

TEMPLETON



CHIHARU SHIOTA

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Walking (and T-ing) Boston's public art Triennial

The Boston Public Art Triennial's inaugural edition opens May 22. Here, a sampling of its 20-some projects and how to see them

By [Murray Whyte](#)

The inaugural edition of [the Boston Public Art Triennial](#), a sprawling, once-in-three-years infiltration of public spaces from Charlestown to Mattapan and many points in between, officially launches May 22. With more than 20 projects on view through the end of October, your opportunities to engage it are many, and your timeline generous.

But public art aspires to much more than one-and-done viewing. Ideally, over time, [the disruption it makes in the urban fabric evolves](#), and so does your experience of it. The best case outcome for any of these projects will be measured as much by absence in their aftermath as presence while they're here – that the city they leave behind is somehow changed by their having been here at all.

Only time can be the judge of that, and here, in the final days leading up to its official opening, I have only best guesses (a backhoe in constant use this week at the Charlestown Navy Yard, one of the Triennial's key sites, underscored the frantic last minute preparations). While we're waiting, I'm giving my imagination a workout to fashion a walking (and occasionally T-assisted) tour of some of what I think will be the most powerful pieces soon to pop up in neighborhoods near and far.

But I'd be pulled across the water to East Boston, where the ICA's Watershed is presenting Chiharu Shiota's exhibition "Homeless Home." Shiota's work is a monument to absence – trunks and suitcases and random pieces of furniture, entangled in red rope and dangling, symbols of lives up in the air. A lament for the untold millions forced into migration, cut adrift by various disasters and left with nowhere to call home, its rootlessness speaks to the chaos of our current moment.