



KELETI STATION

Alina Gallo

Real Art Ways

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In early September 2015, Hungarian authorities shut down Budapest's Keleti Railway Station, denying refugees with tickets access to the trains and thousands, many from Syria and Afghanistan, were stranded on their way to Germany, Sweden and other European destinations. On September 4th thousands of refugees marched from the station in protest, walking together along the M60 motorway towards Vienna.

This work, *Keleti Station*, is a graphic rendering of an makeshift camp that formed as thousands of refugees, many from Syria and Afghanistan, became stranded on their way to Germany, Sweden and other European destinations during the summer and fall of 2015.

Set in the underground transit zones of Budapest's Keleti Railway Station, this work is a composite of images and accounts of the West Balkan migration route taken from traditional and social media during that period.

Our media landscape puts us in contact with a sea of fragmented and stratified documentations that come forth on social media platforms filtered by chance as well as by multiple, calculated and unknowable internal dialectics and interests.

How do we process, recompose and interpret this multitude of information? Do we have a responsibility to attempt to assemble this information for ourselves? What are the outcomes of our interpretations?

Sampling and combining imagery and information from a multitude of raw-footage, photographs and documentary snippets, as well as network media sources, this piece reflects both a fragmented understanding of these accounts and the conscious and unconscious attempts to recompose a potential reality.



1 Refugees help a migrant child board the train to Zagreb, Croatia at Tovarnik station near the Serbian border with Croatia. Days after Hungary sealed its border with Serbia, this small station was overwhelmed by refugees waiting for passage to Western Europe. Based on a photograph by Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times.

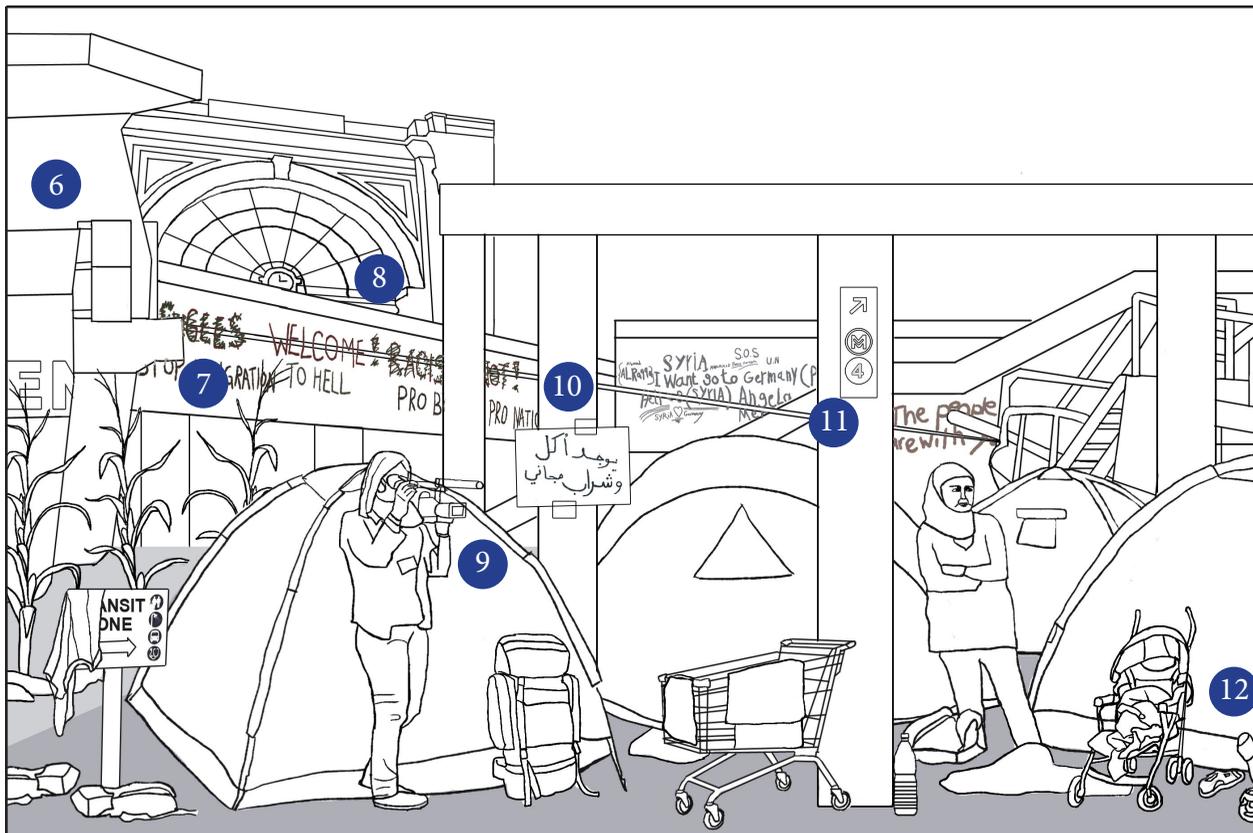
2 “Homeland of stars, I am here.” Hamra, Beriut Lebanon. Creation date: 1 July 2007. Retweeted in 2015 in the context of the Syrian war.

3 Abandoned life jackets and tire inner tubes left by Syrian refugees in dumpsters on the Greek Island of Lesbos. Lesbos remains a primary and dangerous gateway into Europe from Turkey for the greatest migration surge

since World War II. Since January of 2015, the UNHCR, the United Nations’ refugee agency, estimates more than 850,000 refugees and other migrants have entered the European Union through Greece. More than 500,000 have arrived at Lesbos alone.

4 Graphic propaganda from Islamic State billboards seen along a street in Raqqa, eastern Syria, which is controlled by the Islamic State. The billboard reads: “We will win despite the global coalition.” Based on a photograph taken on October 29, 2014 by Nour Fourat.

5 Taken from a graffiti in Athens, Greece. It reads: “When the peaceful revolution becomes impossible, the violent one becomes necessary.”



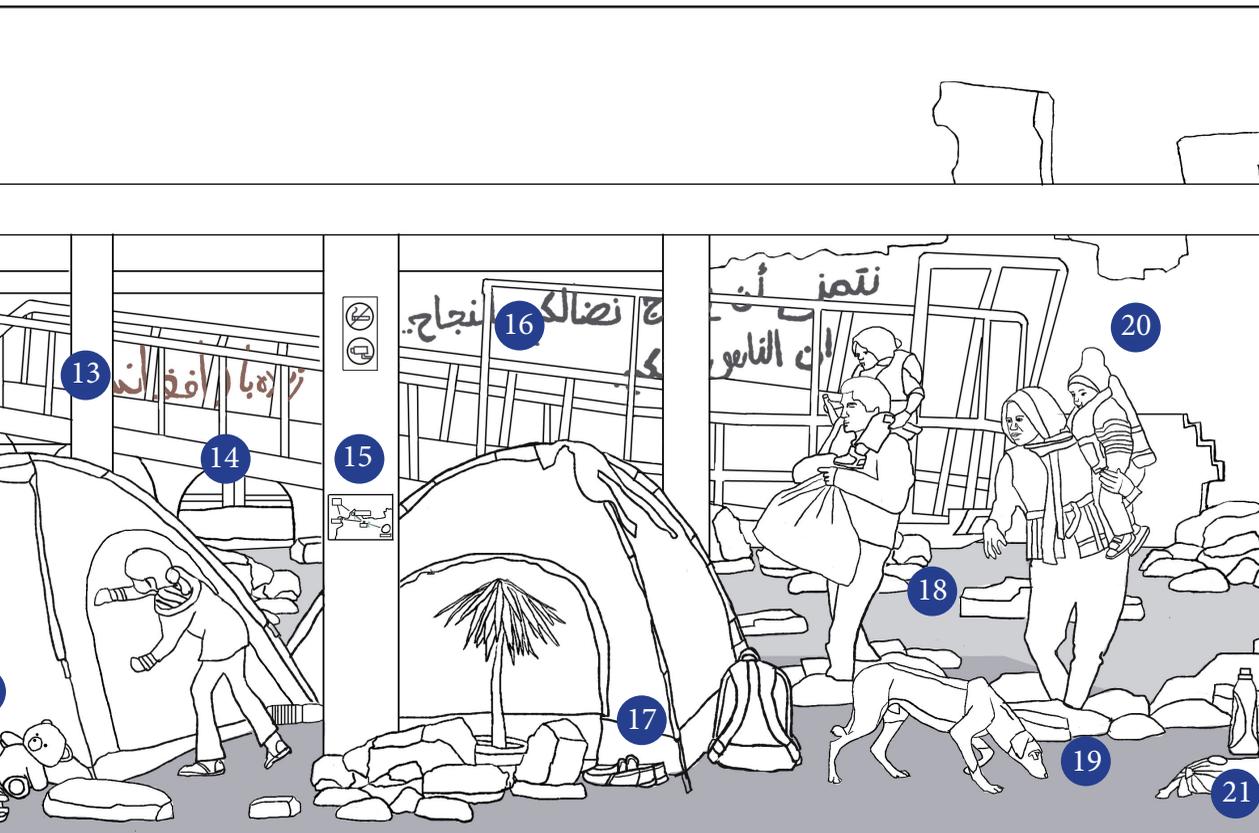
6 The stern of the 40-meter expedition vessel, the Phoenix, used by the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS), a global NGO specialised in search and rescue. MOAS rescued almost 12,000 men, women and children from the Mediterranean Sea between August 2014 and October 2015. MOAS received a wave of support in donations following the death of Alan Kurdi, allowing them to expand their mission to the Aegean Sea.

7 Graffiti in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Originally written to read: “Refugees Welcome! Racists Not!” it was later modified by a second party to read: “Welcome to Hell! Stop Immigration/ Pro Border Pro Nation.”

8 The facade of Keleti Railway Station, or Keleti Pályaudvar, the main international and inter-city railway terminal in Budapest, Hungary. The

building was designed in eclectic style by Gyula Rochlitz and János Feketeházy and constructed between 1881 and 1884 as one of the most modern railway stations of Europe. The façade faces onto a large three-sided plaza called Baross tér. In 2005, a pedestrian concourse and transit zone was constructed for better access between the Keleti Pályudvar Station, Budapest Metro Line 4 and the long-distance trains.

9 Petra László, a camera operator for a Hungarian television channel, who was filmed kicking two refugee children and tripping a man carrying a child at the border area of Röszke while documenting a wave of migrants sprinting from a holding camp. Immediately after the event, the video went viral on Twitter, Facebook and Youtube. The Syrian father who was tripped, Osama Abdul Mohsen, a professional soccer coach from the eastern province of Deir al-Zour, and his son made



it to Spain shortly after the incident and were welcomed and offered accommodations and a job by a soccer school in Madrid. Mohsen's son received the acclaim of thousands of football fans in the Spanish capital, as he was led on to the pitch by Real Madrid superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. Petra László has since publicly apologized and says she is planning to sue Facebook.

10 A sign that says: "There is food and drink for free." Taken from a photograph of the station in the first days of September 2015. Many local volunteers organized themselves to offer food, water, clothes and medical assistance to the travelling refugees. Individuals and students also set up cell phone charging stations, free wifi hot spots and projected films on some nights for the young people.

11 Someone distributed chalk to the stranded refugees and other travellers to write messages to

each other, passers by and for the media on the walls of the transit zone.

12 On September 4, 2015, a group of around 1,000 people who had been waiting days at Keleti station grew frustrated with the lack of international trains, and decided to walk to Austria - a distance of 180 km on the E60 Motorway. Some Hungarian citizens brought fruit, water and strollers to the group, many with young children, along the highway. After 12 hours of walking, the authorities organized buses to come and shuttle them the rest of the way to the Austrian border. However, after an incident the previous day in which the first train to western Europe in days was halted by police and used to try to move people to a refugee camp, the group had become distrusting the authorities' intentions. So, when the buses along the highway to Austria arrived they allowed only one bus to leave with people for the border

and awaited confirmation from the first group that it had indeed arrived in Austria before following on the remaining buses.

he was “on holiday.” These are Abdeslam’s shoes as I imagine him leaving them outside a tent to discuss his business within.

13 Written on the transit zone walls in chalk: “Long live Afghanistan!”

14 A half-sunken boat off the coast of Turkey found on September 16, 2015. At least 22 Greece-bound migrants drowned as the vessel sunk off Turkey, as police blocked hundreds of others in seeking to find an alternative route to Europe by land.

18 Based on a photograph of refugees wading through water carrying their children toward a dingy off the western coast of Turkey for a voyage to the Greek island of Chios.

Photograph by Umit Betas.

Eleven women and four children were among the victims of this migrant shipwreck in the Aegean Sea.

19 A dog roams through the rubble in a town reduced to rubble in Idlib Province, Syria.

Some stray dogs have also been seen accompanying the refugees as they pass through the Balkan countryside following google maps on their phones towards the border.

A further 249 passengers were rescued from the boat which set off from the southwestern Turkish resort town of Datca for the nearby Greek island of Kos.

Others have brought their animals from home with them on their journey. Mohamad Zaki from Bagdad was seen with his Beagle Ivo in Rigonce Slovenia after crossing from Croatia on October 5, 2015.

In the month of January 2016 alone, over 67,000 migrants have arrived in Greece and at least 368 people have lost their lives making the dangerous journey.

15 A map posted on the poles in the transit zone indicating the routes of trains that transfer refugees. Based on a photograph tweeted by @AhmdAbzd on September 10, 2015.

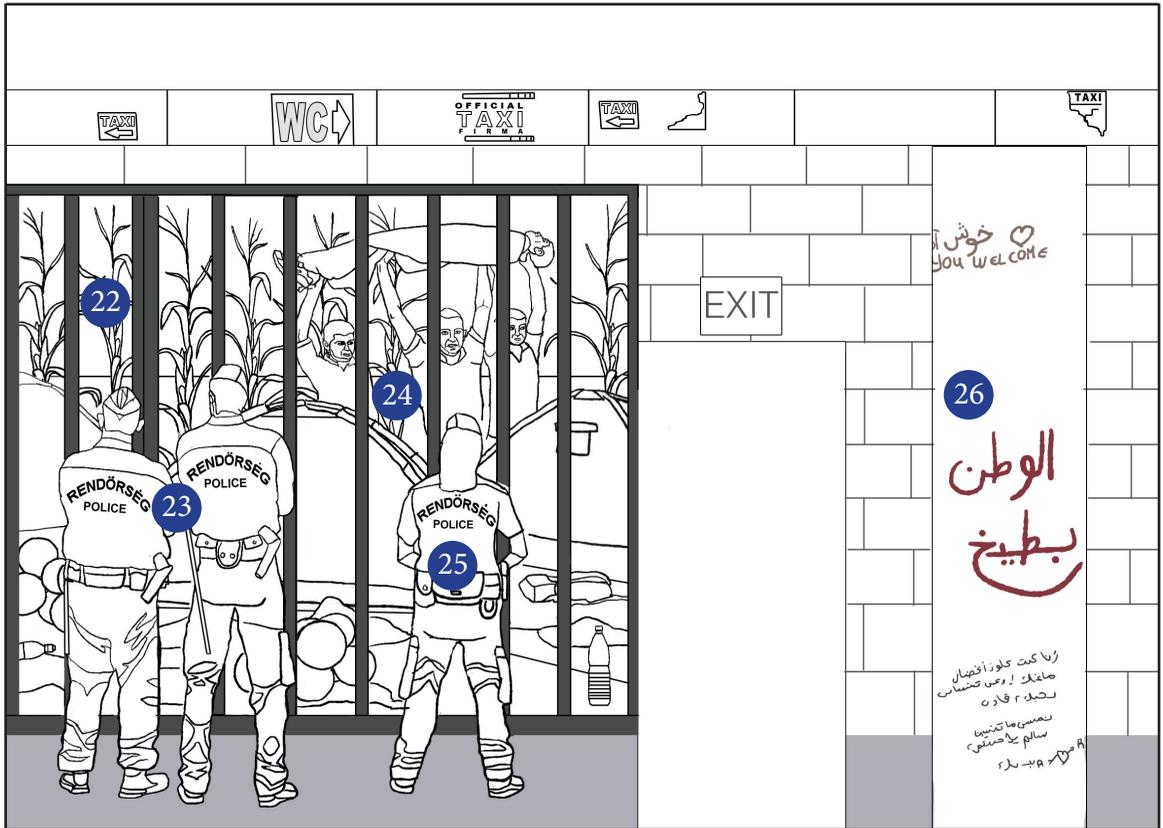
20 The remains of a historic colonial-era structure in Aleppo, Syria. This building was blown up by fighters who placed explosives in a tunnel leading under the Old City of Aleppo in February 2015. The tunnel extended from the Mamluk Yalbugha hammam to the old governorate headquarters in Old City. This colonial-era building dated back to the 1930’s and was once used by the city’s police leadership.

16 Written on the transit zone walls in one of the stairways ascending to the station entrance. It reads: “We hope that your struggle ends with success, the people are with you.”

17 In December 2015 Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced in a news conference that Salah Abdeslam, a key suspect in the 13 November Paris attacks, travelled to Keleti Station in September of 2015 to hire a suicide bomb team from the unregistered immigrants passing through Budapest. The attacks in Paris killed 130 people and triggered a manhunt for suspects, including Abdeslam. On September 9, Abdeslam was reportedly seen in Austria and was stopped along with the two others during a routine traffic check. He was in a car with Belgian number plates after traveling south from Germany and told police that

21 This sand bag with soap bars on top of it and a bottle of laundry detergent nearby are based on a photograph of a sand bag being used to hold down a part of the network of water tubes that were set up by Budapest Waterworks to make potable water available to the thousands of people sleeping at the station. Temperatures were unseasonably hot during the first week of September 2015.

People left bars of soap on this particular sand bag nearby the fountain for washing. Many families also used the water to wash their clothes. Throughout the camp clothes could be seen hung out to dry on the tops of tents and on clothes lines.



22 In August and September thousands of refugees walked hundreds of miles through the Serbian and Croatian countryside, including alongside expansive cornfields.

23 Police guard a fence locked shut to keep migrants from gaining access to the train platforms in Keleti Train Station. Hundreds of police were mobilized to control the crisis situation, which included protecting the refugees from a group of fascist soccer fans who threatened to attack those sleeping at the station one night after a match. This incident contributed to the refugees' decision to walk out of the transit zone camp and go to Austria by foot on September 4, 2015. Based on photographs by David Maurice Smith and posts from Facebook user Budapest seen on September 12, 2015.

24 A boy wrapped in a sheet being held up by a group of refugees in front of the station as a part of a

theatrical protest in which children from the group were held up to demonstrate the horrors they have fled.

25 An officer posts her photos on Facebook.

26 Graffiti that aired on the "Homeland" television series on October 11, 2015. Three artists, Heba Y. Amin, Caram Kapp and Don Karl were hired to create graffiti on site to authenticate the set of a Syrian refugee camp for the show. Taking the opportunity to paint interventionist statements that went to broadcast unchecked, their subversive hack on the series that has "garnered the reputation of being the most bigoted show on television," resonated on a large scale worldwide and was widely covered in the media. This statement reads: "Homeland is watermelon" which is a vernacular play on words that means, "Homeland is empty/ something meaningless/ nonsense." <http://www.hebaamin.com/works/the-arabian-street-artists/>

Real Art Ways

Real Art Ways is an alternative multidisciplinary arts organization that presents and supports contemporary artists and their work, facilitates the creation of new work, and creatively engages, builds, and informs audiences and communities.

Real Art Ways began in the fall of 1975 when a group of visual artists and musicians converted a rambling space on Asylum Street in downtown Hartford into a salon in which they lived, worked and presented the work of others. This year, Real Art Ways celebrates 40 years of contemporary art, cinema, music, and performances.

About the Artist

Alina Gallo, originally from Long Island, New York, is based in Rome, Italy. Her large site-specific installations and contemporary miniature paintings have chronicled the representation of events in the Middle East and North Africa since the onset of the Arab Spring. In the last years, she has followed this project to live in the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Italy. To follow her work visit www.alinagallos.com.

Special Thanks

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Finally, this project would not have been possible without the painting students from the University of Hartford, Alex Ranniello, Victoria Burnham and Quentin Shapiro, and the many volunteers and friends from the community who made this project come to life. Thank you to Marcy Balint, Brad Allison hosting me during the installation, and to Zoe Allison and the amazing team at Real Art Ways for facilitating this project.

