

# HYPERALLERGIC

## Migration Stories From World War II to Now

The fact that more than a fifth of Utica's residents were born outside the US inspires the group show *Between Worlds* at the Munson Museum.



Rachel Harris-Huffman April 25, 2024



Shaunte Gates, "There's No Place Like Home" (2021), acrylic, charcoal, photographs, American history textbook, pulled paper, collage on wood panel, 48 x 72 inches (all images courtesy the Munson, Utica)

UTICA, New York — A 2022 *New York Times* article by Susan Hartman, "[How Refugees Transformed a Dying Rust Belt Town,](#)" details how Utica, New York, was reinvigorated

when it became the new home of refugees escaping war and persecution in countries including Bosnia, Myanmar, and Somalia. The US Census Bureau estimates that about 22% of Utica's 64,000 inhabitants were born outside the US. This significant immigrant population inspired the exhibition *Between Worlds: Stories of Artists and Migrations*, on view at the Munson through May 5.

*Between Worlds* spans a period from the cusp of World War II to today, and presents works that address migration, displacement, home, and people's geographic and metaphoric movements. While pieces like Yasuo Kuniyoshi's painting "Empty Town in the Desert" (1943) and Frederick Sommer's photograph "Arizona Landscape" (1945) reflect the strangeness of moving overseas and encountering the American West for the first time, other works speak to migrations within the United States.

Romare Bearden's lithograph "Before the Whistle" (1973) depicts an African American couple readying for work, exemplifying those who moved from the Jim Crow-era South to the industrialized North during the Great Migration. Phil Young's large-scale acrylic and sand painting "Glen Canyon Desecrations No. 3" (1990) protests the development affecting Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, which crosses the Arizona-Utah border — an area traditionally inhabited by and important to many Indigenous Americans. Shaunté Gates' dynamic mixed-media composition "There's No Place Like Home" (2021) reflects ambivalent memories of friendships and trauma experienced in the neighborhood where the artist grew up.