

NEW RELEASE 2026



Ruth Kaplan
Crossing
From USA to Canada, Walking Roxham Road

Texts by Sarah Bassnett, Raoul Boulakia, Ruth Kaplan, Habib Zahori

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Documenting an irregular border site between USA and Canada

A seemingly ordinary landscape becomes a life-changing threshold for thousands. *Crossing* by documentary photographer Ruth Kaplan is a long-term photographic project focused on Roxham Road, an irregular border site between New York State, USA and Quebec, Canada. Although not an official port of entry, the site became a passageway for people seeking asylum in Canada. During Donald Trump's first presidency, increasingly restrictive U.S. immigration policies led a growing number of asylum seekers to cross into Canada via Roxham Road. While controversial, the site functioned for five years as a largely safe and operational crossing, until its closure in 2023.

Between 2018 and 2023, Kaplan documented Roxham Road and the many lives shaped by its existence. The resulting images trace a dense network of intersecting forces: migration and infrastructure, authority and care, geography, time, uncertainty, and endurance. Rather than isolating moments of crisis, Kaplan builds a layered visual record of a place defined by transition and tension, revealing how global political decisions materialize within a small, seemingly unremarkable landscape.

At a time when displacement and border politics continue to shape lives worldwide, the book offers a grounded and attentive perspective on migration—one that resists simplification and is rooted in observation, duration, and presence. Readers are invited to reflect on borders not only as lines on a map, but as lived spaces.

From the text *Crossing: A Roxham Road Chronicle* by **Sarah Bassnett**

With Kaplan's story of one specific crossing site, readers gain insight into related scenarios and processes around the world. Whenever people make irregular crossings, they take risks for survival. Even though the Roxham Road crossing was not as dangerous as some other irregular sites, claiming asylum is never an easy path. The crossing was shut down in March 2023 when Canada and the U.S. amended the Safe Third Country Agreement, but Kaplan's account continues to resonate. Her sensitive, thoughtful treatment of this place portrays asylum seekers as ordinary people navigating difficult legal and political barriers. Ultimately, she asks readers to consider their own relationship to this story.

Now, alone and thousands of miles away from everyone and everything I had known, loved and cared for—people and places that gave my life structure and purpose—I stood on the invisible line dividing the U.S. and Canada, on the cusp of becoming a refugee.

—**Habib Zahori**

Ruth Kaplan is a documentary photographer with an extensive background in editorial practice. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in major Canadian and international collections and publications. A recipient of numerous grants and awards, she currently teaches at OCAD University and Toronto Metropolitan University.

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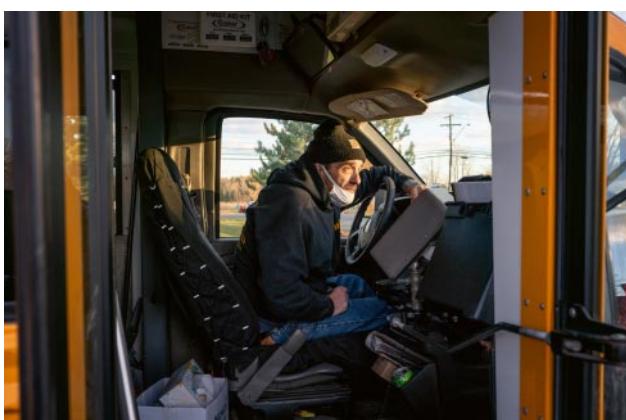
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01_Plattsburgh Bus Station, 2019. Most asylum-seekers arrived by bus from NYC, descended in Plattsburgh, then hired an authorized cab to drive to the Roxham Road border site. © Ruth Kaplan



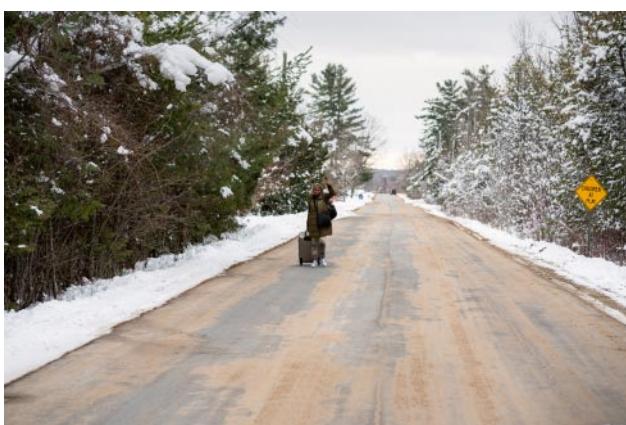
02_Plattsburgh Bus Station, 2019. Asylum seekers load up the cabs with all their possessions to bring across the border. © Ruth Kaplan



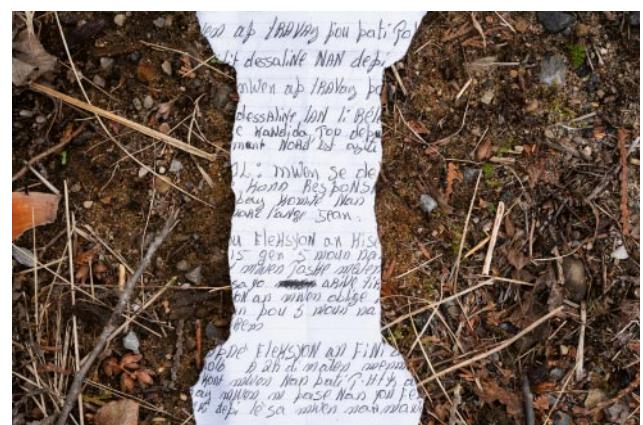
03_Plattsburgh Bus Station, 2021. Authorized cab driver waits for asylum-seekers to drive to the border. © Ruth Kaplan



04_Interstate 87, New York, 2021. Interstate 87 connects Plattsburgh to the border with Canada. The drive takes approximately half an hour. © Ruth Kaplan



05_Roxham Road, US side, 2022. An asylum-seeker is dropped off down the road (not by an authorized cab most likely) and walks to the Canadian crossing on Roxham Road. © Ruth Kaplan



06_Roxham Road Border Site, US, 2022. Before crossing into Canada, asylum seekers sometimes discard papers. This note was written in Creole, identifying the writer as most likely Haitian. © Ruth Kaplan



07_Roxham Road Border Site, US, 2019. A family gathers their belongings before crossing. All bags must be carried in one go. © Ruth Kaplan



08_Canadian Border Building, 2022. Once asylum-seekers crossed into Canada, they entered the Canadian border building and began their asylum claim, a long process. They usually spent a few hours in this building and were then brought to a larger immigration facility nearby for a fuller check including Red Cross assistance if necessary and more thorough interviews. © Ruth Kaplan



09_Roxham Road Border Site, US side, 2019. A family watches Canadian border police before they are questioned. Asylum seekers were informed that this was not a legal port of entry and that they would be arrested if they crossed. They must acknowledge this statement before proceeding. If they choose to proceed, they then make a refugee claim upon entry and are not arrested (unless there are issues with their identity and documents). © Ruth Kaplan



10_Roxham Road Border Site, US side, 2019. A family crosses into Canada. The ditch behind them shows the delineation of the two countries. © Ruth Kaplan



11_Roxham Road Border Site, Canadian Side, 2021. Canadian Border Police address asylum-seekers during Covid-19 when the borders were closed. © Ruth Kaplan



12_Roxham Road Border Site, Canadian Side, 2022. Once asylum seekers entered the border building, they were frisked. Their belongings were taken and searched, then returned to them. © Ruth Kaplan



13_Roxham Road Border Site, US Side, 2019. Cabs drop off asylum seekers at the end of the year (the numbers always spiked at this time of year). © Ruth Kaplan



14_Roxham Road Border Site, Canadian Side, 2022. Asylum seekers wait in line outside the Canadian border building to begin their refugee claims. © Ruth Kaplan



15_Roxham Road Border Site, 2022 © Ruth Kaplan