



Hamlet, a hand-embroidered found photograph by Julie Cockburn, from her monograph *Stickybeak*, which was published by Chose Commune in September. Cockburn's work is on view this month at Flowers Gallery, in London.

hall. There Noemia sits, positioned between elevator and phone. Via one or the other, she expects her children to emancipate her. She is forever revealing the same secret: "Don't tell anyone. I'm leaving next week. I've asked my daughter to bring my suitcase."

"Out there" is how the residents have christened the world—a land where they have been but will not be. Almost all came without a choice. First they lost their husband or wife, then it was their home they could no longer keep up, next their children's apartment got crowded, and finally the whole world transformed into one marked by a giant DO NOT ENTER sign. They arrived at the gate with their suitcases filled with their most cherished odds and ends, such as pictures from their youth, from the time their kids were children and obeyed them, the days when the reins of life lay in their hands—hands that didn't fail them while gripping the balustrade. "It's just for a while, until you get better," their relatives said. And for

the last time, they pretended to believe them. "I came as a guest, to stay a few months," says Maria Prado, a retired civil servant. "It wasn't even me who decided. I think they had a nice little talk and decided to give it a try. Then the stay got extended, and now I expect to die here."

For most residents of the home, the exit door is barred. They go out only with authorization. The ones who rule over their comings and goings are relatives or doctors. Even for those with permission, the urge to see the city slowly wanes, eventually dying out. First time around, Paulo stayed only a month. A confirmed bachelor, he was living in his own apartment in Copacabana, assisted by caregivers after an accident immobilized his legs and a myocardial infarction ran over his heart. When his sister decided to spend a month in Europe, she asked Paulo to stay at the home. "Just so I don't worry," she said. Paulo went. Then he returned to Copacabana. "That's when I realized. I was out walking with my cane and I saw a hulking shadow of a thing leap onto the counter at the café. It was