

FERHAT BOUDA

PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES

Exhibition period: **March 18 – May 15, 2022**

Opening: **Thursday, March 17, 7 pm**

Venue: **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt, Braubachstr. 30–32, 60311 Frankfurt**

Frankfurt am Main, March 17, 2022 – Former nomadic communities are just one of the topics of **Ferhat Bouda's** work. Through impressive visual narratives, the photographer documents the life and survival of the cultures in transition. For ten years Bouda has sought out isolated desert communities and mountainous earthen abodes, traditional urban neighbourhoods and farming villages spread across North Africa, concentrating on the everyday life of today's Imazighen, "free people", a term many now prefer to the more familiar term Berbers. In his often mysterious black and white images, the harsh landscapes of Mongolia are also the backdrop for Bouda's themes.

The exhibition **FERHAT BOUDA. PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES** shows people living in tents or in sewers, families earning a living on small farms, or scavenging on rubbish dumps, travellers by camel and motorbike: shadowy silhouettes that blend into the environments in which they live. And yet they are equally threatened, whether by climate change, political conflict or for other reasons.

Diverse social communities spark Bouda's interests in the Main metropolis Frankfurt as he often photographs punks, protesters, the train-station milieu or religious festivals. Like all of the artist's visuals, these too question cultural resilience and the human in a constantly changing world.

In addition to photographs and multimedia presentations of **Ferhat Bouda's** work, the **Fotografie Forum Frankfurt** (FFF) exhibits various diaries by the artist, with drawings and photographs, accompanied by texts in Berber, French and German. The show was curated by **Celina Lunsford**, artistic director of the FFF, and co-curator **Esra Klein**.

Ferhat Bouda, born 1976 to a Berber family in Algeria, studied photography in France and Germany and is member of the photo agency Agence VU. His photo essays are regularly published in international newspapers and magazines, including *Le Monde*, *Geo*, *The New York Times* and *Spiegel*. His work has been exhibited in numerous photographic festivals. 2017 he received a grant from the Hessische Kulturstiftung. In 2020 he was honoured with the Ellen Auerbach Fellowship for Photography from the JUNGE AKADEMIE/Akademie der Künste, Berlin. **FERHAT BOUDA. PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES** has been supported by these fellowships.

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FERHAT BOUDA

PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES

SPECIAL EVENTS

SAT, 19.03., 3 pm GALLERY TALK

»FERHAT BOUDA. PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES« with **FERHAT BOUDA**,
CELINA LUNSFORD and **ESRA KLEIN**, Fotografie Forum Frankfurt

FR, 29.04., 6 pm, LECTURE

with **FERHAT BOUDA**

SUN, 08.05., 3 pm CURATOR'S TOUR

with **CELINA LUNSFORD**

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CYANOTYPE URBAN HERBARIUM with **MARTINA DELLA VALLE** [in English]

SA/SO, 04./05.06., 10.00–18.00 WORKSHOP

MATERIALITY AND VISION with **PRADIP MALDE** [in English]

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES

IMAZIGHEN IN THE HIGH ATLAS

Morocco, 2016–2017

The village of Tinefgam is located in the Atlas Mountains at an altitude of almost 2000 metres and can only be reached by a three-hour walk along an unpaved road.

The people here live in houses made of stone and clay or in equipped caves, spread across the mountain ridges of this region. They are peaceful, driven by a quiet force, but forgotten by the government, which deliberately marginalises them. The village here, for example, lacks any form of infrastructure.

But the Berbers who live in Moroccan mountain villages like Tinefgam or Timetda are independent. They are determined to live their identity. Their way of life is inseparably intertwined with their surroundings and follows the rhythm of nature. The women hold a central position in the community, they are the guardians of the memories and traditions of the Amazigh culture.

[Ferhat Bouda]

IMAZIGHEN in

Siwa, Egypt, 2017

"I'm going to Egypt now", the man dressed in white told me. We were standing in the Siwa Oasis, a small region in Egypt, but he considered his small oasis separate from the state. This clearly brought the situation of the Imazighen home to me again: they live in the middle of the oasis and yet do not feel one with their country, and instead feel marginalised.

Libya, 2011

In a totalitarian and openly pan-Arabist approach, former Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi tried to eradicate the customs and practices that shape Amazigh identity. The unrecognised language, confiscated lands, bans on promotion in the administration and the army, and subordinate jobs made the Berbers a discriminated, if not stigmatised, and long-term marginalised group in Libya. Their striving for cultural recognition since the end of the Gaddafi era has brought comparatively small successes: although cultural centres have been established and some schools now teach the Berber language, the language itself is still not recognised in the new Libyan constitution. Thus, the Imazighen in Libya continue to fight for the assertion of their rights, among other things with demonstrations.

Tunisia, 2020

Tunisians felt an "air of freedom" after their revolution in 2011. As a result, the Tunisian Imazighen organised the so-called "Congrès Mondial Amazigh" on Djerba, a meeting of all Berbers that takes place every 3 years. During my trip through Libya, I heard about this meeting and spontaneously travelled there too. Here I made many of my important contacts, which were a great help for my subsequent journeys through the Sahel. Nine years later I visited Tunisia again to get an overview of the situation of the Imazighen. Unfortunately, I also found out that despite their demands and claims, their language is still not recognised in the constitution.

[Ferhat Bouda]

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES

TAMURT (Kabyle for 'country')

Algeria, 2004–2019

After five years in Europe, I returned to Algeria in 2004. During my absence, there had been much bloody unrest in my homeland of Kabylia in north-eastern Algeria. In the "Black Spring" of 2001, the whole of Kabylia had risen up – after the death of a student at a police station – and demonstrated peacefully. Nevertheless, the demonstrations had been suppressed, more than 130 young demonstrators were killed and thousands injured. Many Kabyles are still suffering from this today. Filled with the joy and happiness of reuniting with my family and my Kabylia, I set out to come to terms with this "Printemps Noir", which was painful for me. Being a photographer, I wanted to show the hope and sorrow of the Kabyles, to document their struggle against Islamist groups that had settled in the heart of their mountains, as well as photographing their fight against the dangerous ideologies of those in power and for the preservation of their culture, their language and their identity.

My photographs mainly show the everyday life of these mountain people, the work in their fields and in their villages, the moments of joy and sadness experienced together.

Part of this series also shows impressions of my travels through other cities in northern Algeria such as Oran, Annaba and Algiers.

[Ferhat Bouda]

DANS L'INTIMITÉ DES TOUAREG

Niger, 2016

Between the Sahara and the Sahel, in the vicinity of the cities Agadez and Abalak in central Niger, live Tuareg tribes, deliberately away from cities, new technologies and assimilation. To this day they live a semi-nomadic life, moving their camps depending on the height of the water levels. The Tuareg's main source of income is cattle farming. Since the 1960s, however, many men have had to go to the cities to support their families.

The women are the pillars of the tribes. They reject polygamy, which is widespread in the region, and choose their husbands themselves. At the slightest dispute, the husband has to leave the house; children and livestock stay with the wife. In many ways it is a matriarchal society, and yet the men are also able to make their own decisions.

The Tuareg community remains authentic, connected to its traditions, through its customs, art, clothing and traditional weapons. Their language, Taachaqt, also marks the Tuareg population as members of the Amazigh culture.

[Ferhat Bouda]

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AZAWAD

Mali, 2012–2013

Touareg: "Are you scared?"

Me: "Yes of course, this is a dangerous situation!"

Touareg: "Don't worry about it. If we die, then you will be the last one"

Me: "Why?"

Touareg: "Because you are our guest. Your protection is most important to us."

In the early 1960s, after Mali's independence from France, the first big Tuareg rebellion against the post-colonial Malian government occurred for political, ethnic and economic reasons. Various uprisings were suppressed by the Malian army; despite the superior strength in October 1963, the military was never able to put an end to the rebellion completely.

Only after numerous further uprisings in the following years were the Tuareg able to extract some concessions from the country's government, which, however, were not implemented. A promised concession to the Tuareg living in northern Mali failed to materialise.

At the beginning of 2012, during another big Tuareg rebellion, the Tuareg rebels of the MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) finally succeeded in driving the Malian army from their territory and proclaiming the independent state of "Azawad". For the first time in the history of Tuareg rebellions, women had also decided to take up arms.

But the hope for independence did not last long, because alongside the Malian army, various Islamist terrorist groups increasingly have emerged and have used this unstable situation to their own advantage.

[Ferhat Bouda]

ADRAR

Mauritania, 2018

The Adrar region, the historic heart of Mauritania, lies 450 kilometres northeast of the capital Nouakshott and is a vast expanse of mountains and desert where sand and wind shape the relief. After a terrorist attack in 2007, large parts of the country were classified as a so-called red zone, and all tourism was stopped. Ten years later, the local population is hoping and counting on a return of tourists, and travel agencies are gradually resuming their work. Desert lovers have since been retracing the steps of the explorer Monod or the writer Saint-Exupéry when walking through the dunes, resting in oases, visiting World Heritage sites and tasting the nomads' tea prepared in three steps.

Some of the inhabitants still depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, but almost all of them benefit from the boom in tourism.

[Agence VU. Commissioned by GEO France, Issue No. 478, December 2018]

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES

POUSSIÈRE DE MAO

The Dust of Mao
Chad, 2021

The Kanem region of Chad with its main city Mao – and by extension the southern Sahel – is affected by drought and water scarcity. Maintaining agricultural livelihoods poses numerous challenges to the region's nomadic communities: increasing drought, for example, the constant encroachment of the desert, diminishing access to water, and the associated difficulties of cultivation. The people constantly have to adapt to the ever-changing conditions. So they use traditional techniques, like filtering nutritious algae from the nearby lakes with the help of the desert sand – as long as there is water left.

This series was produced as part of the *Dust – Climate Change* project in collaboration with *Action contre la Faim* (Action against Hunger) to document the impact of climate change on hunger in the world.

[Ferhat Bouda]

SETTI

Grandmother
Algeria, 2004 - 2016

After the far too early death of my father, we lived with my grandmother. For my mother and us four siblings she was father, mother, grandmother and friend all in once. With time, I also understood her role in the Algerian struggle for independence in the 1950s and had to realise how unfree she was in her country, for which she was once willing to sacrifice her life. After independence, her mother tongue "Berber/Tamazight" was not allowed to be used officially. In court, she could not defend herself in her language. As her physical strength waned, she spent a lot of time in front of the television without ever being able to understand a word, because most of the channels were in Arabic. I vowed then to go to Europe one day and study film there so that I could present a film to her in Tamazight. She didn't mind that it didn't happen that way, because I discovered photography for myself instead. I remember her joy and pride when she visited my exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Algiers, or when she saw my pictures hanging on the brick walls of the houses in our village. She had never been to a museum before. After a hard and deprived life, which she always knew how to fill with joy, my grandmother passed away peacefully in my arms in 2016 after 83 years.

[Ferhat Bouda]

FERHAT BOUDA **PHOTOGRAPHS AND DIARIES**

DZUD

Mongolia, 2010

"If I had known that my life as a nomad was a constant search for the light in the tunnel, I would have taken a different path. I would have become a teacher."

"I talk to the sky, the earth, the mountains. I pray for my family and my animals. I am not a Buddhist. I pray to nature."

The two quotes in the exhibition from nomads touched me very deeply during my trip to Mongolia in 2010. Together with my journalist colleague Roman, I had to watch how the nomads lost their herds during the so-called Dzud, a cold spell lasting several weeks with temperatures of minus 40 degrees. More and more Mongolians are having to give up their nomadic life, not only due to climatic reasons. The alternative: a life in the big cities, in cramped spaces, sometimes even in the sewers, where it is warm. I was alarmed to see how many of these people work at the garbage dump every day to earn some money with cardboard, plastic and other materials. And I was shocked that sometimes even children have to be given away in order to survive.

The Mongolian people have lived nomadically for centuries, searching for the best pastures and reservoirs on the steppe. A life with animals, and for them.

The Dzud and the dream of a better life in the city which many young people hold on to have contributed to the fact that over 70 percent of the once nomadic population is urbanised today.

[Ferhat Bouda]

AS IT WAS

Frankfurt, 2020

I returned to Germany from a reportage in Algeria on 12 March 2020. Two days later, our world seemed to collapse and go into lockdown because of the Corona virus. Most countries went into total shutdown, except for Germany, where we were able to go for walks under certain restrictions. I decided that I'd better stop watching the news and produce some work instead. So I started photographing again in Frankfurt, hoping for an opportunity to get access to clinics (and take photos there) to report on the situation on site, but that wasn't possible. So I photographed a lot in the streets instead and found frightening, sad, but also funny and beautiful moments there. The whole face of the city changed, as did the faces of the people – some started wearing masks which made them look like cartoon characters.

Out of their fear, people became very creative. So I playfully started to create a visual diary with personal thoughts about myself and the daily circumstances.

[Ferhat Bouda]

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AMAZIGH

To avoid the colonial term Berber, many members of the indigenous peoples in North Africa prefer the term Amazigh, “free man”, plural Imazighen. The expression comes from their language, the Berber or Tamazight, which is spoken in different dialects depending on the region. The Imazighen themselves usually use the names of their respective tribes, e.g. Kabyles, Chaouis or Tuareg.

Today, some 40 to 70 million Imazighen live in the area from Mauritania in western North Africa across Morocco and Algeria to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt. Morocco and Algeria are home to the largest Amazigh groups, accounting for about one third of the total population. Most governments in North Africa also deny these ethnic minorities full recognition of their language and culture, which distinguishes them from the Arab majority. For a long time, the Imazighen and their culture did not conform to the territorial organisation of nation states and their governments. Among other things, this led to them being suspected of heresy, separatism or cultural and confessional deviation by the North African authorities, regardless of whether they were nomadic or sedentary, Muslims, Christians or Jews.

In addition to the cultivation of their cultural diversity and their language, the different groups are shaped and united by their symbiotic relationship with the planet Earth, their spirituality and their hospitality.

[Ferhat Bouda]

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Ferhat Bouda, Diary

© Ferhat Bouda, Agence VU, 2022



From the series Tamurt (country), Kabylia, Algeria, 2018

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From the series Tamurt (country), Kabylia, Algeria, 2018

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A youth loading the gun, Zouara

From the series Imazighen in Libya, 2011

© Ferhat Bouda, Agence VU, 2022



A child playing near the town of Chinguetti

From the series Adrar, Mauretaniien, 2018

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Olive harvesting in Bouregéne

From the series Tamurt (country), Kabylia, Algeria, 2012

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Young Tuareg woman

From the series Dans L'intimité des Touareg, Niger, 2016

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From the series Dans L'intimité des Touareg, Niger, 2016

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From the series Imazighen in Egypt (Siwa), 2017

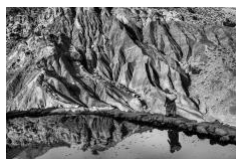
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During the Independence Day celebrations

From the series Dans L'intimité des Touareg, Niger, 2016

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From the series Imazighen in the High Atlas, Morocco, 2016

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Dzud (extreme winter)

From the series Mongolei, 2010

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Dzud (extreme winter); coal power-station in Ulan-Bator

From the series Mongolei, 2010

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Dzud (extreme winter); woman collecting rubbish on the rubbish dump in Ulan-Bator

From the series Mongolei, 2010

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Dzud (extreme winter); Johnoo, 14 y., und Boogie, 18 y, in the sewerage system in Ulan Bator

From the series Mongolei, 2010

© Ferhat Bouda, Agence VU, 2022



Dzud (extreme winter); Baatar and his wife Nergui in the Gobi Desert

From the series Mongolei, 2010

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Dzud (extreme winter); on the rubbish dump in Ulan-Bator

From the series Mongolei, 2010

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From the series Train-station Quarter, Frankfurt, 2015

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Ramona's and Johannes' wedding

From the series Punks, Frankfurt, 2015

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From the series Train-station Quarter (Münchener Straße), Frankfurt, 2015

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Ferhat Bouda, Diary

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From the series Occupy, Frankfurt, 2011

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