

The Front Room

Migrant Aesthetics in the Home

Author: Michael McMillan

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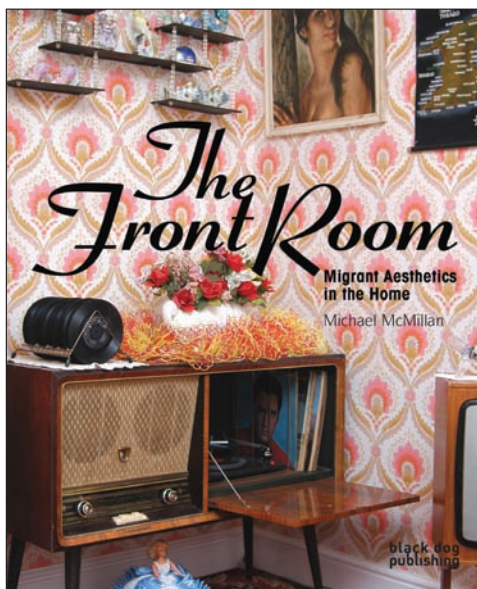
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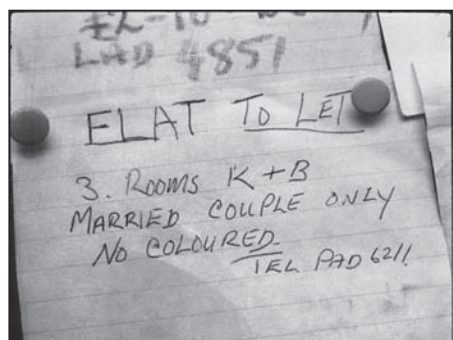
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The Front Room: Migrant Aesthetics in the Home is a fascinating glimpse into the post-war British experience of immigrants, the decoration of their living spaces and their position in society in relation to decolonisation. The “front room” (a term used for the living room or lounge) provides an outlet to respond to the feelings of displacement, exile and alienation and the rebuilding of a home in a strange land.

Primarily concerned with Caribbean homes, *The Front Room* also looks at Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean and Indonesian migrant groups in Holland—encompassing, through texts, archival documents and artistic photographs, the important cultural markers that are expressed through the domestic interiors of migrants.

First generation West Indians and second generation Black British contributors share their personal experiences of their front rooms and discuss the artefacts and objects found in them in terms of their cultural significance.

British born writer and curator, Michael McMillan, examines how this intimate space within the home raises issues of class, race, migration, aspiration, religion, family, gender, identity and alienation. He also looks at the transition from the colonial to the post-colonial by placing the book in the context of his own family’s migrant experience.

The book includes intriguing photographs of installations based on front rooms of the time and the contemporary living room and their associated objects. A critical narrative is provided through texts by well-known cultural theorists Stuart Hall, Carol Tulloch and Denise Noble and reflective commentaries by novelist Mike Phillips, artist Sonia Boyce, comedians Angie Le Mar and Felix Dexter amongst others.

The Front Room is a personal and engaging account, its critical and historical authority mixed with poignant moments of humour and lightness.

Michael McMillan is a curator, writer and playwright of Vincentian parentage. He guest curated the critically acclaimed *The West Indian Front Room* exhibition at the Geffrye Museum (2005-06) and was chief consultant on the popular BBC4 documentary *Tales from the Front Room* (2007). He has written books, plays and articles on arts and culture. www.thefrontroom.org.