

# KENKELEBA HOUSE, INC.

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## *Press Release*

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### MIGRATION STORIES

**From August 14 through September 25, 2021, the Wilmer Jennings Gallery at Kenkeleba** is pleased to present **MIGRATION STORIES**, a thematic exhibition of works by 23 artists from different cultures, races, religions and hemispheres.

There are over 80 million displaced people in the world today. We know now that the causes of migration are many, complex and global in nature—colonization, slavery, neo colonialism, environmental disasters, ethnic extinction, political persecution, war, poverty—the list grows. At the same time, refugees across the world also confront a surge of xenophobia. Here, the ‘other’ is not only demonized, but also turned into an existential threat. In this age of global anxiety, the mere ‘otherness of the other’ becomes yet another source of anxiety. The artists in this exhibition have more than confronted difficult ideas and situations. Through their art they not only survive, but flourish intellectually and spiritually, and they offer us unique conceptions of beauty, insight and consequent recognition and understanding.

The **MIGRATION STORIES** exhibition, curated by Tara Sabharwal, presents paintings, photographs, prints, drawings and installations by Nadema Agard, Sobia Ahmad, Tomie Arai, Osi Audu, Mildred Beltre, Terry Boddie, Irma Bohorquez-Geisler, Pena Bonita, Chakaia Booker, Sandra C. Fernandez, Helen Frederick, Alicia Henry, Robin Holder, Leslie Jean-Bart, Trokon Nagbe, Shervone Neckles, Miguel Rivera, Tara Sabharwal, Omid Shekari, Mary Ting, Ben Zawalich, Emna Zghal, and Helen Zughaib.

The exhibiting artists have learned to live within American communities as natural outsiders, and thus have formed their own borderless intersections. They are not refugees, but speak for them. Their works address in-betweenness, a space between cultures where relationships and negotiations consistently define and redefine themselves, remaining unfixed, in a state of transformation.

Much of the work in this exhibition is about memory and transformation. There are repeating ideas of the meaning of home and family. The almost tangible desire for home is a strong and natural common denominator. The tangible and intangible notions of self-connections with the physicality of landscapes, and the ties between the psychic environment, and the physical locations through the course of time are palpable in the works. A viewer sees the works forming bridges between the old and the new, or between the traditional and the urban cultures.

The need to confront these crises is vital and urgent. It seems the world is where it is today due to countless wrong and ruthless decisions in favor of short-sighted greed. Perhaps the refugees are just the first, most vulnerable victims, of an unsustainable system that will eventually consume us all. Many immigrants have completed painful odysseys. The artists in the **MIGRATION STORIES** exhibition compel us to see ourselves in them.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm

Location: 219 East Second Street at Avenue B

Kenkeleba programs are funded in part by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, and many generous friends.