

Five female views from Beirut

Interview by India Stoughton for Daily Star, Lebanon

Published in Daily Star, on the 22nd May 2015

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Arts-and-Ent/Culture/2015/May-22/298885-five-female-views-from-beirut.ashx>



Real Prince by Ayla Hibri, POV Female Beirut

Why did you decide to found oodee, and as a graphic designer why specialise in photography? Is there a big market for photography books?

My first desire was to publish the work of young female photographers, by doing so, I realised that for many practical reasons, I needed to found a publishing house. I always have been surrounded by artists and photographers and I have a strong passion for the image and photography in particular. I am totally obsessed by the image, specially when you can reach many layers of reading. Until then, I was not aware about the photography book market. I think we're living today in a very interesting time of the book industry.

The market of photography books became a beautiful platform to reveal new talents when, in the past, only well known photographers were able to publish their body of work. The internet and social media provided the industry to get a stronger visibility and give to the public an autonomy.

How did the POV Female project begin and why did you decide to focus on women's work in particular?

Early in the history of photography, women have made an essential contribution to the practice of photography as both a profession and as an art form. This project is a tribute to this invisible role. A strong desire to sublime this genre in itself: women photography.

How did you select the five cities in the series, and why did you choose Beirut?

I consider POV female as an open window to the world and to its richness. It was really important to make a controversial and unexpected selection of cities. All the selected cities are culturally diverse and opposed. By this cultural and artistic project we wanted to challenge the city, the citizen, the artists, the audience and create a space for thought and questioning.

Beirut is a city that question us by its history, culture and identity... It was the perfect kind of city to work with.



Disintegrated Objects by Caroline Tabet, POV Female Beirut

How did you select these five artists? From a base in London was it hard to get an overview of the Beirut photography scene and ascertain who was doing the most interesting work?

At first, it can be obvious to consider the geographical distance as an obstacle to discover new talents. However, distance became a strength and gave me total impartiality to focus only on the quality of the photographic work without knowing the identity of the photographers or being influenced by their local fame or their networks.

All the series you're publishing are set in Beirut aside from Hibri's. Why did you choose to publish her work on Yemen? Do the artists select the series to be published, or do you?

When selecting the bodies of works for all the POV Female it became significant to publish five projects whose approach and relationship to the city is substantial and relevant at the same time. This relationship with the city can appear in different manners. The city can be a starting point to search further or inside.

Did the artists write their own texts to accompany the work?

Each statements have been written by the photographers themselves. In the case of Lara Tabet, she collaborated with a writer for this project.



Clashing Realities by Lamia Maria Abillama, POV Female Beirut



The Reeds by Lara Tabet, POV Female Beirut

How do you feel the five Beirut series work together? Do you see them as standalone books, or do they cohere as a set?

Above all, POV Female is an anthology of bodies of work by female photographers. We wanted to bring together the artistic vision of the emergent artist female scene. It is obvious that each book can exist by themselves. The relationship with the city come to be the important link.

How does the work published in Beirut connect to other series from around the world? Are these are overlaps?

POV Female is a project based on individualities and personal expressions. All the series are connected by the unexpected and intimate vision of the photographer from different cities and continents.



Parallel Universe & Beirutopia by Randa Mirza, POV Female Beirut

The Beirut series as a whole has quite a strong focus on war. Why do you think that is?

Photographers are influenced by their surroundings. They filter their emotions through their artistic expression. I supposed, war is part of their living experience and it sounds evident that most of the artistic work is generated by an emotional state of shock. The artists works are a source of emotions, feelings, reflection, spirituality or transcendence.. I believe in images which embodies an inner thought more than a testimony of reality.

**What does the POV Female project as a whole tell us about women photographers?
Are there any common points or themes that have emerged across the 25 books?**

POV Female have been a journey into the discovery of the scene of young female photography. Little by little a statement grew organically alongside the project. POV female is an anthology of series of books compelling the visual poetic form of young female talents which draws resources into intimates experiences, personal opinions based on the relationship with their city. It was important for me to consider the POV female project as an anthology to invite the audience to have a view on young female photography through different cultures. Young Female Photography is a genre that hasn't been explored enough. My desire was to explore this unknown expression and fulfil the potential of this genre.