

Journey to the Vote

Nov. 2, 2012 - Sept. 27, 2013
Second Floor Library Gallery



In honor of the 2012 election season, the city of Tempe is coordinating “Journey to the Vote,” an exhibition celebrating free voting across the world. During elections, the second floor of the Library is used as a polling location in Tempe.

The exhibition pulls references from American history such as the Suffragette Movement of the late 19th and early 20th century and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s as well as specific displays about culture and elections across the globe. The city is organizing displays such as Associated Press photos of international “election inked” fingers, interviews with local Muslim community members about elections in the Middle East and lectures from local scholars about culture and political science.

Additionally, a ceramic sculpture, “Voting Hand” by artist Adil Rahee, will be on display. The piece honors the many Iraqi people who risked their lives for their first free election in 50 years on Jan. 30, 2005. The sculpture is of a simple fore-finger dipped in indelible red ink, which became a powerful signifier for the people and their individual vote.

Rahee’s work is a balance between tradition and contemporary history. Much of the imagery in his work refers to Iraq’s history as the “cradle of civilization” with ancient influences in the arts and sciences from the Babylonian, Sumerian and the Assyrian cultures. He uses both the positive and negative influences of growing up in Iraq as a propelling force for making art.

Rahee is a Tempe resident and a U.S. citizen. He is currently teaching abroad in Iraq as a university art professor.

The exhibition is a collaboration between Tempe Public Library, Tempe History Museum and Tempe Community Galleries and features a wide array of images and information about the culture and social context involved in the pursuit of voting rights both in the United States and abroad.