

## Ai Weiwei Has Covered the Façade of a Minneapolis Museum in Life Jackets for a Powerful Statement About Refugees—See Images Here

While museums are closed to the public, we are spotlighting an inspiring exhibition somewhere around the globe each day.

**Caroline Goldstein**, April 16, 2020



*Ai Weiwei's "Safe Passage", installed at Minneapolis Institute of Art for the exhibition "When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art and Migration". Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Art.*

*While museums around the globe are closed to the public, we are spotlighting each day an inspiring exhibition that was previously on view. Even if you can't see it in person, allow us to give you a virtual look.*

### ***"When Home Won't Let You Stay: Art and Migration"*** ***Minneapolis Institute of Art***

**What the museum says:** "By choice or by force. With great success or great struggle. People move or are uprooted, for many reasons. The world is currently witness to the highest levels of movement on record; the United Nations estimates that one out of every seven people is an international or internal migrant or refugee."

Borrowing its title from Somali-British poet Warsan Shire, ‘When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration’ highlights the diverse artistic responses to migration, ranging from personal stories to poetic meditations in a range of mediums. See how the global movement of people today through migration, immigration, and displacement has mobilized artists from over a dozen countries to reimagine ideas of home and place.”

**Why it’s worth a look:** When this exhibition, which originated at the ICA Boston and then traveled to Minneapolis, first opened, no one could have predicted that in a few weeks, “home” would take on such a different meaning. Now, in our new reality, home is the place where you are being forced to stay, and while it’s easy to gripe over the cancellation of parties and concerts, the images in this show pose a question of what it might be like without a place to call home.

With works by more than 20 artists, this exhibition throws a spotlight on the very real struggle of migrants all over the world, many whom are now facing the double plight of being displaced in the midst of a global pandemic. One of the most vocal artists in the migrant movement is Ai Weiwei, and his moving installation *Safe Passage* makes its United States debut in this exhibition, transforming the facade of the Minneapolis museum.

The exterior facade of the institution—an unmistakable hallmark of Western architecture—is now covered in discarded life jackets from refugees who traveled from Turkey to Greece on boats that couldn’t hold them all. From a distance, the 2,400 orange, red, and blue inflatables look festive, but, as Ai intended, once reality dawns on each visitor, they are impossible to look at in the same way.

**What it looks like:**



*Installation views of the exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Art and Migration.”  
Courtesy of the Minneapolis Institute of Art.*



Reena Saini Kallat, *Woven Chronicle* (2011–16). View of installation in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2016–2017. Courtesy the artist. Photos by Jonathan Muzikar. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. © Reena Saini Kallat.



Mona Hatoum, *Exodus II*, 2002. Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake. Photo: Sofia Bertilsson © Mona Hatoum.





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*Do Ho Suh, Hub-2, Breakfast Corner, 260-7, Sungbook-Dong, Sungbo-Ku, Seoul, Korea, (2018). Courtesy the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York, Hong Kong, and Seoul. © Do Ho Suh.*



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Aliza Nisenbaum, *La Talaverita, Sunday Morning NY Times* (2016). Courtesy the artist, Anton Kern Gallery, and Mary Mary. ©Aliza Nisenbaum.



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