An Anthem for a New America

Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice
at CUNY School of Law

a new panoramic window installation of visual poetry
written by Judith Sloan
art/design by Warren Lehrer
Long Island City, New York [May, 2017]: The Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice at CUNY School of Law proudly presents a new window installation of visual poetry. The poem—written by Judith Sloan, visualized by Warren Lehrer for street-level windows at 2 Court Square—portrays a message of welcome and inclusion as it celebrates the Law School’s mission: “law in the service of human needs.” The installation features an excerpt from Sloan’s libretto of 1001 Voices: A Symphony for a New America, (written in 2012), which pays homage to recent waves of immigrants to the United States and re-envisions Emma Lazarus’ sonnet The New Colossus (written in 1883 for the Statue of Liberty). “1001 Voices: an Anthem for a New America, is in essence a New New Colossus for our shared histories and continued witnessing of pain, misdeeds, joy, love and resilience,” says Sloan. “In this time of cruelty toward refugees and immigrants, 1001 Voices is my dream for a compassionate future.”

This installation is part of the Sorensen Center’s Justice Through Art Initiative, a collaboration between CUNY Law’s community and artists in order to bring new perspectives and depth to social justice issues and legal challenges. At a time when “Sanctuary Cities” like New York are under attack for their efforts to protect immigrants and asylum seekers, this public work—located across from the Court Square subway station on a bustling street in the most diverse county in America—sheds the light of poetry and art on a national crisis that is dividing the country and calling into question the meaning of the “American Dream.”
For the Sorensen Center collaboration, Lehrer’s panoramic design sets discrete phrases within the poem into their own panels—through typography, photography, color, shape, metaphor. Lehrer describes, “I want viewers to experience the wordscapes as a field and as single panels in whatever direction they/you/we may be heading.” Each of the 17, six-and-a-half foot wide panels float within a street level window. The panels are double-sided, enabling viewers to interact with the poem inside and outside of the building.

Sloan’s text for the full 1001 Voices symphony was inspired by The Arabian Nights and listening to stories of people throughout Queens, in theatre workshops at the International High School, and for Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America, a book (W.W. Norton) and multimedia project by Sloan and Lehrer. Commissioned and premiered by the Queens Symphony Orchestra in 2012, the choral symphony was composed by Frank London, and Lehrer designed animated projections. Known for capturing the shape of thought and speech on the printed page, Lehrer’s expressionistic supertitles fused typography with image and functioned as a visual counterpoint to the music. The panoramic dimensions of this CUNY School of Law window installation parallels the panoramic sweep of the poem and the centuries that span America’s immigrant history.

The Sorensen Center’s Justice Through Art Initiative was launched in 2016 with the pop-up exhibition, Weights and Measures, by Bradley McCallum. “At this crucial moment in our country—and as our CUNY Law community steps up to act boldly for justice and freedom—the 1001 Voices installation aptly conveys a hopeful message from our community and to our community,” notes Camille Massey, Founding Executive Director of the Sorensen Center.
This CUNY installation furthers Lehrer’s recent interest in bringing literature and poetry to people in non-traditional ways. In his 2013 illuminated novel *A Life In Books: The Rise and Fall of Bleu Mobley*, Lehrer’s protagonist produces lines of book clothing, book lamps, and large scale leaves of poetry that fly over town and country. For the past two years Lehrer worked on another large-scale window project, *Art In Vacant Spaces*, with his Community Design class at SUNY Purchase, the White Plains BID (Business Improvement District), and Sloan as poet. “Instead of populating these vacant storefront windows with pretty pictures and nice designs,” said Lehrer of the White Plains project, “I thought why not populate them with visual poems that reflect the people and the conditions of the place.” The CUNY School of Law installation continues this idea of bringing poetry to the streets while reflecting the values of a place and its inhabitants.

The *1001 Voices* poem was installed at CUNY School of Law in time for the May 2017 graduation festivities. The official launch of the project will be in September in conjunction with a series of events including excerpt performance(s) from the *1001 Voices* symphony.

Judith Sloan, Warren Lehrer, and Camille Massey are available for interviews. RGB and CMYK images of the project are available upon request. For more information contact info@earsay.org | 718.791.4324
THE OEM

THE POEM

THE PANELS
Here, everybody, comes inside, to my table

Even if they were at war with each other somewhere else
Here, everybody, starts again, in a new tongue hanging on, letting go.

What’s lost, is gone. Close a door, a window flies open.
Give me your children orphaned by war.

They're free and they're brave and they're tired and poor.
Sons and the fathers together alone

Making a life where the future’s unknown
Mothers foreclosed on, tossed out the door
Yearning to breathe where we’re taught to want more.

Here, everybody, has a shout deep inside them
Give me your nightmares harbored inside aching for, eager to...
refused and forlorn

Give me your losers and lovers,

A thousand one voices sing out to survive
**Warren Lehrer** is a designer and writer known as a pioneer of visual literature and design authorship. He has received many awards for his books and multimedia projects including: The Brendan Gill Prize, The IPPY Outstanding Book of the Year Award, the Innovative Use of Archives Award, The International Book Award for Best New Fiction, three AIGA Book Awards, a Media That Matters Award, and grants and fellowships from the NEA, NYSCA, NYFA, Rockefeller, Ford, and Greenwall Foundations. In 2016 he was honored by the Center for Book Arts for his “pioneering work” and for “extending the field of book arts to the broader worlds of contemporary art and literature.” His work is in many collections including MoMA, The Getty Museum, Georges Pompidou Centre, and Tate Gallery. A frequent lecturer, performer and keynote speaker, Lehrer is a full professor at SUNY Purchase, and a founding faculty member of the *Designer As Author* grad program at SVA. His most recent book, *A Life In Books: The Rise and Fall of Bleu Mobley*, is an illuminated novel that contains 101 books within it.

**Judith Sloan** is an actor, audio artist, and writer, whose work in theatre and human rights combines humor, pathos and a love of the absurd, portraying voices often ignored by the mass media. Her solo performances and plays include: *Yo Miss!, Denial of the Fittest, Responding to Chaos, A Tattle Tale: eyewitness in Mississippi and Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America* (with Warren Lehrer). Sloan has received numerous awards for her audio mixes and documentary works including a New York Foundation on the Arts (NYFA) Fellowship in Sound/Music, grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Queens Council on the Arts, the Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation among others. Sloan is an adjunct faculty member at Gallatin School at NYU and is a frequent guest speaker and performer in universities throughout the country. In 2009 she received the Partnership in Education award for EarSay’s theatre program for immigrant youth in partnership with the International High School at LaGuardia Community College in Queens, NY. Sloan received an honorary Civil Rights Award from CUNY School of Law for her work on *A Tattle Tale: eyewitness in Mississippi*, and participation in the Law School’s Mississippi Project in 1994.

In 1999, Lehrer and Sloan co-founded **EarSay**, a non-profit arts organization in Queens, NY dedicated to uncovering and portraying the lives of the uncelebrated in print, on stage, on the radio, in exhibitions, concert halls, electronic media, and through educational programs in public schools, community centers, and prisons. www.earsay.org
The Sorensen Center for International Peace and Justice, named after Ted Sorensen, was founded at CUNY School of Law in the fall of 2014 as the first named center with Camille Massey as Founding Executive Director. The Sorensen Center’s mission is to train social justice lawyers to work from the local to the global levels, protecting the rights of those affected by instability, conflict, and repression; and advance scholarship, intellectual exchange, and advocacy for international peace and justice.

www.sorensencenter.org

CUNY School of Law is the premier public interest law school in the country. It trains lawyers to serve the underprivileged and disempowered and to make a difference in their communities. Founded in 1983, the CUNY School of Law consistently ranks among the top 10 law schools in the country in clinical training. CUNY Law pioneered the model of integrating a lawyering curriculum with traditional doctrinal study.

www.law.cuny.edu

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For more information contact info@earsay.org | 718.791.4324