

ISABELLE BOUTRIAU

Final Major Project (PHO705)

August 2021

*Maybe I Will Leave*



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FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY | MA IN PHOTOGRAPHY

*Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition*

James Baldwin (1956:88)

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# ARTIST STATEMENT

Maybe I will leave is an ongoing collaborative dialogue aimed to reflect on what it means to live as a woman away from one's home country. It focuses on issues of migration, identity, and belonging. Ultimately, it is about my own situation as an outsider in Vienna, which has been my 'temporary' home for the last twenty years.

Vienna is a wonderful place to live, beautiful, imperial, with a lot of green spaces, but metaphorically, it is also a city with many barricaded doors and curtained windows where it is not simple to find one's home as a foreigner. *Wienerisch*, the local language, is extremely difficult to understand and to speak if you are not Viennese. Communication is laborious and therefore another obstacle to achieving integration.

Agathe and Omaira are not forced migrants, but women, who, like me, came to Vienna to pursue their career. For them, the return home always remains a possibility. As much as they strive to integrate, they remain outsiders, in transit between two countries. The adoption of a new homeland is strongly connected to memories of the place left behind, and the two women carry in their luggage family photographs and objects dear to them. Fragmentation is a common experience and finding a sense of belonging within a new community is not a simple quest.

This poetic narrative, between reality and imagination, merges family archives, portraiture, still life, landscape, and snatches of conversation. My hope is to engage the audience in a discussion about home and belonging.



# IMAGE GALLERY

The following series is an edit of my final major project. All images are referenced by page number in the List of figures (p.37).

Click [here](#) for the full version of the project.

Agathe





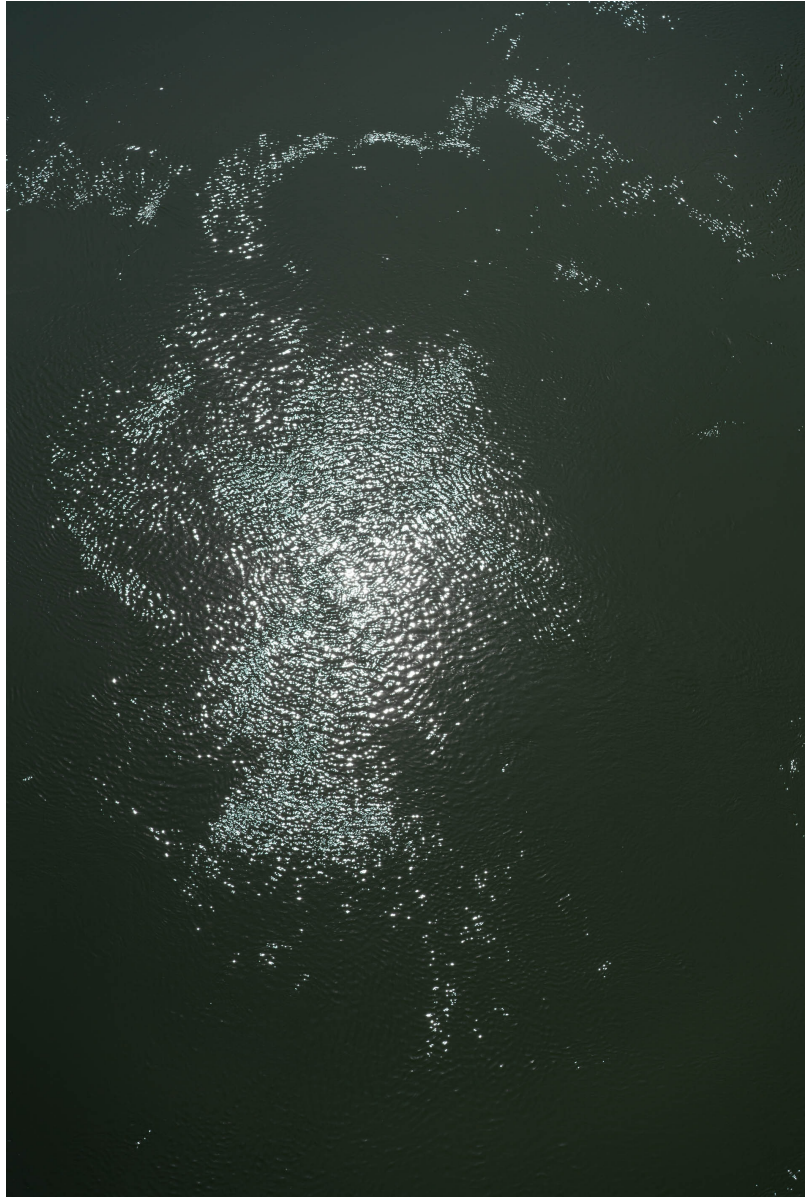




If I like Vienna so much

it is because I never stopped loving Douala







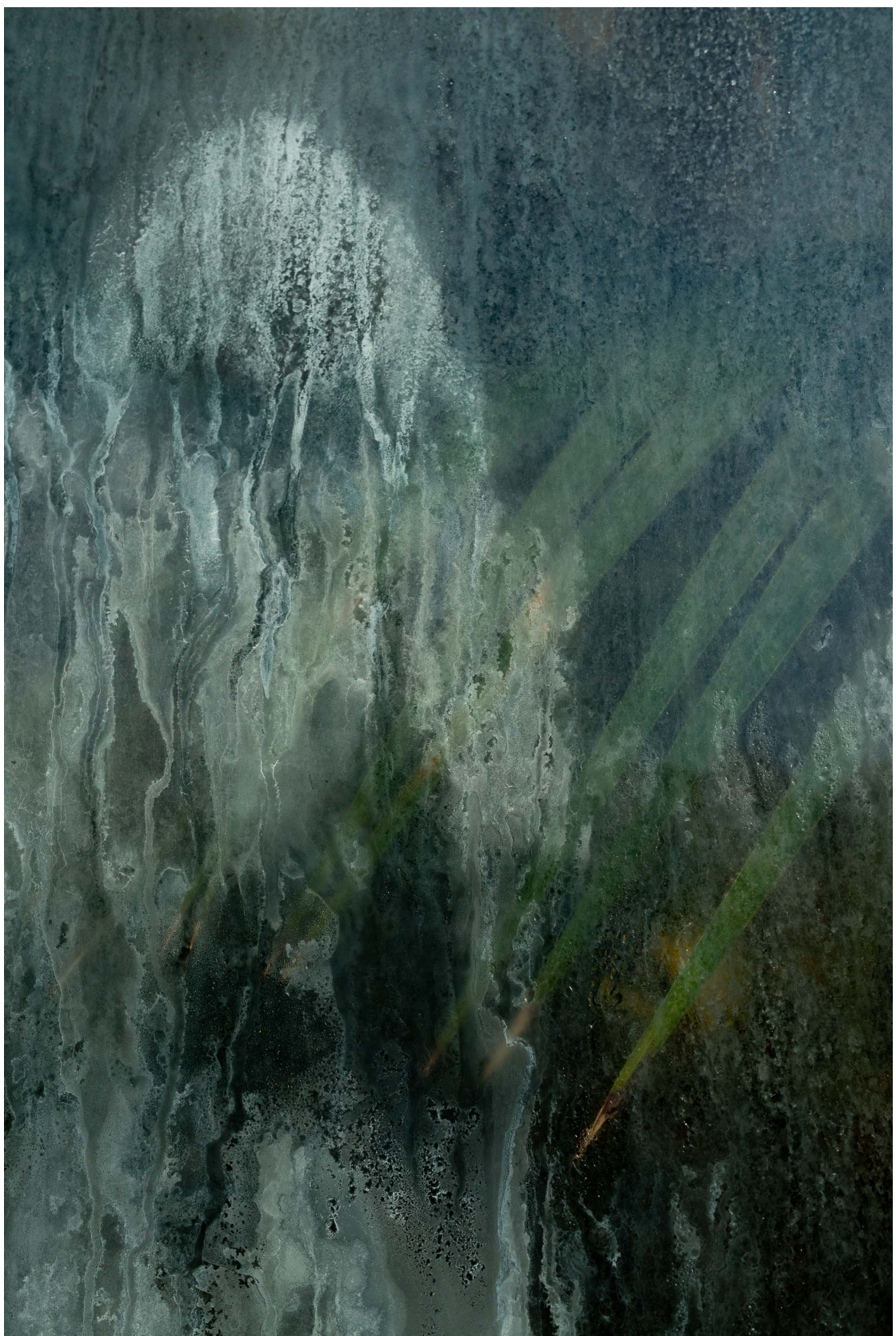






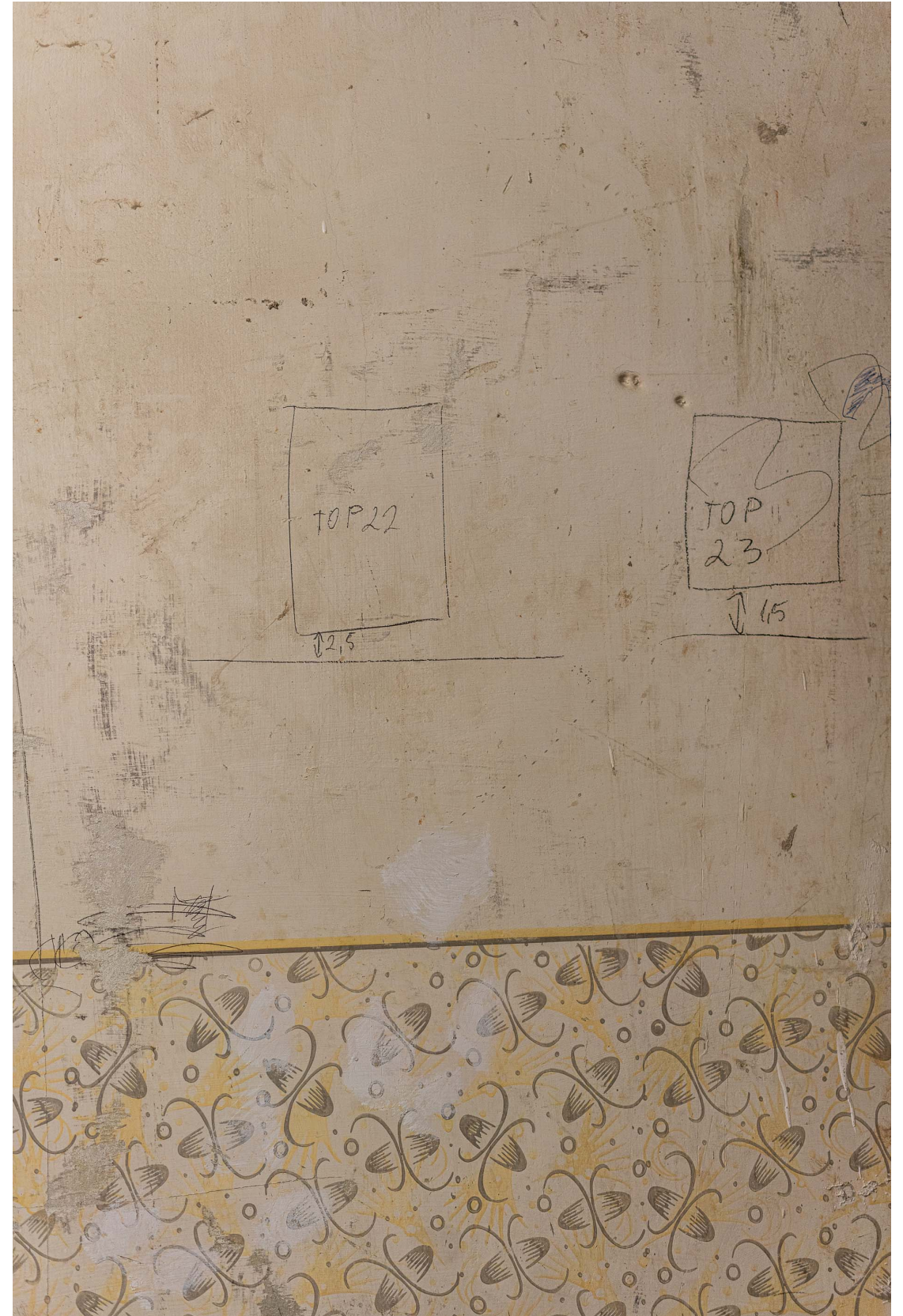




PHOTO TECHNIQUE  
Chey Lapa Inon  
Face Mission Protestant  
Rue de Binshin Nou Ball  
P. P. 5585 Douala  
P. W. de Cameroun  
16 JIII 1983  
2191











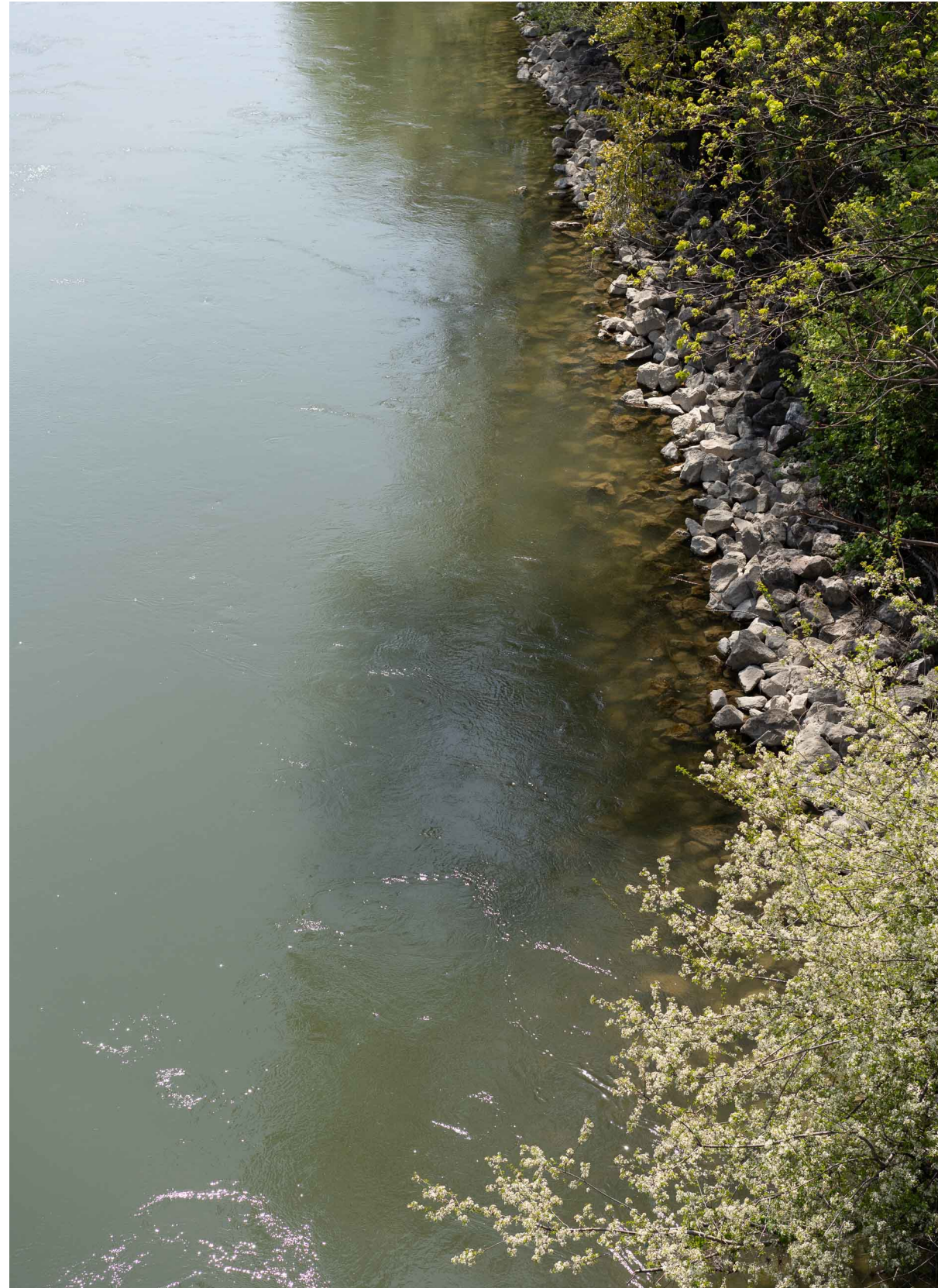














Omaima









I am from everywhere

and nowhere

my genes are

from Cairo

my youth

Belgian

my heart

Moroccan or Turkish



I am a nomad

Bedouin in my heart

like my ancestors















# PUBLIC OUTCOME

## Photobook

My project is a poetic narrative combining images and text into a book. The physicality of the photobook matters as it appeals to all of our senses.

As the purpose is to transmit a message to an audience, it is crucial to consider the way in which the stories are read and to understand how this communication process happens within a book. Rhythm is very important. It should be like music. Some images will help the viewer to rest, others will create the needed tension for the audience to remain interested in the narration. The design of the book should be the extension of the narrative.

## First dummy

In May, I attended a photobook workshop at Rencontres d'Arles with Patrick Le Bescont, the Director of *Filigranes Editions*. My project focuses on five women and deals with their sense of identity. Therefore, I opted for five individual booklets. As the project is set in Vienna, each cover presents an intimate view of the city, representing one aspect of the protagonist's personality. The five booklets are inserted into a slipcase, on the back of which the names of the five women are printed, as if they had been written on a wall.



Click [here](#) for more images of the dummy (website of *Rencontres d'Arles*)

## Second dummy

As the project developed and gained in depth, I decided to create a second photobook dummy, this time in a digital format. The book contains two chapters, concentrating on two of the five women I collaborated with, because of time and covid-19-related restrictions.

I intend to create a third iteration at a later stage, with six chapters, to include all five women and myself as a character and, for the sake of clarity, to add end-notes to provide some context and provenance for each archive image and a few words about each woman.

I paid particular attention to the sequencing, to creating a flow, a rhythm with pauses, including images that are deliberately open-ended in order to invite the audience to construct a story around them.

For the final layout, I collaborated with artist and graphic designer Christopher Jeuhn Bayne ([website](#)).



Click [here](#) for the full version of the book





## Personal Website

The website has been designed as a virtual gallery space that can be viewed by audiences across the world.

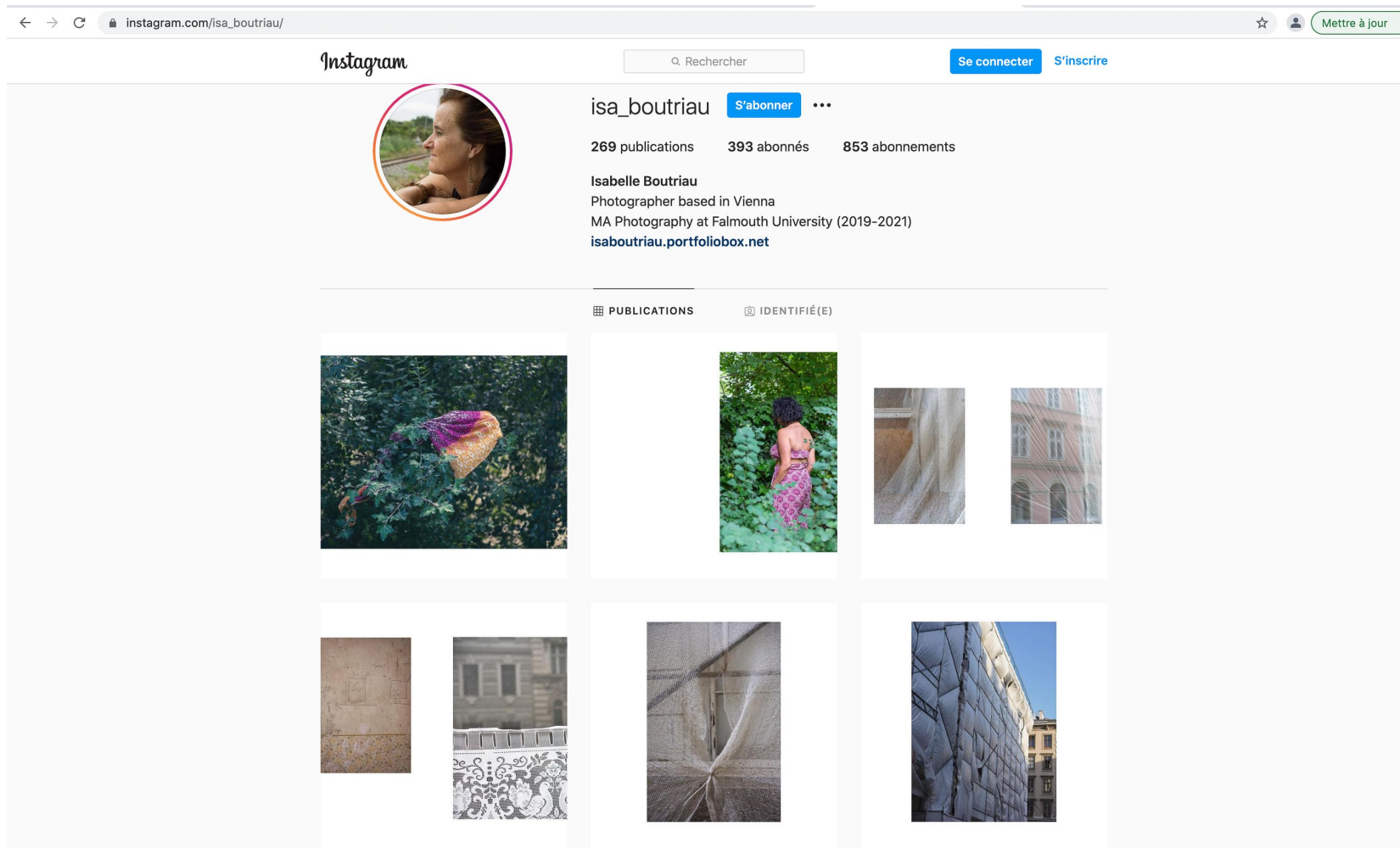
Click [here](#) to access my personal website



# Instagram

My Instagram account, which features a link to my website, has been instrumental in getting spontaneous feedback on individual images of my project. It is also a useful means to connect with a wide network of photographers and to reach further audiences.

Click [here](#) to access my Instagram Page



## The Long Exposure Collective (TLE)

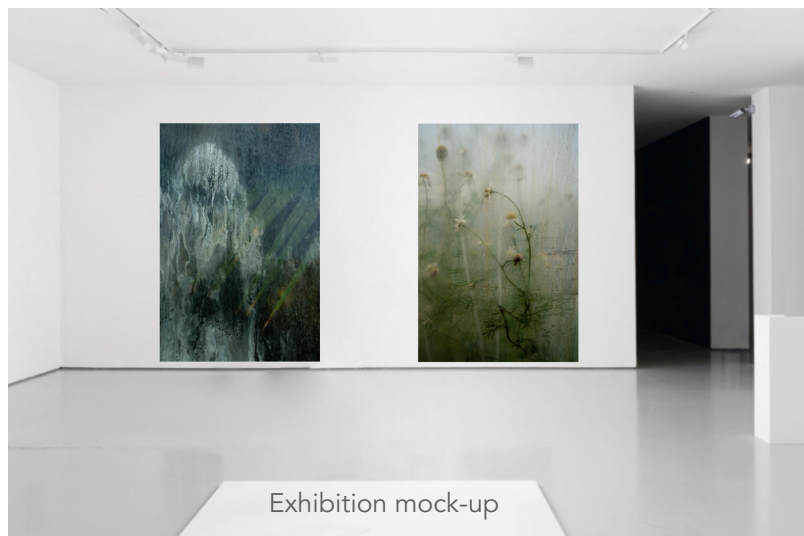
The Long Exposure is a creative collective, recently launched by some MA students from our German Bight cohort at Falmouth University, offering a platform to continue collaborating after the MA and to promote our work to a wider audience. It has a website, an Instagram page and a Facebook page.

Click [here](#) to access TLE website

In October 2021, we will hold a collective exhibition at *Four Corners Gallery* in Bethnal Green, London. The Gallery offers 35 meters of wall space, which is well-suited for a group exhibition.

For more details about the Four Corners Gallery, click [here](#)

Organizing a group exhibition requires choosing a theme that would be flexible enough to allow each artist the freedom to express themselves, but at the same time, it is necessary to create a cohesive collection of works. I will present two landscape images printed on semi-matte fine art paper and mounted on aluminum dibond in large format (105 x 70 cm) (see mock-up).





# Foto Wien

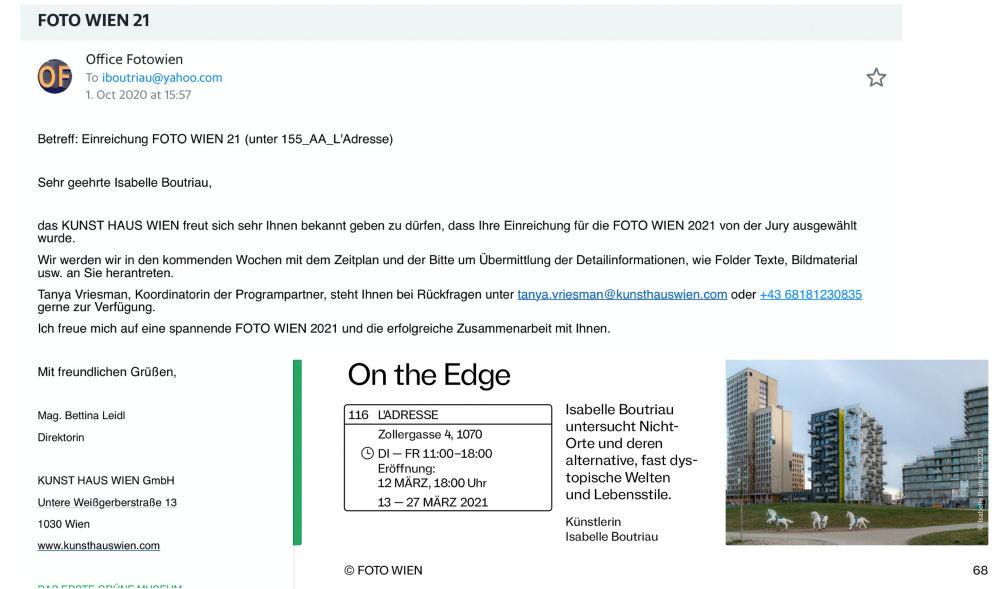
In summer 2020, *Kunsthau Wien* and *Foto Wien* initiated an international call for entries. My project *On the Edge*, created under the Informing Context module of the MA, was selected under the theme « Rethinking Nature / Rethinking Landscape » (see screenshot FotoWien 21), which « focuses on the key role of photography in the perception of nature » and on the relationship between humans and nature.

Since FOTO WIEN 2021 has been postponed to 2022 due to corona, FOTO WIEN 2022 will take place from 9 to 27 March 2022.

My work will be exhibited at *L'Adresse*, a concept store in Vienna, in March 2022. The available space will allow for creative display of my series. The 'concept' of the exhibition still needs to be determined in collaboration with the owner of *L'Adresse*. As for the scale of the images, it will be a mix of larger prints of 60/90 cm for landscape /cityscape images and smaller prints of 30/45 cm for more intimate portraits. The work will be printed on semi-matte fine art paper and mounted on aluminum dibond.

I will take the opportunity to add a book launch event, preceded by a poetic photo book workshop, inviting participants to bring along family photographs and images of Vienna.

Click [here](#) to find out more about Foto Wien.



L'Adresse Concept Store

## International Slide Show

In January 2021, the photo festivals FOTO WIEN, Mois européen de la photographie Luxembourg and IMAGO Lisboa initiated an international call for entries on the topic of **Rethinking Nature**. The idea was to assemble « a large variety of points of view on nature that illustrate, filter, and analyse the present ambiguity of our vision - part sentimental dwelling in nostalgic contemplation, part illustration of destruction and exploitation of the environment ».

Three photographs of my series *Man and Nature*, created during the MA, have been selected to be included in the slide show.

The Rethinking Nature slideshow is shown at:

**Mois européen de la photographie Luxembourg** (31 MAY-6 JUNE 2021);

**IMAGO Lisboa** (1-31 OCTOBER 2021) and;

**FOTO WIEN** (9-27 MARCH 2022).

Click [here](#) to find out more about the slide show and other artists involved.



Greenhouse effect, Austria, 2020

## Landing 2021

My work has been selected following an open call for the sub-exhibition 'I See You' in the framework of Landings 2021, Falmouth Flexible photographic exhibition. I present a series of 8 images related to the first chapter of my project, as well as a link to my second dummy. It is a good opportunity to showcase my work.

To find out more about the online exhibition, click on the following link : [I see You](#)

## Source Magazine Graduate Submission

I also submitted the 8 images that appear on my website gallery to Source Magazine for their MA Phase of Graduate Photography Online 2021.

Source is an important promotional platform to showcase emerging photographers.

To find out more about Source Magazine, click on the following link : [Source Magazine](#)

# REVIEWS

**Graham Cook, graphic designer and photographer** [www.innervisible.co.uk](http://www.innervisible.co.uk)

« The underlying concept works well. There's a good balance and pace to the presentation with the tinted pages well placed and adding emphasis to the messaging. It's a fine example of the power of applying a 'less is more' approach to the storytelling, with text and images offering enough interest and descriptive force to encourage greater engagement from the audience. There is enough breathing space for the viewer to fill any gaps by taking some of the journey themselves. The understated treatment of many of the images gives full page and double-spread images added impact. What works particularly well is the way archive images contrast with other portraits. Both bring personality and warmth yet, at the same time, emphasizing change and the transient nature of their journey. Detailed images have a hint of melancholy in the way they describe place and the difficulty of 'belonging yet not belonging'. As a counterpoint, the landscape photographs offer escape and space to connect to memories of home. With this project, I do get a very real sense of the fractured nature of integration, the potential loneliness and fight for identity, and how it remains one of the most difficult things for the individual to successfully achieve. »

**Dinu Li, photographer** <https://www.dinuli.com/>

« The contemporary artist Theaster Gates once offered a discourse about place as always being at the point of becoming. In other words, place never feeling settled as it is constantly transforming. The photographic work by Boutriau echoes such ideas and is situated at the very demarcation of being both inside and outside. Her attempts to look through glass windows to intimate interiors is interrupted by reflections of the world outside. An otherwise floating textile has its drifting motions arrested, caught up and surrounded by bare branches in an unidentifiable landscape. Images such as these signal our human dichotomy, of wanting to root down, but forever seeking out new routes to take in life. »

**Roxana Savin, Photographer** <https://www.roxanasavin.com/>

« I really enjoyed looking at your project. There is a sense of longing and alienation evoked by the images, which I personally relate to. I also like the inclusion of text, I think it gives an insight into the inner lives of the subjects. (...) I like how you included archive images in your dummy, it brings another dimension to the work, reminding of the past these women have left behind. »

**Hilde Maassen, Photographer** <http://www.hildemaassen.nl/>

« Isabelle comes from Belgium and what often strikes me is that there is a dualistic struggle in that country about 'belonging'. Most obviously in the form of language and politics. The language border that divides the country also forms a lesser-known boundary between richer and poorer. This brings with it problems such as connectedness, identity and culture. I see this project as an extension of that, in addition to a personal quest. To what extent, perhaps unconsciously, are we always guided by our upbringing and past? In that perspective I see in this project a search for 'being', past and future. The photos are poetic, portrayed with feeling, interspersed with symbolism. Together, the images tell the story of women who live "abroad". We get the feeling of the past, memories through photos of the past and the gaze of the women depicted. The many fabrics as covers or see-throughs, sometimes semi-transparent, strike me as recurring elements in the photos and give the series, together with the green elements such as leaves and trees, cohesion. The patterns and colors in the fabrics tell me about the origin. The woods and leaves cannot be specifically linked to a place; it could be anywhere in the world. They make the story universal for me. »

**Len Williamson, Photographer** <https://www.lenandtheowl.com/>

« It has been a privilege watching Isabelle's work develop over the last two years. I have an Austrian mother and an English father and have related to her concept of 'outsider' from my own experience of growing up in England. Her work evokes in me strong feelings about the tension between choosing to be somewhere for work or relationships and the pull towards something our soul thinks of as 'home.' Her work is assured, confident and beautiful. I am so looking forward to attending her exhibitions which I know will be a success. »



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