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Famous Spanish Artist Addresses War and Poverty at Saatchi Gallery

posted by ARTCENTRON



Xavier Mascaró, *Departure* 2009-2011. Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery

ART REVIEW

BY KAZAD

***Departure*, at the Saatchi Gallery reveals the impact of war and poverty on migration**



LONDON, UK - In the last two decades, many people across the globe have been displaced by war and poverty. From Asia to Africa, and South America, a lot of people have left their homes to escape wars and poverty to find refuge in other countries. The migration and exodus of people fleeing war, deprivation and poverty in the Mediterranean and South American regions is the focus of a major exhibition on view at the [Saatchi Gallery in London](#). Titled *Departure*, the show features the sculptures of Xavier Mascaró, a renowned Spanish and Latin American artist, who draws inspiration from the symbolism and iconography of boats – from the Egyptian funerary boats that took the departed on their eternal journey. Organized by SP Koren Art, a gallery dedicated to showcasing works by [contemporary artists](#) alongside timeless works from the 20th century, *Departure* is the first UK solo exhibition of this famous artist.

Departure brings attention not just to the impact of [war and poverty on people leaving their countries to seek refuge](#) in other countries, but also the dangers associated with such migration. One of the very poignant and imposing installations in this exhibition is titled *Departure*. Consisting of boats made from bronze and iron, the installation is evocative of long-forgotten shipwrecks. The long-forgotten shipwrecks point not just to past but also the present. It is a fact that many people have died in shipwrecks and boat disaster as they escape wars and poverty. Just recently, more than 300 African migrants were killed after their boat capsized off the coast of Italy. *Departure* is a totem to those Africans and others like them.

Mascaró's Idols series, which addresses cult imagery and veneration, celebrate the power of women and their contribution to the society. *Sacred Couple* made of two sitting female figures is one of the captivating sculptures in this series. The votive figures which appear to be praying are delicate metal works and have been major attractions since the exhibition opened. Besides their cleverly structured bodies, the facial expressions of the women are illuminated by silver metals, putting them in dialogue with art lovers. The idol series are complimented by the Eleonora series which includes iron portraits of a young woman created in a manner reminiscent of the profiles on ancient coins.

Striking Guardians series is another major installation that is part of the Saatchi Gallery in London. The first outdoor installation presented by the Saatchi Gallery since moving to Chelsea, the row of sculptures located in front of the gallery welcomes guests. Standing at nearly 10 feet high, the sculptures are both imposing and placid. Inspired by medieval armour and ancient Egyptian and Greek art, the rusted iron warriors have stood guard at the Palais Royal garden in Paris and the Paseo del Prado in Madrid.

Looking at Mascaró's works brings clarity to his outstanding ability as a sculptor and an experimental artist who has mastered the traditional casting techniques. A self taught artist, Mascaró began showing interesting in art at a very young age when he started etching by following instructions he found in art books. Although he has a degree in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona, he attended the school only for about two weeks. He left to paint on his own because he did not like the atmosphere of the school. In later years, he developed interest in cast iron, and to sharpen his skills, he went to an industrial foundry to observe the metal casters at work. Although he liked what he saw, he was quick to realize that their techniques would not work for him. Consequently, he developed a technique of his own that has led the creation of amazing sculptures. With his outstanding ability as a sculptor, it is not surprising that Mascaró's who lives and works in Madrid and Mexico City, has shown his sculptures in Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Madrid, Mexico, New York and Paris.

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Departure at the Saatchi Gallery, London is an outstanding exhibition that art lovers who appreciate great art must see. Besides bringing focus to Xavier Mascaró, a renowned Spanish and Latin American artist who is just having his first solo show in London, *Departure* brings attention to the issue of war, poverty, immigration and the impact of women in our society. With his sculpture, Mascaró reminds us all that history has the capacity to shape the future, and that every effort must be done to bring attention to the pains of those fleeing war zones and poverty.

Departure, on view through October 5, 2014 at the Saatchi Gallery, Duke of York's HQ King's Road London SW3 4RY



Xavier Mascaró, *Sacred Couple*. Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery



Xavier Mascaró, *Guardians* 2010. Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery



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