

# WOMEN AND MIGRATION(S) II



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Cover image: FIRELEI BÁEZ for Marie-Louise Coidavid, exiled, keeper of order, Anacaona, 2018. Oil on canvas. Installation view: 10th Berlin Biennale, Akademie der Künste (Hanseatenweg), Berlin, 9 June 9-September 2018. Photo: Timo Ohler. Cover design by Anna Gatti

# 6. Blessing of the Boats

*Muna Malik*

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Our society is grappling with the question of how we can make a better world to serve us all collectively and equally.

Muna Malik's current work uses abstract paintings and interactive sculpture to create poetic imagery concerning the narratives of women of color and refugees. "Blessing of the Boats" is an ongoing art project focused on a series of large, illuminated sculptural boats made of metal and reflective surfaces. The project prompts interaction with the public by encouraging viewers to create small paper origami boats with personal messages for the future. The messages are then collected and added to each installation, allowing it to grow over time.

The first installation of "Blessing of the Boats" was featured at the Northern Spark Arts Festival in Minnesota in 2016. This installation invited festival-goers to take an artist-led journey across the historic Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis. On the walk, they experienced music, poetry, and stories performed by local artists with a direct connection to the ongoing refugee crisis. The journey culminated in a silent vigil surrounding the "Blessing of the Boats" installation to commemorate refugees who had lost their lives on their journey for safety.

"Blessing of The Boats" has evolved, by expanding its focus and appearing in new public and private spaces around the country. Building on the initial topic of global migration, the project now asks: how, together, can we create a better society? Audiences respond to prompts such as, "What messages would people leave if they knew it would have a large impact on someone anywhere in the world?" and, "If we had the opportunity to sail towards a new future, what society would you build and how would we get there?"

Reimagined for NYC audiences, *The Blessing of the Boats: River to River*, a 2020 installation, invited viewers to carefully consider their role as individuals within our greater community. The sculpture was constructed to evoke an uplifting feeling of opportunity, and guests were asked to think about sailing towards an improved society: “what would you build and how would you get there?” Our imagination is only limited by the scope of the questions we ask, and this project inspires a “commitment to the rebuilding of a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.”



Fig. 1 Location: Battery Park City, Belvedere Plaza, NYC. Photo courtesy of the artist © Muna Malik.



Fig. 2 Location: Battery Park City, Belvedere Plaza, NYC. Photo courtesy of the artist © Muna Malik.



Fig. 3 Location: Battery Park City, Belvedere Plaza, NYC. Photo courtesy of the artist © Muna Malik.



Fig. 4 Location: Battery Park City, Belvedere Plaza, NYC. Photo courtesy of the artist © Muna Malik.