

Bénédicte Roscot

Hiraeth

or long gone from my land



Hiraeth

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This Welsh word describes a longing for home tinged with sorrow and sadness for lost or disappeared loved ones. It is equivalent to the Portuguese word *saudade*, which can be translated as longing with a connotation of nostalgia.

In August 2021, dozens of young Afghan women fled their country, threatened by the Taliban. They went into exile alone or sometimes with a loved one, leaving with only the clothes they were wearing and a small plastic bag. They had to choose exile in a matter of minutes, going back and forth several times to Kabul airport, which was stormed by a panicked crowd, sleeping on cardboard boxes on the floor, waiting again. Then, Paris, in the midst of Covid, quarantine in a hotel, and they were sent all over France to emergency social housing. Their stories are all different and overlap.

These young women are called Lajaward, Mojeba, Masoma, Habiba, Nasiba, Maryam, and Djamila. I met them at their homes in Strasbourg, Bordeaux, and Lille. They are artists, students, housewives.

Identity, belonging, survival—what remains in this exile, of the memory of the body (do sensations fade or endure?), of their traditions, their beliefs, the bond that still unites them to those they love despite the distance, their memory? Do we carry our country with us, with its scents, its beauty, its colors?

The land they left behind is now only accessible in their thoughts. Their exile is fraught with trauma; they left behind parents and friends in a country devastated by obscurantism and war. Their history haunts them, and yet they are forging a new future for themselves. Here.

To date, this work consists of seven series of portraits in eight fragments.

These are extended portraits, short emotional and visual narratives linked to their personalities and the resonances they have evoked in me. Sometimes alone, sometimes with their loved ones, present or absent, surrounded by their belongings, in their light.

Here is an excerpt of those portraits in two fragments.



Masoma



Lajaward



Habiba



Jamila



Maryam



Nasiba



Mojeba

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Bénédicte Roscot is a french photographer based in Paris.

She holds a Master's degree in Fine Arts from Paris-Sorbonne University and a DSAA from the École Estienne.

She has been drawing and painting since childhood, inspired by the many portraits of her grandfather, an artist and director of the Beaux-Arts in Nantes.

She taught herself photography, initially working as a portrait photographer for Éditions du Seuil. She had the opportunity to study under photographer Denis Dailleux (Agence VU') for an extended period. Bénédicte Roscot also conducts personal research focused on intimacy, uprooting, and the memory of bodies, at the crossroads of documentary photography and a visual arts approach.

Her series "Hiraeth," a portrait of seven Afghan women in France, was a finalist for the Saif/La Kabine prize and screened as part of the OFF Arles festival in 2025.

An article in *MLe Monde magazine* (709) in April 2025 followed this work, in collaboration with journalist Ghazal Golshiri.

instagram: @ben.roskot
ben.roskot@gmail.com