

## ILYA AND EMILIA KABAKOV FOUNDATION THE SHIP OF TOLERANCE



Photo: Courtesy Jens Krauer

The mission of the Ship of Tolerance is to educate and connect youth of different continents, cultures, and identities through the language of art. The project encourages children to reflect on how divergent cultures interpret tolerance and how these interpretations overlap. By participating in the creation of this ship, children learn about respecting different cultures and ideas while appreciating how they differ from their own.

Conducted in collaboration with local arts and education organizations, the project begins with outreach to schoolchildren from different ethnic and social backgrounds to discuss the meaning of tolerance and the merits of other cultures, races, and ideas. For three weeks, the children work with local educators, museum staff, and volunteers to expand their own cultural, creative, and academic horizons. At the end of this period, children draw pictures reflecting their own visions of acceptance and understanding.

Young carpenter apprentices work with local people from different backgrounds to build the ship. More than a hundred selected paintings created by the children are assembled to form the giant sail. The entire process takes four weeks. During that time, hundreds of visitors come by daily to view the construction, learn about the project and its message, and engage with others by sharing food and conversation at the Table of Tolerance. In this way, the ship creates a positive social space where different types of people can come together.

The ship's launch is the project's climax and is celebrated by the Concert of Talented Young Musicians, presented by an ensemble of players from diverse backgrounds, including those from refugee centers. Beautifully lit, the ship creates an atmosphere of joy and celebration for participants, including children, supporters, friends, community leaders, and the general public. With children's creativity at its heart, the Ship of Tolerance encourages acceptance and understanding in the broader community.

The first Ship of Tolerance was constructed in 2005 in Siwa, Egypt. The most recent site was Zug, Switzerland in 2016, engaging local citizens and immigrants from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Russia, and Ukraine. In the intervening years, the Ship of Tolerance has been constructed in Moscow, Havana, Miami, St. Moritz, Venice, Brooklyn, and Sharjah, UAE.