

I've decided to press the pause button on my video, *RETURN*, so that we can discuss some recent events.

Activists have called on MoMA Board Member Larry Fink, the CEO of BlackRock, to divest BlackRock (and its subsidiaries) from the prison corporations GEO Group and Core Civic, in which they are among the largest shareholders. Why? Because (a) these companies, under contract from I.C.E., have been responsible for approximately 70% of all immigration detentions, (b) these companies are part of a racist, carceral system which has made the U.S. the largest jailer in the world, and (c) BlackRock also controls funds that have purchased billions of dollars of shares in weapons manufacturers.

I broaden this activist call and also ask that the Chairman of MoMA's Board of Trustees, Leon Black, divest his companies from Constellis Holdings. Constellis Holdings, formerly called Blackwater, is infamous for its role in the Nisour Square Massacre, during which Blackwater guards killed 17 Iraqi civilians and injured 20 more.

The opposite of RETURN is DEPART, which is derived from *dispartire*, which means to divide, to separate, to take leave of each other, to go away.

And yet, I wish to remain in *Theater of Operations* and not depart. What makes this exhibition exceptional is the bringing together of artwork made during and in response to the ongoing Gulf wars by artists around the world, with a particular focus on Iraqi artists who made art in the midst of the continuous traumas of siege, sanctions, and occupation. I am humbled to be presenting alongside so many artists I admire from my mother's ancestral home, from which her family was forced to depart in the 1940s. To have such crucial work presented here is momentous. Indeed, it is not the artists who need to depart, it is museums' dysfunctional and abusive relationship to toxic philanthropy that should go away.

I kindly request that Larry Fink and Leon Black please divest from these companies so that I may unpause my video and press play.

If this is not possible, then I kindly ask that MoMA please divest from Larry Fink and Leon Black as trustees so that I may unpause my video and press play.

And if this proves impossible, then I kindly ask that PS1 Contemporary Art Center please divest from its relationship with MoMA, so that I may unpause my video and press play.¹

PS1 is a home for art and I respect all that has been done here by artists since the 1970s when it first opened. I would hate to depart.



Michael Rakowitz

PS: This statement constitutes an essential part of my ongoing artwork *RETURN* and cannot be removed.

¹ On Sunday, November 3, along with other participants in the exhibition, I met with MoMA PS1's Director and curatorial staff. We were informed that PS1 has a separate Board of Directors than MoMA and that Larry Fink is not on PS1's Board and therefore contributes no money directly to PS1. That may be. But this place is called MoMA PS1, Leon Black serves on its Board in an *ex-officio* capacity, and PS1 is responsible for the company it chooses to keep.