

PAUL KARIOUK<sup>b</sup>. 1963  
 MABEL O. WILSON<sup>b</sup>. 1963  
 KW:a  
 Oakland



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Home may be where the heart is, but for the migrant it is equally true that “anywhere I hang my hat is home.” This conflict, the impact of migration on domesticity, is an important theme in KW:a, the practice of architects Paul Kariouk and Mabel O. Wilson, whose traveling installation (*a*)way station gives shape to their belief that migration is a metaphor for the human search for domestic stability in a turbulent world.

In conceiving (*a*)way station, the architects began with the recognition that domestic space for most of the world’s forty million migrants is not divided into separate rooms but is layered into “a dense amalgam of belongings and overlapping daily activities.” For Kariouk and Wilson these residences are “way stations where the migrant assembles a temporary home out of material possessions—transplanted objects of sentimental value and newly acquired objects of consumer culture.”

The exhibition is designed as a room—simultaneously a bedroom, living room, bathroom, and kitchen—that may have been inhabited by migrants. Kariouk and Wilson then divided the “room” into fifteen equal-sized units, slicing through domestic objects and furnishings. Like migrants’ belongings, the units are rearranged for each exhibition site. Visitors walk among these units, temporarily occupying the transitional domestic space of itinerants.

Many of the objects from the original room—plates, chairs, and clothing—are encased like natural history specimens in amber-colored resin and backlit to impart the importance migrants give to such everyday things. Taped interviews with local residents provide the soundtrack. Synthesizing objects, images, texts, and sounds, (*a*)way station forces us to consider how frequent uprooting disrupts domestic life and to rethink the notion of home as a symbol of stability, memory, and promise. **DA**

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**(A)WAY STATION**  
 Exhibition design, 2000  
 Designers: Paul Kariouk and Mabel Wilson  
 with Yusuke Obuchi, Bob Carbon,  
 Sarah Heller, Jason Scroggins  
 Project funding: NYSICA, LEF Foundation,  
 Graham Foundation  
 Photography: Peter Tolkin (1, 2, 4);  
 Kelli Yon (3, 5)



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