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Pietro Ruffo

Italy is a north star beckoning to people fleeing Africa and the Middle East, undertaking an exodus whose perils have touched the nation's artists. Pietro Ruffo's "Constellations/Migration" is the second recent IA&A at Hillyer exhibition in which an Italian artist incorporates one of the reflective blankets used to swaddle immigrants who survive the crossing. The shiny coverings are symbols of both distress and welcome.

Like its predecessor, Andrea Limauro's "Mare Nostrum," Ruffo's show joins classical heritage and contemporary issues. The Rome-based artist constructs large-scale 3-D collages that include antique maps and cutout illustrations of the creatures whose myths endure in the names of constellations. The collages conjure the lands and seas that Ulysses and Aeneas supposedly traversed millennia before today's nomads.

Ruffo uses the emergency blanket as the medium for sketches of scenes from the European Colonial era. Other drawings are combined into the shapes of Africa and the Americas, the "new worlds" Italy and its neighbors once claimed as theirs. Europe's kinship with the other continents, Ruffo illustrates, is not just the stuff of breaking news. The relationship is as venerable as heroic quests for new homes.

Pietro Ruffo: Constellations/Migration Through June 30 at IA&A at Hillyer, 9 Hillyer Ct. NW.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/in-the-galleries-dickson-carroll-puts-fun-and-folly-in-form-and-function/2019/06/21/767ba8ac-9100-11e9-956a-88c291ab5c38_story.html

