



## WELCOME, HOME

by Jamila Bradley

**Vaulted ceilings.** Bay window overlooking the Charles.

Home is one of those words that can mean so many things, based on where people carry the word. It's easy to lose the definition when you are constantly faced with crucial questions like "When did a basement turn in to a garden view?" and "What evil human decided to linoleum over those beautiful hardwood floors?"

The dialogue around home can escalate quite quickly from the longitudinal, latitudinal location of your childhood bedroom to the first apartment you rent, where your name on a piece of paper signifies ownership despite the message

your milk-crate coffee table may be sending. But even that scope may not be broad enough for those forced to create home in the abstract.

The physical home is supposed to stay perfectly encapsulated in time, so that the people it belongs to can grow, change, travel, and still have the true north of *home* to always return to. The mental gymnastics required to assemble a sense of home that can be carried with you is infinitely more complex.

Imagine pouring the concrete into a foundation that sits at the base of your sternum, collecting a sense of permanence with crude bricks composed of survival and defense mechanism, watertight and windproofed by the knowledge that the corporeal home has been snatched from beneath you, commodified and then held above

your head in a way that will never again provide actual shelter.

When I first moved to Boston, I was enamored by the bricks. The context has changed for me now, having spent the time I have on the wrong side of them.

The sturdiest, most beautiful homes I have seen do not have oak doors or wraparound porches. They don't have the coffee table with a small, dark, rough patch in the wood that you can still feel with your finger from a candle you toppled at age six. They aren't filled with things and stuff, photos and embroidered pillows or a cat to wind its way between your ankles after a long day.

My true home is built on the back of the institutions, people, and circumstance that have failed me. We live in a world where developing sharp corners and jagged edges will keep you alive.

The home you carry around inside is responsible for housing the bits of yourself that you haven't weaponized or had stripped of their sparkle because of the way life can happen at you, without your consent.

Some of us have to build a home that can withstand elements much more devastating than fire and floods. A home whose walls won't be shaken by rape, trauma, violence, and fear. It's the one place that will stand when everything around you crumbles. It's the single place where you can tuck away your softness and renew your resiliency before the world strips it away, and you know it'll always be there when you return to it. The lights are always on, the key is always under the mat. And, Jesus Christ, what a view. ■

### ABOVE

*Vacio de una casa*, David Moreno, 2013. Steel piano wire, silver weld, black paint, 25.6" × 23.6" × 7.9".  
Image: Courtesy of the artist