

NEWS RELEASE

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Westbeth Welcomes Artist at Risk through Safe Haven Residency Program

Syrian artist Rashwan Abdelbaki joins Westbeth community through coalition working to safeguard free expression

NEW YORK – Westbeth, the Greenwich Village “home to the arts,” welcomed today the arrival of Rashwan Abdelbaki, a Syrian visual artist, to the Westbeth community. Rashwan comes to Westbeth through the [New York City Safe Haven Residency Program](#)—an initiative led by a coalition of organizations working to safeguard free expression. Westbeth, located at the former Bell Laboratories campus, provides artists of all disciplines affordable live and work space.

The coalition behind the New York City Safe Haven Residency Program includes [PEN America](#), [Residency Unlimited](#), [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#), [Artists at Risk Connection](#), [ArtistSafety.net](#), and [Fordham University](#), in addition to [Westbeth](#). These organizations aim to create a safe haven for artists at risk, providing housing, legal services, and artistic development opportunities in the form of a year-long residency. The coalition model was developed with the understanding that no single organization can adequately serve the needs of threatened artists. Each member institution plays a unique role in supporting resident artists. As part of the program, Westbeth provides several safe haven residency apartments and welcomes artists into its community of creators.

It is fitting that Westbeth, a crucial and historic nexus of the New York artistic community, should become Rashwan’s new home. A recipient of several residencies and fellowships, Rashwan is known for work that delves into the interplay of racism, religion, and politics through joyful colors and eye-opening portraits. Rashwan joins [Kanchana Ugbabe](#), a Nigerian writer and visiting scholar and teacher at Fordham, and arrives at the departure of [Hadi Nasiri](#), an Iranian visual artist. The Safe Haven Residency program aims to make at least three apartments available annually within the Westbeth community over the next several years. Each residence is being developed in partnership with organizations working towards free expression, within the context of social justice and human rights.

“We are honored to be a part of this forward-thinking coalition for a second year,” said Patricia Jones, Board Chair and Interim Executive Director, Westbeth. “Through the Safe Haven Residency program, Westbeth has a unique opportunity to build on our mission of providing affordable housing and workspace to artists from all walks of life. We are thrilled to welcome Rashwan to Westbeth, and aim to host artists at risk for years to come.”

About Westbeth

Westbeth, which opened in 1970, provides affordable live-work space for nearly 400 artists and their families, and work space for nonprofit arts groups at its historic site at the former Bell Laboratories campus in the West Village. An early example of large-scale adaptive re-use of an industrial building, Westbeth is one of the largest artist's housing facilities in the world. It is also the home of the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, The New School for Drama graduate program, the School for Poetic Computation and other nonprofits. Westbeth presents work by its residents and other artists in its art gallery and at public events in large and small spaces used by painters, sculptors, musicians, and other artists throughout the building. For more information please visit www.westbetharts.org.