

Photo 2017 med



**18 MAI
11 JUIN**

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**SANARY-SUR-MER
ÎLE DE BENDOR
TOULON**
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A Festival of Discoveries or Rediscoveries

Philippe Sérénon
Artistic director

In keeping with the aim of the event as defined by Jean-Luc Monterosso, its first artistic director and the director of the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Photomed is a festival of discoveries and rediscoveries. This year, photographers invite us on a journey through their poetic or documentary stories, encouraging visitors to reflect upon the major issues of our time, in particular the way we relate to other people and our surroundings.

FLORE takes us on an Orientalist journey as experienced by early photographers who accompanied archaeologists in the late nineteenth century, and the treatment of her photos helps to accentuate their nostalgic and poetic flavour. At a time when the Arab world is experiencing tragedies and upheavals, FLORE takes us on a poetic and intimate journey to the Middle East, whose contemporary image is far removed from the gentleness of her photos. Not far away, in an island of the Dodecanese, Hans Silvester shows us the work of the women of Karpathos who bake bread, reflecting the existence of an ancient ecosystem: from the wheat field to the oven and then the church, bread is made and plays an important role as a social bond. The harsh landscape of Karpathos is somewhat reminiscent of that of the Calanques near Marseille, where Hélène David explores the question of growing tensions between the human, the non-human and the urban. Hélène worked on climate refugees, travelling to the French Southern and Antarctic Lands, then returned to Marseille to observe and bear witness to this confrontation between humans and its impact (willing or otherwise) on the environment, plants and animals. The title, *Noces ou les confins sauvages* (literally "Nuptials or the Wild Frontiers"), shows her determination to encourage us to think instead of holding on to sterile clichés.

By returning to the myth of Ulysses over a period—still in progress—that is identical to the latter's ten-year voyage, Michaël Duperrin explores highly topical universal questions of identity, otherness and hospitality. In the places Ulysses is supposed to have travelled to, he uses his viewpoint as a contemporary photographer to offer an immersive experience via his cyanotypes and monumental prints. He travelled, for example, to Sicily, where Sophie Zénon takes us to discover its inhabitants. She presents pictures of mummified corpses in Palermo that were still visited by their families a century ago, vernacular portraits found in flea markets, and landscapes of central Sicily, giving us an insight into the soul of this unique and enchanting island where the silence of Man contrasts with the fury of Mount Etna. The fact that the exhibition is being held on the island of Bendor gives it a strong symbolic and emotional dimension that will not escape visitors.

We were also eager to pay tribute to Gérard Rondeau, whose work on Morocco was presented at Photomed in 2012 and who passed away last year. He too travelled the world, and his photographic style is both highly personal and instantly recognisable. His intensely poetic photos are a perfect synthesis of the theme of Man, Nature and Society: his portraits of personalities, his experience in Sarajevo, his landscapes of the Champagne region and his photographs of cathedrals bear witness to his rich itinerary—not forgetting his photos of World War One battlefields whose silence is deafening in these troubled times.

At the Hôtel des Arts in Toulon, another great traveller, Bernard Plossu, invites us to share the relationship he developed over a period of thirty years with Mediterranean metaphysics via his photographs taken in Spain, France, Italy and Greece.

These are journeys, of course, but here the photographs seek to record moments of transition that sometimes span two worlds and two types of awareness. The exhibition curator, Ricardo Vazquez, had to choose between these mysterious journeys, including some that the uninitiated can safely undertake and other, more risky expeditions for those of us who are eager to travel further afield.

Last but not least, The Liberté theatre, a new Photomed venue, presents a set of photos and a video by Zineb Sedira, who was born in France of Algerian parents and lives in London. She primarily finds her inspiration in a quest for her identity as a woman—a search that has its own unique personal geography. She is presenting 3 autobiographical works that reference universal ideas of mobility, memory, passing on knowledge to future generations, and language. She is fascinated by the mother-daughter relationship, and her video *Mother Tongue* (2002) shows three generations of women and raises the question of how things are passed down from generation to generation in a globalised world. Her installations, photographs, films and videos serve as media for her ideas on the family and migration. Her diverse origins are reflected in the format of her works, which are often triptychs referring to the three places, three languages and three generations that form part of her identity and that of her family.

"Art is political. Without the political dimension, it is just decorative. But it's important not to focus on politics at a particular point in time; instead we must concentrate on something more vital: the way we relate to the world."

Gao Bo.

Hélène DAVID	<i>Noces ou les confins sauvages</i>	Maison Flotte - SANARY-SUR-MER - 18/05 • 11/06
Michaël DUPERRIN	<i>Out of the blue</i>	Atelier des Artistes - SANARY-SUR-MER - 18/05 • 11/06
FLORE	<i>Une femme française en Orient</i>	Maison Flotte - SANARY-SUR-MER - 18/05 • 11/06
Gérard RONDEAU	<i>Entre silence et ombre</i>	Salle Barthélémy de Don - SANARY-SUR-MER - 18/05 • 11/06
Hans SILVESTER	<i>Le pain des femmes</i>	Allée d'Estienne d'Orves - SANARY-SUR-MER - 18/05 • 11/06
Sophie ZÉNON	<i>Sicile. Au-dessous du Volcan</i>	Salle Patmos et Mikonos - ÎLE DE BENDOR - 18/05 • 11/06
Bernard PLOSSU	<i>L'Heure immobile. Métaphysique Méditerranéenne</i>	Hôtel des Arts - TOULON - 20/05 • 18/06
Zineb SEDIRA	<i>La maison de ma mère</i>	Le Liberté - TOULON - 19/05 • 27/07

Noces ou les confins sauvages

Hélène David

Noces ou les confins sauvages is a photographic narrative. "The grand libertinage of nature and the sea that takes hold of my entire being," wrote Albert Camus in *Nuptials in Tipasa* (1936). At the start of the project, Hélène David saw in this essay an intimate experience of the Mediterranean that might be shared. "Here too, at the edge of the city, bodies unfold and willingly become permeable to the different elements—water, plants, minerals and organic entities. All these protagonists take part in the fabulous contemporary story of our coastline."

In the exhibition, the photographer invites us on a sensory journey along the coastline, which is a buffer zone between different worlds. Her pictures explore the interactions between humans and non-humans and the boundaries between wildlife and the fringes of the urban environment. Hélène David invites us to look at this vulnerable area in a different way.

Although the project mainly focuses on the coastline of Marseille and the Calanques National Park, it is the first chapter in a broader project concerning the Mediterranean coast that looks at the relationships between living things on either side of the shore. *Noces et les confins sauvages* is also the title of a book to be published by Sun/Sun in the autumn of 2017.

The Mediterranean is a world in crisis that lies at the crossroads of many instances of social and environmental fragility. The impoverishment of land and sea threatens the future of the people who live on its shores, exacerbating inequalities between North and South. The coastline is under pressure from climate change, pollution and large-scale urban development. At a time when such tension is rife, the contributors to this

project wish to work towards improving the quality of the relationships between people and their environment. Hélène David invites us to reconsider the paradigm according to which nature and nurture are separate.

Hélène David has drawn from her experience as a documentary photographer to develop a poetic approach that explores the relationships between people and their environment. During her documentary projects, Hélène spent time in the Arctic with the Inupiaqs of Alaska, and regularly took to the high seas for her series entitled *Marins* (Sailors). These immersive experiences have shown her new ways of identifying the relationships between humans and nature. Influenced by the philosophy of ecology and nature writing, she now wishes to explore the different ways in which humans relate to wildlife. The series entitled *Les confins sauvages* (in progress) explores the different ways the living world is perceived and represented in the Mediterranean area. *The Réfugiés climatiques* (climate refugees) project, which Hélène worked on with the Argos collective, was exhibited and the world climate summit in Copenhagen, at the La Gacilly photography festival, and at the French National Library (François Mitterrand building). The *Marins* series was presented at the International Festival of Maritime Photography in Vannes and at the Étonnants Voyageurs festival in Saint-Malo, and published in the international press. Hélène is also working on digital projects such as *Sportifs*, *petites discussions avec la douleur*, a web series with Radio France.

Her documentary work on the coastline of the Calanques forms part of the photography collection at the Archives Départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône. She has lived in Marseille since 2008, and is represented by the cooperative agency PictureTank (Paris).



Noces (Méditerranée), Series *Noces ou les confins sauvages*
© Hélène David / Picturetank

MAISON FLOTTE
SANARY-SUR-MER
18/05 - 11/06



Series *Noces ou les confins sauvages*
© Hélène David / Pictoretank



Series *Noces ou les confins sauvages*
© Hélène David / Pictoretank

Out of the blue

Michaël Duperrin

ATELIER DES ARTISTES
SANARY-SUR-MER
18/05 - 11/06

The Odyssey is the story of a man driven both by the desire to return home and by an insatiable curiosity that leads him to make detours and meet other people. Ulysses is eager to satisfy both, even if the price to be paid is a decade of wandering. If this ancient story still speaks to us, it's because it deals with universal questions that are especially relevant today: identity, otherness, and hospitality. Michaël goes to the places Ulysses is said to have travelled to on his adventurous journey, creating links between a mythical past and current reality. The idea is to explore reality via the prism of the epic and to interrogate the present and the relevance of myth. The experiment lasted ten years—the time took Ulysses to return to Ithaca. It is a many-layered journey, somewhere between here and elsewhere, today and yesterday, reality and fiction, literature and photography, the Mediterranean and a period spanning 3,000 years. It was a voyage of discovery: of the world, of himself, and of other people.

The exhibition brings together two sets of pictures for the first time: *L'Autre monde* (2011-2016) comprises episodes from the *Odyssey* where Ulysses encountered non-human beings: Sirens, monsters, gods, and the denizens of the underworld. The photographs are printed as cyanotypes because there is no word for "blue" in the language of Homer. The adjective that would later refer to dark blue can be found in the *Odyssey*, but it has another meaning: it refers to the world of the Night: the "Other World" of the title. *L'île de l'oubli*, the first section of *Le Monde de l'autre* (2016-2020) raises questions of human migration, exile and the memory (or lost memory) of where we come from.

Shipwrecked on the island of Calypso, Ulysses was homesick and wept every evening as he looked out to sea. This is thought to have happened near Ceuta, where today other people look towards Gibraltar: migrants attempting to travel to Europe...

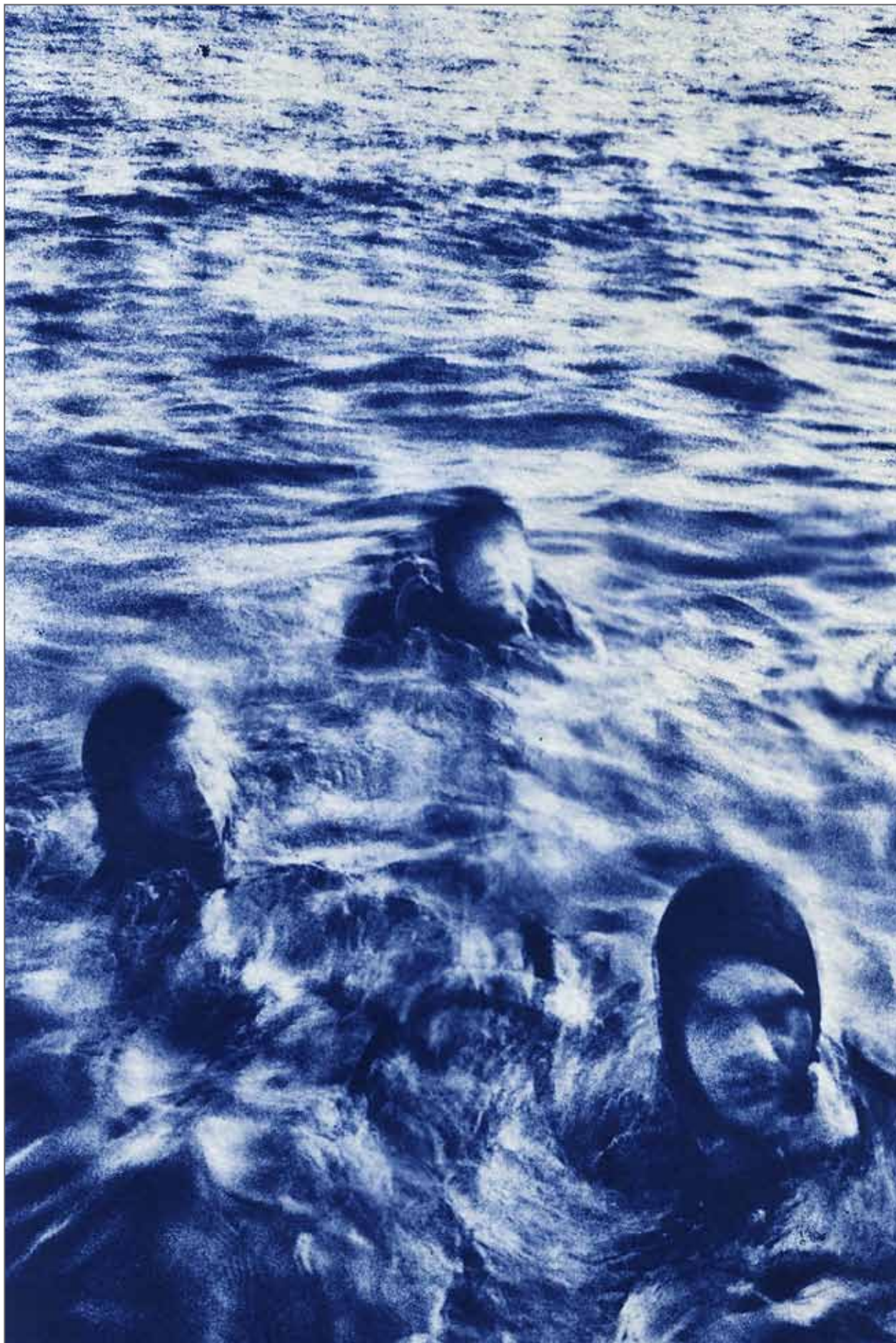
L'île de l'oubli is sponsored by the Photomed Festival.

© Michaeël Duperrin / Studio Hans Lucas



© Michaeël Duperrin / Studio Hans Lucas

Michaël was born in Toulouse in 1972 and lives and works in Marseille and Paris. He turned to photography after studying film at the Atelier Reflexe at the Centre Jean Verdier, and holds a Masters degree in Art from Paris 8 University. "Standing at the frontier between personal experience and myth, my work as a photographer attempts to give form to the invisible and to existence by highlighting traces of their presence. After studying film I chose photography, but the question of time remains at the heart of my preoccupations. At first photography struck me as similar to the experience of Orpheus in the Underworld. He took Eurydice back to the world of the living, but transgressed the instructions he had been given: on the threshold of the world of the living, he turns to look at her. Eurydice, still in the Underworld, turned into a vanishing shadow. Orpheus tries to hold her back, but his hand grasps thin air. For ten years, photography stood on this threshold between presence and absence, past and present. My first two books were related to the deaths of people close to me. When the grieving process was over, the time came to move on. I encountered the figure of Ulysses in Dante, and he chimed with my long-standing and deep-seated attraction for the Mediterranean and my need to explore the world. This is how the idea of retracing the Odyssey slowly developed. My photography is now driven by a growing concern for reality and documenting actual experience.



© Michaeël Duperrin / Studio Hans Lucas



© Michaeël Duperrin / Studio Hans Lucas

Une femme française en Orient

FLORE

"With these tiny things she gives us, like offerings of suspended time, Flore extends our field of vision—and expands the world with unexpected spaces".

Susana Gállego Cuesta

This series presents a version of the Middle East as seen by FLORE, somewhere between imagination and reality, between intimacy and illusion; an alternative, poetic view of countries that have been, often painfully, hitting the headlines for several months.

These photographs are informed both by the artist's childhood spent in Egypt and major literary works, from Lady Duff-Gordon's letters to Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and Gustave Flaubert's *Voyage to Egypt*, in which the invention of photography was already present.

There is a sense of nostalgia for a time when the slow journey to the mysterious East was a voyage of initiation and a real adventure.

The series comprises black and white selenium-toned gelatin silver prints made by the artist, measuring 20x20 and 15x15 cm. It is the result of several journeys around the Mediterranean Basin (in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Morocco and Andalusia).

The artist invites us on a journey in the great orientalist tradition, with images of a dream that modernity cannot erode.



MAISON FLOTTE
SANARY-SUR-MER
18/05 • 11/06

Tea at Selma © FLORE, courtesy galerie Sit Down

The old man looking at the sea © FLORE, courtesy galerie Sit Down



Caminin Kedi © FLORE, courtesy galerie Sit Down



FLORE is a French-Spanish art photographer. Born in 1963, she currently lives and works in Paris. She is represented by Galerie Sit Down in Paris, Blanca Berlin Galeria in Madrid, Galerie 127 in Marrakech and Galerie Wada-Garou in Tokyo. Her photographic series, which are all long term projects often carried out while travelling, have been purchased or presented by major institutions such as the Musée du Petit Palais, MMP+ in Marrakech, the Mémorial du Camp in Rivesaltes and the French National Library, as well as at international events including Photo London, Fotofever in Paris and Brussels, the Marrakech Art Fair, the Daegu Art Fair and the Snif Art Fair in Osaka. Her series *Une femme française en Orient* was made into a book published by Postcard to coincide with the exhibition at the Hôtel de Sauroy during the Paris Month of Photography in 2014. In 2016 her new book *Lointains souvenirs* on the childhood of Marguerite Duras in Indochina was published by Contrejour. She mainly uses traditional photography, often adding materials such as wax, gold or watercolour and taking great care over the printing process. In parallel with her artistic activity, FLORE is a widely acknowledged teacher who regularly organises workshops. She defines her poetic, timeless world as a political act that is her way of taking a stance with respect to the “beam of darkness that arises from [her] time”, in the words of Giorgio Agamben.

Entre silence et ombre

Gérard Rondeau

Curated by
Simon Edwards

**SALLE BARTHÉLÉMY DE DON
SANARY-SUR-MER
18/05 - 11/06**

"I love roads that lead nowhere. They're the ones I tend to take, treading paths where there is nothing to be found."

Gérard Rondeau, who died on 13 September 2016, spent his life looking not for what can be seen, but what can be felt. At the start of his career he travelled through France and the Champagne-Ardenne region where he was born, looking for secrets and unspoken things. He published a book on his friend the painter Paul Rebeyrolle, chronicled life during the siege of Sarajevo, and produced a portrait of contemporary Morocco via a brilliant dialogue with the paintings of Delacroix. For fifteen years he travelled with Médecins du Monde on international aid missions.

As we look at his photographs, we are struck by their elusiveness and their ineffable poetry. What interested him were the traces left behind by ordinary people, fleeting moments, and the memory of places. He was fascinated by the First World War and, with the writer Yves Gibeau, inventoried its battlefields, its monuments, and the still visible wounds it inflicted on the landscape. Gérard Rondeau was also an outstanding portrait photographer. With a neutral, sometimes austere eye, he offers highly personal views of the artists and writers he met. A sensitive photographer, he was able to establish a relationship of attentive trust with all his subjects.

The MEP presented a retrospective of Gérard Rondeau's work in 2015, following which he donated 60 prints representative of his career. An exhibition of his photographs of Morocco was held in 2012 in Sanary-sur-Mer as part of the festival. Photomed is eager to pay tribute to him by presenting a selection of prints from the MEP collection, which provides an insight into the work of an intuitive man and an imposing figure: as the title of one of his books puts it: *Le silence et rien alentour* (silence and nothing around it).

Photomed wishes to thank the Maison Européenne de la Photographie for the loan of the photographs.



Grand Palais, Paris, 1997
© Gérard Rondeau, Collection Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris



The tomb of Jean Genet, Larache, Morocco, 1996
© Gérard Rondeau, Collection Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris



Salé, Morocco, 1999
© Gérard Rondeau, Collection Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris

Le pain des femmes

Hans Silvester

ALLÉE D'ESTIENNE D'ORVES
SANARY-SUR-MER
18/05 • 11/06

Hans Silvester is known all over the world for his book on cats in the Greek Islands. Before carrying out the project, he took the time to visit the islands to find the ones where there are a lot of cats and where the setting lends itself to photography. In the Dodecanese, between Crete and Rhodes, he selected the island of Karpathos not for its cats but for its bread.

This very poor, rocky, arid island was abandoned by the young generation who left for America, which is why its traditional and seemingly timeless rural lifestyle has been preserved.

As he went there in all seasons, even in winter when he was the only foreigner, he bonded with the villagers of Olymbos in a way tourists never do. They gave him their trust and gave him an insight into their daily lives. Among other things, families make their own bread with the wheat they have sown, harvested and ground.

Hans Silvester photographed workers in the fields and people baking bread in traditional costume, with utensils that have not changed for centuries used by women whose faces are red from the heat of the bread oven. Wood is scarce on Karpathos and the heat from the oven is never wasted—it is used, for instance, for roasting lamb or drying fruit. The loaves are blessed at religious festivals according to Greek Orthodox tradition. Families take it in turns to give the Patriarch a large loaf, which he then shares among the faithful.

This documentary work forms part of Hans Silvester's highly personal approach, which bears witness not only to his relationship with others but also to his connection with nature and time. His extraordinary empathy allows him to establish a close, respectful relationship with everyone he meets and to

take us into their world. He might be seen as the first green activist to use photography as a weapon of persuasion: whether he is photographing the last surviving rituals of primitive peoples in Ethiopia or Greek traditions, he always immerses himself in the setting, which also means he photographs animals and the natural environment of his hosts. He loves the Earth, and his work forms a coherent whole that speaks of the beauty of the world and testifies to his independence. Hans Silvester never seeks to create effects; he chooses his subjects and allows himself to be guided by serendipity. He is the very essence of the photographer, a storyteller like travelling minstrels, acting as a messenger and leaving it up to the viewer to wonder what the images mean. He is eager to preserve a record of a disappearing world and to denounce, by means of contrast, a worrying view of the evolution of societies.



Le pain des femmes
© Hans Silvester



Hans Silvester is a professional photographer and green activist, born on 2 October 1938 in Lörrach, Germany. His parents gave him his first camera for his fourteenth birthday: this was when he took his first photographs. He was fascinated by photography, but travel gave him his taste for reportage work. After leaving school in Fribourg in 1955, he travelled through Europe, especially in the Camargue. In 1960 he published a book of photographs of the Camargue with captions by Jean Giono, which was an instant success. In 1962 he moved to the village of Lioux in Provence, but continued to travel: he visited South America (for a humanitarian reportage piece), the USA (where he stayed for six months), Central America, Japan, Portugal, Egypt, Tunisia, Hungary, Peru, Italy, and Spain. He joined the Rapho agency in 1965 and in 1977 contributed to the first issue of *Géo* magazine with a reportage piece on a Basque village. His animal photography includes pigeons, Camargue horses, birds, cats and dogs in the Greek Islands, etc. He also photographs unique traditions such as pétanque, scarecrows, and kites. From the 1980s onwards, Hans Silvester has focused his work on environmental activism, photographing all the natural parks in Europe, denouncing the ravages of deforestation in the Amazon, publishing a long reportage piece on the River Calavon entitled *La rivière assassinée*, and taking an interest in forestry in North America. Hans Silvester recently published a book entitled *Pastorale africaine* with a preface by Pierre Rabhi, and has republished his book *Pétanque et jeu provençal*.

Le pain des femmes
© Hans Silvester

Sicile. Au-dessous du volcan.

Sophie Zénon

Curated by
Laura Serani

SALLE PATMOS et MYKONOS
ÎLE DE BENDOR
18/05 - 11/06

"An island within an island, a special world far from the coast and the temples, the languid African atmosphere and the huge palaces: this is Enna, surrounded by deserts. No one makes the trip to the centre of this land without a feeling of dereliction; and no one can forget it once back home.

In this eye at the centre of the triangle, this geological cross-section where spells are cast, the essence of Sicily is revealed."

Christiane Rancé, écrivain.

In the regions of Madonia and Val Demone in central Sicily, Man has a mysterious, austere relationship with nature. Shut away at night in villages clinging to rocky outcrops emerging from the vast undulating plains, by day he cheerfully walks the winding roads through the hills, driving sheep and sometimes scrawny cattle.

Here, the sea is not part of the landscape. Another region, arid and harsh, surrounds Enna and Caltanissetta. The land preserves the rich complexity of the Sicilians, which the writer Leonardo Sciascia called "Sicilianity". It's a secret, wild, hidden Sicily, which looks at the sea from above and afar. It's a land where wheat and solitude have always grown.

At the heart of the island of Bendor, Sophie Zénon has occupied the room next to Paul Ricard's studio. Conceived as a gallery of ancestors, the space presents a selection of black and white landscapes alongside portraits of anonymous people—glass plates founded at the flea market in Palermo—and impressive colour photographs of mummified corpses from the Palermo Catacombs. In the late 16th century, Capuchin monks discovered that their crypt had the unusual ability to preserve corpses. Between 1559 and 1920, over eight thousand mummies, dressed in their best attire, were displayed to families who came to converse with their dear departed. Delicately captured in these photographs, they seem to shimmer or even dance, somewhere between presence and disappearance, blurring the boundary between life and death.



Mummy of Palermo (Series: In Case We Die), 2008.
© Sophie Zénon



Untitled, Palermo, 2008
© Sophie Zénon



© Sophie Zénon

Sophie Zénon, who trained as a historian and ethnologist, took her first photographs in the late 1990s in Mongolia, a country she finds fascinating because of its wide open spaces and the intense relationship the inhabitants have with nature. Influenced by her encounter with shamanism, a global system of thought where the invisible world, especially ancestors, interacts with the world of the living, her artistic approach has focused since the late 2000s on representing absence, our relationship with our ancestors, and the notion of filiation. It is impossible to understand her work in Sicily without being aware of her unique and profound experience in Mongolia.

L'Heure immobile. Métaphysique Méditerranéenne

Bernard Plossu

Curated by
Ricardo Vazquez

**HÔTEL DES ARTS
TOULON
19/05 - 18/06**

French photographer Bernard Plossu has devoted his life to travel and photography. From Mexico to the USA (of which his photographs are so famous), and from his beloved Italy to the city of Le Havre whose poetry he captured, few places in the world have escaped his highly educated yet distanced eye.

But he has always had a great fondness for the Mediterranean. This shifting space, with its stark light and penetrating shadows, has always held his attention. Spain even managed to keep him for a few years, in a little house in Andalusia that is still very much present in his conversation and his dreams.

The exhibition at the Hôtel des Arts, the arts centre of the Département of the Var, presents 135 as yet unseen photographs taken in Spain, France, Italy and Greece, reflecting Bernard Plossu's thirty year conversation with Mediterranean metaphysics. Over the years he has collected, selected and carefully preserved hundreds of photographs that are, in effect, dialogues with metaphysical painting, literature and photography.

Particular attention will also be paid to Bernard Plossu's relationship with the books he has published. Some thirty books by the great photographer, many of them out of print, will be on display. Several videos, including one made specially for the exhibition with a local improvised music group, Hi Klub, will also be screened.

The photographs show a Mediterranean made up of deserted, imprecise places that might be either real or imagined, so mysterious are they despite their apparent familiarity. This is the Mediterranean of Carrà, De Chirico or even Morandi.

In these photographs, the strangest things can occur at any moment. Opposites can meet, time can be modified, be stretched indefinitely or even stand still for no apparent reason.

These are photographs of journeys, of course, but instead of an Odyssey, they seek to capture the waiting times that occur between two actions, two places, or two periods: moments of transition that sometimes span two worlds and two types of awareness.

These colliding worlds, these magical instances of chance so dear to the Surrealists, make these mind-spaces into a metaphysical world whose apparent calm can hardly conceal its powerfully evocative poetry.

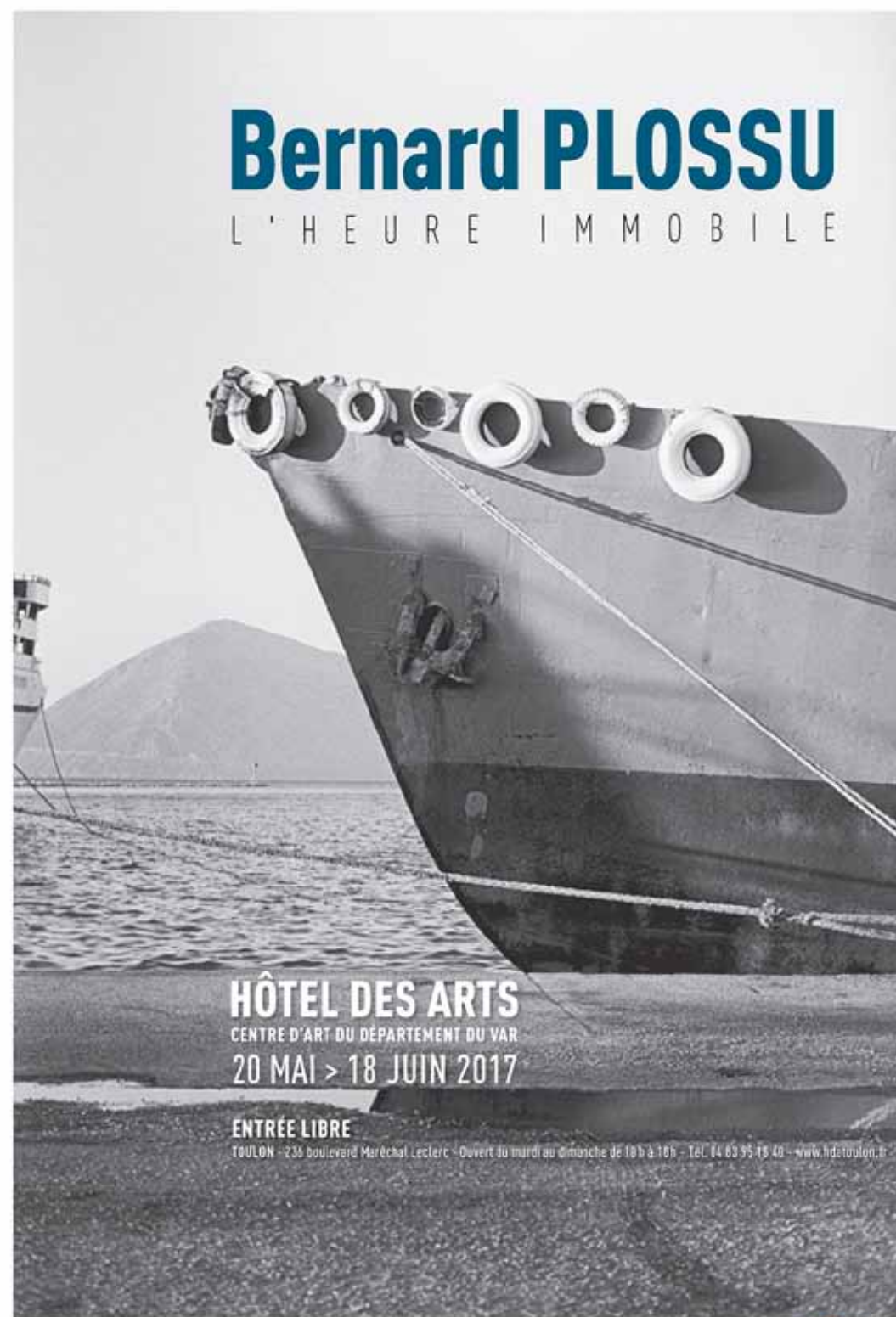
The curator's task was to choose between these mysterious journeys, including some that the uninitiated can safely undertake and other, more risky expeditions for those of us who are eager to travel further afield.

Building sites, shops, motorways, train carriages, factories, sea shores or pavements turn into portals that allow us to step through the looking-glass. The clocks now stop, so that we can hear the whisper of time as it passes... A book will be published in partnership with the PhotoEspaña Festival. An earlier, smaller version of the exhibition opened the 2016 edition of the Madrid Photography Festival.

Simy Island, Greece, 1989
© Bernard Plossu



Ricardo Vazquez is chief heritage curator and director of the Hôtel des Arts in Toulon. He has organised many exhibitions, in particular photography shows with artists such as Stéphane Couturier, Jacqueline Salmon and Marie Bovo. He works with institutions including the Maison Européenne de la Photographie, the PhotoEspaña Festival, the Fondation des Treilles, the Photomed Festival and the Rencontres de la Photographie in Arles.



Photo' med PHotoESPAÑA 2017 Hôtel des Arts LE DÉPARTEMENT



Pierrevert, France, 2009
© Bernard Plossu

La maison de ma mère

Zineb Sedira

LE LIBERTÉ
TOULON
20/05 - 27/07

La Maison de ma mère (2002)

"For me, white is the colour of Algeria—the white of Algeria and "Alger la blanche" [Algiers the White, as the city is often called]. White is omnipresent in my mother's house—embroidery, curtains, cushions, clothes. It's the white of ceremonies and rituals. It's a colour tinged with nostalgia, and it's also the white of the emptiness of the house, which makes my mother so sad because her children have moved away and will not return. So white is evocative of absence. As for Assia Djebar in *Le Blanc de l'Algérie*, the words of nameless people swept away by History, as well as the dignified assertion of simple lives lived heroically, constitute a kind of graveside ritual for the dead: an atonement for the pain of lives torn apart. But this white is also a space where things are made good, a space for creation, an in-between space where what we cannot always name is revealed, a magical space for the creation and mystery that belongs to us all.

Mother, Daughter and I is about more than just motherhood; it's more about mother-daughter filiation and the way things are handed down. In the series of photographic portraits entitled *Mother, Daughter and I*, the artist shows herself with her mother, then with her daughter, then with both of them. These pictures of mother and daughter are part of a long tradition of self-portraiture in the history of art by woman artists. The self-portrait with her daughter recalls *Portrait of the Artist and her Daughter* (1785) by the painter Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, who presents herself as a happy mother and an accomplished artist at the same time. This question of motherhood and creativity is also one of the concerns of second-wave feminist artists. For example, at the Salon in May 1968, the Brazilian-born artist Léa Lublin exhibited her son in his cradle, as an artwork: procreation as a creative act. During opening hours, the artist cradled, fed, and changed her son, blurring the frontier between private and public. Zineb Sedira more specifically explores mother-daughter filiation in her portraits, which are accompanied by photos of the subjects' hands. These highlight not only the loving bonds

that connect the artist to her mother and daughter, but also the unease and distance between her daughter and her mother, who have no interaction, be it through their bodies, hands, or eyes. Both are looking straight at the camera (at Zineb Sedira), which forms the link between them. In the video triptych *Mother Tongue* (2002), the artist uses language to make this distance palpable.

Mother Tongue is a video triptych in which Zineb Sedira explores the relationships between herself, her mother and her daughter by introducing the parameters of language as primary forms of communication.

The videos show the way family memories are passed down orally from generation to generation. Filmed very simply, the characters stand out against a neutral background in short scenes in which the artist with her mother, then the artist with her daughter, and finally her mother and daughter, are seen having a brief day-to-day conversation about childhood memories. In the first video, *Mother and I* (France), Zineb Sedira asks her mother about her past. She talks to her in French and her mother answers in Arabic. The questions Zineb Sedira asks concern a time that is not so far away, but which seems distant from her memory. The viewer who is unfamiliar with Arabic can't understand the answers, but the way the dialogue unfolds makes it possible, paradoxically enough, to guess what her mother is saying. In the second video, *Daughter and I* (England), Zineb Sedira also speaks French, while her daughter asks questions in English. We know that Zineb Sedira understands her daughter's questions because she answers, but the viewer may doubt whether she really grasps the meaning. The third video, *Grandmother and Granddaughter* (Algeria), presents her mother on the right and her daughter on the left. The old lady starts asking questions in Arabic; the little girl doesn't answer and looks at the floor. For a few moments, the dialogue goes nowhere, it is non-existent as the child does not answer any of the questions. Her grandmother smiles, revealing a great sense of loneliness.

They say a few words in English and Arabic respectively, but without understanding one another. They both look at the camera, looking for an interpreter. We then understand the pertinence of Zineb Sedira's analysis of relationships determined by language. The meaning of the work is not only based on the words themselves and the content of what is said; it is more about modes of communication. The grandmother carries on smiling, but frequent moments of absence can be seen on both their faces, making the silence all the more audible. As the questions are unanswered, the grandmother's past appears as the most distant and inaccessible of all. Historical distance also tends to remove the meaning of the language, taking Arabic back to its ancestral origins that existed long before the grandmother left for France, long before she returned to Algeria, and long before she met her granddaughter in Algeria. With great discipline and simplicity, Zineb Sedira presents the cultural crossover she has experienced and which is the source of her multiple identity. The memory of the mother tongue becomes, in the artist's work, a translation to be made, a space to be reconstructed, and a timeframe to be experienced in the present.

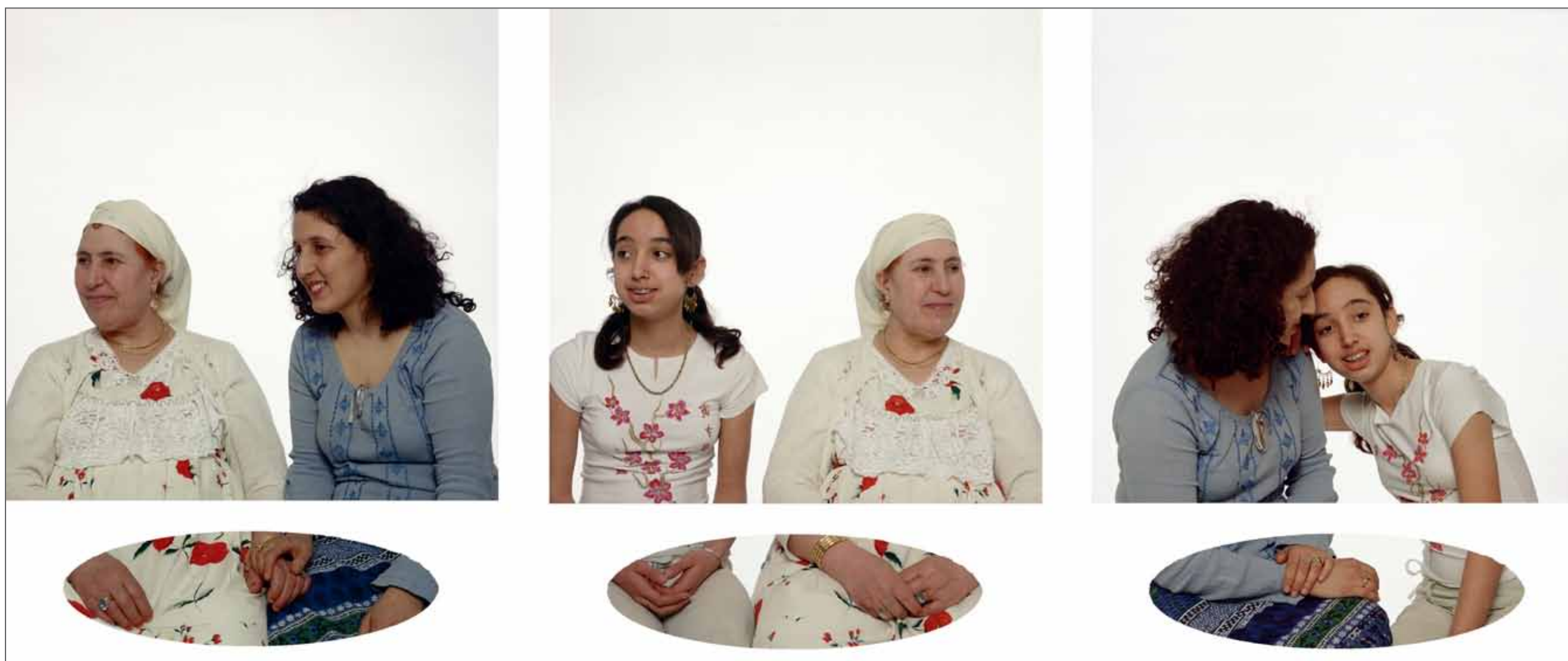
For fifteen years, Zineb Sedira has played an active part in discussions focusing on concepts of modernism, modernity and their manifestations. She has also raised awareness of contemporary artistic expression in North Africa, first finding inspiration in her search for her identity as a woman with a unique personal geography. Starting from these autobiographical concerns, she gradually shifted her focus towards universal concepts of mobility, memory, and the way things are passed down between generations. She is fascinated by mother-daughter relationships, and her video *Mother Tongue* (2002) represents three generations of women, addressing how things are passed down from generation to generation in a globalised world.

Zineb Sedira has also tackled geographic and environmental issues past and present. Using portraits, landscapes, languages and archives, she has developed a polyphonic vocabulary that embraces fiction, documentary, and more poetic and lyrical forms. She expresses herself in installations, photography, film, video, and now also makes objects. The idea of preserving and handing down memories of the past to leave a legacy for the future has often been at the heart of her work.

Zineb Sedira was born in 1963 to Algerian immigrant parents and now lives in London. Her parents, both involved in the resistance movement for Algerian independence, emigrated to Gennevilliers from Bordj Bou Arreridj in 1961. Zineb grew up in France and studied art in England in 1986; she began working in London, and finally settled there. She devoted herself to photography and video and made several installations, all focusing on the complexity and ambiguity of individual identity. These different forms all support a discourse based on notions of family and migration.

Her videos and photographs are testimonials that form a compelling narrative in which she explores complex themes relating to mobility, memory, the way things are handed down between generations, and language. Her diverse origins are reflected in the format of her works, which are often triptychs referring to the three places, three languages and three generations that form part of her identity and that of her family. After her first daughter was born in 1991 she began to explore concepts of oral history and the way culture and traditions are handed down. Her works reflect an exploration of her role in the intergenerational transmission of cultural origins.

Zineb Sedira's work has been presented in many solo and collective exhibitions worldwide. In 2001 her exhibition at the Venice Biennale earned international recognition; in 2002 she exhibited at the Pompidou Centre in Paris and the Hayward Gallery in London, and has held shows throughout Europe and in Algiers, in Qatar, in South Korea, and in the USA. Her works can be found in many public and private collections including those of Tate Britain, the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. She founded Aria, an artist-in-residence programme in Algeria that supports the development of contemporary art in the country. Zineb Sedira now works in London and Algiers.



Mother, Daughter and I, 2003

Triptych I. C-print mounted on aluminum

Portraits: 120 cm x 210 cm each

Hands (in oval format): 26 cm x 90 cm each

Commissioned by the Contemporary Art museum Saint-Louis, Missouri

Collections: Deutsche Bank Collection; Art in Embassies - U.S. Department of State

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Courtesy the artist and Kamel Mennour, Paris/London

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