

## Ai Weiwei's 'Safe Passage' Debuts in U.S. With 'When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art and Migration' Group Exhibition and a Postcommodity Commission at Minneapolis Institute of Art

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*Rendering of Safe Passage at Mia, 2020. Image courtesy of Ai Weiwei Studio.*

***Mia has commissioned Postcommodity to create a site-specific work exclusively for Minneapolis presentation, which responds to migration, immigration, and displacement today***

***Ai Weiwei's Safe Passage will be installed for the first time in North America on Mia's historic façade***

The Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) will present "When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art and Migration," an exhibition exploring how contemporary artists are responding to the migration, immigration, and forced displacement of people today. The show will be on

view from February 23 through May 24, following its debut at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, which organized the show.



*Figure 1 Installation view of the exhibition, "Insecurities: Tracing Displacement and Shelter." October 01, 2016 - January 22, 2017. Reena Saini Kallat. Woven Chronicle. (2011-2016). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photographer: Jonathan Muzikar. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, NY*

The exhibition comprises more than 40 works by 21 artists from across the globe. Exclusive to Mia's presentation are three large-scale installations from artist and activist Ai Weiwei, the interdisciplinary arts collective Postcommodity, and CarryOn Homes, a team of five Twin Cities–based international artists dedicated to telling the stories of immigrants and refugees in the United States. Highlighting the diverse artistic responses to migration, ranging from personal accounts to poetic meditations, the exhibition includes sculpture, installation, painting, and video.

“‘When Home Won't Let You Stay’ and the Mia-specific installations by Postcommodity, Ai Weiwei, and CarryOn Homes exemplify how contemporary art can respond to today's most complex issues and spark vital discourse,” said Gabriel Ritter, curator and head of the Department of Contemporary Art at Mia. “This exhibition is particularly meaningful in the Twin Cities, which is home to a large refugee and immigrant population who have first-hand experience of displacement and emigration. My hope is that the artistic responses to these difficult and timely issues encourage viewers to empathize with a multiplicity of positions and experiences, and recognize that native-born citizens and immigrants have much more in common than not.”

Mia will be the first U.S. museum to present Ai Weiwei's (b. 1957, China) *Safe Passage* (2016), featuring thousands of refugee life jackets installed around the neoclassical columns of Mia's landmark McKim, Mead, and White building. Worn by refugees making the dangerous sea journey from Turkey to Greece, the discarded lifejackets were recovered and donated to Ai Weiwei by the mayor of Lesbos, Spyros Galinos, in 2016. The piece was previously installed on the classical columns of the Berlin Konzerthaus, Yokohama Museum of Art, and the National Archives of Chile.

In addition, Mia has commissioned Postcommodity, the interdisciplinary arts collective comprised of Cristóbal Martínez (b. 1974, USA) and Kade L. Twist (b. 1971, USA), to create a site-specific installation that comments on the forced displacement of indigenous communities and the complexity of human relationships bound by shared sources of water that are increasingly difficult to protect and preserve from waste and contamination. Titled *Let Us Pray for the Water Between Us* (2020), the imposing work transforms a large chemical storage tank (commonly utilized in agriculture) into a self-playing automated drum suspended from the ceiling of Mia's Rotunda. The drum's placement is a conceptual gesture that intentionally challenges the veneration of objects like Mia's *Doryphoros*—considered by the Greeks to be the ideal human form—as foundational to the Western art historical canon. The artists will replace the *Doryphoros* with a levitating ceremonial drum that reverberates an honor song created for Dakota people and all tribes of all nations who now live within the traditional homeland of the Dakota. This displacement enacts a symbolic upending of the museum's colonial foundations, and seeks to forcibly dismantle—or decolonize—the institutional structures that have historically discriminated against Indigenous people and their culture.

CarryOn Homes—the Twin Cities-based art collective that includes Zoe Cinel (b. 1992, Italian), Preston Drum (b. 1983, American), Aki Shibata (b. 1984, Japanese), Peng Wu (b. 1981, Chinese), and Shun Jie Yong (b. 1987, Malaysian Chinese)—will create a space in the final gallery of the exhibition for visitor reflection. Titled *CarryOn Homes—Living Room* (2020), the installation will feature handmade pillows made from articles of clothing linked to the artists' (and audience's) intimate and varied experiences of home. The installation is envisioned as an immersive space offering stories of home, healing, and community around the experience of local migrants and migrants living across the world. *CarryOn Homes—Living Room* will be a shared space for local immigrant and refugee communities to access resources, connect, and have restful and healing conversations.

Central to “When Home Won't Let You Stay” is the power of artistic thinking to reflect on the complexity of global migration today and to process the heated dialogues around it. The exhibition borrows its title from a poem by Warsan Shire, a Somali-British poet who gives voice to the experiences of refugees. It shares with Shire's poem, *Home*, the imperative to give a public platform to the variety of experiences around migration, ranging from its jarring realities to moments of joy and celebration.



Numerous works in the exhibition address the navigation of routes, borders, and camps. Reena Saini Kallat maps various movements of people and goods across oceans with twisted and barbed wires in the site-specific installation *Woven Chronicle* (2011–16). The U.S.-Mexico border is the focus of Guillermo Galindo and Richard Misrach’s multi-year collaboration, *Border Cantos* (2004–16). They bring together images and artifacts gathered at the border, capturing its quality as an inhospitable territory and, accordingly, the distress, determination, and resourcefulness that fuel people’s journeys through these borderlands.

The featured artists, some themselves immigrants, refugees, or migrants, hail from more than a dozen countries—such as Colombia, Cuba, France, India, Iraq, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States—and reveal migration as a universal force that reimagines ideas of home, place, and transit in the 21st century.

#### Featured “When Home Won’t Let You Stay” artists:

- Ai Weiwei (born 1957 in Beijing, China, lives and works in Berlin)
- Kader Attia (born 1970 in Dugny, France; lives and works in Berlin and Paris)
- Yto Barrada (born 1971 in Paris, France; lives and works in Tangier, Morocco, and New York)
- Tania Bruguera (born 1968 in Havana, Cuba; lives and works in Queens, N.Y.)
- CarryOn Homes, team of artists working in the Twin Cities, comprising Zoe Cinel (born 1992 in Italy), Preston Drum (born 1983 in the United States), Aki Shibata (born 1984 in Japan), Peng Wu (born 1981 in China), and Shun Jie Yong (born 1987 in Malaysia)
- Rineke Dijkstra (born 1959 in Sittard, the Netherlands; lives and works in Amsterdam)
- Guillermo Galindo (born 1960 in Mexico City, Mexico; lives and works in Oakland, Calif.)
- Mona Hatoum (born 1952 in Beirut, Lebanon; lives and works in London)
- Isaac Julien (born 1960 in London; lives and works in London)
- Hayv Kahraman (born 1981 in Baghdad, Iraq; lives and works in Los Angeles)
- Reena Saini Kallat (born 1973 in New Delhi, India; lives and works in Mumbai, India)
- Richard Misrach (born 1949 in Los Angeles; lives and works in Berkeley, Calif.)
- Richard Mosse (born 1980 in Kilkenny, Ireland; lives and works in New York)
- Carlos Motta (born 1978 in Bogotá, Colombia; lives and works in New York)
- Aliza Nisenbaum (born 1977 in Mexico City; lives and works in New York)
- Camilo Ontiveros (born 1978 in Rosario, Sinaloa, Mexico; lives and works in Los Angeles)
- Michelle Angela Ortiz (born 1978 in Philadelphia; lives and works in Philadelphia)
- Adrian Piper (born 1948 in New York; lives and works in Berlin)
- Postcommodity, artist collective comprising Cristóbal Martínez (born 1974 in Santa Fe, N.M.; lives and works in San Francisco) and Kade L. Twist (born 1971 in Bakersfield, Calif.; lives and works in Los Angeles)
- Anthony Romero (born 1983 in Austin, Texas; lives and works in Boston)
- Yinka Shonibare CBE (born 1962 in London; lives and works in London)
- Xaviera Simmons (born 1974 in New York; lives and works in New York)
- Do Ho Suh (born 1962 in Seoul, South Korea; lives and works in London; New York; and Seoul)

“When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration” is organized by Ruth Erickson, Mannion Family Curator, and Eva Respini, Barbara Lee Chief Curator, at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.

**Catalogue**

A richly illustrated scholarly publication edited by Ruth Erickson and Eva Respini accompanies the exhibition, featuring an introduction by Erickson and Respini and texts by scholars and curators Aruna D’Souza, Okwui Enwezor, Thomas Keenan, Peggy Levitt, and Uday Singh Mehta, as well as conversations with artists Tania Bruguera, Guillermo Galindo, Reena Saini Kallat, Hayv Kahraman and Anthony Romero.