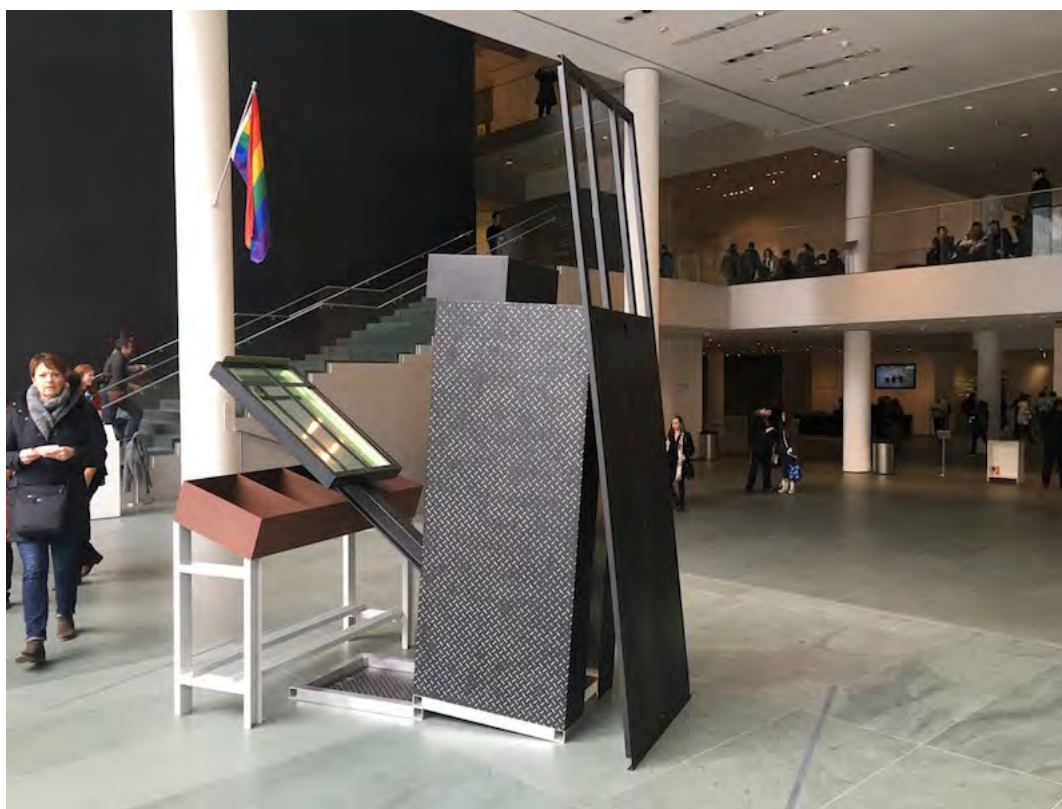


IN ELEGANT RIPOSTE TO TRUMP'S TRAVEL ORDER, MOMA INSTALLS WORKS BY ARTISTS FROM BANNED MUSLIM COUNTRIES

BY *Andrew Russett* ([http://](http://www.artnews.com/author/arussett/)www.artnews.com/author/arussett/) POSTED 02/03/17 2:31 PM

Siah Armajani, *Elements Number 30*, 1990, has been installed in the museum's lobby.

ARTNEWS

Less than a week after President Trump signed an executive order banning citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the United States, the Museum of Modern Art in New York has responded by installing a dozen works by artists from those countries, including the late Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid, the Sudanese master Ibrahim El-Salahi, and the young Iranian painter Tala Madani, in the galleries devoted to its permanent collection.

Alongside each work is a placard that reads:

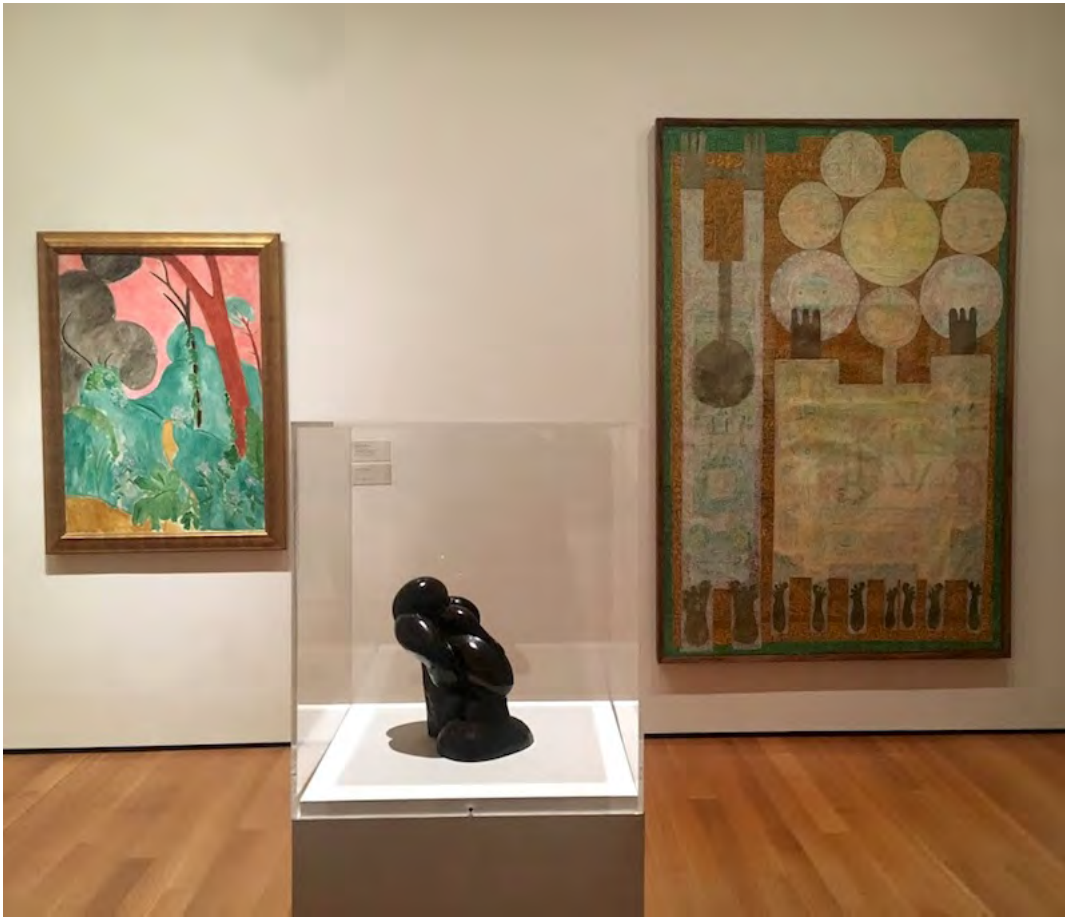
This work is by an artist from a nation whose citizens are being denied entry into the United States, according to a presidential executive order issued on January 27, 2017. This is one of several such artworks from the Museum's collection installed throughout the fifth-floor galleries to affirm the ideals of welcome and freedom as vital to this Museum, as they are to the United States.



Henri Rousseau, *The Sleeping Gypsy*, 1897, and Zaha Hadid, *The Peak Project, Hong Kong, China*, 1991.
ARTNEWS

A press rep for MoMA said that Christophe Cherix, chief curator of drawings and prints, and Ann Temkin, chief curator painting and sculpture, were overseeing the initiative, that the artworks were installed last night, and that additional installs and curatorial programs are being planned. (The news was first reported in the *New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/03/arts/design/moma-protests-trump-entry-ban-with-work-by-artists-from-muslim-nations.html?smid=tw-share>).

The additions so far are almost uniformly impressive and well-considered, broadening the geographical and cultural scope, as well as the political implications, of MoMA's collection galleries, which its curators do not regularly alter.



Henri Matisse's *Tiari*, 1930, and *Periwinkles / Moroccan Garden*, 1912, and Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, *K+L+32+H+4. Mon père et moi (My Father and I)*, 1962.

ARTNEWS

In the gallery devoted to Matisse, the curators have installed a remarkable work from 1962 by the Iranian Charles Hossein Zenderoudi, who is 80 this year. It is a deliriously patterned geometric drawing of Zenderoudi and his father, more than seven feet tall and made with felt-tip pen and ink on paper, and it plays beautifully with the Matisse's glorious color, emphasizing the vital role that art and textiles from the Middle East and surrounding areas played in the Frenchman's work. (Just a few steps away is Matisse's 1915–16 masterpiece *The Moroccans*, which shows a man in a turban looking out at a white-domed mosque.)

Like Tate Modern and a handful of other major Western institutions, MoMA has been making efforts in recent years to broaden its reach beyond the European and American canon, expanding its holdings of art from the Middle East (<http://www.artnews.com/2015/04/02/modern-middle-eastern-art-finds-new-audience-in-the-west/>) and elsewhere, but it is notable that many of the works installed here have long been in the museum's collection. They just have not regularly been on view. The Zenderoudi was acquired the year it was made, and a potent little abstraction by the great El-Salahi, *The Mosque* (1964) was purchased the year after it was made, and has now found a home in the museum's Picasso gallery, across the way from his *Demaiselles d'Avignon* (1907), a work heavily influenced by African art. Let us hope that some of these new inclusions stick, even after the order and the president who signed it are long gone.



Ibrahim El-Salahi, *The Mosque*, 1964.
ARTNEWS

The story of modernism in the West is, of course, a story of global travel, of intercontinental influence, and of colonialism, with artists in the United States and Europe looking to other countries and cultures for inspiration. It is also a story of forced displacement, wars forcing artists to become refugees and seek safety abroad. Tala Madani's 2007 video *Chit Chat*—a work finely attuned to current developments, showing a variety of old men conspiring and then spewing bile—sits in a room with a Marc Chagall, who fled Occupied France in 1941 and came to the United States along with so many other vanguard artists of the time.

One room over, where a major Picasso has long been displayed, a large photograph of what appear to be billiard balls by the Iranian-born German photographer Shirana Shahbazi hangs not far from Marcel Duchamp's *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour*, which Duchamp made in 1918 in Buenos Aires, where he lived after first heading to the United States to get away from the Great War.



Shirana Shahbazi, *[Composition-40-2011]*, 2011, with Marcel Duchamp, *To Be Looked at (from the Other Side of the Glass) with One Eye, Close to, for Almost an Hour Buenos Aires*, 1918.

ARTNEWS

There will be those who will say that a move like this is just a gesture, that it offers no concrete help to the more than 100,000 people whose visas have been revoked (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/public-safety/government-reveals-over-100000-visas-revoked-due-to-travel-ban/2017/02/03/7d529ecc-ea2c-11e6-b82f-687d6e6a3e7c_story.html?utm_term=.849554f59d48) as a result of this racist executive order. In a sense, they are right. Only a fundamental political reversal can begin to repair the damage that has been done. But until that shift happens—and it will—every institution with a belief in the free sharing of ideas, in combating Islamophobia, and in ensuring the safety of victims of war has an obligation to support those causes in the ways that they can. That is what the museum is doing right now.

Acting quickly and wisely, MoMA has managed a feat that is far too rare in the museum world: it has made its collection a living, breathing thing, responsive to current events, and ready to educate and challenge visitors. Artworks have unique powers—the ability to transmit complex ideas instantaneously, to highlight unseen histories, and to question the status quo. MoMA is letting those powers get to work.

Copyright 2017, Art Media ARTNEWS, llc. 110 Greene Street, 2nd Fl., New York, N.Y. 10012. All rights reserved.