

• neue  
galerie

**Slow Days in  
the Fortunate Isle  
Imane Djamil  
19.01.–13.04.2024**



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**Mi–Fr 12.00–17.00 | Sa 11.00–15.00**

# *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*

## Imane Djamil

In her solo exhibition ***Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*** at the Neue Galerie, Moroccan photographer and visual storyteller **Imane Djamil** tells the story of two places – Tarfaya and Fuerteventura – her favourite and least favourite place. Less than 60 miles apart, the two are emotionally inseparable because of their often-tragic migratory relationship. But the exhibition does not address the complexity of international relations; it is an essay about how one feels in the middle of it.

**Exhibition  
text**

Imane Djamil's first encounters with Tarfaya and its inhabitants took place several years ago. Since then, she has felt a connection with the place in the south of Morocco.

A magical place where, for example, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry got the idea for *The Little Prince* or off the coast of which many people have assumed was the site of the sunken city of Atlantis. Djamil tries to capture all this in her now second series *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*. To this end, the photographer adopts what she calls „mental geographies“. In doing so, she establishes a dialogue between history, fiction and a territory and opens up new perspectives and levels of interpretation with her „docu-drama style“. She allows the viewer to participate in her personal reality.

The series *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*, presented here in the Neue Galerie for the first time, was preceded by the project *80 Miles to Atlantis*. The title of this first series referred less to Tarfaya itself and more to its immediate proximity to the Spanish archipelago, the Canary Islands, off whose coast the mythical city of Atlantis was supposedly located.

**Exhibition  
text**

Whereas in the story by the philosopher Plato, Atlantis fell out of favour with the gods and sank into the depths of the sea, the coast of Tarfaya is being swallowed by sand, not because it has gambled with the gods, but because of the Sahara's expansion and the apathy of the state towards its own cultural and territorial heritage. With *80 Miles to Atlantis*, Djamil questions the multiple symbolic dimensions of the built and natural landscape, the re-evaluation of colonial architecture over time, and the dissolution of the boundaries between myth and reality. Aspects that continue to represent an important layer of meaning in *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*.

But it is not only Atlantis - the small dots on the left of the map south of the Moroccan coast are also such mystical places of desire. Some called it Atlantis, others suspected it to be Elysium, *the Island of the Blessed* from Greek mythology.

As in Hesoid, *The Fortunate Isle* - whose location and conception in mythology changed over time, a place where heroes settled and lived in joy.<sup>1</sup> Today's heroes need more than the simple favour of the gods to reach the *Fortunate Isle*; they need a Schengen visa.

The enlarged image of the *Global Map of the Fortunate Isle & Friends* on the front wall of the first gallery room captures Djamil's personal experiences and observations in a map drawn from her memories.

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<sup>1</sup> *Illustriertes Lexikon der Mythologie* (Stuttgart: Parkland, 1993)

For many travellers from North and West Africa, the Canary Islands, Fuerteventura in particular, are a stopover on their way to Europe and have thus become a widespread fantasy of the West, which shatter upon arrival into numerous pieces of déjà vu and despair, often a painful reminder of what was left behind.

“This is not an essay about the complexity of international relations.

This is an essay about how one feels in the middle of it.”

*Imane Djamil*

*“Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle takes place in a small, personal, kingdom split into a historically fallen East and a chimerical, illusory West. It’s both the shape of a triangle and a broken heart, cracked in the middle by the notorious winds and waves of the Atlantic, but also, and mostly, by exclusionary policies much stronger than any ocean.” \_Imane Djamil, 2023*

Imane Djamil learned at a young age that these islands, even though they were only 60 miles away, are almost inaccessible to Moroccans due to the brutality and harshness of European border policies.

This policy of exclusion is a kind of violence and awakens forms of resistance based on the existential experiences of racism and patriarchal structures.<sup>2</sup> A „flat form of resistance“ that is not obvious or loud but takes place in the in-between, in the everyday.<sup>3</sup> Djamil captures this hidden resistance in her photography.

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<sup>2</sup> Seyda Kurt, *Hass: Von der Macht eines widerständigen Gefühls* (Hamburg: HarperCollins, 2023), 114.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 67.

**Exhibition  
text**

The works on display are accompanied by drawn stories about *Fortunate Isle* by the artist in the gallery space as well as descriptions of the characters of the heroes of the *Fortunate Isle*. In those descriptions of the characters, she avoids revealing whether the people really exist or not. Likewise, Djamil does not reveal which of these descriptions refers to which portrait, in order to preserve each person's privacy and security.

## **The heroes of the *Fortunate Isle*:**

### **Ares I**

An ex surf champion. In his early teens, he was fascinated by the three people in Tarfaya who surfed, who were in their 20s. He'd follow them everywhere but make sure they didn't see him. Very shy, too. One day, they caught him and took him to his mother, told her he often skipped school because all he did was follow them and watch them surf. They became his mentors and later, Ares I co-founded his town's first surf association. He moved to the Western part of the *Fortunate Isle* during the pandemic and has been lost since then. He has major alcohol problems and becomes violent when he drinks. Been in trouble a lot here. He wants to go back to his town but he and his friends came to the West after stealing a boat from the port of Tarfaya. One of the guys they were with made a video that was posted on social media. The town's authorities know about the theft, and so Ares I would go to jail if he ever returns home.

### **Ares Junior**

Tried going to the West by boat, twice. First time in 2018, he and his friends were taken to a place near Boujdour (in the East) with thirty-two other people. They were going to take a boat and had paid 700 euros. When they arrived, Ares Jr. and three other people realized the smugglers might be thieves because the boat was in real bad shape. They bailed out and three other people joined them. All this happened in a no-man's-land near Boujdour. They started walking in the desert to leave the area, and in the meantime the smugglers did indeed take off and left everyone behind.

**Character  
descriptions**

The second time he tried to leave was during the pandemic in 2020. Ares Jr. left with a couple other guys from a place near Tantan. They stumbled across the military in the ocean and were transporting hash. The military saw it but told them to get rid of it in the water before they sent them back to the shore. They treated them well, and asked them to make up a story to tell the authorities inland. The 3rd time he succeeded, Ares Jr. left on the same boat as Ares.

**Athena**

A bad bitch in any book of good manners. For curators with a background in European freedom and democracy advocacy, this concept may be something totally new: well-behaved Muslim person who still does whatever the F\*\*K they want. A great singer who took part in the East's biggest singing contest. An awesome soccer-playing girl. Loves the East of the *Fortunate Isle* and doesn't want to leave, although her town pisses her off sometimes.

**Hestoa**

Prude, but looks up to Athena. She loves to practice seduction "Eastern *Fortunate Isle* telenovela style". Could get married to literally anyone soon, but might follow Athena's advice and not get married at all and become an actress. Only girl in a family of 4 hyperactive artist-brothers.

**Hadee HD**

20 years old and hyperactive! He wants to learn and do absolutely everything. Mostly into film, photography and video editing. Loves "trippi" (backpacking hippy types as we call it in the *Fortunate Isle*).



## Character descriptions

At the moment he teaches maths at a local school to save some money. Also, he's looking for an internship in anything image related. He tried going to the Western part of the *Fortunate Isle* once but was caught by his big brother who, by the way, is also trying to move out there.

### **Ulysses**

Took a boat to the Western part of the *Fortunate Isle* after 4 visa applications got refused. His story is well documented and in the *Bed Time Story for Ambassadors and Consultants* (<https://open.spotify.com/show/4mXh2cpDGmDKOZn6sblIic>). He's an existentialist but not the French type, not the type you want to throw a shoe at. He is a very nice one but shy. He has an earring in his left ear but still, it doesn't make him look any tougher. After arriving, he figured out his way for the first months and stayed with a retired businessman who was slowly dying in agony. A few weeks before he died, he told Ulysses he could keep one object from his house. He chose a photograph of a pregnant woman because of how cool she looked. A photograph he wants to keep wherever he goes.

### **Zeus**

He is a mess! He has so many ideas for his town but he is also a little bit of a dictator. Loves graphic design. Very hot and he knows it. Starts things but doesn't finish them because no one wants to work with him longer than a month. Inspires people though.

Character  
descriptions

**Apollo**

Hyperactive, but hyperactive in a different way to Hestoa's brothers and Hadee HD. He is a school teacher. He has a background in Arabic and Hebrew comparative linguistics. He loves books more than he loves anything else. He dreams about living in a library. Apollo lived in another city, and as he claims, more in the library than anywhere else. Also, a troublemaker. He is a Marxist and loves nature. He has tried a couple times when at high school to go to the Western part of the *Fortunate Isle* but has been caught every time.

**The Narrator**

27 years old. It sucks to be neutral, anyway. Photographer mostly. My best and worst days usually revolve around the same blessing/curse: my curiosity. If I ever cross your path somewhere and you're talking about anything in this world, then there's a very good chance my chair will accidentally slide and I'll find myself sipping coffee from your mug.

In the end, Imane Djamil reveals her own identity as narrator and deep connection with the place and the protagonists of *Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle*.

Her involvement in the stories and experiences of those she encounters unfolds a potential for resistance by taking on the perspective of the West-dominated East and giving it space as well the work does not try to highlight any political tensions and territories, but the people who find themselves in between.

**Exhibition  
text**

Exhibition text: Bettina Siegele  
Character descriptions: Imane Djamil

# Biography

## Biography

**Imane Djamil** (born 1996 in Casablanca, Morocco) is a self-taught, Moroccan-based visual storyteller who works on commissions and long-term projects.

Her stories have been published in the New York Times, Le Monde and Libération, among others. She co-founded the collective KOZ with photographers M'hammed Kilito, Yasmine Hatimi and Seif Kousmate in 2020, as well as Cantara, a cultural entrepreneurship programme in Tarfaya (MAR). Djamil's work has been exhibited internationally, including at *A Room of One's Own*, Neimënster, *European Month of Photography*, Luxembourg (LUX), and *Ma aka Maaya ka ca y yere kono*, Bamako Biennale, Bamako (MLI) in 2023; *Who is Photography For*, Landskrona Festival (SWE) and *Nordwärts*, La Gacilly-Baden Photo, Baden (AUT) in 2022, and *Festival Traits d'Union*, *Théâtre El Duende*, Ivry-sur-Seine (FR) in 2018.

She has received numerous prizes for her work: 2022 - *Arab Documentary Photography Program*-Magnum Foundation, AFAC, Prince Claus; *On the Road Again* (KOZ/220 collectives) *Pro-Helvetia*; 2021 - *300-year anniversary grant from the British Council Morocco*; *New Narratives in Environmental Photography Prize*; *All Around Culture* - L'Art Rue European Union.

# Credits

**Curatorial support:** Bettina Siegele  
**Exhibition production:** Paul Irmann, Lukas Klestil  
**Production:** Cornelia Reinisch-Hofmann  
**Exhibition booklet:** Milena Thurner  
**Exhibition booklet editorial:** Bettina Siegele & Cornelia Reinisch-Hofmann  
**Grafic design booklet:** Marille. Büro für Grafik und Text

Credits

*Slow Days in the Fortunate Isle* is part of the annual programme *The Resistance of Nothingness* curated by Bettina Siegele.

## Jury for the programme 2024:

**Didem Yazıcı**, curator and director of the gallery at Yapı Kredi Culture Arts and Publishing, Istanbul, **Michael Strasser**, artist & board member of the Künstler:innen Vereinigung Tirol, and **Bettina Siegele**, artistic and managing director of Kunstpavillon & Neue Galerie.

# Dates

## Dates

### **Opening:**

Thursday 18.01.2024, 19.00

### Exhibition tour **Art & Coffee:**

27.01.2024 | 13.04.2024, 11.30

### **Curator's tour** with Bettina Siegele:

06.03.2024, 17.30 Uhr

Current information on the events and outreach in the realm of the exhibition can be found on our website: [www.kuveti.at](http://www.kuveti.at)



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