

I WAS HUMBLLED BY PEOPLE'S RESILIENCE AND HOSPITALITY



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Ordinary Lives

by Rania Matar (Lebanon, 1964)

The focus of my photography is the Middle East, on women and children especially. Lebanon in particular is interesting because of its key location as a gate to the Middle East, between the West and the Arab world. I grew up and lived in both Lebanon and the U.S. I am a Lebanese insider who speaks the language, knows the country, and understands its people, but also an outsider who can see Lebanon and its complexities through Western eyes, who can still be intrigued by the dichotomies that are shocking to the Westerner, but unnoticed by the locals.

These images are not meant to represent all facets of Lebanon as a country, or to be political, but they focus on the universality of being human no matter what the circumstances are, of being a mother, a father, a child, or a young woman no matter what background or religion one belongs to. Girls have friends, bond, and giggle behind their black veils; mothers nurse and nurture their children in refugee camps; toddlers bring a smile to their mothers' faces regardless of surrounding circumstances.

Throughout my work in Lebanon, I was welcomed into people's homes and lives, and I was humbled by people's resilience and hospitality. Religion and political affiliations did not matter. In these photos I concentrated on people who did not lose their humanity and dignity despite what they have been and are still going through. I tried to portray them as the beautiful individuals they are, instead of as part of any religious or political group. I concentrated on the spirit with which they continue with the mundane tasks of daily life no matter what their circumstances: their lives that are ordinary in a surrounding and a political climate that are often anything but ordinary.



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Curator Statement by The Black Snapper

Rania Matar's adolescent girl portraits were featured here recently, as part of a week curated by Elie Domit of The Empty Quarter (Dubai). Rania had sent us two separate photo essays. Today we are presenting some of her older work. There is no distinct story or concept in this presentation. Instead, there is a general love for people and a passion for photography. Both are obvious in these beautiful portraits.