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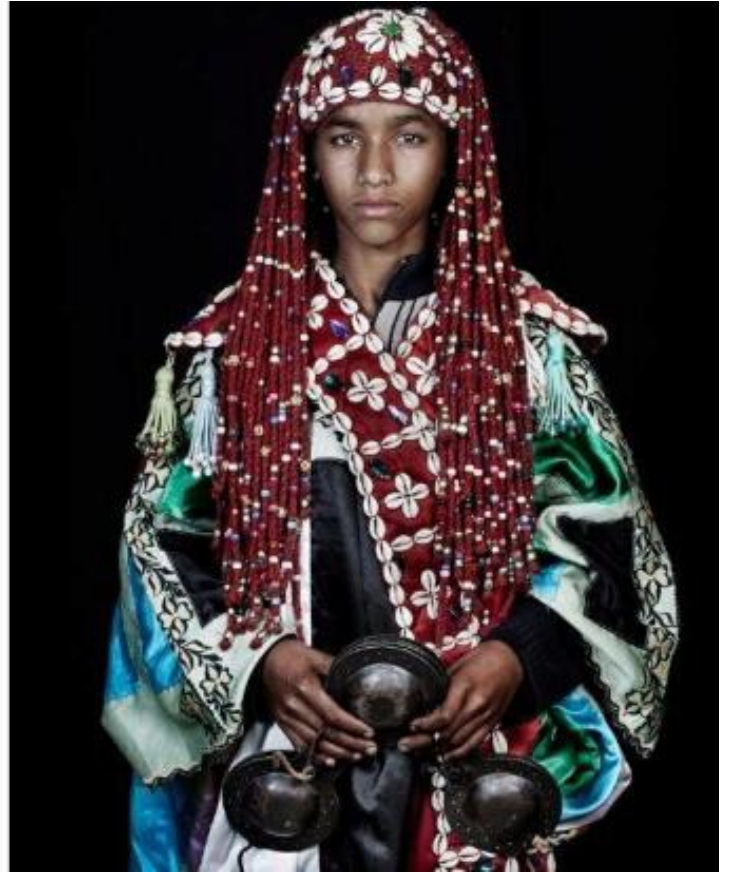
Leila Alaoui: Rite of Passage, Somerset House

11 OCT 20 – 28 FEB 21, TUESDAY - SUNDAY, 12PM - 6PM

The first major UK retrospective of the late French-Moroccan photographer Leila Alaoui is opening at Somerset House



By *Holly O'Mahony* on 14/9/2020



: Khamlia, South of Morocco #1, 2014 from the series *Les Marocains* by Leila Alaoui. Courtesy Fondation Leila Alaoui & GALLERIA CONTINUA (1) / Right: Tamesloh 1 from the series *Les Marocains* by Leila Alaoui. Courtesy Fondation Leila Alaoui & GALLE

ether documenting the journeys of Syrian refugees fleeing civil war in Lebanon or young North Africans seeking an alternative future in Europe, Leila Alaoui made it her mission to capture the complex identities and resilience of the communities facing hardship. The French Moroccan photographer, video artist and activist tragically lost her life during a terrorist attack in Burkina Faso in 2016, aged just 33. She was in the area reporting on a women's rights campaign called [My Body My Rights](#) for Amnesty International at the time. This autumn, the first major UK retrospective of Alaoui's work is going on show at Somerset House.



Portrait of an elderly man by Leila Alaoui, 2013. Photo: Fondation Leila Alaoui & GALLERIA CONTINUA

The exhibition, *Rite of Passage*, showcases the rich body of photographic and video work created by Alaoui between 2008 and 2015. The show is opening in collaboration with [1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair](#), and will then continue as a standalone exhibition throughout Somerset House's winter season.

Celebrated for her ability to capture the unseen realities of communities displaced by conflict, and her commitment to retelling the stories of those often misrepresented in society, Alaoui saw her works make their way into a number of prestigious publications, including [The New York Times](#), [The Guardian](#), and [The New York Times](#). [Privacy](#)

w *York Times* and *Vogue*.



Pasara by Leila Alaoui, 2008. Photo: Fondation Leila Alaoui & GALLERIA CONTINUA

Rite of Passage opens with the photographer's most celebrated series, *Les Marocains* (2010-14), which features life-sized portraits of some of the men, women, and children – from vastly different communities – whom she met during her travels across her home country of Morocco.

The exhibition continues with works from Alaoui's first photographic series *No Pasara (Entry Denied)*, created in 2008. Commissioned by the European Union, the series follows young Moroccans who left the Moroccan port cities of Nador and Tangier, attempting to seek passage to Europe, but become stuck along the way.



Waiting by Leila Alaoui, 2013. Photo: Fondation Leila Alaoui & GALLERIA CONTINUA

The exhibition's focus then turns to *Natreen (We Wait)*, Alaoui's 2013 series commissioned by the Danish Refugee Council to raise awareness for the humanitarian crisis faced by Syrian refugees fleeing the war. The exhibition culminates with Alaoui's final unfinished project, *L'Île du Diak (Civil's Island)*. Begun in 2015, the piece marks Alaoui's transition into the medium of video as she documents the experience of migrant workers who became collectively displaced in France, while working to build up the country's automobile industry following World War II.

Uniting theme throughout each series is Alaoui's unwavering commitment to challenging the clichéd portrayals of North Africa and the Arab world, revealing to the viewer a more authentic, three-dimensional and wholly human narrative.

AT Leila Alaoui: Rite of Passage, Somerset House

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9/21/2020

Leila Alaoui: Rite of Passage, Somerset House | Culture Whisper

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