

01.06 — 21.08.2022

DRY

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The Centre de la photographie Genève is pleased to present the first major solo exhibition of Abdo Shanani, a Sudanese-Algerian photographer based in Algiers. Primarily focused on one of his long-term projects entitled *Dry*, the show will explore questions of identity and representation closely related to his personal experience.

In 2009, after spending a major part of his childhood and adolescent years in Libya, Abdo Shanani returned to Algeria, where he began to develop his interest in photography. It grew progressively and first materialised in 2012 with an internship at Magnum in Paris. He thinks of his work as a photographic exploration, anchored in a deep and urgent need to capture the reality of his generation in Algeria. Abdo Shanani's work offers a narrative counterpoint to a visual history predominantly written by the colonial powers, and to news images that reduce Algeria to a series of crises. Photography is therefore for him a tool for self-affirmation, which translates the need to make one's voice heard and the urgency of asserting agency over one's own story.

Abdo Shanani's work is rooted in the experience of migration and exile, whether it is the experience of the artist himself or that of the people he meets, photographs and whose testimonies he keeps, in Africa as in Europe. In the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, the thinker W.E.B. DuBois already underlined the identity conflict of the African-American self, torn between the norms imposed by white and dominant thought and a desire for emancipation linked to a form of exile. Traversed by a similar experience, Abdo Shanani constructs a plural and complex self, which evolves in a network of people, experiences, places, and questions imposed limits. He thus intends to offer collective and individual narratives of the experience of exile and the protean identities it shapes, bypassing the stereotypes commonly found in the media and visual culture that convey dominant and normative discourses.

The exhibition will present a dialogue between photographic images taken from a corpus of about one hundred images, and written texts, testimonies of the photographed people, personal reflections of the artist and extracts from significant literature. It will retrace, in a form that is not chronological or documentary, but based on an immersive experience for the visitor, the important moments of this search for new forms of expression of plural, complex and constantly evolving identities. Thus, Arnold Böcklin's *Island of the Dead*, a famous 19th century painting that

has been widely disseminated in many printed media, is included in the exhibition, testifying to the multiple influences and inspirations that nourish Shanan. With this exhibition, the CPG wishes, through the strong and singular point of view of the artist, to contribute to sketch out possible answers to certain major current identity questions. It also intends to give subtle and relevant visibility to issues that are often invisible or, on the contrary, approached in a simplistic or spectacular manner.

Born in Oran, Algeria, in 1982 to a Sudanese father and an Algerian mother. Abdo Shanan studied telecommunications engineering at the University of Sirte, Libya, until 2006. Returning to Algeria in 2009, his growing interest in photography first took shape in 2012 with an internship at Magnum in Paris. Over the next decade, his work gradually gained an international reputation, marked by major international art and photography awards, including the CAP Prize (Contemporary African Photography) for his *Dry* project in 2019, a selection for the prestigious Joop Swart Masterclass of the World Press Photo in the same year, or the Premi Mediterrani Albert Camus Incipiens in 2020. His work is also regularly published in the international press.

Alongside his individual practice as a photographer and artist, Abdo Shanan is dedicated to collective and curatorial projects, always with the aim of highlighting and encouraging new contemporary views. Thus, in 2015, he co-founded Collective 220, a collective of Algerian photographers currently comprising 10 photographers based in Algeria and abroad. In 2020, he co-curated the exhibition *Narratives from Algeria* with Danaé Panchaud at the Photoforum Pasquart in Bienne. He is also co-curating in 2022 a new exhibition on contemporary Algerian photography, *Rhymes from Untold Realms*, organised by the association Djelbana with the Centre de la photographie Genève. In 2021-2022, he is the recipient of the Pro Helvetia *On the Road Again* grant with the collectives 220 and KOZ for an exchange and residency project between the Moroccan and Algerian art scenes.

More information on his work is available on his website:

www.abdoshanan.com

Opening : 31 May 2022, 18h00

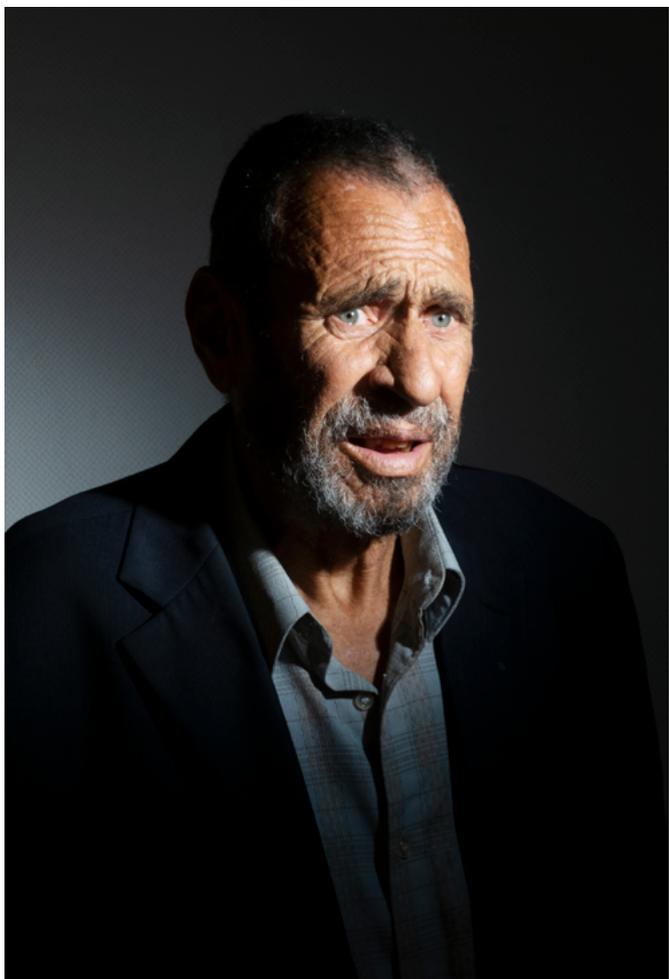
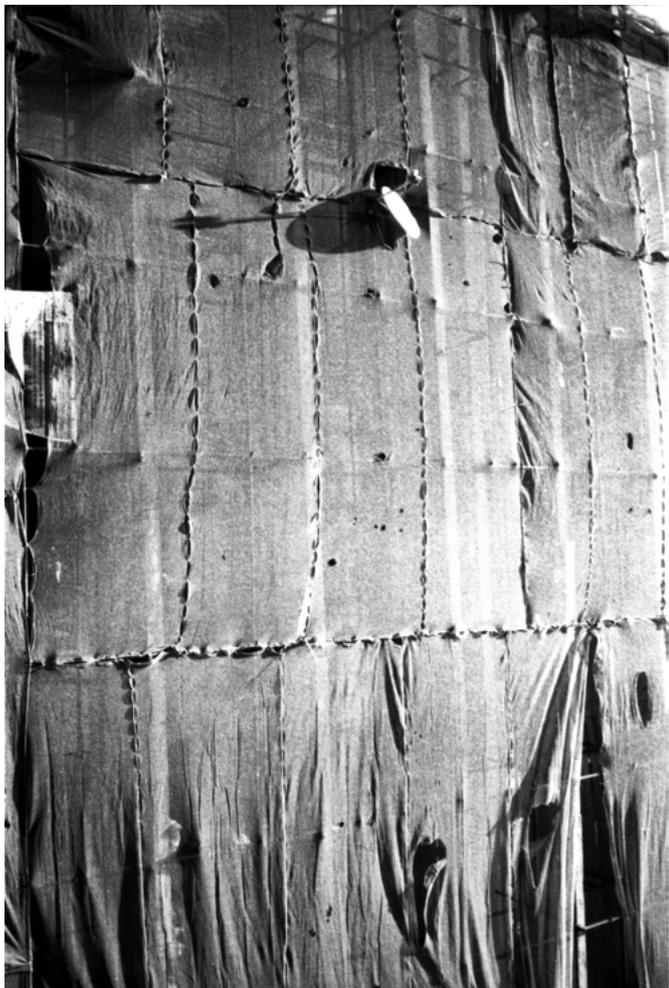
The artiste is available for interviews on 31 May and 1 June 2022.

Press contact : c.gunti@centrephotogeneve.ch / 078 712 27 49

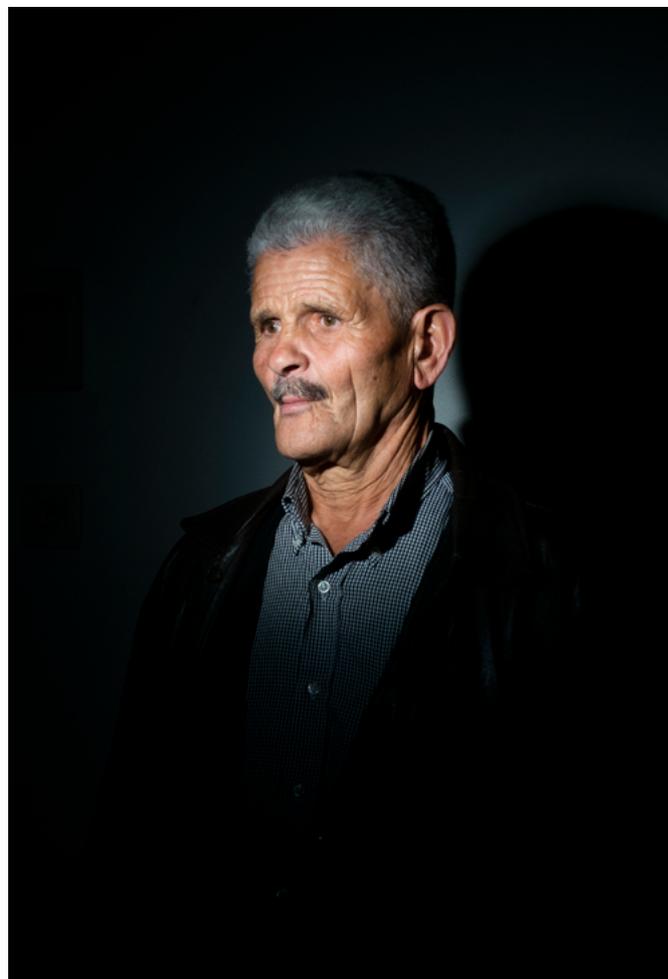
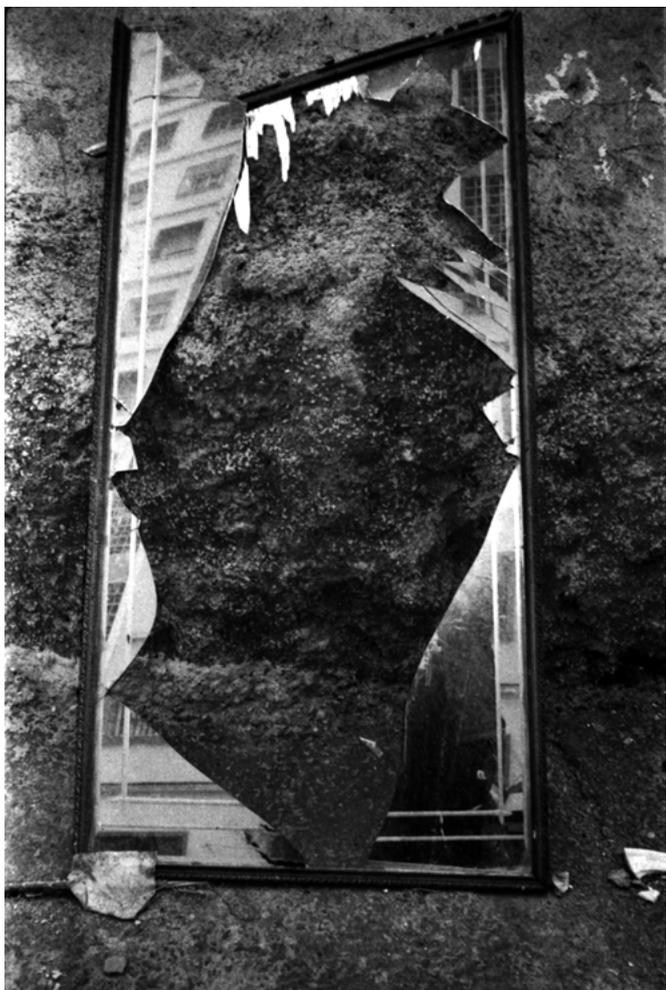
Images : www.swisstransfer.com

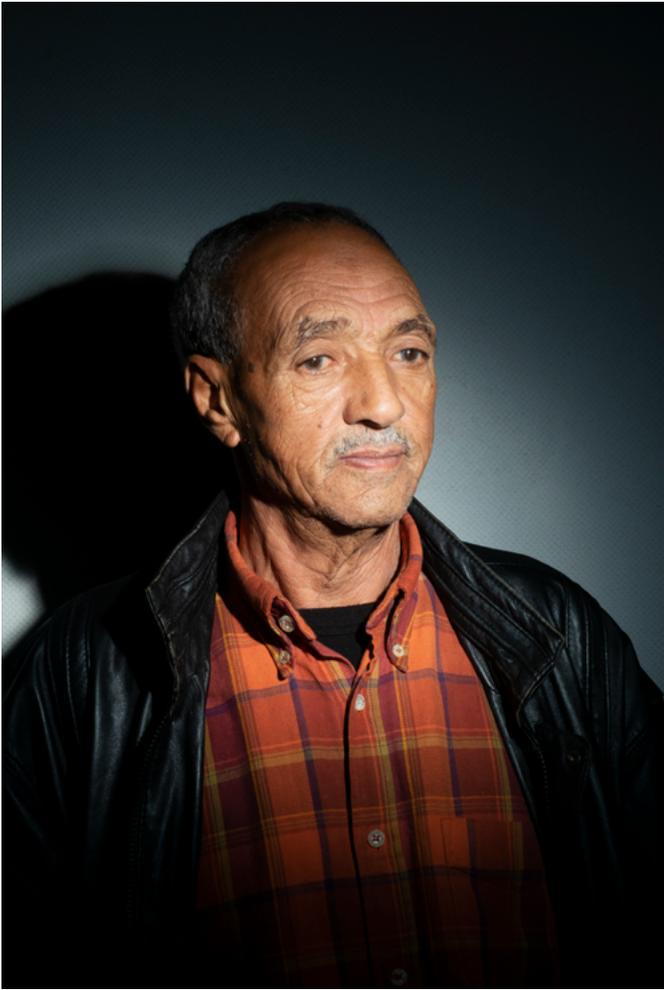
The exhibition is supported by the Fonds culturel Sud and the City of Geneva.

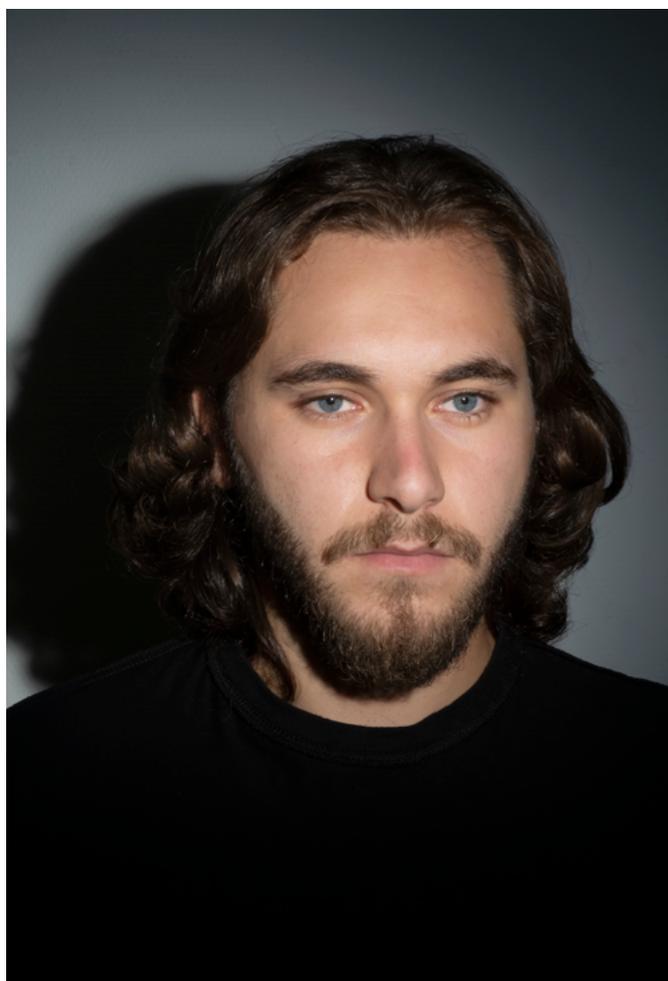




I belong to a generation that's going to liberate itself from the traumas of the past, from the collective trauma, from concepts such as citizenship and nation state. I'm part of a generation that does not only want to exist for the sake of existing, but to exist for the sake of contributing.

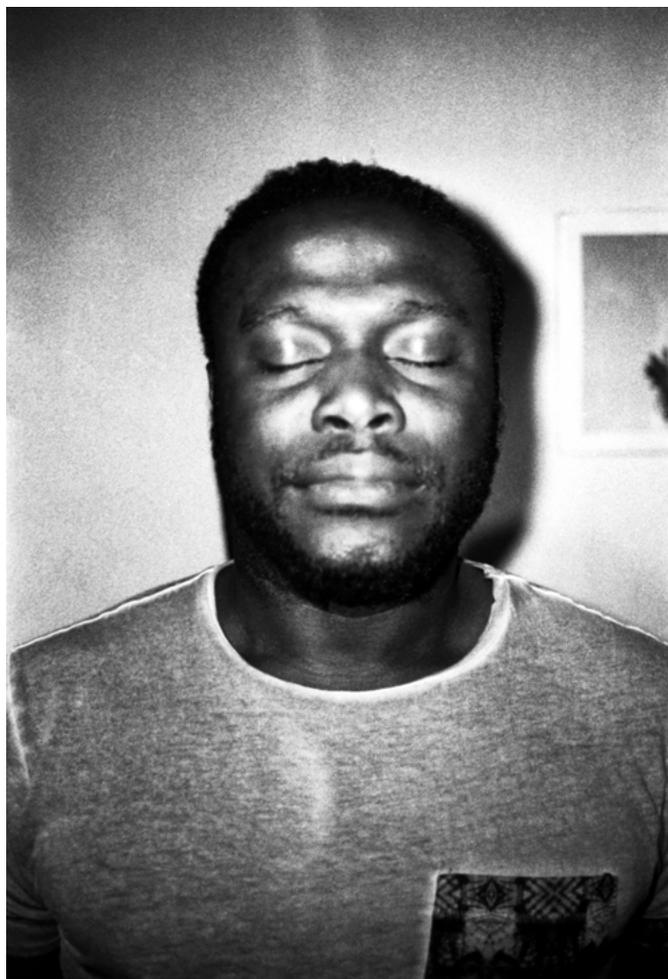




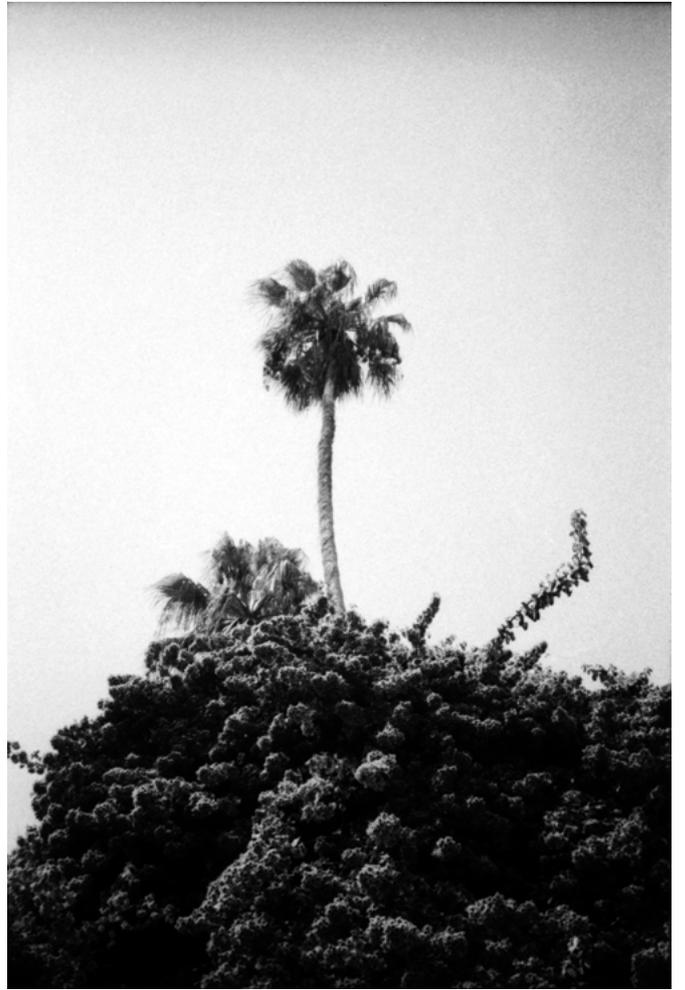




As people who have been adversely affected by colonialism, we are, in our minds, still following the same script, because we want to belong. Deep inside, I think, everyone wants to belong.







If you go on the streets and ask people, what do you think being Algerian means, they will say different things. There is no homogeneous Algeria. No, there might be some factors people agree on, but there is no such thing as a homogeneous Algeria.



