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Stockholm Culture Festival brings a refugee boat to town

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"I have decided to model each refugee with a beautiful, dignified and personal radiation, to emphasize that these people are humans like you and me, and hence can claim a decent life", states Jens Galschiot the Danish artist in a leaflet handed out by the organisers on the ship.

From a distance you can see a fishing boat and dark silhouettes on the deck. The ship, in the centre of Stockholm, is crammed with people covered in blankets and rugs. An art installation showing the plight of refugees has arrived.

The refugee ship M/S Anton is a floating art installation with more than 70 bronze sculptures. It was created in 2010 by the sculptor Jens Galschiot in cooperation with the environmental association "Living Sea" and with

support from Danida (Denmark's Development Cooperation).

In front of the boat there is a sign explaining the installation: "A Danish fishing boat has rescued 70 refugees from a sinking refugee boat in the Nordic Sea. Now this fishing boat has become a refugee boat. In the effort of trying to find a permanent placement for the refugees the boat has now come to Sweden. Who is responsible for these people? In what way can we prevent people from having to flee?"

- "I've decided to transform M/S Anton into a refugee ship to pinpoint that if we do not help the third world to get rid of poverty, the result will be even bigger refugee streams in the future. I have also decided to model each refugee with a beautiful, dignified and personal radiation, to emphasize that these people are humans like you and me, and hence can claim a decent life", states Jens Galschiot, the Danish artist in a leaflet handed out by the organisers on the ship.

The ship has been exhibited in Denmark, Germany and Norway. Now it is part of Stockholm Culture Festival 14-19 August. Knud Andersen, one of the volunteers on the ship, explains that he was already working there when it was still used for fishing.


- During the festival an estimated 1,000 people have passed the ship every hour, says Knud.




Two ladies have come to the harbour to look at the installation. - I am touched by the faces of all these people, and upset by the thought of the horrifying things they have to endure in order to try and find a safe life, says one of them.

Every year over 100,000 persons make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aden, fleeing violence, human rights abuses and poverty. According to UNHCR estimates, more than 1,500 people drowned or went missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach

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Links

- [UNHCR Rescue at Sea](#)
- [Nansen Refugee Award 2002 for rescue at sea](#)
- [Environmental association "Living Sea"](#)

PDF documents

-  [UNHCR report Rescue at Sea, Stowaways and Maritime Interception \(1.37 MB\)](#)
-  [Asylum Levels and Trends in Industrialized Countries 2011 \(4.33 MB\)](#) Statistical overview of asylum applications lodged in Europe and selected non-European countries. Published: 27 March 2012.

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Europe in 2011.

It is the obligation of every shipmaster to rescue people in distress. It is a longstanding maritime tradition and part of customary international law. The duty to render assistance applies in all maritime zones and to every person in distress without discrimination, including asylum-seekers and refugees. The principle of non-refoulement ensures that people rescued at sea are not disembarked in places where they may face torture, persecution or other serious harm^[1].

UNHCR has organised a number of expert meetings on the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers at sea. For more information please see UNHCR's report: Rescue at Sea, from December 2011.

[1] UNHCR Rescue at Sea, stowaways and maritime interception. 2nd edition, December 2011.

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