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# Coming Soon: ‘The Warmth of Other Suns: Stories of Global Displacement’ at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C.

by VICTORIA L. VALENTINE on May 20, 2019 · 8:58 am

THE TITLE OF A FORTHCOMING exhibition at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., is derived from Isabel Wilkerson’s critically acclaimed book “The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration.” The volume documents the migration of African Americans in the United States from the Jim Crow South to the industrial North between 1915 and 1970, nearly 6 million strong seeking better lives and opportunities.

Currently, there are more than 65 million people displaced around the world. The Phillips Collection is partnering with the New Museum in New York to explore their stories of migration, immigration and displacement through the work of more than 60 international artists. The exhibition “poses urgent questions around the representations and perceptions of migration, both historically and within the scope of the current global refugee crisis.”

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BENNY ANDREWS, “Trail of Tears,” 2005 (oil on four canvases with painted fabric and mixed media collage, 76 x 145 x 1 inches). I © 2019 Estate of Benny Andrews; Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

“The Warmth of Other Suns: Stories of Global Displacement” opens June 22 at the Phillips Collection. The diverse slate of participating artists features historic and contemporary figures, including John Akomfrah, El Anatsui, Benny Andrews, Kader Attia, Frank Bowling, Tania Bruguera, Beverly Buchanan, Jack Delano, Dorothea Lange, Arshile Gorky, Zoe Leonard, Glenn Ligon, Diego Rivera, Mark Rothko, Cameron Rowland, William Edouard Scott, Xaviera Simmons, Alfred Stieglitz, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Wolfgang Tillmans, Danh Võ, and Nari Ward.

Presenting installations, videos, paintings, and documentary photography, the exhibition will shed light on “areas of enduring violence and war around the world, the crisis of migration in the Mediterranean and at the U.S.-Mexico border, the experience and representation of refugees and refugee camps, and the plight of undocumented and ‘stateless’ people around the world. These subjects will intersect with themes of memory, placelessness, and precariousness, as well as the dream of opportunities and hope for more promising futures.”

The exhibition is co-curated by Massimiliano Gioni, artistic director of the New Museum, and Natalie Bell, associate curator at the New Museum. Although the curators are affiliated with the New Museum, The Phillips Collection is the sole venue for the show.

An earlier exhibition inspired the project—“The Restless Earth” curated by Gioni at the Milan Triennale in 2017. A spokesperson for The Phillips Collection said after seeing the Milan show, the museum approached the curators about producing a version specifically for the Washington institution. “Because of the New Museum’s previously committed exhibition schedule, our exhibition cannot travel there and will only be on view in Washington, D.C.,” she said. Klaus Ottmann, chief curator at The Phillips Collection, is coordinating the show with the New Museum curators.

According to Phillips, “the exhibition will bring together a multitude of voices and expose the universality of migration as an experience shared by many. The exhibition also focuses on how artists bear witness to both historical events and more subtle shifts in cultural landscapes.”

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JACK DELANO, “Group of Florida migrants on their way to Cranberry, New Jersey, to pick potatoews near Shawboro, North Carolina,” 1940 (photograph). I Farm Security Administration, Office of War Information Photograph Collection, Library of Congress

Selections from Jacob Lawrence’s iconic Migration Series (1940-41) from The Phillips Collection will be featured in the exhibition among several other works considering the experiences of African Americans, and people of African descent across the globe, trying to find a safe and productive place in the world.

Wilkerson adapted the title of her book from a phrase she discovered in the footnotes to “Black Boy,” Richard Wright’s autobiography.

“The question of the title set me on a course of trying to understand just what the sun means to us, what it gives us and what it takes to defy the gravitational pull of your own solar system and take off for another far away,” Wilkerson says in an [interview on her website](#).

“Richard Wright consciously chose to call the cold North the place of warmer suns. It showed how determined he and millions of others like him were to leave a place that had shunned them for a place they hoped would sustain them, the need of any human being and the gift of any sun.” **CT**

**“The Warmth of Other Suns: Stories of Global Displacement” is on view at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., June 22-Sept. 22, 2019**

IN CONVERSATION On May 23, The Phillips Collection and New Museum are co-hosting a discussion, **“Representations and Perceptions of Migration in Art”** at Hunter College in New York City

FIND MORE [about the title](#) of Isabel Wilkerson’s book, **“The Warmth of Other Suns”**

**BOOKSHELF**

Isabel Wilkerson’s **“The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration”** won many awards including the National Book Critics Circle Award. Wilkerson adapted the title for her book from a phrase she found in the footnotes for **“Black Boy”** by Richard Wright. **“Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series”** accompanied the artist’s exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 2015.



*GLENN LIGON, “Double America,” 2012 (Neon and paint, 36 x 120 inches). | National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Agnes Gund*





ALIZA NISENBAUM, “MOIA’s NYC Women’s Cabinet,” 2016 (oil on linen, 68 x 85 inches). | Whitney Museum of American Art, New York Gift of Jackson Tang in honor of Christopher Y. Lew



DOROTHEA LANGE, “I Am an American,” 1942 (Gelatin silver print). | Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-USZ62-23602