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## Washington, DC

**Allan deSouza**

THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION 1600 21st Street, NW June 23–  
September 17



Allan deSouza, *No Entry*, 2010–11, color photograph, 12 x 16". From the series "The World Series," 2010–11.

Jacob Lawrence's "Migration" series, 1940–41, has long stood as the most comprehensive and telling visual account of the dramatic relocation of African Americans from the rural South to cities such as New York and Chicago during the early twentieth century. Allan deSouza's current exhibition at the Phillips Collection, produced through an initiative to encourage interaction between contemporary artists and the institution's

holdings, displays photographs conceived as a reaction to Lawrence's canonical series. Although the concepts of "response" and "influence" may be historically fraught, deSouza effectively acknowledges the significant weight of these earlier canvases by identifying and mining their most important themes. Topics such as travel, resettlement, and foreignness are suggested and revisited from a global perspective that builds on Lawrence's epic narrative with a sense of tragic irony. DeSouza's disjointed, episodic snapshots suggest a world in which alienation is the status quo and relocation still provides a lens for closer examination of its underlying social and political forces.

While some works in the exhibition rely on formal effects—such as aerial viewpoints or uniformly arranged objects—to evoke a sense of disorientation and unfamiliarity, many consist of otherwise banal scenes that gain further meaning through their particular context. One particularly forthright example from the series depicts the words NO ENTRY painted as signage on an airport runway. Associations, including the increasing volatile obstacles to immigration and the climate of fear surrounding terrorism and air travel, present themselves immediately. These issues, laden with political meaning, are belied by the straightforward, snapshot quality of the photograph itself. Its almost amateurish inclusion of part of the plane and its shadow seems to imply that the image might have been captured on board by the artist, who himself may be implicated by these factors. This sort of highly subjective suggestion characterizes deSouza's photographs, which, taken together, highlight the personal experience contained within universals.

— *Britany Salsbury*

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