

WHEN HOME WON'T LET YOU STAY: Migration through Contemporary Art

ICA Boston
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Hannah Sammut



ICA: BACKGROUND, HISTORY, AND LOCATION

- Two locations: ICA Seaport and Watershed (across the harbor, East Boston)
- museum grounds themselves have history of displacement: once home to many tribes, including the Massachusetts, Nipmuc, and Wampanoag



- Boston was once a center for New England's Atlantic slave trade
- Early 20th century: East Boston was composed of primarily Irish and Italian immigrants

BOSTON TODAY

- Immigrants from East Boston today are largely from Central and South America
- Half of East-Boston residents are immigrants
- Top countries of origin in Boston as a whole are China, Dominican Republic, and Haiti



WARSAN SHIRE



- Somali British writer and poet born in Nairobi and raised in London.
- Award-winning poet, multiple accolades
- Wrote the poetry for the visual album "Lemonade" and "Black Is King" in collaboration with Beyoncé.

HOME

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.

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home is the mouth of a shark.

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you only leave home
when home won't let you stay...

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

... and one would leave home
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.

MONA HATOUM

- British Pa le stinia n born in Le b a non
- Unab le to return home during Leb a non's civil war
- Doesn't usua lly sub scribe to any notion of identity, including her own

Exodus II

- themes of de parture
- uncomforta b le ne ss
- story of Exodus
- se pa ra tion



Mona Ha toum, "Exodus II", 2002.

Compressed card, leather, metal, human hair, and beeswax





REENA SAINI

KALLAT

• Mumbai-based artist

Woven Chronicle

- electric wire and auditory devices
- play between line and territory
- purposely confusing patterns
- lines are not natural entities, rather political
- based on research in contemporary patterns in contemporary trade and migration



Reena Saini Kallat, "Woven Chronicle," 2011-16

circuit boards, speakers, electrical wires, and fittings; single-channel audio sound
approx. 11 x 38 ft



RICHARD
MIS RACH

- Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA

Artifacts found from

California to Texas

between 20 13 and 20 15

- photographed and collected objects to be sent to a musician who was making instruments using the pieces

- "Border Cantos" series

- wayfinding tools

- forensic grid





Artifacts found from California to Texas between 2013 and 2015

Artefactos encontrados California y Texas de 2012 a 2015

six parts



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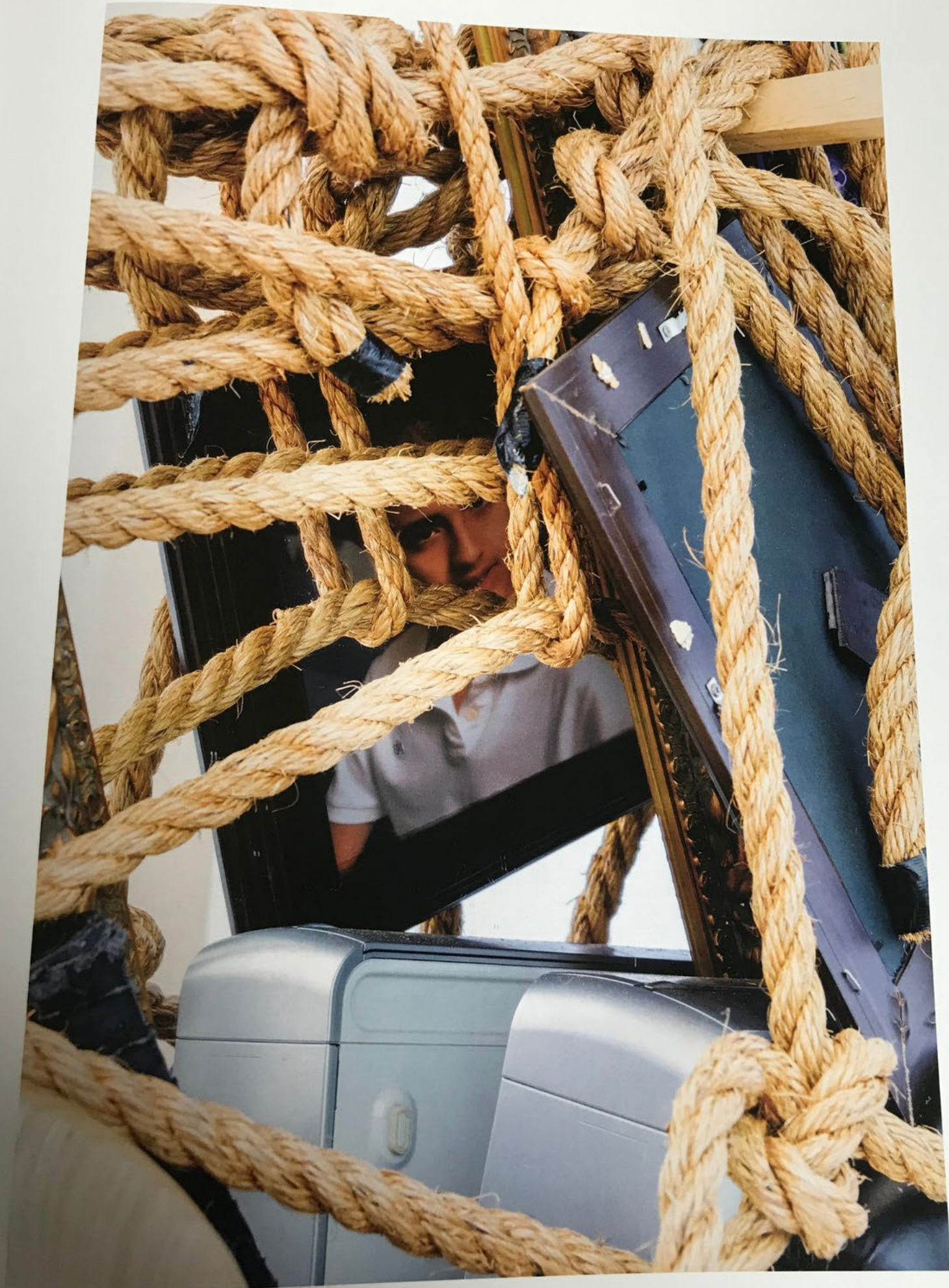
CAMILO ONTIVEROS

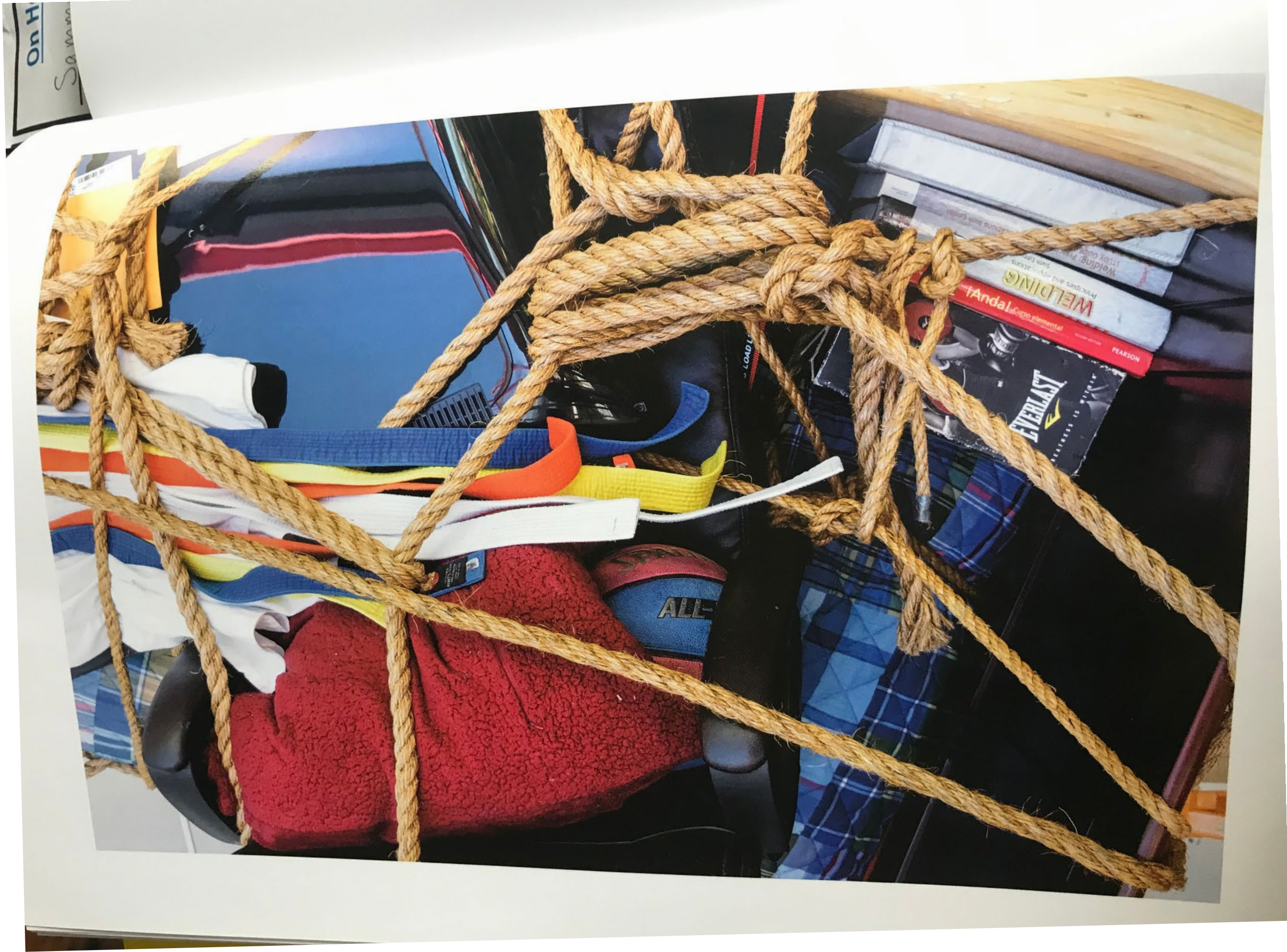
- Came to the United States from Mexico as a teenager
- Based in SoCal

Temporary Storage

- Juan Manuel Montes
- Reflection of the artist's own experience
- transit and "precarity of immigrants, both documented and undocumented" (Ontiveros)
- themes of exile and movement







DO HO SUH

- Seoul, Korea
- Lives and works in Seoul, London, and NYC

His Work:

- fabric sculptures that are to scale
- replicas of the places he has called home
- thin polyester fabrics or silk, hand-sewn using a traditional Korean sewing method
- attachment of memories to physical space
- less about preserving the artifact of home but rather about the feeling of visiting once-familiar spaces





Do Ho Suh, "Hub-1, Entrance, 260-7, Sungbook-Dong, Sungbo-Ku, Seoul Korea"

2018

Polyester fabric and stainless steel



Do Ho Suh, "Hub-2, Breakfast Corner, 260-7, Sungbook-Dong, Sungbo-Ku, Seoul Korea" 2018

Polyester fabric and stainless steel

FINAL COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

- themes of both comfort and uncomfortability
- Humanity in the inanimate
- didn't touch upon the violence that nations have perpetuated against asylum-seekers and refugees
- How does the definition of "home" vary across cultures and contexts?
- Can "home" ever be found if one is forcibly moved?
- How do you apply "home" to your own lives?
- How can one find "home"?
- How do we hold nations accountable for anti-immigration policies through art? Is it effective?