‘OM
(mother)

MOTHERS

OM ABDUL
OM AHMAD
OM EMAD
OM HAZEM
OM MUNTASSER
OM TAMER
OM WISAM
OM YUSUF

AND DAUGHTERS

SHIRIHAN SILINE AYLA EMAN NIDAA SUNDUS JANAT AYSHA FATIMA ZAINA QAMAR JORY HAYAM ASEEL DALLAL KAWTHAR JANA ZAINAB RAHAF LOJAIN LAYAN LAMAR HOURIA MARAM SOUNDOS SHAHD AWATIF ABEER OLA AHED AROUB SARAH GHANI QAIS SHAM EYLUL JULIA...

Hebron is the only city on the westbank, apart from Jerusalem, where Israeli settlers are living in the heart of a Palestinian city. Hebron is divided in 2 areas, H1 (a palestinian area, under the control of the palestinian authority) and H2 (a military area, under the control of the israeli army).
All the women and girls of the families I work with, live in the neighbourhood of Tel Rumeida, one of the most complex areas in the Westbank, with an explosive mix of Palestinians, settlers and soldiers (who are there for no other reason than to protect the jewish settlers against the Palestinians). In this hood is situated the cave of Abraham, holy for both jews and muslims. Not a surprise that here a few of the most radical settlers in the whole Westbank are residing.

My presence, just like that of many other western photographers, video makers, activists and journalists is important to make the world aware and protect the people who suffer under this system of apartheid. Also, on top of the military occupation of their land, the lack of control of their lives and bodies, there is always the immediate threat of colonist-neighbors violently harassing them, which they do with impunity. Men and women both suffer from this situation. But on social media and press videos on Tel Rumeida and Hebron you seldom see women. In one part this is because when women in tel rumeida leave their house, to go to work or to the store or to school, they fear for their safety and do not stay very long on the streets to talk to other women. So in news items or video's depicting actions and violence the settlers undertake towards Palestinians, we see mostly men, submitting to the violence or fighting back. Another part of the reason is that womenn-here resist in their own way.

In this project, therefore, I also photograph their surroundings but I especially chose to hand the camera over to the women of Tel Rumeida. The camera is these days the most powerful weapon of the Palestinians, to simply document and expose what is happening inside the Westbank. Women do not like to be in the picture, for many reasons, so in this way, as photographers, they can be in control of the image, also the image that is painted of their life. They have agency of what and who to photograph and how they do that. They photograph their houses, their immediate surroundings. To show the outside world what their life is about. Remarkable lives.
Because raising a family here and just staying in this incredible violent place, that is always threatening, always pregnant with imminent confrontations, and more so, by continuously creating a loving home for their children and family members, these women and girls are showing extreme strength.
Love as the ultimate act of resistance.

The women and I talked extensively on the situation, with the help of a friend translator in the beginning, so every nuance would be really clear, we talked on photography and its power, on the reason I chose only women and girls to participate and why I only give them analogue photography cameras, not digital ones.
Since the camera of the context, of the violence, of the deadlock politics, of men, surrounding the lives of the Palestinians in Tel Rumeida, is the digital camera, I decided to choose analogue photography to be the sole medium of these women. To convey something less tangible, less rational, more ambiguous and emotional, more feminine. The unpredictable character of the analogue, the light leaks, the mistakes, all that corresponds perfectly with the fact that especially women do not control the politics of their situation.

These women understood perfectly. We learned to know eachother in February and May and we saw each other daily during my stay in Tel Rumeida in September 2023. To talk, to eat, to change the film in their camera, to walk, to check the camera, to photograph together etc. We connected on many different levels and have become friends.
These pictures are a selection of their and my work. There is no authorship, the project is a collective effort and will be presented as such. In exhibtions and in the book that has been published in April 2024 by The Eriskay Connection. All profits go to the women's activities like language lessons and yoga in Tel Rumeida.
We are proud of our visual work. 'Om is a feminist work of love, joy and resilience.