

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF  
AMERICAN JEWISH  
HISTORY  
A Smithsonian Institution Affiliate



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**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY IS OPEN FOR  
INTERPRETATION BY VISUAL ARTIST AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZER JJ TIZIOU**  
**Third NMAJH Artist in Residence Aims his Unique Lens on the Museum:**  
**Focuses on the Power of Images To Tell Universal Stories**  
**Project to unfold through Summer 2016**

If only one word could be used to describe visual artist and community organizer JJ Tiziou's images and philosophy, it would be celebratory. As an artist, he accentuates the human form, diversity, and the challenges of everyday life through shared experiences that build community. For the third edition of ***OPEN for Interpretation***—the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH)'s artist in residence program—Tiziou has been invited to create a series of installations inspired by the elements of the Museum with the most meaningful connections to him: light, letters, faces, and spaces, as well as the universal themes of displacement, evolving identity, and the notion of home. *OPEN for Interpretation* featuring JJ Tiziou will be on view at the Museum through August 21.

To develop his residency project, Tiziou explored in depth the Museum's core exhibition and examined the stories that most resonated with him. Migration, identity, freedom, community—these subjects motivated him to create an immersive visitor experience across five floors, which will unfold throughout the summer as follows:

- **Core Exhibition Interventions** (currently on view): Tiziou's relevant photographic works related to modern-day labor, activism, housing, and education issues are installed in the Museum galleries that feature historical images, objects, and stories related to those same themes, posing questions to visitors that invite them to consider the themes and their contemporary relevance.



- ***A Confession and An Invitation***, on view beginning **June 14**: A series of museum staff and volunteer “family portraits” taken by Tiziou will greet visitors at the museum entrance in a window installation that includes the artist’s handwritten introduction. To further welcome visitors, Tiziou will also periodically set up his mobile office in the Museum Café and invite anyone to interrupt and say hello.



- ***Faces of Migration***, on view beginning **June 21**: To kick off *OPEN for Interpretation: JJ Tiziou*, NMAJH and Tiziou put out an open call for participants to have their photo taken during one of five free portrait sessions held at the Museum and around the city. The Museum’s community partners included Art Sanctuary, Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture, Norris Square Neighborhood Project, and the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition. The resulting images, featuring individuals who have themselves or in some generation(s) of their families experienced migration or displacement, will be on view at the Museum

from June 21 through August 21. All are invited to the Museum on **Wednesday, July 20 at 6:00 p.m.** for a **free public event featuring behind-the-scenes look at the project with Tiziou**, including a screening of the images and a reception which will include a serving of the artist's famous lentil soup. Find registration information at [NMAJH.org/open](http://NMAJH.org/open).

- ***Letters to You/From You***, on view beginning **June 21**: Tiziou was inspired by the letters in the Museum's collection and the vital role they played in connecting people across oceans and time through the visual aesthetic of handwriting. Therefore, he will be authoring his own handwritten letters and placing them throughout the Museum's Freedom Experiences—the entry area on each exhibition floor that features a wall of windows overlooking historic Independence Mall. Visitors are invited to read letters from JJ and then compose their own personal notes at letter-writing stations.

### **About JJ Tiziou**

Visual artist and community organizer JJ Tiziou (b. 1979) has made Philadelphia his home since 1997. Born to French parents in Washington, DC and educated in an international school, Tiziou grew up in a multicultural environment and at a young age, he was inspired by the diverse ways of finding beauty and meaning in our world and began capturing these influences on images. JJ Tiziou Photography's motto is "everyone is photogenic"—whether taking pictures of workers in warehouses, lawyers in offices, surgeons in the operating room, activists in the streets, or educators in the classrooms, nowhere has he found a person to not be able to shine in front of a camera. Tiziou has traveled the world and worked in such places as Kenya, Honduras, France, Germany, and Mongolia. In 2010, Tiziou's ongoing How Philly Moves project—in which he photographs Philadelphians who love to dance—was selected by the City of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program as the basis for the creation of the 85,000 sq. ft. mural that spans half a mile of parking structures at the Philadelphia International Airport. *OPEN for Interpretation* is Tiziou's first residency at a major cultural institution.

### **About *OPEN for Interpretation***

*OPEN for Interpretation* at the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH) is a residency program that invites all types of creative thinkers—spanning from art, music, and dance to writing and performance—to reimagine the museum's stories, make new connections between past and present, and to ultimately explore the American experience in new and unexpected ways. In 2014, artists Dito van

Reigersberg and Andrew Nelson produced a cabaret inspired by unexpected stories told in the museum. Previously, Keir Johnston and Ernel Martinez created a textile-based installation inspired by themes of labor and struggle. Learn more about past *OPEN* artists at [NMAJH.org/open](http://NMAJH.org/open).

*OPEN for Interpretation* featuring JJ Tiziou is made possible through the generous support of the **William Penn Foundation**. Major support has been provided by **Sherrill Neff and Alicia Felton**, and **Judith Creed and Robert Schwartz**, with additional support from **The Paul and Emily Singer Foundation** and **Drs. Marsha and Stephen Silberstein**.

*Faces of Migration* is made possible through the support of community portrait partners and host sites **Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture, Art Sanctuary, Catholic Healthcare Services, The Moffet School, Norris Square Neighborhood Project, Norris Square Senior Center, and SEAMAAC**.

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The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the 360-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. NMAJH is closed most Mondays, including federal holidays and some Jewish holidays. Museum admission is \$12.00 for adults, \$11.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID. From Memorial through Labor Day\*, the Museum stays open until 8 pm on Wednesday evenings. Admission after 5 is pay-what-you-wish. For information on the Museum, the public may call 215.923.3811 or visit the website at [NMAJH.org](http://NMAJH.org). \*The Museum will be closed for a private event July 27.