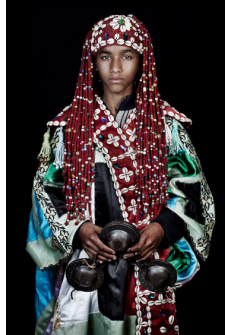


SOMERSET
HOUSE

LEILA ALAOUI: RITE OF PASSAGE GOES ONLINE

New Virtual Tour guided by writer and curator,
Ekow Eshun

Online at www.somersethouse.org.uk



Responding to the restrictions of England's second lockdown, Somerset House invites audiences to join the **virtual tour** of its new exhibition **Leila Alaoui: Rite of Passage, guided by award-winning broadcaster and cultural commentator Ekow Eshun**. Forming the **first major UK retrospective** of works from the celebrated French-Moroccan photographer, video artist and activist **Leila Alaoui**, the exhibition opened to coincide with 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair in October. For those who missed it in its opening weeks, the virtual tour offers the opportunity to still discover Alaoui's timely and moving work, and gain insight into the evolution of her practice, before she was tragically killed in a terrorist attack at the age of 33 whilst working on a photography project promoting women's rights in Burkina Faso in 2016.

Acclaimed for capturing and preserving the unseen stories of individuals and communities displaced by conflict and unrest, Alaoui was strongly committed to getting to know the communities and people she met, resulting in her sincere and authentic bodies of work. The virtual tour introduces three of her defining series featured in *Rite of Passage*. **No Pasara** documents the lives of North African migrants trying to reach Europe, **Natreen** (*We Wait*) follows families trying to flee the Syrian conflict, and inspired by Robert Frank's *The Americans*, **Les Marocains** meets the many individuals who make up the multifaceted fabric of contemporary Morocco. The exhibition also includes an unfinished video project **L'Île du Diable** (Devil's Island), on which she was working at the time of her death, featuring dispossessed migrant workers at the old Renault factory in Paris. Brought all together, Alaoui's works form a timely reminder of the extraordinary journeys and challenges people face each day.

In a time where access to cultural institutions and events returns to virtual spaces, Eshun's tour through *Rite of Passage* encourages viewers to consider those who so often become lost and misrepresented behind waves of news coverage and statistics. Encountering Alaoui's life-size portraits from their own homes, viewers come face-to-face with the people she met, creating a powerful sense of intimacy.

Audiences can also enjoy a [special online talk](#) between Eshun and acclaimed photographer **Hassan Hajaj**, as they reflect on *Rite of Passage* and the great sensitivity Alaoui applied to her practice.

Leila Alaoui: Rite of Passage will reopen in Somerset House's Terrace Rooms as soon as government guidance permits.

Rite of Passage is the latest exhibition in the *Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series*, an ongoing partnership with the leading law firm to present a wide range of free exhibitions reflecting the broad interests of both organisations.

Image credits: (L) *Natreen* by Leila Alaoui, 2013. (C) *Tamesloht*, 2011 from the series *Les Marocains* by Leila Alaoui (R) *No Pasara* by Leila Alaoui, 2008. All images courtesy of Foundation Leila Alaoui & GALLERIA CONTINUA

LEILA ALAOUI: RITE OF PASSAGE VIRTUAL TOUR

FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT:

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ABOUT SOMERSET HOUSE

London's working arts centre

Somerset House is London's working arts centre and home to the UK's largest creative community. Built on historic foundations, we are situated in the very heart of the capital.

Dedicated to backing progress, championing openness, nurturing creativity and empowering ideas, our cultural programme is ambitious in scope. We insist on relevance, but aren't afraid of irreverence, and are as keen on entertainment as enrichment. We embrace the biggest issues of our times and are committed to oxygenating new work by emerging artists. Where else can you spend an hour ice-skating while listening to a specially commissioned sound piece by a cutting edge artist?

It is this creative tension – the way we harness our heritage, put the too-often overlooked on our central stage and use our neo-classical backdrop to showcase ground-breaking contemporary culture – that inspires our programme. Old and new, history and disruption, art and entertainment, high-tech and homemade, combined with the fact that we are home to a constantly shape-shifting working creative community: this is our point of difference. It is what we are proud of. And it is what makes the experience of visiting or working in Somerset House inspiring and energizing, urgent and exciting. somersethouse.org.uk

ABOUT 1-54 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART FAIR

With annual editions in London, New York and Marrakech, 1-54 is the leading international art fair dedicated to contemporary art from Africa and its diaspora. Drawing reference to the fifty-four countries that constitute the African continent, 1-54 is a sustainable and dynamic platform that is engaged in contemporary dialogue and exchange. Initiated by Touria El Glaoui in 2013, October 2020 will mark its eighth consecutive edition at Somerset House, London.

ABOUT THE CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS TERRACE ROOM SERIES

The Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room Series of free exhibitions profiles the work of living artists in one of the most accessible spaces at Somerset House, bringing the public into contact with a diverse and engaging range of creative thinkers. The series provides a platform for artists to develop and amplify the messages within their practice and engage openly with Somerset House's visitors. Every exhibition in the Charles Russell Speechlys Terrace Room series is free and contributes to our on-going commitment to public access and engagement with arts and culture.

ABOUT THE LEILA ALAOUI FOUNDATION

The Leila Alaoui Foundation was created to preserve her work, defend her values, and inspire and support artistic engagement.