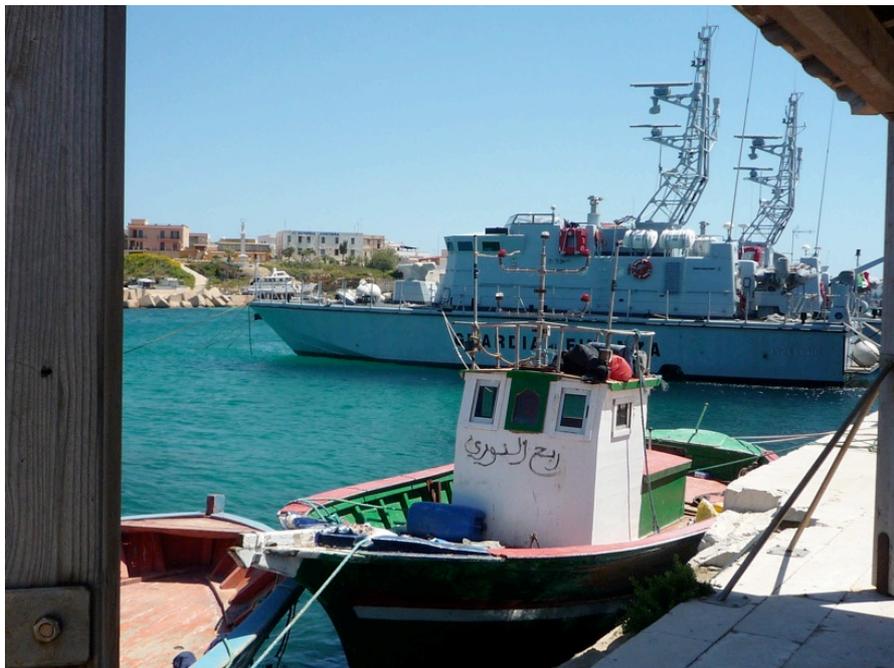


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PRESS RELEASE

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Italian Government donates seized migrant boat used to traffic Libyan migrants to British artist, Lucy Wood

Distant Neighbours/Vicini Lontani.4: Lampedusa to London - Migrant Boat / Floating Museum / Performance Piece

Following year-long negotiations with the Italian Government, British artist Lucy Wood has just been granted ownership of a confiscated migrant fishing boat used to traffic Libyans to Lampedusa during the 2011 conflict. Officially registered by Italian customs as TO6411, Wood's boat will be single-handedly

sailed by the artist from the Italian island of Lampedusa to London from June 2013.

En route, Wood will be documenting her journey, raising awareness and highlighting the perils of people trafficking from Africa. Her solo voyage will be a floating installation piece that mirrors the journey of fleeing migrants. The boat will act as a visual aid of individual migrant experience and will also be used to host events in relation to migration.

The intended route will include stops in Sicily, Naples, Rome, Genoa, Monaco, Marseille, Arles, Avignon, Paris, Lyon, Brussels, Antwerp, Cologne, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, before sailing up the Thames to London. En route, Wood will be inviting local Cultural Institutions to collaborate with her, and inviting guest speakers on board to debate and exchange ideas with the public to raise awareness of the plight of migrants. There will also be organised public 'sit-ins' on the boat, giving a unique insight into a real migrants' experience and the suffering many endure on their journey to Europe.

The boat will be displaying many items left by migrants on this and other similar boats. Wood has collected and stored such items during her visits to Lampedusa to create an anthropological survey, and to further illustrate the story of migration.

To show people what it really is like on these boats, Wood is also keeping the vessel in as original a condition as possible and will travel and live alongside collected objects/possessions left by its migrant cargo. The artist intends to keep all evidence of her own journey, including food and drink packaging and all her equipment, for exhibiting purposes, so visitors can compare such items with what the original 36 people on board brought with them on TO6411.

Wood will also be writing a blog en route - 'The Chronicles of Lampedusa' -

covering her everyday experiences of the journey.

During 2012, the boat will be upgraded to meet EU safety regulations, which include navigation equipment, flares, lifejackets and a life-raft. This will all be in sharp contrast to the migrants' boats, which carry no such safety equipment. Wood is an experienced sailor and has the necessary qualifications required to sail TO6411 to the UK.

International charities such as Amnesty International, along with media networks, private enterprise and international celebrities, already know about this project through Wood's professional fund-raising contacts in London. They have already expressed great support and interest in her idea. Wood will require full sponsorship for her project.

TO6411 was originally used to ferry 36 passengers, including three children and a pregnant woman, when it and its human cargo were rescued off the coast of Lampedusa.

'I was deeply effected and inspired last year when I witnessed several landings in Lampedusa,' says Wood. 'Many people arrived soaking wet and totally traumatised. They were often completely silent - the only sounds were from the Guardia Costiera, Guardia di Finanza and Carabinieri who were helping the migrants disembark. My intended voyage is to give the people of Europe a glimpse of the sad and desperate plight of people trafficking, which is a perennial and timeless international issue.'

Over 50,000 lives were saved by the search and rescue services in Lampedusa last year, following sea patrol pick-ups and distress calls sent out by the boats.

Lucy Wood would like to thank the Italian Government, Local Agencies

and the people of Lampedusa for all their support and help in obtaining this vessel for what will be a unique voyage.

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More information on Lucy Wood and the Distant Neighbours project

Lucy Wood's work is based on issues dealing with social, political and environmental entrapment. This forthcoming voyage will mark the fourth chapter of Wood's 'Distant Neighbours / **Vicini Lontani**' project - a series of recent exhibitions surrounding issues of global migration and the idea that migrants are trapped economically and politically at home, but also remain trapped en route and at their final destination.

During the past three years, Wood has regularly travelled to Lampedusa to collect and document migrant material through interviews, photography and found objects. Many migrants believe, on arrival at Lampedusa, that they are in mainland Europe, but in fact they are still far from their desired destination. Many face grave dangers at sea on their perilous journey. Any sea swell often tips these small, unstable craft and their passengers into the sea. The voyages they make to Lampedusa sometimes end in terrible tragedy and are reminiscent of Theodore Gericault's famous painting, *The Raft of the Medusa*.

The first two 'chapters' of *Distant Neighbours* were shown at Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam.

Vecinos Distantes / Distant Neighbours.1 (2009)

In 2009, Wood made a show called 'Vecinos Distances / Distant Neighbours' documenting the migration of Mexicans and Central Americans from Mexico to Arizona USA. The migrant boat project focuses on a European geographical location using the natural borders of oceans. It represents similar economic and political issues faced by many along the Mexican/US desert borders.

Vincini Lontani. Distant Neighbours. 2 (2011).

The work references the plight depicted in 'The Raft of the Medusa' by Theodore Géricault.

Central to the show was the installation of a migrant raft made from chrome oil barrels, a glass platform and an old, burnt-out 4hp outboard engine. It represents the fragility of the crossing and the dangers associated with overloading a vessel with human cargo. The sail, made from traditional African cloth and North African flags, maps the geographical reference to the piece, while its dysfunctional mast adds to the chaos of this crude vessel. A number of monitors surrounding the raft screen the migrants' stories of survival, fishermen's tales of rescue and the consequences to their livelihood. The Commander of the Lampedusa Coast Guard and local Lampedusans' all speak out across the raft, the audience trapped in the middle being left to stand and absorb the chaotic situation expressed.

The Third Chapter of Distant Neighbours was shown at Payne Shurvell Gallery, London.

Vincini Lontani/Distant Neighbours. 3 (2011)

This exhibition focused on a rescue in Lampedusa Harbour on 8th May 2011. The exhibition consisted of an installation of a series of 'ghost' boats, an abstraction of the 'Boat Graveyard' (an area on the harbour side in

Lampedusa where the migrant boats are stored whilst waiting to be destroyed), as well as a series of video works of story telling by local people, the police, fireman, fisherman and shopkeepers who were immediately involved in the rescue to save lives.

Lucy is currently represented by Upstream Gallery in Amsterdam.
www.upstreamgallery.nl

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