

**DISAPPEARANCE**

**AT SEA -**

**MARE NOSTRUM**

# ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

BALTIC's Ground Floor exhibition, *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* is a group show presenting film, video, digital mapping, installation, photography, collage, print and drawing.

Exploring the refugee crisis, *Disappearance at Sea* draws particular attention to the collective and individual journeys of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Mare Nostrum is the Latin name for the Mediterranean and literally means 'our sea'.

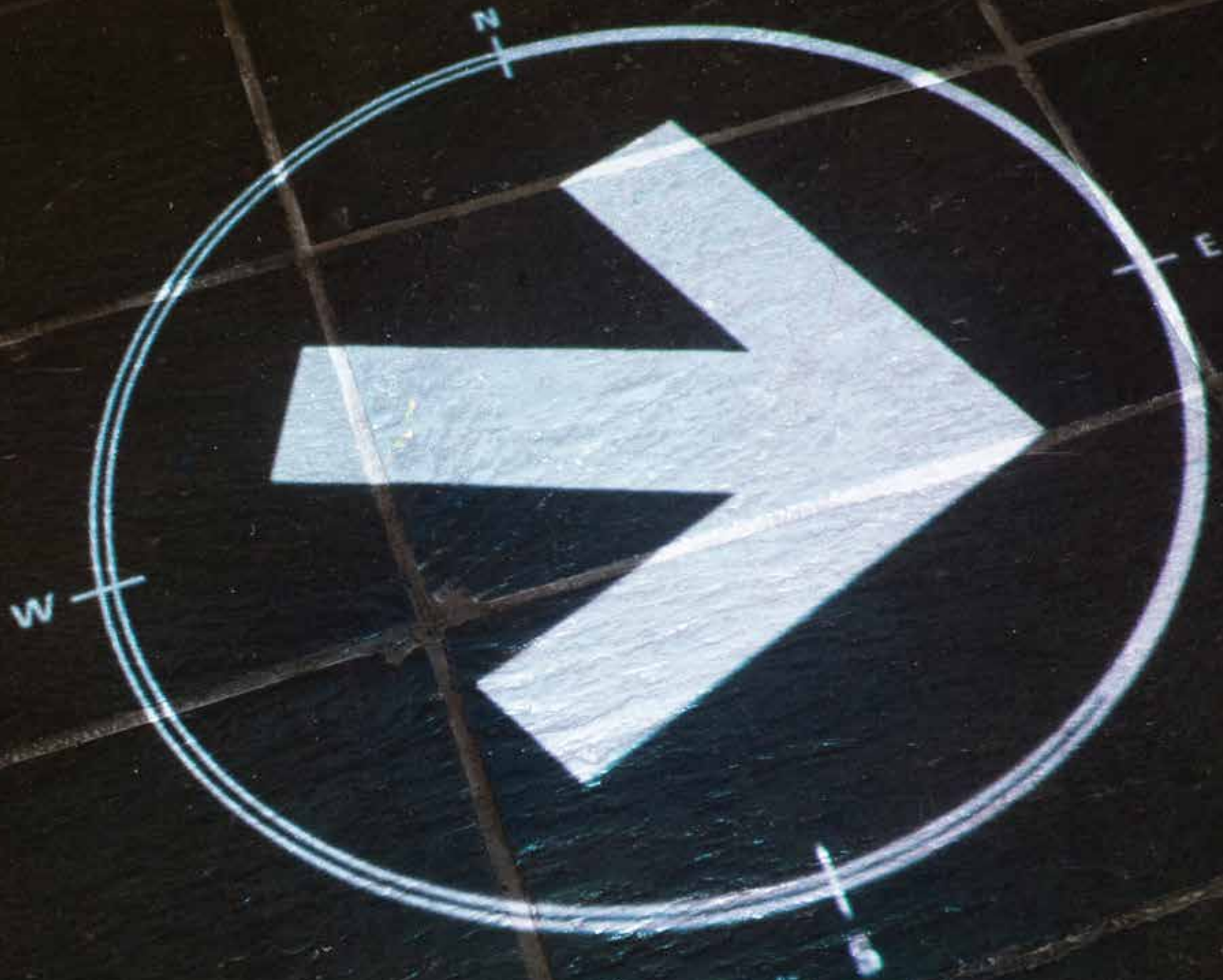
During 2015, some one million people sought to make this crossing, travelling through Turkey and Greece and from Libya to Italy, forced by wars in the Middle East, in Syria, Libya and Egypt, and compelled by persecution.

It has been the largest exodus of people in our times and it continues.

The exhibition presents responses, reflections and collected findings by artists, activists and researchers to themes of migration, identity, disempowerment and human rights. It references the political, social and economic climate that breeds this scale of humanitarian disaster and the stories, images and global media reception that result.

With several new commissions, *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* exhibits work by artists from Syria, Greece, Serbia, Denmark, Kenya and the UK.

Artists include James Bridle / Tomo Brody / Aikaterini Gegisian / Forensic Architecture (Lorenzo Pezzani & Charles Heller) / Jackie Karuti / Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen / Hrair Sarkissian / ScanLAB Projects & Embassy for the Displaced Skart collective – Djordje Balmazovic / Wolfgang Tillmans / Watch the Med. With contributions by Amnesty International.



# JAMES BRIDLE

Artist, writer, journalist and publisher, James Bridle's two channel installation *Wayfinding*, 2016, gathers international news headlines in real-time and uses them to collate the shifting climate of opinion towards refugees and migrants across Europe.

Controlled by two Raspberry-Pi microcomputers, the installation reads hundreds of online news articles an hour and analyses them for location and sentiment; are they positive or negative, welcoming or dismissive?

A growing tool in newsgathering, companies are increasingly using sentiment analysis to understand and respond to public opinion on products, programming and politics by collecting and collating online chatter.

The latest headlines, together with their projected sentiment, are displayed to visitors, whilst a compass arrow on the floor shows the direction and distance towards the point in Europe with the best, or least negative, national attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

*"Wayfinding is not a stop-start process of moving from one point to another, but a constant flow of data from multiple sources, subtly inflecting our passage through the world."*<sup>1</sup>

- Think about your own opinions towards migrants and refugees. Where would they sit on Bridle's sentiment analysis? To what extent do your past experiences shape your current opinions? Who and what are they informed and influenced by?
- How much of a role does the media play in shaping individual and national sentiment?
- How possible is it to form opinion in a vacuum, without influence, sway or presupposition?
- Create your own wayfinding installation. Pick a theme, subject, key word, question or debate and collate together news articles, social media stories, hashtags and the feelings of your peers, family and friends. Analyse the collective sentiment towards your issue. How is it similar to your own individual opinion? How is it different? Does knowing the collective sentiment change your own ideas?



# TOMO BRODY

Brody's documentary *Humans After All: Voices from Calais*, features a sample of testimonies from 65 men, women and children from seven different countries.

Filmed in the Calais Jungle, a French refugee camp, located just outside the ferry port, the piece focuses purely on the shadowed hands of their speakers; anxiously wringing, angrily clenched, tight with fear or open in appeal.

Voices tell the stories of why speakers had to leave their home countries, what happened to them along the way and the experiences they have had as refugees in the camps. These are stories of fear, threat, exploitation, loss, weariness and sadness.

- Watch Brody's documentary <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/humans-after-all-voices-calais>

Think about the experiences that have been shared. Reflect, question and respond.

*"If everyone recognises the essential dignity and worth of all other human beings and if everyone recognises that all human beings have the same basic, equal rights, then this will lead to freedom, justice and peace in the world."*<sup>2</sup>

On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A milestone document, the UDHR is drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from across the world, and sets out a common standard for all people and nations.

- Re-watch Brody's documentary. Consider the UDHR and decide to what extent it has been upheld in the stories you hear.
- Why do you think that the UDHR is an advisory document and not a law?

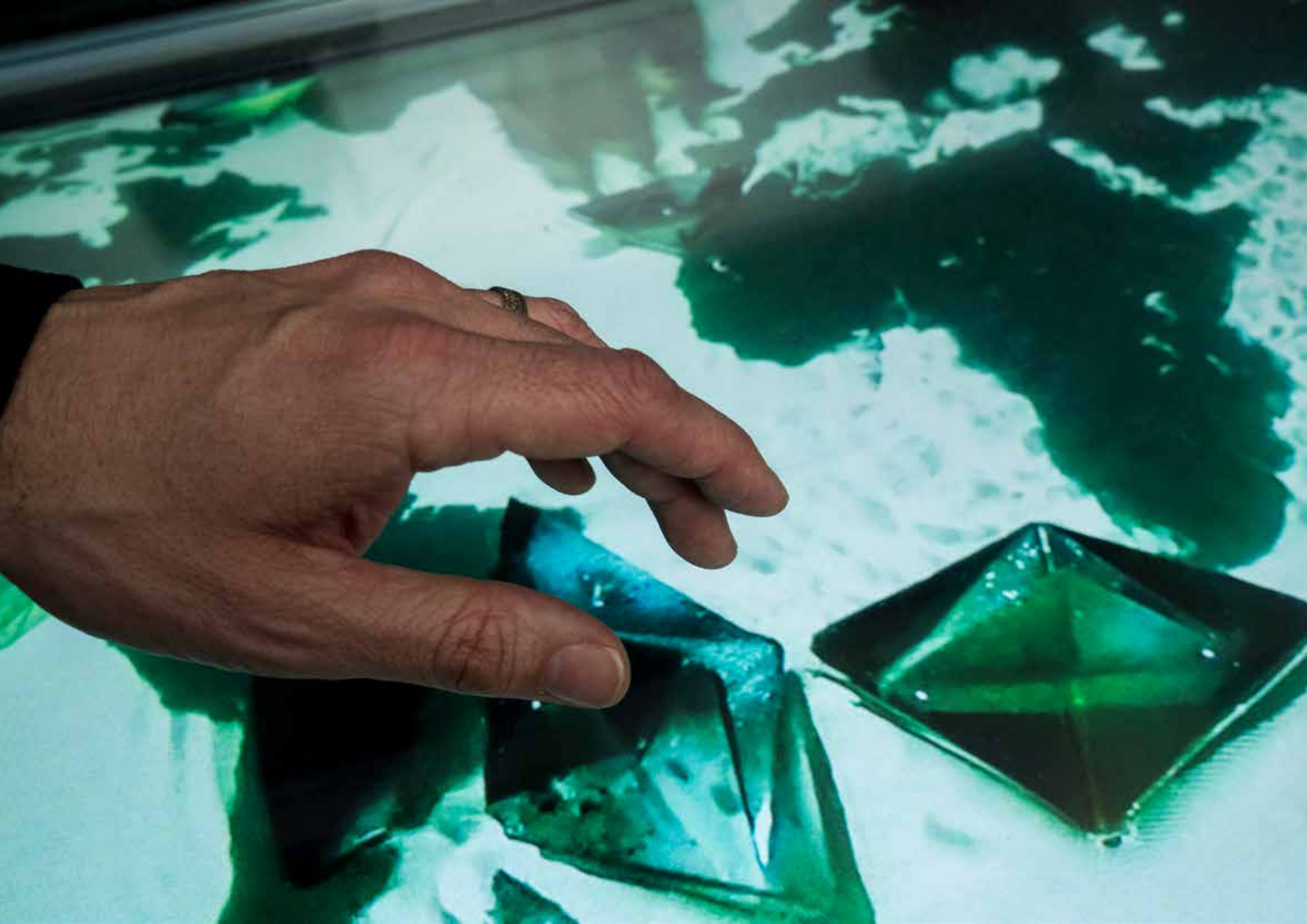
Visit <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-great-escape#.WG9uCFOLTcs> for an interactive board game that explores this further.

- One of the speakers reveals that he and his family have 'no place' in the world. Imagine thinking this. How do you feel about yourself and your homeland? How do you feel about, and react to, the people and places around you?
- Consider the last line of the documentary; *"Why do they not help us?"*

Think about the political, social, cultural and economic factors that surround an immigration debate. Look at news websites, newspapers, opinion pieces, blogs and social media. Talk to friends, family, teachers and peers. Is there an answer to this question? If so, what is it?

- How important is it for artworks to evoke discussion and to challenge? How big, or small, a part does this play in the purpose of art?





# JACKIE KARUTI

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Karuti's work explores themes of death, identity and urban culture using installation, video and still performance.

Her work, *There Are Worlds Out There They Never Told You About*, 2016, sees a disembodied hand gently trickle and swirl water over a submerged world map; paper origami boats bob and float. As the video continues, the boats start to take on water, dipping and tilting before slowly sinking below.

Karuti's work imagines the origins of a human world beneath the ocean; inspired by the myth of a 'Black Atlantis' where the descendants of slaves, thrown overboard during the Middle Passage from Africa to the Americas, went on to form a civilisation in its watery depths.

The scene of confinement, sickness, torture and cruelty, the Middle Passage was the longest part of the journey made by slave ships sailing between the West Coast of Africa and the West Indies. It was considered a time of in-betweenness for those being traded where – separated from their families, community, culture, religion and history – individuals existed with ripped and removed identity.

- How is identity constructed? List the things that make you, you.

- How important is your country of origin in defining your identity?
- When you think of home country, how do you feel about it? What aspects are you most proud of? What parts of its history do you question?
- How was the country you live in described or defined 100/200 years ago? What is it best known for now? How do you feel about this?
- What makes up a country's culture? What have you lost from your culture of origin? What has been carried over from your parents or grandparents' lives into yours?
- How might it feel to be forcibly separated from your culture?

Karuti's *There Are Worlds They Never Told You About* imagines the beginnings of a place where people who die away from 'home' go to. She questions whether, in a present without individual agency, choice or control, you can perhaps just fly away to another time and space.

- What would it mean to migrate or run away to a world that exists only in our imagination?
- Are there times in your life when you've felt the need to do this?
- Design your own country. What rules and laws would you want people to follow? What would your country be known for? How would it respond to the global refugee crisis?





# NIKOLAI BENDIX SKYLUM LARSEN

Watch *End of Dreams*, 2015. It is 14 minutes long.

**Think** about what you are watching.

**Consider** what the film might mean.

**Reconsider** the sounds that accompany it.

**Try** re-titling the work.

**Do** you think 'the title' encourages a predetermined idea about the piece?

**How** comfortable do you feel watching?

**Imagine** the stories and scenes cut from the film; what didn't make it?

**Find** something about this piece that you think other people might have overlooked.

**Draw** the movements of the water.

**Collect** a list of words that come to mind when you watch this.

**Fold** paper to create a viewfinder and focus on one part of the work.

**Stop** and think about what *End of Dreams* says about our choices as a society.

**Start** to think about what you would film in Larsen's style.

**Be** the artist. Use your mobile phone to make your work.

Larsen's *End of Dreams*, 2015, was initially envisaged as a sculptural installation; an ode to the migrant lives lost crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

In 2014, the artist submerged 48 canvas-wrapped, concrete sculptures, attached to an anchored wooden raft, off the coast of Pizzo Calabro in Calabria, Southern Italy. Hauntingly reminiscent of bodybags, these sculptures were left to slowly grow a patina of ocean organisms. However, a few weeks after immersion, an unanticipated, violet storm ravaged the raft, scattering sculptures and wooden remnants across the sea bed and onto nearby beaches. On the same night, the same storm took the lives of a boatload of migrants in the nearby Channel of Sicily.

Larsen believed that nature's intervention brought the process of the work's production even closer to the fear, trauma and peril of its content. He hired divers to film the scene and collect all the debris and sculptures that could be located.

13 out of 48 sculptures were found. The rest are forever lost at sea.



# AIKATERINI GEGISIAN

Born in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, Gegisian, now lives and works between the UK and her home country.

Her work, *Sea Blues*, 2016 is a photographic installation composed of a series of found images mounted onto wood to create a panorama.

Using photographs of the Aegean Sea from travel brochures and postcards of the port towns of Thessaloniki, Greece and Smyrna (now, Izmir) in Turkey, the artist constructs a window through which to peer into a carefully constructed landscape.

- Gegisian has chosen images that are predominantly red, blue and yellow. What effect does this have on the overall 'feel' of the piece?
- Re-imagine this artwork in different colours. How might it change?
- Gegisian has used the life ring as a frame in the centre of her installation. Explore your home, school and local community. How many similar framing devices can you find? Document them through drawing, photography, mapping or note taking.

In May 1923, Greece and Turkey enacted a population exchange; where the state or authority enforces movement of people from one region to another, made on the basis of ethnicity or religion. This forced migration saw almost 1.5 million Christians and half a million Muslims journey, across the sea, from one side of the international boarder to the other. As port towns on either side of the Aegean, Thessaloniki and Izmir are forever linked by this policy.

Gegisian references this complex history in her descriptions of *Sea Blues*; the appearance and disappearance of the sun on the horizon of this timeless tourist paradise belying its role in enforced mass movement.

- Consider the images that make up *Sea Blues* and their original inclusion in travel brochures. What clues do they give to understanding the wider context of the piece?
- To what extent do you believe the film and photography imagery you see?
- Select images from a wide variety of daily newspapers and consider what each image conveys.
- If a picture is worth a thousand words, what are your selected pictures telling you?
- Consider what the photographer has been able to capture in each shot and what elements might be 'missing'.
- Re-examine the article that accompanies each image. How well do they work alongside each other?



# WOLFGANG TILLMANS

Born in 1968 in the Remscheid, North West Germany, Tillmans is a photographer.

In 2000, he won the Turner Prize, an annual art prize presented to artists under 50, living, working or born in the UK. Tillmans' diverse body of work is characterised by close observation and an ongoing investigation of the medium of photography.

Made in 2008, *Lampedusa* depicts the rusting wreckage of blue, white and red boats piled amongst the dunes of a white sandy beach under a greying sky. The photograph is named after the island where it was taken. Lampedusa is the European territory closest to Libya and a popular route for migrants looking to enter Europe from Africa and the Middle East. The fragments in this image are from boats used by people making this crossing of the Mediterranean Sea.

In October 2013, more than 500 people drowned attempting this journey. In 2014, around 3,500 people are known to have died doing the same; and in one incident in April 2015 more than 800 people lost their lives. This is the deadliest sea crossing in the world.

- The crossing from Libya to Lampedusa is 290 miles. How suitable are the boats in Tillmans' image?
- Tillmans took this in 2008. Consider if, and how, this scene might have changed.

*"Since last autumn many friends in the art community have, like myself, been asking themselves similar questions: 'What can I do?'; 'How can I help?'; 'How can we address a situation that's in constant flux?'"*<sup>3</sup>

Reflect on Tillmans' statement. Think of an issue that makes you feel like this.

- Represent it in one single, still image.
- Title it and write one sentence to accompany the piece.
- How would you want your audience to react?

The terms 'migrant' 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'Internally Displaced Person' (IDP) are used frequently in our newspapers, websites, social media and local communities.

- Research and define these words.
- How interchangeable are they? Can you be more than one of these?
- What's the difference between legal and illegal migration?
- How can you legally, and safely, claim asylum in the UK?

It is important to understand and appreciate the definitions of these labels, but it is even more important to remember that they are applied to real human beings, in real situations, often making horrible, challenging and frightening decisions on a daily basis. Remember that we are all human.

<sup>3</sup>Tillmans. W , 2015. Berlin News - Meeting Place: A Project by Wolfgang Tillmans My Art Guides, (Online). Available at: <http://myartguides.com/posts/news/meeting-place-a-project-by-wolfgang-tillmans/> [Accessed: 11 January 2017].





# CHARLES HELLER AND LORENZO PEZZANI, (FORENSIC ARCHITECTURE)

'Operation Mare Nostrum' was a year-long naval and air operation organised by the Italian government. It focused on search and rescue and is credited with enabling at least 150,000 migrants to cross the Mediterranean Sea safely. Costly and politically unpopular, the operation ended in October 2014 and was replaced by the EU's 'Operation Triton'. With less budget, and fewer sea and air resources, Triton operates closer to Europe's coast and focuses on patrolling borders.

Forensic Architecture's *Liquid Traces – The Left To Die Boat*, 2014, is particularly concerned with this wider responsibility that government and coalition organisations have for rescue.

Directed by artists Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani *Liquid Traces* offers a reconstruction of the events concerning what is now known as the "left-to-die boat" case. In March 2011, 72 passengers left the Libyan coast aboard a small rubber dinghy heading towards the island of Lampedusa. They were left to drift for 14 days in NATO's maritime surveillance area, despite several distress signals relaying their location and repeated interactions with government agencies; including at least one military helicopter and an encounter with a military ship.

As a result, only 9 people survived.

"In producing this reconstruction, our research has used... remote sensing devices used to record and read the sea's depth and surface. Contrary to the vision of the sea as a non-signifying space in which any event immediately dissolves into moving currents, with our investigation we demonstrated that traces are indeed left in water, and that by reading them carefully the sea itself can be turned into a witness for interrogation." <sup>4</sup>

- The title of this piece is particularly evocative. Consider how titles affect your expectations and opinions about an artwork?

Forensic Architecture's artwork relies on decoding the traces of action, or inaction, left behind within the sea. Throughout our daily lives we leave traces behind us, physical, social, cultural or emotional signs that we were there; on objects, people, animals, in situations and in landscapes.

Sometimes the smallest gesture leaves the biggest trace.

- Embark on a series of art installations that focus on leaving behind your own 'trace':
- Create badges; wear them and distribute them.
- Make peel-able stickers and mark where you've been.
- Project silhouettes onto paths and walls using card templates and a torch.
- Leave positive post-it notes for others to find.
- Write notes in the sand with a stick.
- Leave words of encouragement next to the crossword puzzle in the free paper and pass it on to someone else.
- Smile at someone.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

*“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”<sup>5</sup>*

Amnesty International works to protect men, women and children wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

As a global movement of over seven million people, Amnesty International is the world's largest grassroots human rights organisation. It investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilises the public and helps transform societies to create a safer, more just world. Amnesty International received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its life-saving work.

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>

You can now register for Amnesty's second massive open online course (MOOC) on human rights. It will help you gain the knowledge to defend and promote the rights of refugees across the world

[https://www.edx.org/course/human-rights-rights-refugees-amnesty-internationalx-rights2x?utm\\_source=paid-social&utm\\_medium=partner-marketing&utm\\_campaign=amnestyinternationalx&utm\\_content=fans\\_interests\\_r2\\_v3](https://www.edx.org/course/human-rights-rights-refugees-amnesty-internationalx-rights2x?utm_source=paid-social&utm_medium=partner-marketing&utm_campaign=amnestyinternationalx&utm_content=fans_interests_r2_v3)

# FURTHER RESEARCH

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL / ASYLUM /  
DJORDJE BALMAZOVIC / HUMAN RIGHTS /  
HRAIR SARKISSIAN / INTERNALLY DISPLACED  
PERSON / MIGRANT / REFUGEE / SCANLAB  
PROJECTS / SKART COLLECTIVE / UDHR /  
WARSAN SHIRE – HOME / WATCH THE MED

# NOTES FOR TEACHERS

Contemporary art is incredibly diverse and wide ranging and can be used to support teaching and learning as part of an entire learning experience. Contemporary art challenges, exposes and explores cultural and social issues and identities, investigating their meaning through a wide range of practices. BALTIC's programme aims to build pupils' confidence and encourage aspirations, develop their visual language and creative thinking as well as furthering their artistic skills, encouraging students to offer opinions and take risks in response to such visual, cultural and creative stimuli, safe in the knowledge that art has no 'wrong answer'. Contemporary art can be used to generate creative thinking in all subject areas, supporting and offering transferable learning across the curriculum.

BALTIC offers a variety of tours, workshops, artist sessions and research opportunities for EYFS, primary, secondary, SEND and post-16 students. Many are free!

To book a session, arrange a visit or chat about an opportunity, please contact our Schools and Colleges Programmer, Vicky Sturrs on 0191 440 4929 or [vickys@balticmill.com](mailto:vickys@balticmill.com)

**An Introduction to *Disappearance at Sea***  
**Mon-Fri between 27 Jan and 23 Apr 2017 / FREE**  
**1-1.5 hours**  
**For pupils aged 5-19 / Booking essential**

This free session, supported by discussion and enquiry techniques, will introduce BALTIC's exhibition, *Disappearance at Sea*.

Offering an artist response to the current refugee crisis, this exhibition draws attention to the loss of life at sea and in particular the conditions faced by refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

This session offers the opportunity to discuss how artists reflect the changing nature of society, the tolerances we should exhibit, the democracy we are part of and the individual liberties we are afforded, by birth, or through circumstance of being British.

This session is tailored to the age, needs and ability of your group and will complement your work on British Values and SMSC.

**ARTIST STUDIO SESSIONS SUITABLE FOR EYFS,  
KS1,2,3&4, POST-16 AND SEND, £100 HALF DAY, £200 FULL DAY + VAT**

Practical art workshops delivered by one of BALTIC's experienced artist facilitators develop your pupils' creative inspiration, influences, skills and techniques.

Artist Studio Sessions give your pupils the opportunity to get initial inspiration for projects, develop new artistic practices, work closely with a practicing artist and take creative risks.

Use the exhibitions as a focus, come with a ready designed project, or leave it to BALTIC to create a bespoke session from your ideas and desired outcomes. BALTIC's artist team have diverse interests and workshop skills can include drawing, painting, sculpture, printing, textiles, installation, photography, animation, ceramics, performance and sound work to name only a few!

Artist Studio Sessions can take place at BALTIC or at your school and includes all materials.

# USEFUL LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[amnesty.org.uk](https://www.amnesty.org.uk)

[amnesty.org.uk/blogs/classroom-community/eight-educational-resources-better-understand-refugee-crisis](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/classroom-community/eight-educational-resources-better-understand-refugee-crisis)

[amnesty.org.uk/humans-after-all-voices-calais](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/humans-after-all-voices-calais)

[amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-great-escape#.WJS8umY1yP8](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/activity-great-escape#.WJS8umY1yP8)

[amnesty.org.uk/resources/lesson-refugees-and-asylum#.WJS8gmY1yP8](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/lesson-refugees-and-asylum#.WJS8gmY1yP8)

[amnesty.org.uk/resources/speaker-toolkit-refugee-rights#.WJS8WWY1yP8](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/resources/speaker-toolkit-refugee-rights#.WJS8WWY1yP8)

[amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/activities\\_-\\_seeking\\_safety.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/activities_-_seeking_safety.pdf)

[amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/amnesty\\_trainers\\_refugee\\_training\\_pack.pdf](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/amnesty_trainers_refugee_training_pack.pdf)

[balticmill.com](https://www.balticmill.com)

[balticplus.uk](https://www.balticplus.uk)

[forensic-architecture.org](https://www.forensic-architecture.org)

[gegisian.com](https://www.gegisian.com)

[nbsl.info](https://www.nbsl.info)

[shorttermmemoryloss.com](https://www.shorttermmemoryloss.com)

[thirdroomstudios.com](https://www.thirdroomstudios.com)

[tillmans.co.uk](https://www.tillmans.co.uk)



# IMAGE CREDITS

## Page 3

James Brindle, *Wayfinding*, 2016. *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* (installation view) BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo: Mark Pinder © 2017 BALTIC

## Page 5

Tomo Brody, *Humans After All: Voices from Calais*. *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* (installation view) BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo: Mark Pinder © 2017 BALTIC

## Page 7

Jackie Karuti, *There Are Worlds Out There They Never Told You About*, 2016. *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* (installation view) BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo: Mark Pinder © 2017 BALTIC

## Page 9

Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen, *End of Dreams*, 2015. Photo, Domenico Gallelli. Courtesy of the artist.

## Page 11

Aikaterini Gegisian, *Sea Blues*, 2016. *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* (installation view) BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo: Mark Pinder © 2017 BALTIC

## Page 13

Wolfgang Tillmans, *Italian Coastal Guard Flying Rescue Mission off Lampedusa*, 2008. Image Courtesy Maureen Paley, London.

## Page 15

Forensic Architecture, *Liquid Traces – The Left To Die Boat*, 2014. *Disappearance at Sea – Mare Nostrum* (installation view) BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art. Photo: Mark Pinder © 2017 BALTIC