



Editorial

The history of the 20th century is one of exile. It was a century defined not by where people were but where they could not be. A time when diaspora, flight, and crisis not only defined the political events of the century, but also its intellectual, artistic, and cultural production. We currently inhabit a political and economic landscape shaped by exile, displacement, and movement of people globally. As we confront a 21st century marked by refugee crises, changing national boundaries, and debates over immigration, it is time to reframe the discussion by approaching exile as the most important condition of the 20th century and a major one for the century to come.

In terms of the discipline of architecture, the 21st century has seen a shift in the understanding

of crisis from a human tragedy to a business opportunity. Over-designed refugee shelters, pavilions, or housing projects turn the migrant or refugee from a subject of humanitarian disaster to an unwitting client and consumer of architectural services. Yet the relationship of the architect to the exile was not always so opportunistic; throughout much of the 20th century the architect and the exile were often one and the same. Not so long ago, exile entailed not the rapid integration of refugees into the economics of the built environment but rather a total cultural upheaval.

Indeed, 20th-century exile constituted the most violent but also most productive act of intellectual relocation. Exile comprised not so much a condition for architects to act upon, but a state of being that profoundly affected the nature of the discipline. Just think of exiles like Mies van der Rohe, Oscar Niemeyer, Walter Gropius, Rudolph Schindler, and countless others. We cannot imagine the architectural profession today without the context of displacement and the reinvention of oneself in a new context. In this issue, we reexamine the current human displacement with the 20th century in mind, asking how we as designers can approach exile not just as a problem that needs to be remedied, but rather an inescapable legacy that has shaped and will continue to shape our present world and

profession. Just as exiles once transformed our professions from within, revamping old rules for architectural, landscape, and urban practice based on new contexts, so are contemporary exiles still doing the same today.

— Ali Karimi