

HOME(LESS)



HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION MUSEUM, NEW YORK

HOME(less)

Laura Kruger, Curator, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Museum

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Home – is it an actuality, a concept, a dream, or some combination of these and more? Does it describe a yurt, an igloo, a palace, a boathouse? Is it primarily a shelter, a refuge, a storage place, a hope, an aspiration, an ideal? We speak about leaving home, coming home, going home, staying home. In moments of stress we focus on the safety of home, in loneliness on the embrace of home, in fear on the security of home, in plentitude on the hospitality of home.



David Wander

Lot's Wife, 1990

Oil on canvas, 52" x 60"

We find ourselves defining home by physical sensibilities: the intrinsic aroma of one's home, the security of a locked door, of a protective waterproof roof, of bookshelves, closets, cellars with provisions for unknown situations, treasures, collections, a place to invite friends, to reveal oneself through selections of books, art, objects, random artifacts. We identify ourselves by the idea of a 'homeland' although we may have never visited or dwelt in such a place.

We become, when most fortunate, home owners. We are made "homeless" by arbitrary acts of nature – fire, flood, the heaving of the earth and by war, illness, and poverty.

Humankind has been living in an ever-increasing morass of homeless people, refugees, displaced individuals. Natural disasters strike leaving people without shelter. Crops fail, climate changes, the sea rises, forests burn, the earth quakes, and blameless people flee with whatever they are able to carry. And war, the only preventable human-made disaster, continues its destruction.

The disconnection – the loss of confidence in attaining safety, security, nourishment – defines the homeless situation. There are millions of people in every part of the world who live without consistent shelter, with inadequate food, separated from family, and with no options to break out of this condition. Victims of wars, feuds, natural disasters, failed agriculture, divorce, or family discord may lack marketable skills and education. With no place to sleep, they live on the streets. Some municipalities provide palliative efforts to feed, house, and nurse these desperate humans.

The artists engaged in exploring this grave situation come from many backgrounds, faiths, and nationalities. They brilliantly reveal the tension of those striving to survive, grasping for remembered dignity.

ELIZABETH LANGER

My Old House, 2010

Collage, 13" x 10½"

Langer created this collage shortly after her return to New York City. All around her were new construction, nameless, faceless sterile grids. *My Old House* was her protest against the encroaching sterile cityscape.

