



Trasmedia Documentary Trilogy
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Mi Casa My Home is a trasmedia documentary trilogy focused on the existence of houses built with remittances around the world whose owners don't dwell in them. This phenomenon calls attention on the relationships between the intimacy of private lives and decision-making and how macro-economic and geopolitical relations cross them. These stories show the friction between the necessity of a sense of rootedness and the compulsory or voluntary search for prosperity in the own land or beyond the national borders.

Mi Casa My Home consists of two full-length documentaries (**The House of Mama Icha** and **Absentees' House**) and an interactive web platform. The two feature films explore in an intimate and poetic way stories of migrants who have built their houses with remittances.

Absentees' House, focuses on stories of migrants who have built their houses with remittances in a town in Mexico, Metztitlán, with the money they earned in Philadelphia. The stories suggest a relationship between a northern city (in a geopolitical sense) and a rural southern town. This documentary includes five stories, none of the characters who built a house in their hometown has returned to live in it. Each story gives account on a specific, sometimes surprising reason for not dwelling in the house. The documentary explores in each of these stories the different meanings of 'house/home' in connection to the experience of migration.

While the other documentary, **The House of Mama Icha**, focuses on a single character and the story of a reverse migration. It is the story of María Dionisia Navarro, Mama Icha, a 93-year-old woman who after 33 years decides to leave the well-being obtained in Philadelphia/United States, and to return to live her last days in her hometown, Mompox/Colombia, in order to be near her other children and be buried in the land of her origin.

The third component of the project, the **Interactive Web Platform Mi Casa My Home**, seeks to expose the global phenomenon as such. There are houses built with remittances that remain uninhabited in Colombia and Latin America, but in Africa, parts of Asia and Eastern Europe. We understand the existence of these houses as a powerful metaphor to generate discussions around topics such as inequity in the distribution of wealth, the relationship between social rights and globalization, the fundamental right to have a decent housing, the right to migrate and the right not to migrate. The platform should allow interaction between audiovisual stories and storytellers, migrants, academics and in that way generate a broad discussion about the inherent aspects of these stories.





La Casa de los Ausente (Absentees' House)
 92 minutes, HD. Spanish & Engl. Subtitles
 Finishing production.

A legion of houses is empty or face uncertain destinies in Metztlán, Mexico. They stand out in this rural community for their size and appearance, foreigner styles, expensive or imported materials and call attention to the material wealth of the owners. The people who built them emigrated from this town to Philadelphia, US, with the dream to get the funding in a more developed economy to make the house they never had before in their land. However, now when their dream is already built, they don't return to dwell in it. Unexpectedly, after many years of migration, they have found that the new urban destination in the north has become their new home.

This documentary is a visual essay on the emotional and material effects of migration and the hegemonic lifestyle representations.

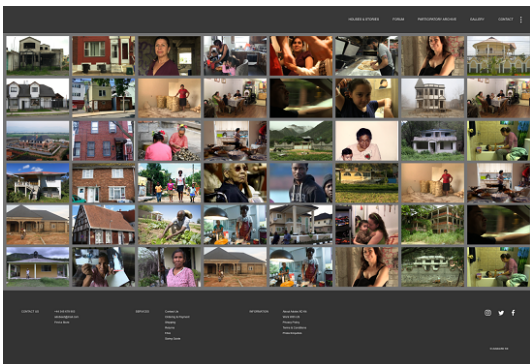
Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/164048664>. A 20 minutes version of the work in progress by request



La Casa de Mama Icha (The House of Mama Icha)
 90 minutes, HD. Spanish & English Subtitles
 Finishing postproduction.

After 33 years of economic well-being in the US, 93 year-old Mama Icha decides to return to her hometown in Colombia to live and die in the house she built there with remittances. Her homecoming is fraught by the pressure of unpaid bills and fraying family dynamics taxed by years of separation. This is a story of reverse migration; it is the story of a mother and grandmother, a dispersed family, a longing, a striving for agency, for rootedness.

Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/153791905>. Final cut by request



Interactive Web Platform *Mi Casa My Home:*
 Conceptualization & Development.

Tool for exposition, reflection and poetic translation of the global phenomenon of the remittance houses. It aims to promote a broad transdisciplinary and participatory discussion on the right to migrate and the right not to migrate, as well as the right to proper housing. The stories are accompanied by rich social, political and economic information interrelating those with the intimacy and singleness of migrants destinies.

Teaser: <https://vimeo.com/259982764>

INVESTIGATION

The initial interest for the houses built with remittances that are subject to uncertain destinies since their owners' don't return to inhabit them started when director Oscar Molina made his first attempt to leave Colombia in 1997 seeking for better working conditions, social fabrics, and political systems in other countries. That year he went to Japan to work in factories. In the different environments he worked, he met fellow migrants who spent much of their wages to build the house they always wanted in their home land. Those interlocutors often talked about the return; some of them had already spent many years abroad and haven't seen neither their families nor the house they have built.

Given the repetition of these stories on different continents and his search for a place to settle, he started wondering why people have to leave home to build a house in their homeland? Why native territories -rich in resources, culture and diversity- are not home for their people? However, when he learned that in many stories the house was already built but their owners don't return to live in them, he also wondered how migration generates a divided sense of house/home, especially when people's mobility is restricted by migration policies.

Since 2011, while he was studying film in Philadelphia, United States, he began exploring conceptually and formally how to address these stories to produce a documentary project.

Several scholars have provided advice for this initiative: Chon Noriega, Director of the Centre for Chicano Studies at the University of California, UCLA; Ruben Hernandez-Leon, a sociology professor also from the University of California, a leading figure in the current studies on movements of Latin American population in the United States; Sarah Lopez, a researcher focused on architecture and houses built by migrants, professor at the University of Texas; Luis Fernando González, professor and researcher at the School of Habitat, CEHAP, from the National University of Colombia, who studies processes of population and urbanization.

As part of the fieldwork, he recorded stories of houses built in their hometowns by Colombian, Mexican, Ecuadorian, Honduran and Guatemalan migrants located in the Delaware Valley and New York City. Also, he carried out interviews with real estate sales agents (brokers) from New York that sell houses to migrants in Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador.

This project has received film advice by Rea Tajiri, American artist and filmmaker of Japanese origin, recognized by the exploration she has done in her film work of concepts such as memory, history and relationships with the territory. Also by Alex Rivera, Peruvian-American documentary filmmaker who explores critically and humorously the paradoxical relationship between both sides of the Americas.

Studying Terrence Malick's filmography has also been inspiring for this documentary as his films explore the relationship of home with concepts such as memory, past, tradition, universe, nature, family, division of cultures and death. Also, reviewing the documentary work of Frederick Wiseman and Maysles brothers has been inspiring as they, with an intimate and observational camera, point the audience attention to the institutional forces that affect the daily lives of their characters.

Several bibliographical references have brought other perspectives to this research, including: "*Building Dwelling Thinking*" by Martin Heidegger that points out how the action of building is a way of dwelling; and he understands building for its functions to give shelter, care and edify oneself beyond a certain physical space. "*The Poetics of Space*" by Gaston Bachelard interprets a house as a symbolic construction that extends the physical presence of the body, the original home of each one; that extended house keeps reminiscences for the past, it is a haven for contingencies and supports continuities; it is not only a physical house that is built, the house is the sum of all the experiences of the same body to inhabit different dwellings.

“*Home, a short history of an idea*” by Wytold Rybczynski makes a historical overview of how what we now call house has been a long-term process during centuries purifying ideas, concepts and spaces. A house throughout history has been associated with a place for intimacy, privacy, security, comfort, light, efficiency, comfort and nostalgia. “*Colonial Legacies: the Problem of Persistence in Latin America History*” by Jeremy Adelman gathers several essays of Latin American scholars that account for the persistence of patterns of thought and development in the region that have generated exclusion, displacement and loss of wealth in favour of the great colonial powers. “*Different, Unequal and Disconnected*” by Nestor Garcia Canclini makes a demand to the social sciences to understand the cultural clashes taking place currently around the exchange of symbolic references in the population due to mobility, and the interaction between cultures intensified by technological and economic exchanges. “*The Practice of Everyday Life*” by Michel de Certeau proposes a reconfiguration of relationships between production and consumption drawing attention to how the consumer makes particular and unpredictable uses of goods and products that can be accessed in a market dominated by the forces of capitalism environment (in this case, building a dream house that is difficult to dwell).

Remittances and how that kind of income generates a direct relationship between the fate of an individual and macroeconomic and geopolitical conditions are at the bottom of this phenomenon. Dilip Ratha, an economist from the World Bank and CEO at the KNOMAD-program (The Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development) is a very important source for discussions around that topic, since has been arguing that remittances are/could be an economic development factor for countries in the so called third world. His articles and especially his book *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016*, have been of great help in understanding remittances and their impact in the local economies. On the other side, Nancy Fraser, a feminist, critical theorist and one of the most influential philosophers in the contemporary thinking, has dedicated her later studies in questioning the senses of ‘justice’ in the globalized world. Her latest publications argue that it is essential to bring together the contemporary notion of ‘justice of recognition’ and the classical notion of ‘distributive justice’. For our research this author has been relevant since through the academic discourse she has been putting into light the necessity to question the limitation of Nation’s responsibilities towards the social rights of their citizens, regarding globalization and the free flow of money around the world.

The Declaration of Human Rights 1948 states in the article N°25 the fundamental right to a proper housing. This human right has been ratified in several international agreements. 2017 the well know urbanist Richard Florida (*The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It*, 2017) had an interview with former US-President Jimmy Carter inquiring about his program on proper housing in the USA (The Carter Work Project). In that interview they argue how the right to proper housing tends to be a human right with little attention dedicated to but at the same time it represents the foundation on which some other human rights, like the right to education or to free expression, are based. A proper housing should not only be the means of the private economy, but also a right, which ought to be foster by the national states.

PARTICIPATION IN

WORKSHOPS AND MARKETS

- Docs Forum, International Documentary Film Festival of Mexico City -DocsMX- 2016 (Absentees' House)
- DocMontevideo Pitching Series, 2016 (Mi Casa My Home)
- DocuLab.8, Guadalajara International Film Festival, Mexico, 2016 (The House of Mama Icha)
- Cartagena International Film Festival, Documentary Workshop, Colombia, 2016 (The House of Mama Icha)
- Spotlight on Documentaries-Independent Film Program Week, IFP, New York, 2015 (The House of Mama Icha)
- HackaDoc Workshop, International Documentary Film Festival, DocsBarceloma+Medellin, 2015 (Interactive platform)
- International Documentary Film Festival DocsBarcelona+Medellin, 2014 (The House of Mama Icha)

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- Filmedellín-Grant: Estímulo al Fortalecimiento Audiovisual de Medellín, 2017 (The House of Mama Icha)
- Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. Grant to individuals 2017 (Absentee's House)
- SeirenFilms Award, a mentorship for the transmedia development of Mi Casa My Home, DocMontevideo, 2016 (Mi Casa My Home)
- Centro Atico, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Postproduction Grant, 2016 (The House of Mama Icha).
- Colombian Film Fund for Short Documentary Production, FDC-Proimagenes, 2014 (The House of Mama Icha)

ART RESIDENCIES

- Residencias Walden, marzo 2018 (The House of Mama Icha)
- Art Residency by Espacio-Arte, Medellin, Colombia, 2016 (Mi Casa My Home)
- Art Residency in Mexico given by the *Ministerio de Cultura* of Colombia and the *Fondo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes de México* (FONCA), 2013, (Absentees' House)