ROOTS and ROOMS: Migration and Memory

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KID: 20240309

Abstract

The Roots and Rooms is an exploratory project to document the many myriad shades of migration and memory. It tries to map the emotional journey of displacement, at times forced due to multiple reasons, whether voluntary or involuntary.

The emotional and psychological attachment to a space and how it tries to rebuild a similar habitable atmosphere in another space by an individual. This research extends the ethnographic observations and investigates how home, belonging, and memory evolve.

The project takes its shape in the form of a pop-up book design and paper engineering telling the stories of a woman's migration experience through the lens of the objects she carries with her.

Introduction

Roots and Rooms is a pop-up book that explores the complex journey of migration and the emotional aspects attached to displacement. Centering around the journey of three women who have all migrated—whether voluntary, involuntary, or mixed—the book is rooted in understanding home, memory, and belonging. It explores this through the objects that they carry with them. These objects hold immense emotional value, acting as symbols of continuity of their culture, self, and identity amidst the migration.

The book features the stories of three women and their houses before migration and their new homes after. The objects of familiarity and connection were different for different women—some found comfort from their bedsheets, while some had a deep connection to their plants.

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Design Concept Development

The research for the book began with a deep understanding of migration and displacement studies. Migration and its psychological and sociological impacts led to the concept of home within a home that migrants sculpt. Home slowly became the central focus of the research.

Migrants carry pieces of their home with them, and there is a constant reinterpretation of their new surroundings to make them feel similar to their previous home. This assimilation and assigning of familiarity to their new homes is done through objects and the nostalgia and memory that they assign to them.

These objects function as anchors, grounding the migrants with their roots and into the new rooms they create. The objects they carry, the ones they leave behind, are all reminders of resilience and loss. With this ground primary ethnographic research, interviews were conducted with women who had migrated for varied reasons. Their generous contribution to sharing their personal experiences helped immensely in giving shape to this project.

Every woman contributed extensively by simply letting us listen to their stories, memories, and traditions that they felt connected to.

“Migration is a complex experience, riddled with challenges and a constant reconstruction of one’s identity and emotional landscape. The shared strength, resilience, and adaptability of migrants remain undeniable, and all across the world, millions face similar challenges.”

Their willingness to share and support was invaluable to this project. Migration is a complex experience, riddled with challenges and a constant reconstruction of one’s identity and emotional landscape.

The shared strength, resilience, and adaptability of migrants remain undeniable, and all across the world, millions face similar challenges. Roots and Rooms is an attempt to understand what home, belonging, and identity mean to migrants, acknowledging deeply their personal stories, yet a universally resonant experience of finding and creating home in new surroundings.

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