

A selection from **Home** by Warsan Shire

(born 1988, Kenya; lives and works in London)

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.

WHEN HOME WON'T LET YOU STAY

ART AND MIGRATION

Migration—the movement of people and cultures—is a story of who we are and how we got here over time. Millions of people move for myriad reasons, from fleeing war and religious persecution to seeking better education or financial security. The United Nations estimates that one out of every seven people in the world is an international or internal migrant who moves by choice or by force. In this era of mass migration, and amid ongoing debates about it, “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration” considers how contemporary artists are responding to the migration and displacement of people worldwide. The exhibition borrows its title from a poem by Warsan Shire, a Somali British poet who gives voice to the experiences of refugees. Through artworks made since 2000 by 21 artists born in more than a dozen countries, this exhibition offers diverse artistic responses to migration, ranging from personal accounts to poetic meditations.

This exhibition is organized around the theme of sites of transit—bodies of water, borders, refugee camps—and the shifting idea of home.

Minnesota and the Twin Cities have a long history of forced migration, immigration, emigration, and resettling refugees/refugee communities. The Indigenous residents and caretakers of this land, the Dakhóta and Ojibwe peoples, were brutally murdered, exiled, or restricted to reservations by the U.S. government in a series of treaties, land cessions, and conflicts that culminated in the 1850s and 1860s. The legacy of this forced migration for contemporary Dakhóta and Ojibwe/Anishinaabe peoples and their everlasting connection with the land remains an enduring, animate relationship to this day. Throughout the 1860s and 1870s, thousands of Scandinavian immigrants settled in this area because they found access to farmland and a climate similar to the countries they’d left in Europe. More recently, individuals and families forced to leave their homes due to war in Laos, Liberia, Vietnam, and Somalia have settled in the Twin Cities and other urban centers, making Minnesota the state with the highest number of refugees per capita nationwide. By considering place and movement together, “When Home Won’t Let You Stay” presents migration as a world-transforming force that continues to shape our region, our nation, and our world.

Mia staff are grateful for the expertise and input of the following individuals who served on an advisory board for this exhibition: Sarah Brenes, Alfreda Daniels, Jack DeWaard, Rodolfo Guttirez, Erika Lee, Roxana Linares, Aaron Ortiz Johnson, Mark Pfeifer, Michelle Rivero, and Corleen Smith.

The exhibition is organized by Ruth Erickson, Mannion Family Curator, and Eva Respini, Barbara Lee Chief Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston. The Minneapolis Institute of Art’s presentation is organized by Gabriel Ritter, Curator and Head, Contemporary Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art.

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

As a curator of contemporary art, I personally believe that, while museums have a responsibility to educate and inspire the public through the display of art, they can also function as challenging sites of critical discourse and agents for positive social change. It is with this in mind that I first proposed the traveling exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration,” for presentation at Mia as a way for our institution to engage with the urgent issues of migration and forced displacement facing the world today.

The exhibition seeks to look at migration and the unprecedented displacement of peoples in the 21st century from the point of view of artists, and to give a platform to artists’ perspectives. As such, there are works in this exhibition that may cause emotional pain or (re)traumatize viewers with lived experience of immigration and/or forced displacement. These artworks also pose challenging questions, engage audiences in difficult conversations, provide an opportunity to think deeply about ideas, and perhaps even shift assumptions and perspectives in some way.

Adapting this exhibition to the needs of an encyclopedic museum and its diverse audiences has been a thought-provoking exercise in curatorial practice—catalyzing complex questions around whose stories are told, how, by whom,

and at whose expense. We all are implicated in the global narratives of migration and displacement facing the world today, and unfortunately, there are no easy answers. My hope is that artistic responses to such difficult and timely issues can challenge viewers to empathize with a multiplicity of positions and experiences on the topic of global migration and forced displacement. Hopefully we can recognize what we have in common and work to deeply understand and celebrate our differences.

Gabriel Ritter, PhD

Curator and Head of Contemporary Art, Mia

IN 2018 A RECORD 90 MILLION PEOPLE LIVED IN A STATE OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT.

This map counts individuals fleeing armed conflict, economic hardship, and ethnic violence, but also natural disasters such as earthquakes, forest fires, hurricanes, and floods. The numbers include refugees who have relocated to other countries as well as individuals who are displaced within their own countries.

As these numbers show, forced displacement is a global issue, and few are truly free from the risk of losing their homes.

Who gets counted?

The numbers presented in this map are based on data from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), which collect information on displaced people from governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Yet these counts only include those individuals known to UNHCR and IDMC—and whose situations fit the categories they track. That means that even as these counts make visible the realities of many people's experiences of forced displacement, they also render invisible the experiences of many others whose reasons for leaving home fall outside the scope of these organizations.

THIS IS NOT THE FULL STORY.

This map presents approximate numbers of individuals experiencing forced displacement caused by conflicts and natural disasters. The underlying factors contributing to these record-high numbers are too complex to show on a map, but they are critically important. Consider which economies and industries contribute the most to climate change. Which countries export the most weapons? How do these factors affect forced displacement?

You can find more information about the underlying factors of forced displacement on our blog through the link below and printouts available in the seating area behind you.

artsmia.org/displacement

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 a country of residence or birth 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 country of residence or birth 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.

Reena Saini Kallat

Born 1973, New Delhi, India; lives and works in Mumbai

Woven Chronicle, 2011–19

Electrical wires, speakers, circuit boards, and fittings;
single-channel audio (sound; 10 min.)

Woven Chronicle is a map-based wall drawing that, in the artist's words, represents "the global flows and movements of travelers, migrants, and labor." Reena Kallat uses electrical wires to create the lines, which are based on her meticulous research of transnational flows. The map is paired with a soundscape that evokes the steady hum of global movement.

Wire is an evocative and contradictory material: it operates as both a conduit of electricity, used to connect people across vast distances, and as a weaponized obstacle, as in the barbed wire fences used to mark borders and encircle refugee camps.

This work merges the artist's personal history and her research on migration with metaphors of violence. Kallat's family was splintered by the Partition of India in 1947 upon independence from Britain, which divided the country geographically along religious lines and caused the movement of more than 10 million people in one of the largest forced migrations in human history.

Mona Hatoum

Born 1952, Beirut, Lebanon; lives and works in London

Exodus II, 2002

Compressed card, leather, metal, and human hair

Mona Hatoum's family fled their home in Haifa, Palestine, during the Arab-Israeli War (1948), to seek refuge in Lebanon. She was visiting London when the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90) broke out and forced her into unexpected exile in the United Kingdom, during which time she enrolled in art school. The two suitcases in *Exodus II* are linked by entangled hair that sprouts from their surfaces. Hair is a fraught material that for the artist signifies waste, decay, life, and rituals of grooming and appearance. Here, it cannot be confined by the suitcases, establishing a physical link between them. We are left to wonder what the suitcases contain. What considerations go into selecting the few objects that can fit into a suitcase and those that must be left behind?

Camilo Ontiveros

Born 1978, El Rosario, Sinaloa, Mexico; lives and works in Los Angeles

Temporary Storage: The Belongings of Juan Manuel Montes, 2017

Personal belongings of Juan Manuel Montes, rope, metal sawhorse, aluminum base, and wood

Temporary Storage: The Belongings of Juan Manuel Montes references the February 2017 deportation of Juan Manuel Montes, who is believed to be the first DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient to be removed from the United States under the administration of Donald Trump. The work is composed of everything Montes left behind in his sudden departure. With permission from Montes's mother, artist Camilo Ontiveros assembled Montes's possessions and bound them together with rope to create this towering sculpture.

Like Montes, Ontiveros also emigrated from Mexico as a teenager and recalls seeing a reflection of himself in Montes's story. "I am not interested in migration as an abstract subject, but as a lived experience," says the artist, "whether it be in the actual belongings of someone who has been deported or in an engagement with the policies that determine what is and is not possible for immigrant life."

Adrian Piper

Born 1948, New York; lives and works in Berlin

Everything #4, 2004

Oval mirror with gold leaf–engraved text in traditional mahogany frame

In 2006, a year after moving to Berlin, Adrian Piper discovered she had been placed on the U.S. Transportation Security Administration’s suspicious traveler list. She has refused to return to the United States since, rejecting the state’s authority over her movements. The Everything series (2003–present) considers how forces such as the state, family, private property, and home create and break feelings of attachment. The series inscribes its central slogan—“Everything will be taken away”—on photographs, placards, people’s foreheads, chalkboards, and mirrors. The phrase is adapted from Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s book *In the First Circle* (1968), in which a prisoner tells his torturer that “the man from whom you’ve taken everything is no longer in your power; he is free again.” *Everything #4* imprints its phrase on a simple oval mirror, making it impossible to read the work without seeing yourself and others in the frame.

Carlos Motta

Born 1978, Bogotá, Colombia; lives and works in New York

The Crossing, 2017

Anwar (12:08 min.)

Behnam (9:39 min.)

Butterfly (12:20 min.)

Faysal (11:17 min.)

Raneen (11:58 min.)

Zizi (9:47 min.)

Six channels from an 11-channel video installation (color, sound)

The Crossing features video portraits of 11 LGBTQI+ refugees living in the Netherlands, whom Carlos Motta met through the Dutch organization Secret Garden (six are included here). Anwar, Behnam, Butterfly, Faysal, Raneen, and Zizi narrate the experiences they each faced before and after their immigration to Europe.

Motta presents these stories as video portraits, in which the subjects retain agency over the content and details of their stories. Depicting harrowing moments of struggle and survival and complicated relationships to home and family, these portraits illuminate how persecution based on sexual and gender identity affects vulnerable migrant populations. This reality is significant to Motta, who identifies as a queer Colombian migrant and shares that he often has “been made to feel as an undesired and threatening and foreign other. I am interested in engaging with these

politics to demonstrate the intersectional issues that are at stake.”

This work contains descriptions of violence against LGBTQI+ individuals. Adults visiting with children may wish to preview these videos in advance of young viewers.

Richard Mosse

Born 1980, Kilkenny, Ireland; lives and works in New York

Incoming, 2017

Three-channel HD video (black-and-white, 7.3 surround sound; 52:12 minutes)

Produced in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, 2014–16

Director/producer: Richard Mosse

Cinematographer/editor: Trevor Tweeten

Composer/sound designer: Ben Frost

Colorist: Jerome Thelia

Production assistants: Daphne Tolis, Djibo Issifou, Marta Giaccone, Marco Buch, Lazara Marinković, Zaher Said, and John Holten

Richard Mosse has developed a body of work that is aesthetically rich, yet fraught with political and ethical implications. He subverts photographic technologies, using them to confront the viewer and revise documentary forms. *Incoming* was made in response to the recent mass migration unfolding across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa and documents the journeys of refugees into Europe. Filmed from 2014 to 2016, it chronicles the largest displacement of people since World War II (1939–45) in the form of an immersive video installation.

Mosse filmed *Incoming* using a military-grade thermographic surveillance camera that can detect human body heat from a distance of 18 miles, day or night. Designed for long-range border enforcement, battlefield situational awareness, tracking and targeting, as well as search and rescue, the camera measures heat, presenting relative temperature difference through tonal contrast. In

subverting this technology, Mosse challenges how photographic surveillance has weaponized the act of looking: “We weren’t attempting to rescue this apparatus from its sinister purpose. Rather, we were trying to enter into its logic . . . to foreground this technology of discipline and regulation, and to create a work of art that reveals it.” Presented at a slowed rate of 24 frames per second (originally captured at 60 frames per second), *Incoming* alters the conventional visual experience of film. Reading heat as both a metaphor for and index of life, the work does not attempt to represent the experience of refugees in a seemingly transparent or objective way, but rather uses the camera against its intended purpose to meditate on the profoundly difficult and frequently tragic journeys that migrants make.

Kader Attia

Born 1970, Dugny, France; lives and works in Berlin and Paris

La Mer Morte (The Dead Sea), 2015

Clothes

Kader Attia was born and raised outside Paris in an Algerian Muslim community. There, he experienced how the European media has sensationalized migration from neighboring countries as a “migrant crisis,” stoking xenophobia and anxiety that often manifests in hate crimes and assaults. Attia works mainly in visual art and film to counteract the media’s depersonalization and misrepresentation of immigrant communities. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that in 2015, the year Attia made this work, more than one million refugees and migrants fled to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea; of these, 3,753 were missing and believed to have died at sea. In *La Mer Morte (The Dead Sea)*, individual pieces of blue clothing on the gallery floor evoke bodies washed ashore, a field of debris as well as a seascape.

Xaviera Simmons

Born 1974, New York; lives and works in New York

Sundown (Number Twelve), 2018

Chromogenic color print

“Black people,” says Xaviera Simmons, “especially those who descend from American chattel slavery, have been in a constant state of migration since the country’s formation.” Simmons’s series *Sundown* (2018–present) connects the Atlantic slave trade and the domestic migrations of those who descended from enslaved people in the United States. The series references “sundown towns,” places known to be unsafe for Black people in the United States after dark for fear of white terrorism (violence perpetrated by white supremacists). This series acknowledges the ongoing truth of this threat.

The character in this work poses with an archival photograph of Black U.S. migrants taken during the first Great Migration (1890–1930). The floral cotton dress and the botanical backdrops reference “colonial” fashion as reimagined in the early 1980s and again made popular in fashion today. The character holds an African mask in front of her face. The mask is of indeterminate origin—a symbol for Simmons that conveys the Western idea of Africa as a commodity to be sold and the role of some Africans as slave traders.

Xaviera Simmons

Born 1974, New York; lives and works in New York

Found the Sea like the River, 2018

Acrylic on wood panel

One of several text paintings in the series *Sundown* (2018–present), *Found the Sea like the River* features translated excerpts from the diaries of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), hand lettered by the artist. The work highlights Columbus’s meditations on birds and landscape, which stand in marked contrast with the violence that characterized the explorer’s encounters with Indigenous people. Simmons does not quote verbatim but, instead, as she describes it, “sculpts from the language,” focusing on Columbus’s encounters with landscape rather than with people.

Simmons’s textual and visual juxtapositions reconstruct Columbus’s personal narrative as poetry and render the intimate contents of the diary in the scale of public signage. In its size and style, the painting’s declarative and urgent message eclipses Columbus’s expressions of marvel and relief upon his safe arrival in an unfamiliar land, creating a work that, in Simmons’s words, “is idyllic yet loaded with historical conflict.”

Yto Barrada

Born 1971, Paris; lives and works in Tangier, Morocco, and New York

Clockwise from top left:

Panneau—Publicité de lotissement touristique—Briech 2002 (Hoarding—Advertising for a Tourist Development—Briech 2002), 2002

Rue de la Liberté, Tanger 2000, 2000

Le Détroit de Gibraltar—Reproduction d'une photographie aerienn—Tanger 2003 (The Strait of Gibraltar—Reproduction of an Aerial Photograph—Tangier 2003), 2003

Salon de première—Ferry de Tanger à Algeiras, Espagne—2002 (First-class Lounge—Ferry from Tangier to Algeiras, Spain—2002), 2002

Usine 1—Conditionnement de crevettes dans la zone franche, Tanger 1998 (Factory

1—Prawn Processing Plant in the Free Trade Zone, Tangier 1998), 1998

Arbre généalogique (Family Tree), 2005

All chromogenic color prints

The Strait of Gibraltar is a closely surveilled waterway between Spain and Gibraltar to the north and the Moroccan port cities of Ceuta and Tangier to the south. As the point where the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea meet, the region has long been a contested political arena for the movement of people. Today, Tangier maintains a large population of migrants who are held in limbo as they await passage to Europe or elsewhere. Yto Barrada began the series *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project* in 1998 to witness the tension between the Strait of Gibraltar's symbolic nature as a site of passage and its harsh reality. For Barrada, the work also serves as a personal meditation on class and nationality. As a French and Moroccan citizen, she is free to cross the border, while thousands are not. "In my images I no doubt exorcise the violence of departure, but I give myself up to the violence of return," she says. "The estrangement is that of a false familiarity."

Tania Bruguera

Born 1968, Havana, Cuba; lives and works in Queens, New York

Dignity Has No Nationality, 2017

Nylon, polyester poplin, and thread

In 2011, Tania Bruguera founded the Immigrant Movement International, an artist-initiated sociopolitical movement that began as a community group in Queens, New York. Its slogan, “Dignity has no nationality,” affirms the agency of immigrants regardless of their citizenship. Countering the assumption of some that assimilation is the aim of immigration, she writes, “The measure of an immigrant’s success in society should never be to accept the demand to have amnesia and lack of solidarity with other immigrants.” *Dignity Has No Nationality* features a map of Pangaea, an ancient supercontinent that formed approximately 300 million years ago before breaking apart into the seven continents we know today. Bruguera combined the image and slogan to create a flag that highlights transnational unity and celebrates the humanity of the individual, regardless of and beyond national identity.

Isaac Julien

Born 1960, London; lives and works in London

Western Union: Small Boats, 2007

Three-channel video installation, 35 mm film transferred to HD video (color, 5.1 surround sound; 18:22 min.)

Western Union: Small Boats was filmed on the Italian island of Lampedusa in the western Mediterranean Sea. The island sits between Tunisia and Sicily and is an important location for those seeking passage to southern Europe from North Africa. Alluding to global histories of empire, slavery, and colonialism, Isaac Julien's film has the sea as its central motif. The Mediterranean is "a space that is between east and west, north and south, Europe and Africa," says Julien. "It's a contact zone that has a number of different markings, a number of traumas, that are very much still present."

Western Union presents choreographed scenes in a loosely linked narrative, heightening the film's sense of nonlinear time. Malian singer Oumou Sangaré performs a Wassoulou song from West Africa, as actor Vanessa Myrie crosses sun-bleached beaches. Other scenes depict tourists, dancers, and fishermen and dreamlike sequences set in an Italian palace. Julien has said, "It's about displacement of the person but also about displacement [of] spaces."

Do Ho Suh

Born 1962, Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in London, New York, and Seoul

Hub-1, Entrance, 260-7, Sungbook-Dong, Sungbo-Ku, Seoul, Korea, 2018

Polyester fabric and stainless steel

Hub-2, Breakfast Corner, 260-7, Sungbook-Dong, Sungbo-Ku, Seoul, Korea, 2018

Polyester fabric and stainless steel

“I consider migration to be a process,” says Do Ho Suh, “not something that happens overnight. Each step of the process is like crossing another threshold.” Impressions of space, environment, and home are central to Suh’s art, which explores memory through materials and architecture. His delicate fabric sculptures depict rooms, thresholds, and passageways from the artist’s former homes. The structures’ translucence may evoke the nature of memory: somewhere between real and unreal, visible and invisible. They are actual size and painstakingly sewn, with doorknobs, molding, and outlets crafted in precise detail. The works shown here represent two spaces from the artist’s childhood home in South Korea—the entry and eating area—connected to form a passageway. In imaginatively linking the fragments of places he has lived, Suh reconfigures memories of home in the present.

Aliza Nisenbaum

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

Veronica, Marissa, and Gustavo, 2013

Oil on linen

Las Talaveritas, 2015

Oil on linen

La Talaverita, Sunday Morning NY Times, 2016

Oil on linen

“I’m interested in the politics of visibility—who and why someone is depicted,” writes Aliza Nisenbaum, whose paintings further her commitment to empowerment and recognition through representation. Nisenbaum connected with the subjects of these paintings in 2012 while teaching an English-language class at Immigrant Movement International, a community space in Queens, New York, started by artist and activist Tania Bruguera (also featured in this exhibition). These works are part of an evolving family portrait of Veronica and Gustavo, who immigrated to the United States from Mexico in the 1990s and settled in Queens, where they had their daughter, Marissa. Nisenbaum emphasizes the tenderness and humanity of her sitters through her considered attention to the exuberant patterns and textures of their interior surroundings, including the colorful, patterned tiles of the

Mexican ceramic style known as Talavera. In painting her portraits, Nisenbaum builds trust and comfort with her sitters over time, striving for self-awareness for herself and her subjects. “The aesthetic in my work happens through the social interactions I have with people,” says Nisenbaum. “The paintings develop as my relationships with people develop.”

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

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.

Hayv Kahraman

Born 1981, Baghdad, Iraq; lives and works in Los Angeles

Bab el Sheikh, 2013

Oil on wood

Hayv Kahraman was 10 years old when her Kurdish family was forced to flee Iraq during the 1990–91 Gulf War. She turned to art to cope with feelings of isolation while growing up as a refugee in Sweden. In *Bab el Sheikh*, the painted figures interact with and float over a floor plan derived from traditional Baghdadi domestic architecture—the type Kahraman distantly remembers from her childhood. The artist describes her “inaccessibility . . . to a place that I used to call home . . . a place that I’m supposed to be completely a part of but that at this point in my life I don’t understand.” The five female figures here belong to the collective notion of “she.” Says Kahraman: “I am interested in the multitude, not the self. This is not only my story. It can be the story of more than five million people within the Iraqi diaspora or any diaspora.”

Rineke Dijkstra

Born 1959, Sittard, the Netherlands; lives and works in Amsterdam

Almerisa, 1994–present

Chromogenic color prints

Almerisa was a six-year-old Bosnian refugee when the artist met her and her family in 1994 at a refugee center in Leiden, the Netherlands. Rineke Dijkstra had been commissioned to photograph the children of asylum seekers—a moment that, as Almerisa recounted, ruptured the monotony of life in the refugee center: “I don’t know how I expressed myself, but she understood me—that I wanted to be in the picture.” Dijkstra continued to meet her every few years to make a portrait. Photographed in different cities but always in her own home, seated on a chair in her best clothes, Almerisa conveys her presence and emotion through her posture, dress, and expression. This ongoing project—now totaling 15 works—forms a visual archive of a young girl’s transition from childhood to adolescence and early adulthood. Almerisa not only preserves a personal likeness but also represents the personal transformation involved in navigating foreignness and finding belonging in a new place.

Yinka Shonibare

Born 1962, London; lives and works in London

The American Library, 2018

Hardback books, Dutch wax-printed cotton textile, gold-foiled names, and website

The American Library consists of 6,000 volumes wrapped in vibrantly colored Dutch wax-print fabric. Many are embossed with the names of first- and second-generation immigrants or their descendants or those affected by the Great Migration in the United States. All those named have made a mark on American culture; these individuals span race, gender, and class, recasting how ideas of otherness, citizenship, home, and nationalism acquire their complex meanings. Although the library is filled with migrants' names, it does not take into account Indigenous peoples, ignoring the cultural contributions—and forced migrations—of the original inhabitants of North America.

The fabric also reflects the complex interactions among cultures. Dutch wax-print fabric was introduced to West Africa in the 1800s through colonial trade. It was a factory-printed facsimile of cloth from Indonesia, and the fabric has become intimately linked with West African fashion. It is an important material for Yinka Shonibare, who was born in London and raised in Lagos, Nigeria.

Please do not handle the books. We invite you to use the tablets on the table to learn more about the individuals in the library and to contribute your own family's migration story to the project's website.

Richard Misrach

Born 1949, Los Angeles; lives and works in Berkeley, California

Agua #10, near Calexico, California/Agua n° 10, cerca de Calexico, California, 2014

Pigment print

Artifacts found from California to Texas between 2013 and 2015/Artefactos encontrados entre California y Texas de 2013 a 2015, 2013–15

Pigment print

Border Cantos is a collaboration between composer Guillermo Galindo and photographer Richard Misrach. Misrach has photographed the U.S. West since the 1970s. Though he had been developing *Border Cantos* since 2004, it was only after meeting Galindo in 2011 that Misrach began to focus more closely on the Mexico–United States border. His images are both poetic and documentary, as demonstrated by this monumental work, which presents found evidence of migrant journeys in a grid that may remind us of an archaeological dig or a forensic investigation.

Misrach observes the remnants of human passage through the desert—discarded clothes, toys, books, or

water jugs. Though absent of human figures, his photographs recall human presence by showing what the land itself remembers, questioning how landscapes embody ideas of national identity and shared histories. “Most Americans,” he says, “with the exception of Native Americans and African descendants of slavery, are [descended from] immigrants. Embedded in this whole body of work is the history of my own family. It’s personal.”

Guillermo Galindo

Born 1960, Mexico City; lives and works in Oakland, California

Zapatello, 2014

Wood blocking used in construction of the Mexico–United States barrier, tire, rawhide, boot, glove, donkey jaw, and ram’s horn

Ángel Exterminador/Exterminating Angel, 2015

Section of the Mexico–United States barrier, Border Patrol drag chain, and wood blocking used in the construction of the Mexico–United States barrier

Border Cantos is a collaboration between photographer Richard Misrach and composer Guillermo Galindo, whose sound sculptures are located in the center of this gallery. Galindo finds many of his objects at the Mexico–United States border area. *Zapatello* is modeled on Leonardo da Vinci’s *martello a camme*, a mechanized hammer that in Galindo’s sculpture is made from a Lakota drum—formed from a discarded tire used by the U.S. Border Patrol to smooth the sand in search of human footprints—as well as a boot, glove, and range targets recovered near the Mexico–United States border.

Ángel Exterminador/Exterminating Angel, which resembles a gong, is made from a reclaimed section of the

Mexico–United States barrier, itself constructed from helicopter landing strips used in the Vietnam War. The sculptures are instruments played by the artist or other performers.

As Galindo recounts, “It is not a coincidence that within all my sonic objects from the border, those representing the anti-immigrant apparatus have the loudest voices.”

Galindo’s devices and experimental musical scores honor the presence of migrants on the border and of those Indigenous and heritage communities that continue to make life in contested places.

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Beijing and Berlin

5776 Photos Relating to Refugees, 1.12.2016–16.2.2016, 2016

Wallpaper

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 immigrants from the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa, who were 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 Beijing and Berlin

Calais, 2016

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 Beijing and Berlin

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 their journey into the European Union. This video captures the conditions of children and adults sleeping in tents next to a railway 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. These items makeup his installation *Laundromat* (2016).

Ai Weiwei

Born 1957, Beijing; lives and works in Beijing and Berlin

At Sea, 2016

3-part color video with sound Part 1: 4:08 min.; Part 2: 3:44 min.; Part 3: 9:40 min.

(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.

Postcommodity

American artists collective, founded 2007

Let Us Pray for the Water between Us, 2020

2,200-gallon polyethylene hazmat chemical storage container, brushless linear motor, leather mallet, wood, steel, aircraft cable, algorithmic composition

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. The 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

Twin Cities artists collective, founded 2017

CarryOn Homes—Living Room, 2020

Mixed media environment

Interviewees:

Hodo Ali

Jamal Ali

Yana Frank

Teyent Germa

Jacques Elate Joss

Srivalli Kundurthi

Lucas Messerer

Aki Shibata

Lucia Simental

Isabel Sin

Piotr Szyhalski

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 journeys 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 experiences 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.

“As our world becomes more challenged by climate change, and as migration continues to increase, we cannot afford to make strangers of those who we may depend upon in the future.”

ERIKA LEE, REGENTS PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA; DIRECTOR, IMMIGRATION HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

Use your own device to hear Lee talk about the artwork *La Mer Morte* (The Dead Sea) by Kader Attia.

“For me, portraiture is putting a first and last name on people so that we might have a more direct relationship. The notion of migrants, in general, is abstract. If we can relate to them as people, then we can change the discourse to something that is more human.”

XAVIER TAVERA, PHOTOGRAPHER AND FILMMAKER

Use your own device to hear Tavera talk about the collaborative artworks by Richard Misrach and Guillermo Galindo.

“The most important action that any one can take is to educate themselves. I’d rather that people do that than march with us because information is powerful. Hopefully when people leave here, they will want to learn more.”

ALFREDA DANIELS, CO-FOUNDER, BLACK IMMIGRANT COLLECTIVE

Use your own device to hear Daniels talk about the artwork *Incoming* by Richard Mosse.

“At Advocates for Human Rights, we continue to connect with clients who received asylum decades ago. To see how they have woven themselves into the fabric of our community, really underlines the fact that the process of seeking protection is just one chapter of a very long book of their lives.”

SARAH BRENES, REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT PROGRAM DIRECTOR, THE ADVOCATES FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Use your own device to hear Brenes talk about the artwork *Almerisa* by Rineke Dijkstra.

“My experience with home has been finding it within myself. I find myself often grappling with foreignness. When I was in Syria, my mother is American, so I was the foreigner, and then when I came here, I was the Syrian. So the question of home, and where it is defined and where to locate it has always, for me, come back to the body.”

ESSMA IMADY, INSTALLATION ARTIST

Use your own device to hear Imady talk about the artwork *Bab el Sheikh* by Hayy Kahraman.

“The idea of using technology that’s intended for surveillance in order to show the humanity of people is an interesting idea. But, it seems to just be reproducing the military use and simply bringing that into an art museum. The subjects of his work have no agency. And he’s benefitting from that. It’s a racist impulse to do a work like this.”

Lana Barkawi, Executive and Artistic Director, Mizna

Use your own device to hear Barkawi talk about the artwork *Incoming* by Richard Mosse.

“There’s an impulse to wake us up from our constant scrolling through headlines, stories, and images that we see for a second and then they slip by and off our radar. I wonder what witnessing these life jackets means for the viewer. What are we to take from seeing them in this sanitized display? It seems to trivialize the experiences of the people who have gone through and are going through this journey. I worry that it gives the audience a sense that they’ve done something profound by witnessing it, when these are the real lives of people who don’t know that their life jackets are here on display.”

Lana Barkawi, Executive and Artistic Director, Mizna

Use your own device to hear Barkawi talk about the artwork *Safe Passage* by Ai WeiWei.

“I’m a child of two cultures. My mother is American, my father is Syrian. But I grew up in Damascus, and I didn’t come here until I was 24. I had many privileges in that I could speak the language. But speaking the language is not the same as speaking the culture.”

Essma Imady, Installation Artist

Use your own device to hear Imady talk about the artwork *Exodus II* by Mona Hatoum.

“This artwork shows many connections between different parts of the world. When you move from one country to another, you keep connections to your country. I keep connections through language, traditions, and food. Those connections remain in our souls, now that we’re here in the white fields of snowy Minnesota. As people of color, we bring color to these white fields through the connections that we have with our countries.”

Immigrant to Minnesota

Use your own device to hear this individual talk about the artwork *Woven Chronicle* by Reena

“I had a home and a career. I made an impact on society. And then I found myself in Minneapolis in 2012 with nothing. I lost everything, and I left behind my wife and two children. We were separated for four years. The challenge of being an immigrant is starting over.

When someone is a refugee or an immigrant, it’s not by choice, it’s because of circumstance.”

Blaise, Immigrant to Minnesota

Use your own device to hear Blaise talk about his immigration experience.

“This is a strong and painful image. This is a difficult road that many of us travel. I couldn’t get the help I needed in my country. I spent 21 days of hunger and thirst in the desert. Everyone who chooses to walk this road hopes to change their lives. When I came to the U.S. my life changed completely. We come because we need help.”

Immigrant to Minnesota

Use your own device to hear this individual talk about the photograph *Wall, east of Nogales, Arizona* by Richard Misrach.

“I feel drawn to these photos. I want to know what her favorite toy was when she was at the refugee camp. I’m curious what she’s thinking. How much does she understand the world that she’s handed? I’m curious if this girl had a moment of wanting to go back home. What was her journey like?”

Ifrah Mansour, Multimedia Performance Artist

Use your own device to hear Mansour talk about the artwork *Almerisa* by Rinike Dijkstra.

“With refugees you often focus on what they brought or didn’t bring. If you were lucky, you brought your loved ones. Internally, you brought your wounds. If we don’t intentionally deal with them at some point when we finally feel safe enough, we’ll continue unrecognized and unchecked generational trauma.

Ifrah Mansour, Multimedia Performance Artist

Use your own device to hear Mansour talk about the artwork *Exodus II* by Mona Hatoum.

“Everything has been taken away. My joy was taken away. My pride was taken away. My love was taken away. I am in a strange land to start all over. I lost everything.”

Immigrant to Minnesota

Use your own device to hear this individual talk about the artwork *Everything #4* by Adrian Piper.

“When you go to a new country, it’s to have a better life. It’s not good back home, but that does not mean it’s very good here. There is no place that’s better than home. Being here is a safe haven, but it’s not heaven. There’s no one pointing a gun at your neck here, but there is an invisible gun. Being a Black immigrant in this country is very difficult.”

Immigrant to Minnesota

Use your own device to hear this individual talk about the artwork *Temporary Storage: The Belongings of Juan Manuel Montes* by Camilo Ontiveros.