

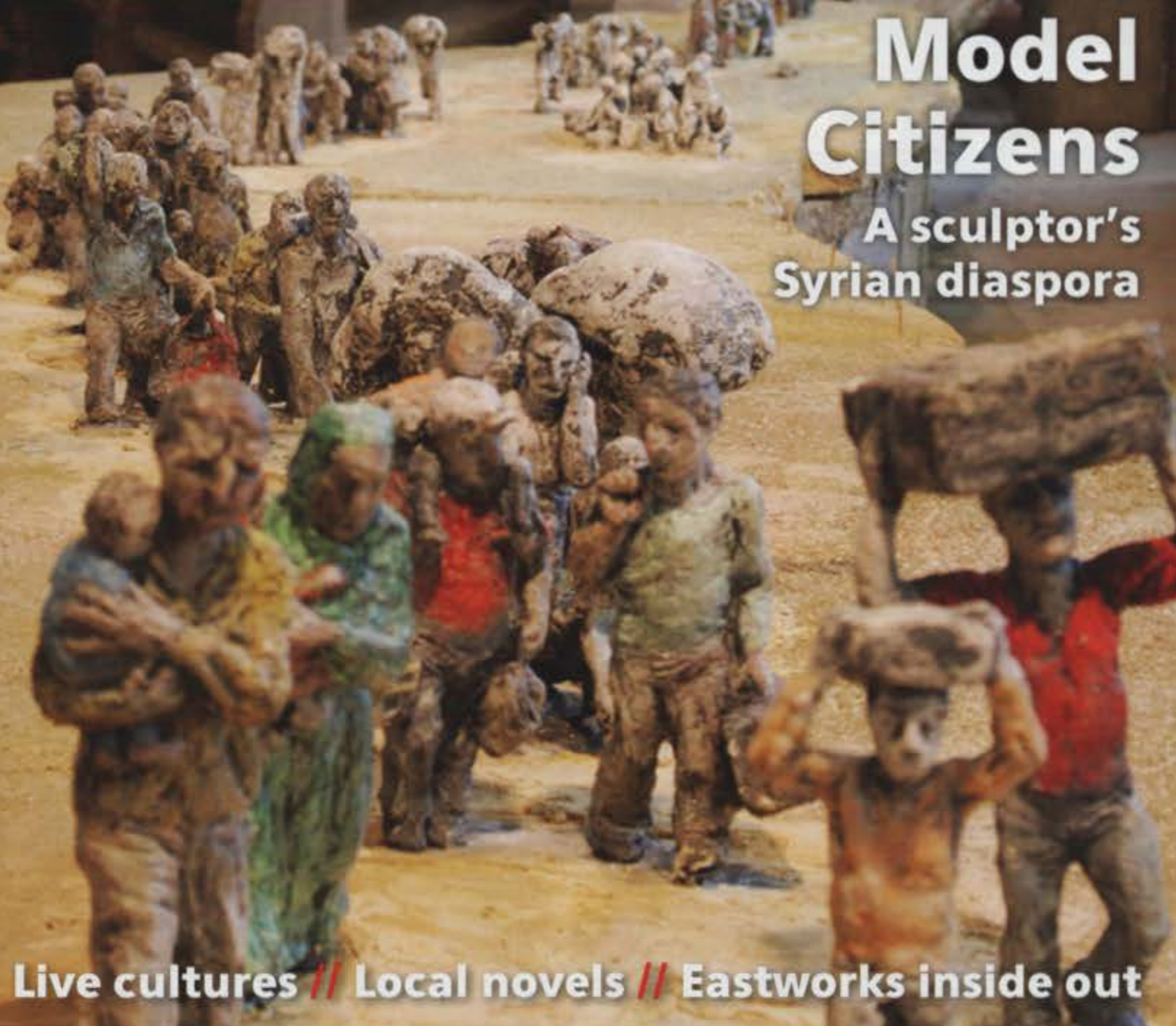
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preview

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Model Citizens

A sculptor's Syrian diaspora



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on view



IMAGE COURTESY OF HARRIET DIAMOND

Driven From Their Homes

The Syrian diaspora, writ small

Local sculptor Harriet Diamond does mini-installations on topical themes, and her new project, which opens Mar. 2 at the Oxbow Gallery in Northampton, builds on her longstanding interest in social justice. "Driven From Their Homes" is an installation of sculpted scenarios that chronicles the most recent years of destruction and diaspora in Syria. Her small figures, rough-shaped but lifelike, populate detailed scenes of hardship. It is a portion of humanity in dire straits — a situation that has escalated with frightening speed over the two years since Diamond began this project — and small scenes within this installation, from the abandonment of home cities to internment in refugee camps to possible escape by boat, bring the viewer into communion with this line of people, hundreds long. In their faces run strains of fear, hope, grief, effort, endurance, ingenuity, courage, and heroism.

"It is a dark scene, but it's also rolling with life," says Diamond, who also works with Valley Syrian Relief. "What I see in these faces is the opposite of the depravity of war makers. These people are centered on the true core of our common human struggle — keeping life and limb together, saving the family, trying to help neighbors, thinking through difficult logistics.

"This is a story for every person and for all time," she adds. "This is the worst that we can imagine — to endure war and desolation and to be driven from our homes and left to others' mercy. What I see in these people and what I have tried to portray is raw courage and the values that define us as human. I hope that this sculpture can bring us closer to these people and their suffering."

Driven from Their Homes: Mar. 2-26. Free. Oxbow Gallery, 275 Pleasant St., Northampton. (413) 586-6300, oxbowgallery.org.

— Hunter Styles

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