



UNIT 7: DESIGN SYSTEMS 2

HOME IS NOT A SPACE

Progress Journal

Compiled and Presented by:
Muhammad Al-Hakim

London

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON &
THE NANYANG ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

I.Introduction & First Opinions

I have often considered myself a person of the left, with a strong desire for change and improvement in the lives of the common people and their living environments.

Having been born with a blurred sense of borders (Having parents of different nationalities, does that you), I also took an interest in politics in countries other than my own, such as Malaysia and the United Kingdom.

Was it a manifestation of my Anglophilia? Was it general boredom as the rather tepid state and somewhat closed-off nature of politics in Singapore? One wonders.

But on receipt of the brief, my mind wondered about the state of housing in general of the United Kingdom, with the nature of the current state of crisis coming from so many factors such as the general economic malaise, poor governance by the incumbent government for the past decade, to the lack of supply towards new homes in areas of the UK that needs it, all turning into a snowball effect that affects everyone, especially the marginalised and disadvantaged.

This combined with the migrant crisis that the UK has been undergoing, fanned by extremists that seeks political gains from discord and marginalisation, creates a hurricane of conditions that discriminates heavily towards migrants seeking their basic right of housing.

The examples that was given to us was also interesting as it gave me insights on how to move forward in the projects.



The Grenfell fire tragedy and the subsequent investigation made me realise how the poor and marginalised can be screwed over in their own homes.



Headlines like this fuels discrimination against migrants of all kinds not just seeking a simple abode but others

One of them was Friedrich Mueller: From the project Lockdown Diaries, whose documentation was pretty unique in terms of approach, using images to talk about and document the struggles of housing here, whose own personal experiences of expectations and disappointments are also reflected in my own experiences finding accommodations here.

The Migrant Journal was also another highlight for me. Despite what some might say that it is a conventional, safe, or worse, static way to talk about migrant issues and their impact on the world around them, it is invaluable for documentation of their experiences, thoughts, and imagination to exist, be it in physical form like the migrant journal or possibly digital.

Thus, I have an idea, a pole star for me to ponder upon and seek, possibly manifesting as a form of publication, which I had never done before, to discuss and elaborate my thoughts, opinions and feelings on the subject matter at hand.



The project Lockdown diaries made me ponder on the unassuming and how each items may have a story underneath them.



The migrant journal was an interesting concept that I'd explore further in terms of publication.

II. Visiting the Museum of the Home: Observations and findings

The Museum of the Home was surprisingly pleasant to visit and explore.

As I had never heard of the museum before, I kept an open mind when approaching it. Despite being unable to view some of its more exciting parts, I gained invaluable insights into the advancement of my project.

I have always believed in finding commonalities and similarities among us, be it physical or metaphorical. I do believe that there are common impulses that drive us, even if we end up going in different directions.

We ended up mainly seeing a line of exhibitions that detailed the evolution of what can be considered an English middle-class home from the 17th to 19th century, which in some eyes would regard them as having lives that are separate and alien from us, not just by distance of time but also by social stature and sensibilities.

However, I would digress from such an opinion: There is an alignment layered underneath, the seeking of warmth, connections and something personal within their living space, even as they chase social approval and validation.

Even as they sought the exotic, followed trends, and sought expensive items to decorate their interiors, there's still something homily about them that echoes today.

The museum's collections tell me that



These plug are definitely the same type to the ones that I saw in my late grandma's house up in the hills in Malaysia.



How different are these embroidery samplers in the 1800s to kids learning about spelling by drawing on an Ipad? Not much in my opinion

homes in the UK, especially those of a certain social strata, have this dual role that might conflict with each other. As a sign of social upbringing and status, homes often pocket the latest interior fashions in a somewhat Sisyphean attempt to keep up with the Joneses.

A hunch I have about the nature of society and class in the UK is that an element of this remains embedded and manifests itself in how some view and decorate their homes.

Of the items that inspired me the most were the imported Chinese plates and the Wedgewood plates.

It showed me the dual aspect of class and homeliness at work. It must be a pleasure for those owners to have something that is both practical and of immense value to them, a piece that may be considered typical today. Most importantly, it pointed me towards a truth that I may seek to pick up upon: Home is what we impart ourselves into. It's about the little items of joy, of what we want to be seen with or use.



I shudder at the thought that someone putting up so much money into a new wallpaper for their house only to be told the colours are no longer in fashion.



The backs of an empire was started what today could easily be brought for a few pounds at the local shop.

III. Research & Presentation

After initial consultations with lecturers on the subject matter, I decided to focus my energy towards advocacy for international students, reading up on the challenges and issues they faced finding a home within the British Isles.

I narrowed down my focus towards homesickness, analysing the cause, symptoms, effects and coping methods needed for students.

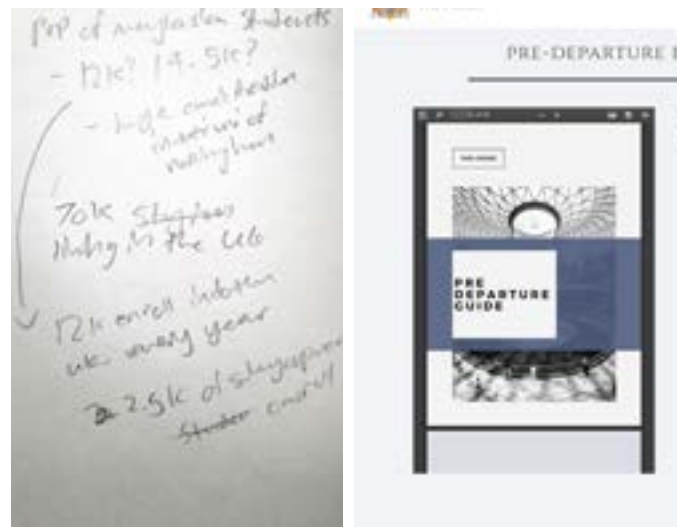
From there, I also analysed my fellow Singaporeans' situation, from the reasons they chose the UK for their studies to the distribution of students within these islands.

I expanded my research focus to Malaysian students, partly to explore possibilities of involving them and my connections with some of them.

I also analysed the support structures and community that these students have, both within students themselves, such as local student societies, and within the wider community of Singaporeans living here.

III.I Conclusion

I decided with concurrence from the lecturers to advance forwards to create an publication platform for international students for Singaporeans, named Koel, after an iconic common bird in the nation, it shall serve both digitally and physically, aiming to assist and give a voice for students, both in the UK and students preparing to move into the country.



I had to rely on several sources, from UK Govt statistics, facebook groups to properly collate my findings.



An early iteration of the Koel logo, taking inspiration from the bird whose iconic sound permeates the Singapore soundscape every morning.

Listen and see why Singaporeans both love and hate Koels: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANI4IJ7qUc>

IV. Development

After the presentation and feedback from my colleagues and lecturers, I decided to focus on creating the final product.

On the advice and by time constraints, the final viewable product would be a booklet as part of a series aimed towards prospective A-Level students who may have aspirations to further their education in the United Kingdom.

I drafted several topics, using the information I gathered such as Facebook groups, Reddit posts and other guidebooks as a reference for my draft series.

Within the series, it would be:

Creating a Home I: Finding your home

(Focusing on accommodation searching)

Creating a Home II: Prepping for travel liao

(Focusing on what to prepare before departure)

Creating a Home III: Safety first bro

(Focusing on safety and emergencies)

Creating a Home IV: Making your own makan

(Focusing on shopping for groceries)

Creating a Home V: Finding your lepak mates

(Focusing on finding friends)

These booklets would exist both digitally and physically. They would be handed out at physical events like fairs and talks and available in digital format for easy access.

The first element I focused upon was the creation of the branding and style for the booklets; from this, I was Inspired by the classic design style for Penguin Books,



Several attempts were made in the design process, figuring out what fonts, which angle suits the concept.



The final set of branding colours and logo

The final logo is an illustration of a Koel bird, modelled after the Penguin iconic logo with my own subtle remix.

primarily the style established by Jan Tschichold.

I dived deep into understanding the typography and design elements used within Penguin, referencing several books regarding the design and covers of Penguin and Pelican books over the years.

From there, I started creating a book cover inspired by the geometric cover designed by Henning Boehlke for Penguin and the logos of supermarket brands in the UK. I used their respective design cues to create the cover.

The font I used for the cover and content is Neue Haas Grotesk. Some may consider it conventional and safe, but as my focus is on delivering information from an authority standpoint, I decided to use it to establish rapport.

The layout was a challenge, but I got it through advice from my lecturer and inspiration from established sources such as Monocle, whose layout inspired me to create the final layout process for my booklet.



Same same but not the same.



Using their logo elements as part of the cover was pretty interesting and many gotten a clue on which brand is which pretty quickly



Mockup of the final product

VIII.Final Reflections

This unit has been a enlightening experience for me, both as a foreign exchange student in a new country, and as a creative.

Coming from a course that often emphasised on the values and virtues of collaborative group work amongst peers, having to effectively conduct this unit by myself could be politely described as birthing pains, but the support from the lecturers, friends and colleagues within this college and the wider cohort has helped me overcome my own struggles.

As a creative with a somewhat limited repertoire (Being a heraldic artist more comfortable in talking and discussing socio-political issues rather than designing around it), having to directly consider them within the context of design has been an interesting challenge and had the time been more extensive, I would have definitely love to go more in-depth.

My venture towards publication design has also been an interesting adventure for me, as I was able to explore my love for Penguin books, and manifest it through design. Thus this one aspect I would love to continue to explore back in Singapore,



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wood, B. (2016). Migrant Journal: a new magazine wants to change how we think about migration. [online] The Spaces. Available at: <https://thespaces.com/migrant-journal/> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2024].

Angelos, A. (2023). 'Creativity thrives when we feel safe': How is the rental crisis affecting creative practices? [online] www.itsnicethat.com. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/rental-crisis-and-creativity-thematic-creative-industry-130623> [Accessed 11 Mar. 2024].

Erik Ellegaard Frederiksen (2004). The Typography of Penguin Books.

Lickiss, P.D. and Penguin Collectors' Society (2017). Pelicans at eighty : a visual history. London: Penguin Collectors Society.

Baines, P., Hare, S., Penguin Collectors' Society and And, V. (2007). Penguin by designers : Saturday 18 June 2005, V & A Museum, London. London: Penguin Collectors' Society.