

FRIENDSHIP

The Enduring Art of Ali



PUCKER GALLERY
BOSTON

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First, I have to say that I am deeply honored to have been asked to write this forward. I LOVE Ali's work, I love Ali, and I am a dedicated fan and collector of her genius.

When Pucker Gallery was in a far smaller space on Newbury Street, a sub-street level basement, I used to wander down the stairs from time to time to see the many treasures there. I was always greeted warmly and made to feel welcome by Bernie and his assistant, Anita. In 1977, I was completely smitten with the newly discovered works of a young artist painting with textiles, netting, lace, string, gold metallic threads, patterned cloth, yarn. No paint, no charcoal, no pencil. I was dazzled by the creativity of Ali Cliff and began to dream of

come into my house. The painting reflects Ali's amazing capacity to deal with light and shadows, a signature of her work. Its vast space invites the viewer to question what is happening. Why are we here? As Bernie's oft quoted dear friend, Brother Thomas, said: "It is amazing how shadows form in spaces where we ourselves cannot go." Ali's work makes it possible to visit those places within us.

That first painting led to another, and another, and many more. They are an integral part of my life. They are quite magical, nourishing to my soul. They give me great joy and feel like part of my family. Guests are astonished when I explain that Ali's work is not created with paint at all (her work needs to be well lit to see the many tiny details).

"WITH ALI'S WORK, IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT."

owning a piece of her work, never thinking it would be possible. However, I soon managed (through Bernie's kindness I paid over a four-year period) to own my very first Ali in 1977.

During the decade of Ali's Circus period, her paintings were lonely worlds of illusion with vast spaces populated by one or two tiny figures. The first painting I bought, a huge vertical called *Circus Still Life 1*, is the first thing people see when they

They look closely, astonished that those shadows, that mystery, that beauty is created with layer upon layer of various fabrics. Ali's work is incredibly original; she is uniquely imaginative. It seems impossible to create such realistic images without the aid of paint, pencil, pastels, but somehow, magically, she does.

Over the years, Ali has evolved from her Circus period to paintings of Grand Canyon scenes,



After Rehearsal, 1986
Cloth painting
42 x 32"
AC138 (MF)

violins in framed boxes, jackets portraying a variety of activities and messages, and works inspired by her many trips to Mexico. In my desire to keep up, I have collected her work from many of the periods and cannot imagine my home without her art.

It gives me substantial joy to see what she is contemplating next and to see how her sense of beauty, texture, and color keeps evolving. Only a prodigious talent like Ali can keep inventing and creating over decades. One of my favorite paintings is *The Letter*, which she created for her late husband. Having lost my husband, Bud Collins, six years ago, this hauntingly beautiful, lacy, floral painting speaks volumes to me and hangs in a place of honor in our dining room. It is a glorious work of art, lace curtains gently framing the scene, white lilies, a red carnation on the desk next to a two-page letter. What words did she write? And beyond, an open window to the outdoors with a multihued sky.

Another favorite of mine, also a huge vertical painting, *Friend of the Harlequin (Woman in White)* features an elegant, mysterious figure. I marvel at how Ali pieced the fabric together, an astonishing achievement of shadows and highlights, a sumptuous white lace gown whose sleeves and neckline are trimmed with strings of tiny pearls. The woman's face is partially covered, her left eye gazes out, and her red hair flies in the wind. She holds a red flower on a long stalk. It reminds me a great deal of the artist herself, but Ali assures me it is not a self-portrait!

Ali's paintings featuring water and waterfalls, such as swimmers in the turquoise pools of the Grand Canyon, are remarkable. I feel the coolness and rush of the water, the thrill of leaping into it, the play of light on the water, on the rocks, the turquoise sky. I marvel at the impossibility that it is all done with fabrics. These paintings are heroic in feeling, capturing the splendor of nature.

Ali keeps creating and inventing, and now we are being treated to a retrospective and can see together decades of work, from the beginning of her career through the present. I am curious to see her current work, to see how she continues to evolve and generate new and important ideas. It is inspirational to me to observe her capacity for invention, always with great sensitivity. Thanks to Bernie and Sue and their welcoming nature, I met Ali early in the days of collecting her work. Like her work, she is warm and approachable. I treasure her friendship and feel that knowing her enhances my appreciation of her work.

I recently hosted a dinner for the board of the Bach, Beethoven and Brahms Society, a recent addition to the vibrant musical scene in Boston. There were thirty-five people, only some of whom had seen Ali's work and knew of her. All were dazzled and wanted more information. It gives me great pleasure to have been introduced to Ali's work over 40 years ago, and since then to have lived with her magical paintings and been able to share them with others. She is a rare treasure.

— Anita Klaussen



The Striped Flag, 1980
Cloth painting
47 x 48"
AC69



Grand Canyon XXI, 2008
Cloth painting
48 x 18.5"
AC295



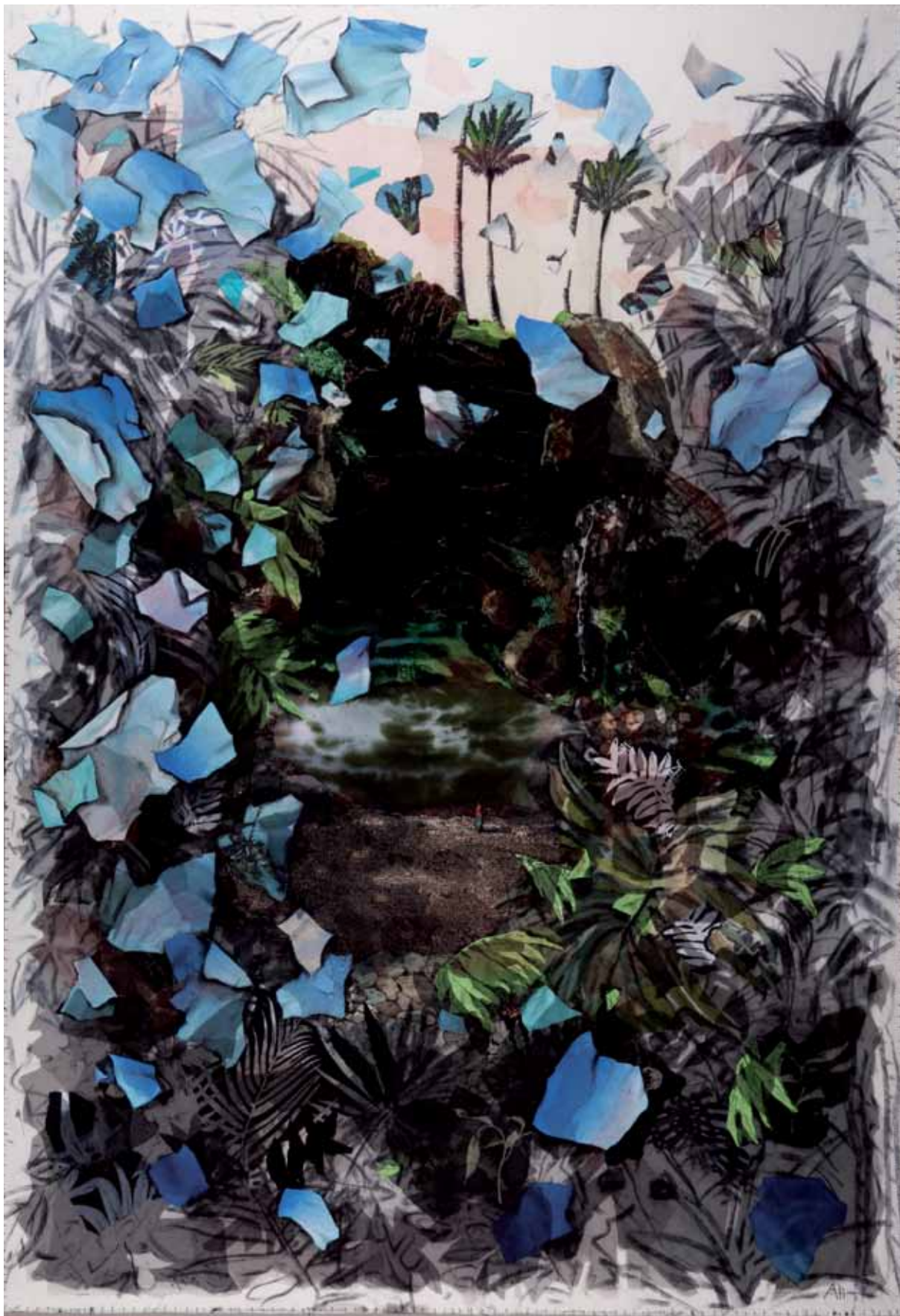
In the Nether I, 2010
Cloth painting
57 x 26"
AC317



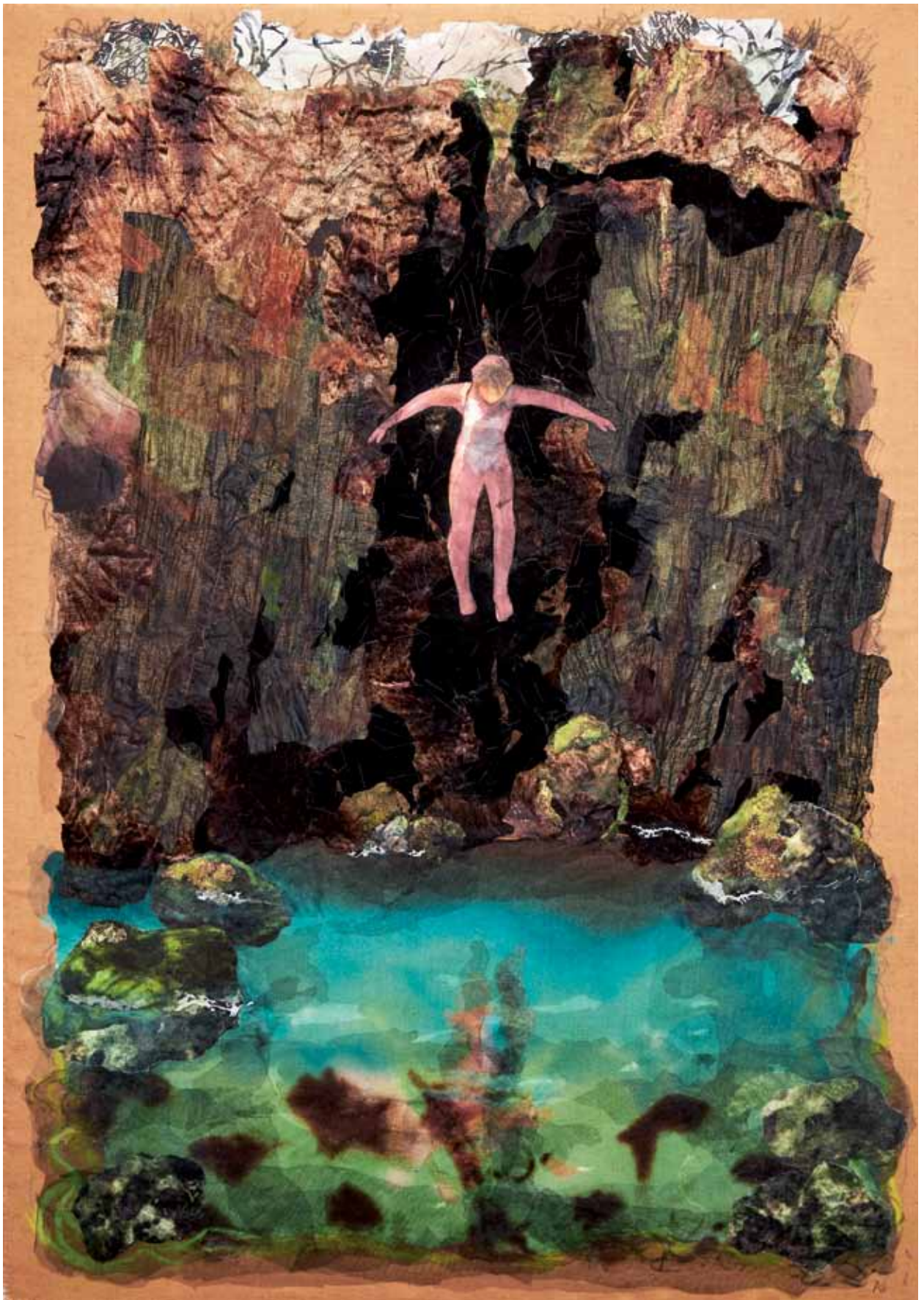
Grand Canyon XVII, 2007
Cloth painting
70 x 43"
AC291



Go Fly a Kite, 2021
Cloth painting
36 x 35.5"
AC392



Sky Blue, 2011
Cloth painting
48 x 32.5"
AC335



Suspended, 2022
Cloth painting
51 x 36"
AC393



A River Runs Through (Triptych), 2011
 Cloth painting
 15 x 16" each
 AC334



La Mesita, 1995
 Cloth painting
 22.25 x 18.25"
 AC184



Las Mandarinas (Tangerines), 1994
 Cloth painting
 16.75 x 13.75"
 AC178



Red Tablecloth, 1997
 Cloth painting
 25 x 21.75"
 AC206 (DF)



Last Letter, 2004
Cloth painting
36.5 x 41.75"
AC261



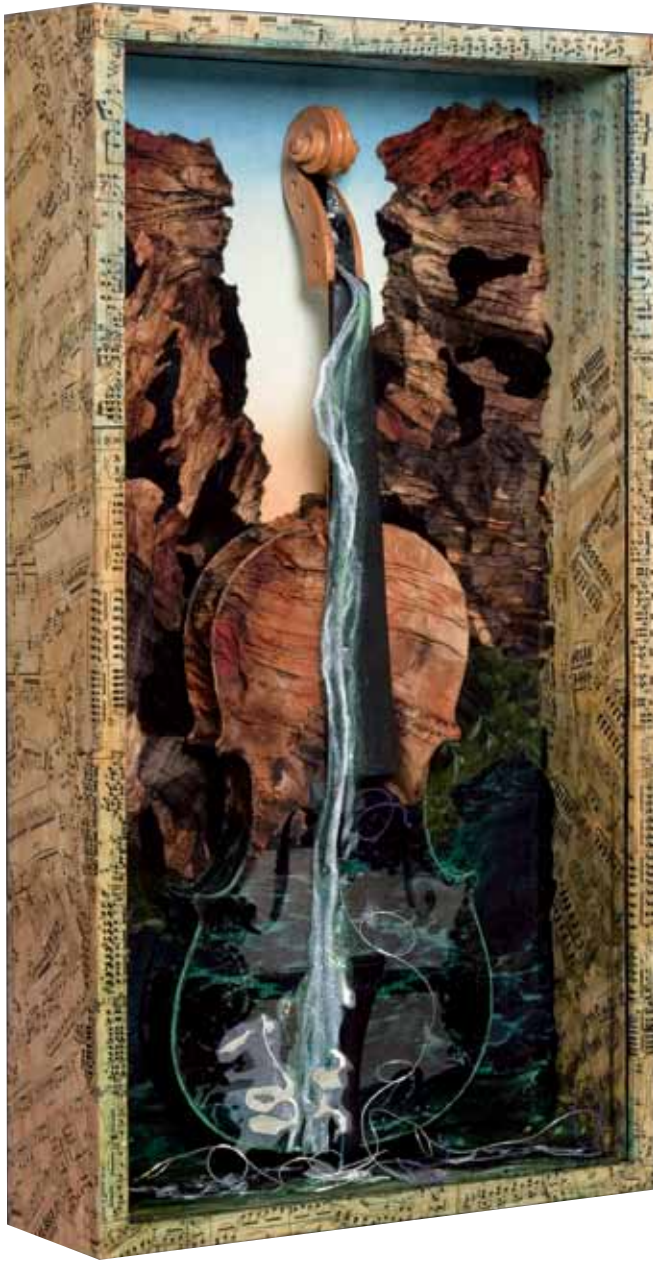
1966, 2002
Cloth painting
38 x 28"
AC236



Amaryllis III, 2016
Cloth painting
29 x 21"
AC371



A Special Place, 2000
Cloth painting
57 x 57"
AC224



Air & Simple Gifts, 2009
Cloth painting and construction
26 x 14 x 14"
AC302





Through the Mist, 2009
Cloth painting
60 x 22.5"
AC305



Open Spaces II, 1983
Cloth painting
48 x 45"
AC111



Out of the Blue, 2005
Cloth painting
31.5 x 35"
AC268

Alison Cliff's unique and mysterious cloth paintings are delicately crafted using fabric. Born in 1949 in Nova Scotia, Ali is a graduate of Tufts University and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Her first cloth paintings were inspired technically by a picture composed of small cloth pieces at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. Throughout her artistic career, Ali has been fascinated by the challenge of creating an authentic sense of space through the illusion of fabric. As she continues to expand her creative process, each new body of work introduces distinct subjects and a notable change in her

exploration of cloth as a medium for painting. An ardent and engaged traveler, she shares, literally and figuratively, fragments of her experiences in new environments. Ali's earlier works inspired by Mexico are featured in the book *Paintings of the Last Decade: Still Life*, which is the second publication featuring the artist. The first, entitled *Ali Beyond the Big Top: The Cloth Paintings and Graphic Works*, explores her successful circus-themed works. Ali's art has been represented by Pucker Gallery since 1977 and is included in public collections in New England, New York, Canada, Israel, Vietnam, and Bali. She resides in Chelsea, Massachusetts and Naples, Florida.

PUCKER
ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON
GALLERY

PUCKER GALLERY

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GALLERY HOURS:

Monday through Saturday
10 AM to 5:30 PM

Sunday 1 PM to 5 PM

We are open to all and taking the necessary precautions for visitor and staff safety. We welcome appointments to maximize visitor experience.

Pucker Gallery is a member of the Boston Art Dealers Association and the New England Appraisers Association.

CREDITS:

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Please visit

www.puckergallery.com

to view current and past
exhibition catalogues
and subscribe to the
Artwork of the Week
email list.

Cover:
My Sunflowers, 2022
Cloth painting
35 x 40.5"
AC395



Joy, 2022
Cloth painting
36.5 x 30"
AC394

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DATES:

11 March through 9 April 2023

PUBLIC OPENING RECEPTION:

Saturday 11 March 2023, 3 PM to 6 PM

ONLINE EVENTS:

Please visit www.puckergallery.com for a list of virtual gatherings and events accompanying *Friendship: The Enduring Art of Ali*.