On property no. 641 in Mar Mkhayel Street stood a large, multi-storey building which once housed the brewery, founded in 1911. The brewery was a hub for commerce and trades, and with the installation of the tram stop at the beginning of Mar Mkhayel Street kickstarted a wave of development and expansion which lasted from 1923 to 1929. However, the brewery continued to operate until 1974.

But in the 1930s, the Roum hill, once a summer destination for wealthy families, began to attract people looking to benefit from this increased economic activity, turning Roum into a residential area for medium and low-income families. In 1941, Antoun Antoun was born in Roum, and in 1940, Antoun Antoun and his family moved to Roum as Antoun worked as a barber and forced them to sell.

Due to the absence of public spaces in the neighborhood, the street was transformed into a major thoroughfare, with large numbers of local visitors and tourists. In response to these changes, Antoun Antoun moved from the family house to a home on the edge of the city center. Yet, the more people moved into the area, the more property developers acquired the shares of the non-resident owners, outmaneuvering the remaining two investors and forcing them to sell.

In 2017, an investor, the Michel Company, acquired the shares of the non-resident owners, outmaneuvering the remaining two investors and forcing them to sell.

The investor gradually cleared the other tenants from the building in preparation for a major development project. Following Georgette’s death, the new owner sealed her apartment, but she had given red wine to her children and had taken back the house and recovered her possessions. The remaining residents—Antoun Antoun and his family, the Abu Wahals, and George—were unable to remain in the neighborhood due to the high rents, and moved out of Beirut.

As we get to know the streets and alleys whose residents have witnessed significant changes in the architectural, social, and economic environment, we pose questions about heritage and the housing policies and the politics which shape the housing market.
We migrated to the city in search of education. My father rented us a place in Roum next to the school, but he didn't want to leave his village and so we stayed with him. We grew up here, between the train and the tram, and I still remember him and my friends used to dodge paying the fireman-painter fare. We'd go into the train through the back door on the conductor wouldn't spot us. I also remember the old customs of Gemmayzeh Street: the dead cats being laid on a car peddled by a gang of barely and all the shop owners shutting their doors until the carriage had passed, out of respect for the dead. Death today has lost its gravity: sensual and searching are used in the same building all the same time.

Between 2001 and 2007 the average price of apartments in Mar Mkhayel increased 761%, from $1,000 per square metre to $3,000.

In 2014 approximately 60 new shops were opened by designers and artists in the neighbourhood, in addition to 70 art galleries, bars, and restaurants.

As for me, I returned to Roum, where I opened a new shop that I run to this day.

The Massaad Stairs are named after Massaad Bou Chebl who came to Mar Mkhayel from Bikfaya in the 1930s to work in transport at the Port of Beirut. He later founded the Trucks Management Authority and was head of the truck drivers' union in Lebanon for 43 years. He put up the first buildings in the Upper Neighbourhood, where he lived before moving to the Port area. When he died in 1985, he bequeathed his entire fortune to his four heirs. The construction site was licensed to demolish the Massaad Stairs in order to give trucks access to the site and connect the residential area to the Port of Beirut. He later founded the Trucks Management Authority and was head of the truck drivers' union in Lebanon for 43 years. He put up the first buildings in the Upper Neighbourhood, where he lived before moving to the Port area. When he died in 1985, he bequeathed his entire fortune to his four heirs. The construction site was licensed to demolish the Massaad Stairs in order to give trucks access to the site and connect the residential area to the Port of Beirut.

The Olympia Cinema was built on the property in 1952, with residents stating that it was built by a Muslim. It was a place where Muslims would spend their evenings. When it became cinema, the nearby shops were turned into boutiques and cafes. The cinema was closed in 2008 and the property was then sold to a developer who wanted to build a tower block on the site. The site was entered on the list of protected buildings. However, construction is ongoing at the site, causing suffering and inconvenience to the residents of this century-old historic landmark. The greater part of the stairs were saved from destruction, and the site was entered in the list of protected buildings. However, construction is ongoing at the site, causing suffering and inconvenience to the residents of this century-old historic landmark.