



# GALLERIA CONTINUA

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 Open from Wednesdays to Sundays from noon to 7pm and by appointment.

# LEILA ALAOUI

## *Je te pardonne*

In collaboration with The Leila Alaoui Foundation

21/05/2016 – 25/09/2016

Opening on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, as from 4.30 pm

« All art is a revolt against man's fate, because art lives beyond the artist. It transforms the individual dream of the artist into a collective endeavor that lasts for eternity. »

– Opening address, Dakar Biennale 2016, Macky Saal, Senegalese President

Leila Alaoui, our daughter, sister, fiancée and friend has left us, but we did not wish to conceive this exhibition as an homage. That would mean that we have fixed her work in time whereas the images and words of an artist escape the laws of time.

Leila Alaoui's photography looks at excluded communities from the viewpoint of men and women who have been relegated to the margins, excluded from the collective memory of our increasingly amnesiac society.

Alaoui who trained as a documentary photographer also worked with video as a medium to "explore the frontiers of traditional historical narratives while avoiding clichés and victimization". Leila's subjects exist not only for the duration of a photograph but through their stories shared by the photographer. At once observer and participant she imagines a singular affinity with each individual. To discover her work is to participate in a common endeavor to look at and listen

to the stories that were shared with the intimacy of a human bond, annihilating the distance which transforms the other into an exotic specimen and returning to the idea of a communion between human beings.

*Je te pardonne* extends a hand to the furthest extremes in its search for humanity. A humanity that is trapped by impossible frontiers in *No Pasara*, enriched by diversity in *The Moroccans*, hiding in a migratory crossroads in pursuit of a cruelly inaccessible utopia in *Crossings* or lurking behind an assassin in the eponymous text written by Yasmina Alaoui in which she imagines a letter written by her sister Leila fallen under the gunshots of terrorists in Burkina Faso, sacrificed to obscure extremism.

In her essay *On Photography*, Susan Sontag compares the photographer to a hunter, the camera to a predator's weapon, and photographs to hunting trophies. If taking a photograph is an act of non-intervention, the camera transforms the photographer into an active participant with control and mastery over the situation Sontag argues. And yet, to the contrary, the photographer is vulnerable and it is the artist's empathy that lends his particular gaze surpassing languages and territories. Alaoui's oeuvre is an exchange between two souls, outside the bounds of time.

Leila Alaoui is a French–Moroccan photographer and video artist whose experiences across different cultural and geographic environments inform her critical and creative practice. Born in Paris in 1982, she studied photography at the City University of New York before spending time between Morocco and Lebanon. Her work explores the construction of identity and cultural diversity, often through the prism of the migration stories that intersect the contemporary Mediterranean. Her images express social realities using a visual language that combines the narrative depth of documentary storytelling and the aesthetic sensibilities of fine art.

Her work has been exhibited internationally since 2009, including at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Art Dubai and the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris. Her photographs have been published in newspapers and magazines including *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and *The Guardian*. Leila's humanitarian engagement involves photographic assignments with respected NGOs, including the Danish Refugee Council, Search for Common Ground and the UNHCR.

In January 2016, during a photographic assignment on women's rights in Burkina Faso commissioned by Amnesty International, Leila fell victim to the terrorist attacks of Ouagadougou.

She succumbed to her wounds on January 18th, 2016. The Leila Alaoui Foundation has been set-up to preserve her work, defend her values, and inspire artistic engagement for human dignity.