

Home

By Warsan Shire

No one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.

You only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well.

Your neighbors running faster than you,
the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind
the old tin factory
is holding a gun bigger than his body,
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.

No one would leave home unless home
chased you, fire under feet,
hot blood in your belly.

It's not something you ever thought about

doing, and so when you did-
you carried the anthem under your breath,
waiting until the airport toilet
to tear up the passport and swallow –
each mouthful making it clear that
you would not be going back.

You must understand,
no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land.

Who would choose days and nights
in the stomach of a truck,
unless the miles travelled
meant something more than journey.

No one would choose to crawl under fences,
be beaten until your shadow leaves you
raped, then drowned, forced to the bottom of
a boat because you are darker, be sold,
starved, shot at the border like a sick animal,
be pitied, lose your name, lose your family,
make a refugee camp a home for a year or two or ten

stripped and searched, find prison everywhere
and if you survive
and you are greeted on the other side
go home blacks, refugees
dirty immigrants, asylum seekers
sucking out country dry of milk,
dark, with their hands out
smell strange, savage –
look what they've done to their own countries,
what will they do to ours?

The dirty looks in the street
feel softer than a limb torn off,
the indignity of everyday life more tender
than fourteen men who look like your father,
Between your legs. Insults easier to swallow
than rubble, than your child's body
in pieces – for now, forget about pride
your survival is more important.

I want to go home,
but home is the mouth of a shark
home is the barrel of the gun

and no one would leave home
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home tells you to
leave what you could not behind,
even if it's human.

No one leaves home until home
is a damp voice in your ear saying

leave, run now, i don't know what I've become.

A Glossary of Migration

This exhibition uses words such as “immigrant,” “migrant,” and “refugee,” terms whose meanings have changed over time and whose connotations depend on the political and cultural contexts in which they are used. The following glossary incorporates some of the most commonly used terms today and is not exhaustive.

Citizen

A citizen is a person legally recognized as a subject or national of a country and is entitled to the rights and protections of that country.

Emigrant

Someone who has left their country of residence to settle in another. The word “emigrant” is used in reference to the country from which people leave, whereas “immigrant” is used in reference to the country in which one settles.

Expatriate/Expat

A person who resides outside a country of origin, usually by choice, and who maintains the right to return to that country. Many expatriates are also immigrants.

Immigrant

Someone who leaves a native country to settle in another, or whose ancestry includes recent generations moving from one country to another. First generation: born in one country but

residing in another. Second generation: native-born children of foreign-born (first-generation) parents.

Indigenous Peoples

Communities that live within, or are attached to, geographically distinct traditional habitats or ancestral territories and who identify themselves as being part of a distinct cultural group descended from groups present in the area before modern states were created and current borders defined. They generally maintain cultural and social identities and social, economic, cultural, and political institutions separate from the mainstream or dominant society or culture.

Migrant

A general term to refer to a person who moves from one place to another. Some migrants move by choice, often to find work, and others are displaced or forced from their homes. Many migrants stay within the country or region in which they originally lived.

Refugee/Asylum Seeker

A displaced person seeking international protection due to persecution, war, or violence.

Refugees are asylum seekers who have been granted legal protection. Most refugees stay close to the region from which they were displaced.

Stateless Person

Someone who, under national laws, does not enjoy citizenship – the legal bond between a government and an individual – in any country.

Undocumented Person

A person living in a country without recognized legal documentation that would allow that person to reside legally within that country.

This glossary is a modified version of one created by the ICA, Boston, in partnership with Adam Strom, director of Re-Imagining Migration, Boston.

[Extended label]

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Cambridge, England

Safe Passage, 2016

Life vests

Courtesy the artist and negerriemschneider, Berlin

As part of the exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration,” Mia invited artist and human rights activist Ai Weiwei to install the monumental work *Safe Passage* on Mia’s iconic façade, which features an imposing stairway and columns.

This work consists of thousands of life jackets that were worn by refugees—primarily those fleeing war in Syria and Afghanistan—making the dangerous sea journey from Turkey to Greece in 2015–16. In 2016 the discarded life jackets were recovered and donated to the artist. The United Nations Human Rights Council estimated more than 856,000 people arrived by sea to Greece in 2015 alone, with approximately 800 dead or missing that year.

The artwork itself commemorates all the refugees who undertook the dangerous passage across the Mediterranean Sea, but it does not distinguish between those who perished and those who survived. Nor does it give insight into the harsh realities that greeted the refugees after their journey.

Ai Weiwei has noted, “There’s no refugee crisis, only a human crisis. . . . When people talk about refugees, the words used are ‘they,’ ‘us,’ or ‘them.’ The moment of realization that we are part of them, and they are part of us, is the moment when we can begin to effect change.”

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Cambridge, England

5776 Photos Relating to Refugees, 1.12.2016–16.2.2016, 2016

Wallpaper

Courtesy the artist and negerriemschneider, Berlin

Ai Weiwei’s wallpaper collage titled *5776 Photos Relating to Refugees, 1.12.2016–16.2.2016* consists of more than 5,000 images shot by the artist during his ongoing contact with refugees across Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Composed of mobile phone images, the collage documents the personal encounters of the artist with individuals who are part of the large number of Syrian and Afghani immigrants making a dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea—bringing attention to, in the artist’s own words, “the biggest, most shameful humanitarian crisis since World War II.” These candid and unedited images weave together a tapestry that provides a sea of human faces that serve as a contrast to the otherwise anonymous life jackets of *Safe Passage*, Ai Weiwei’s installation on Mia’s façade.

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Cambridge, England

Calais, 2018

Color video with sound, 18:41 min.

Since the late 1990s, migrants have set up makeshift camps, known as the “Calais Jungle,” near the French port city of Calais in an attempt to reach the United Kingdom. In early 2015, during the peak flow of migrants into Europe, the population of the camps grew to over 6,000 people. The camps were demolished in October 2016 by the French government. This video records the daily life of refugees in the camp trying to survive and maintain their dignity under difficult circumstances. It follows inhabitants as they move around the camp, prepare food, line up to shower, buy clothing, pray, fly kites, protest their conditions, and attempt to enter England.

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Cambridge, England

Idomeni, 2016

Color video with sound, 17:22 min.

In 2016 Ai Weiwei visited the Idomeni camp in northern Greece near the border with North Macedonia. The video documents refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq who were forced to remain in the area after North Macedonia closed its border with Greece, preventing them from

continuing on to Serbia and into the European Union. This video captures the conditions of children and adults sleeping in tents next to a railroad that ran through the camp.

In May 2016 Greek officials evacuated the Idomeni camp, relocating its inhabitants farther south to official camps near the city of Thessaloniki. The Greek government then sent bulldozers to remove the scattered debris including abandoned clothing, blankets, tents, and personal items. Ai Weiwei intervened, and with the permission of local authorities he collected thousands of these objects and transported them to his studio in Berlin. The close of the video shows Ai and his assistants meticulously washing, ironing, repairing, and sorting these items, as if to restore to them a sense of human dignity, and readying them for their orderly display in his installation *Laundromat* (2016).

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Cambridge, England

At Sea, 2016

3-part color video with sound

Part 1: 4 min., 8 sec.; Part 2: 3 min., 44 sec.; Part 3: 9 min., 40 sec.

(Part 1) At Sea

While on the Greek island of Lesbos, Ai Weiwei filmed boats carrying refugees attempting the sea crossing to Europe. The video was filmed on multiple days using the artist's iPhone.

(Part 2) Floating

Floating is a short video of an abandoned, partially submerged inflatable raft Ai Weiwei discovered in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Filmed from all sides, the video shows the drifting boat up close, with glimpses of the objects within. Also visible is the horizon stretching beyond the small craft, with no land in sight.

(Part 3) On the Boat

While in Lesbos, Ai Weiwei discovered an abandoned, partially submerged inflatable raft floating in the middle of the sea. The artist boarded the raft and asked to be left alone. *On the Boat* captures the roughly 10-minute period in which Ai stands alone on the dinghy, contemplating the fate of its former passengers. Among the objects Ai found on the boat were a Christian bible and a baby's bottle.

[Nisenbaum Label Extended]

Aliza Nisenbaum

Born 1977, Mexico City; lives and works in New York

Nimo, Sumiya, and Bisharo harvesting flowers and vegetables at Hope Community

Garden, 2017

Oil on linen

The Mary Ingebrand-Pohlad Endowment for Twentieth Century Painting 2018.13.3

In the summer of 2017, Mia invited artist Aliza Nisenbaum for a three-month-long residency to work with groups in Mia's Whittier neighborhood and the adjacent Phillips neighborhood. She collaborated with individuals at Centro Tyrone Guzman and Hope Community and with Mia's own security guards to create three large-scale group portraits. Through face-to-face portrait sessions, the artist built a relationship of friendship and mutual trust.

For her portrait of Hope Community, the artist worked with the female leaders who care for their community gardens. The sitters represent two generations of Somali immigrants and are pictured wearing the hijab—a headscarf traditionally worn by Muslim women. Surrounded by symbols of sustenance and self-sufficiency, these women embody the bonds of care between family, friends, and community.

Postcommodity

American artists collective, founded 2007

Let Us Pray for the Water between Us, 2020

2200 gallon polyethylene hazmat chemical storage container, brushless motorized mallet, leather, bailing wire, ductape, wood, steel, aircraft cable

Courtesy of the artists

As part of the exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration,” Mia commissioned Cristóbal Martínez and Kade L. Twist of the interdisciplinary arts collective Postcommodity to create a site-specific installation. This new work transforms a large hazardous-material storage tank generally used in agriculture into an automated drum that plays rhythms honoring the Dakhóta people and all tribes of all nations who now live within the traditional homeland of the Dakhóta. Chemical storage tanks like this are common across Minnesota’s farmland, which is historically Dakhóta land. This work references the complexity of human relationships bound by shared sources of water that are increasingly difficult to protect and preserve from waste and contamination.

The artwork’s placement in Mia’s rotunda is also a conceptual gesture that challenges the Western art historical canon. Usually this rotunda features ancient Greek sculptures, with the central artwork presenting an “ideal” male form (the *Doryphoros*). Here the artists have intentionally removed these sculptures. This displacement presents a symbolic upending of the white European foundations of the museum and seeks to forcibly dismantle—or decolonize—the institutional structures that have historically excluded or objectified Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

[Carryon Homes Label]

CarryOn Homes

Twin Cities artists collective, founded 2017

CarryOn Homes—Living Room, 2020

Mixed media environment

Interviewees:

Aki Shibata

Hodo Ali

Isabel Sin

Jacques Elate Joss

Jamal Ali

Lucas Messerer

Lucia Simental

Piotr Szyhalski

Srivalli Kundurthi

Teyent Germa

Yana Frank

The Twin Cities-based artists collective CarryOn Homes consists of five artists from five countries: Zoe Cinel (Italy), Preston Drum (United States), Aki Shibata (Japan), Peng Wu (China), and Shun Jie Yong (Malaysia). As immigrants and transplants, they have experienced the difficulty of adapting to a new cultural context while attempting to maintain a sense of

identity and find a community. Being an immigrant in the United States is a complicated condition that can be both humbling and empowering. Drawing on this experience, the collective seeks to create artworks that offer a sense of belonging to those who are disenfranchised.

CarryOn Homes has created a “living room” where visitors are invited to rest and relax in the final gallery. They intend it to be a calm space away from the difficult realities associated with the migration journey depicted throughout the exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay.” At the center of the installation are handmade pillows made from articles of clothing that are linked to the artists’ (and audience members’) intimate and varied experience of home. The installation immerses visitors in audio and video that feature stories of home, healing, and community found in the experience of local migrants and those living further away. While the *CarryOn Homes—Living Room* is open to all, it also functions as a shared space created especially for local immigrant and refugee communities to access resources, connect, and have restful and restorative conversations.