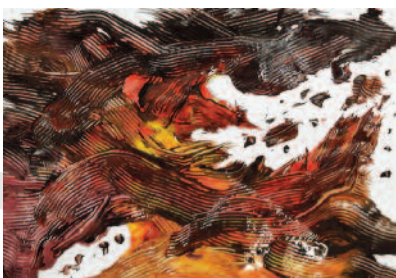
# INSTALLATION 1. SAFE SPACE ART



The pictures in this set are produced by a method called fluid painting. This is a great method that allows everybody to experiment and have fun with paint regardless of their level of skill or experience with art. There are no specific rules for how it is done which enables free expression and builds confidence as participants experiment with different colours and techniques.

One of the joys of this approach is that you don't use conventional brushes or paint but can experiment with anything from plastic forks and knives, to old credit cards, straws and teabags.

Produced by young men currently  
part of at La Casa Della Cultura in  
Scicli, Sicily (Sudanese, Eritrean,  
Ethiopian)





## INSTALLATION 2.

# THE FENCE

The Fence displays a collection of art by migrants and refugees that allows them to freely express various elements of their experience such as what they left behind, their journey, and their situation at present.

### STORY-TELLING ART PIECES

Produced by young men (Sudanese, Eritrean and Ethiopian) at FCEI's Casa delle Culture in Scicli, Sicily.

1. Here is Miryam, an Arab neighbour who looked out for a refugee family who had fled from war in Sudan into Chad. The picture was painted because the artist wanted to remember Miryam's kindness to them.



2. Here is a heart, with eyes that cry tears, pierced with an arrow. This artist was conveying his deep sorrow at being separated from his wife and children and not knowing how long he would have to wait until he could see them again.



3. Here is a mountain in Libya near where a refugee used to live. The artist painted it as he remembered the mountain as a peaceful place.

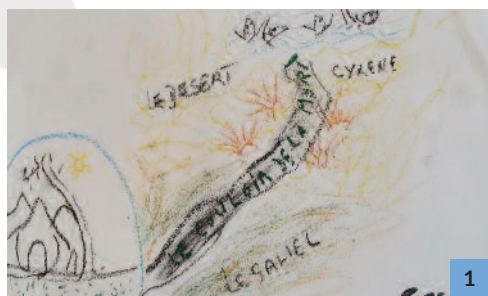


4. The artist painted a dog in his hometown of whom he was afraid.



5. Here is a memory of a vegetable garden, left behind at a home in Sudan, to which the artist cannot return.





1. The artist, Pape, from Senegal, drew his journey to Italy. In the bottom is his village, in a blue surround, almost like a cocoon. He then set off along the Corridor of Death (Le Couloir de la Mort) towards the sea. He had friends already in Italy who spoke to him of a future there. The Corridor took him across the Sahel and the desert of Libya towards the city of Cyrene, now called Shahhat. There the sea came into sight but the bombs signify the dangers of the Libyan war.

2. Pape also drew this picture to convey his African heritage. Reading from left to right, he drew first roots, then DNA to convey his identity, then green lines to show how history is passed on through writing and orally. The figure is a blend of the Egyptian Sphinx and the African Woman, powerful images of the historical past and present in Africa. It is in the middle of red, to convey the

suffering that is experienced now. The blue at the end expresses hope and imagination.

3. Painted by Ibrahim, who comes from the Ivory Coast and works as a mediator among farm labourers in Calabria. The picture represents a form of corruption, where the powerful walk on the most vulnerable.

4. Drawn by Pape, from Senegal. This drawing represents breaking the chains of mental slavery in front of Prefettura – a regional authority which holds power. It conveys the need to advocate for migrants' dignity against exploitation and the like.

5. This is a crying orange, drawn by Ibrahim, to express his pain for the exploitation of orange pickers of Calabria and other farm labourers.



### INSTALLATION 3.

# ORANGES FOR JUSTICE

This section of the exhibition depicts migrants and refugees' susceptibility to labour exploitation, notably in agricultural production. The fundamental aspects of this exploitation are conveyed through text, poetry, and picture — the strength of profit-driven market forces that result in salaries so low that employees are unable to live with dignity or hope.

We might imagine that arriving safely in a country such as Italy is the finishing post. The reality is far more complex. How is a person without a network — and sometimes without documents — to live?

Calabria, in the southern tip of Italy, is one of its poorest and yet most fertile regions. There, casual work can be found harvesting produce such as citrus fruits, olives and tomatoes. The labour force is often made up of people who are living on the margins.

The price of that produce is, in general, fixed by giant wholesalers who are in competition with each other for the custom of consumers whose loyalty is primarily determined by how much they pay. The profit margins for producers selling to these wholesalers are squeezed to the limit — and beyond.

As a result, wages are cut to the minimum and recourse may be made to a workforce which is desperate, often without contracts and, hence, without rights. Many are run by gangmasters.

Those who pick up this casual work are often trying to support family left behind in another country. Having sent home what they can, they are left with little to live on. Around the plain of Gioia Tauro, in western Calabria, you can see the tent cities and container camps where casual workers live, with little or no hope of improving their lot. Such people have no agency.

This type of exploitation is just one of the many dangers faced by people in host countries, including those in Europe. It may be sobering for us to realise that, as consumers, the buying choices we make may be helping to sustain that reality.

Mediterranean Hope, FCEI's refugee and migrant programme, is working in Calabria with workers trapped in this sort of situation.

Amongst other things, Mediterranean Hope is promoting ethical production and buying choices. It is a drop in the ocean but, through promotion of the "Etika" brand, together with SOS Rosarno 3 and the Mani e Terra cooperative, Mediterranean Hope is enabling producers to reach a wider market directly and, thereby, to fix a fair price. Etika producers abide by a code of practice, provide contracts to all their workers and pay a fair wage. Consumers, producers and workers all benefit.



## 1. SOMETIMES THEY APPEAR

Every year, in the plain of Gioia Tauro by the hundreds, labourers come from all over Italy. They collect oranges and clementines for a few euros per hour. The dehumanisation they encounter on the frontier they have been carrying for years like a curse on their skin. Sometimes they appear. But only because the death of one of them makes the news, because someone was shot dead, because someone was killed by a car in a dark street. Sometimes, for a moment, they appear.

## 2. PROFIT IS HUNGRY FOR THEM

Waiting for them, at the crossroads of blackmail between misery and exploitation, is the profit that is hungry for them. Profit waits and chooses, ready to suck the sweat from their skin, while the wind of hatred takes away their voice, rights and dignity.

## 3. IN THE DARKNESS OF RIGHTS

In the darkness of rights everything becomes lawful. Exploitation is linked to misery and arrogance to ignorance. The border one carries can lead to madness, the frontier one carries kills freedom, even hope. Those who remain caged between residence permits to be renewed and residence to be requested have the curse of illegal work as a life partner.

## 4. CYCLING IN THE NIGHT

It gets dark in the streets of the Piana di Gioia Tauro. Pedal after pedal I see them getting lost in this region without light or hope.

## 5. FOR A MOMENT...

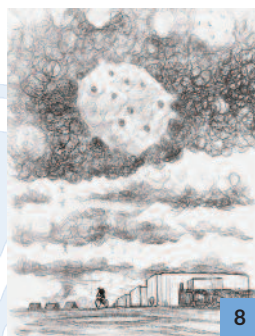
They return tired in the evening after a day of work picking clementines or oranges, kiwis or olives. For a moment they are illuminated by the cars that drive past them. For a moment light prevails over darkness, for a moment their faces become human again, for a moment the frontier seems to have disappeared.

## 6. THE GHETTO ENTERS YOUR SOUL

Waiting for them after a day of work is not a house but shacks and sheets, tents and containers. Day after day the ghetto enters your soul. They hope that tomorrow can erase the reality of the present, but it is an illusion and nothing more.

## 7. LONELINESS PREVAILS

In the silence of the farmhouses, far from the lights of the villages, silence dominates the night. From the white man, solidarity, far less affection, is rare. While waiting for light, darkness caresses the soul of the earth's damned.



## 8. COVID IN THE WET

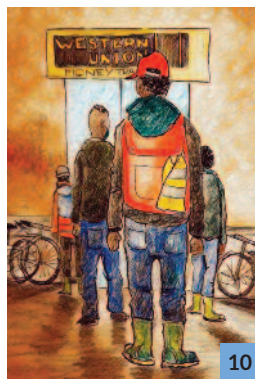
The virus appeared above us as a moon appears on a thunderstorm. From exploited we have become greasers. The quarantine took away our working days while on the other side of the world they asked us for money. It rains in the night. Covid in the wet.

## 9. THE DISEASE OF WAITING

Getting sick in the ghetto means waiting because we cannot lose our working days. Those who work illegally must choose whether to work to send money home or lose a job which exploits us but is our last hope.

## 10. IN LINE TO HELP OUR HOME

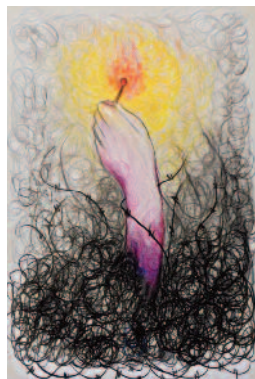
First they exploit us in the fields and then they earn on the transfer of the money we send to our families. Let's help them at home they say, but in hundreds of years they have done nothing but impoverish us where we are born and where we emigrate



## FRANCESCO PIOBBICHI

Francesco Piobbichi is a Facilitator for Mediterranean Hope, the migration project promoted by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI). He does not call himself an artist, but a social cartoonist who tells the suffering of migrants. Francesco has first-hand experience of this suffering. He has worked with Mediterranean Hope since it was established in 2013, initially on Lampedusa and then in Calabria.

Francesco rediscovered sketching whilst working on Lampedusa. As a social illustrator, he draws what he sees and, through his art, communicates impressions, ideas and commentary on the world around him. He has published three volumes of illustrations inspired by his work with migrants and refugees, the profit from which is all donated to Mediterranean Hope. [www.claudiana.it](http://www.claudiana.it)





## INSTALLATION 4.

# THE KITES

The Kites is a project that brings together refugee adults and children to reflect on their future aspirations as they experience a new sense of freedom. The kites display a blend of future hopes, physical symbols of identity, and the joy and dignity of being able to play freely.

Flying the kites on a hill overlooking Scicli elicited a palpable sensation of pleasure, laughing, and delight.

Sudanese refugees added the colours of the Sudanese national flag to their kites. A national flag is designed to signify identification and belonging and many refugees chose to use it on their kites.

This was the first time this Afghan family had participated in a community activity since moving to Camini in Calabria. Kites are an important part of Afghan culture, so it was a very memorable experience for them. Love hearts and the Afghan national flag were two prominent motifs on many of their kites.

The participation of local Italian children in the kite project has been a crucial aspect of fostering a welcoming culture.







# INSTALLATION 5. KRISTY'S ART

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

A songwriter, creator of spoken words content, a chef, self-taught story telling artist. My creative abilities have allowed me the fortune of creating a wide variety of artistic compositions, from sceneries, abstract background, carving flowers on pieces of wood found on the side of the road. I have learnt to use by artistic abilities to channel my healing, art became my therapy. The re-creation of Mama's green dress, depicting the struggles she faced raising her kids, I depict through the arts to express the pain alongside the joy of my upbringing.

The wisdom of a father, the support he lends to the family, the foundation of love he uniquely placed in our hearts, to love unconditionally, with the freedom of choice to be whatever we desire with no judgement or condemnation.

The evolving rapid flowing progress of a journey I once thought was over, I take you into my world of art and spoken words which I hold close to home.

My Identity has been freed.

## WHO IS SHE? By Kristy Delancy

*She has spent a lifetime searching for love in desolate places and distant hearted people, asking God through prayer, why has she been created with so much love, yet she bears so much pain.*

*Living in a non-existent world, a realm where she is accepted and love but the reality is not real to her, she can see it and feel it, yet non acceptance bears in the very blood that runs through her veins.*

*Flashes of the innocence of that little girl not knowing her beauty, trying hard to find someone to tell her that she is beautiful. Pain has been her wreckage, sorrow has been her daily bath, the invisible sores that protrudes through her skin, unable to see with the naked eyes. Who can understand and bear witness to her broken spirit?*

*A fight to live, a fight to be more than she is, a taste of success but so clearly out of reach. The road she walks is lonesome, there are no pro, con, negative or positive. All is calm but dark, the mist never goes away the cold and heat combined makes it difficult to breathe, yet she continues her journey.*

*Who is she? she wonders. She can sing but cannot whistle*

*She is maternal but cannot bear*

*She loves yet no one cares*

*She gives everyone takes She is lost in a realm of her own attributes. Look at her she seems so strong, oh no you are wrong. She is that well where buckets and canister's hanging on the end of a rope goes in and out retrieving her wealth. Like the sound of streaking flooring boards, she silently cries, where is your voice? Cry louder, but no one is there .*





# EXHIBITION PARTNERS

## FCEI

The Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI) was established in 1967 and comprises several Protestant denominations. Its areas of focus include communication, education, church and society and relations with the State, with a strong emphasis on ecumenism and environment. Its Mediterranean Hope team works directly with migrants and refugees across Italy and beyond, from bases in Lampedusa, Sicily, Calabria, Lebanon, Bosnia and Rome. Together with the Comunità di Sant'Egidio, Mediterranean Hope has been operating the pioneering humanitarian corridors programme from Lebanon to Italy since 2015. [www.mediterraneanhope.com](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com)

## THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

The Clewer Initiative is the Church of England's response to modern slavery. It is lifting the veil on a phenomenon hidden in plain sight in our societies – raising awareness of exploitation, building resilience, and equipping communities to act. It is committed to developing pathways for victim identification and support, and “slavery-proofing” businesses and community projects. The Clewer Initiative has a wealth of resources, information and downloadable training materials for use by secular and faith-based communities, adults and children. [www.theclewerinitiative.org](http://www.theclewerinitiative.org)

## THE ANGLICAN CENTRE IN ROME

The Anglican Centre in Rome is the Anglican Communion's permanent presence in Rome, working collaboratively with all Christians for justice and peace. It is the base of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Personal Representative to the Holy See, who is also the Centre's Director. The Centre seeks to dismantle barriers of misunderstanding between Anglicans and Catholics; hosts scholars, art exhibitions and courses; creates a space for hospitality and ecumenical encounter. The Centre was integral to the establishment of a multi-faith anti-slavery network, engaging with churches and agencies in Italy, and was key to initiating the “Hear My Voice” exhibition. See further: [www.anglicancentreinrome.org](http://www.anglicancentreinrome.org)

## ELY CATHEDRAL

At the Cathedral we have for several years sought to engage with the needs and experiences of those vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitative work practices, particularly refugees and migrants. Our hope for this powerful exhibition is that it should celebrate and show the human dignity of those who have been dispossessed and uprooted – in people's own words, artwork, and beautifully creative variety. When we see each other as fellow human beings with the same kinds of hopes and dreams it transforms our common lives together.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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