

PLACEMAKING RE-IMAGINED

Pop-up exhibit co-created with homeless women in New York



“Hundreds of people passed in front of me every day, and most of them don’t see me. Some just scream at me. (...)

It’s hard to be sitting here with people ignoring you”. (Rachel)

Placemaking Re-imagined is a pop-up mobile exhibit created by a team of NYU Design for America, a student club that uses human-centered design to address social issues impacting local communities. This project began in September of 2017 and focuses on issues faced by women experiencing homelessness. It originally centered around periods of menstruation. Based on our research (interviews with women experiencing homelessness, observations, etc.) and feedback from women, the project evolved as one of the themes that’s been coming out over and over again was a dire need for being “visible”: “Thousands of people pass by me every day, but most of them don’t even notice me”.

This was the inspiration for Placemaking Reimagined, the pop-up we created (and presented in April 2019 and May 2019) to share the stories of Rachel and Tabby, two women whom we have been visiting regularly since March of 2018. It presents Rachel and Tabby’s perspectives while inviting visitors to become aware of their specific individualities; to understand their feelings, hear their stories, and learn about their lived experiences.



Sitting with Rachel

We sat with Rachel at her regular weekday spot in December 2018 and recorded her point of view. We also took notes of how it felt to sit on the ground and become invisible.



In Rachel's Words

We recorded our conversations with Rachel where she told us about her exhaustion, the violence she was faced to, her loss of faith and confidence.



Through Tabby's Eyes

Photos taken by Tabby in spring 2018 with a disposable camera. The album showed the elements of her everyday life, her frustration, and her aspirations.



Tabby's Library

From May 2018 to April 2019, we regularly brought books to Tabby and engaged in conversation about them. After a few months, her two companions joined the "book club".



Call for Action

At the end of the pop up, visitors were invited to reflect and to commit to act by signing their name on a card they selected - Acknowledge, Understand, Advocate, Donate and Volunteer.



HOMELESSNESS IN NEW YORK

- In recent years, homelessness in New York City has reached the highest levels since the Great Depression of the 1930s.
- In January 2019, there were **63,839 people experiencing homelessness**, including **15,492 families with 22,938 children**, sleeping each night in the New York City municipal shelter system. Families make up three-quarters of the homeless shelter population.
- Every night in NY nearly **4,000 people experiencing homelessness** sleep on New York City streets, in the subway system, and in other public spaces.

(Sources: Coalition for the homeless & Bowery.org).

OUR TEAM

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