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SHIFTING SANDS

By

Rachid Tagoulla
B.A., University of Ibn Zohr, 2017

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in Studio Art and Design

Department of Fine Arts
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

May 2021

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B.A., University of Ibn Zohr, 2017

A Thesis Approved on
April 10, 2021
by the following Thesis Committee:

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DEDICATION

To the soul of my father, Tayeb Tagoulla, who gave me my first camera
To my beloved mother, Aicha Arabe, and sisters Malika and Sana who always supported
me and my choices in life
and
to my darling wife, Rachel Keane Tagoulla, for her endless love and caring

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ABSTRACT

SHIFTING SANDS

Rachid Tagoulla

April 10, 2021

Shifting Sands is a re-exploration of the presentation of North Africans in colonial postcards, an examination of identity, and a critique of the modern Western museum.

Since the inception of photography, colonizers used this medium- especially in the form of postcards- to categorize and exoticize Eastern peoples in order to more easily subjugate them. *Shifting Sands* is a series of reconstructed colonial postcards which challenges colonial-era stereotypes of North African peoples. The colonial gaze, represented by the camera lens, is subverted through a lensless image-making process in which sand is used to remove the subject from the colonial gaze and create a new visual experience. In manipulating old postcards dated between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, *Shifting Sands* challenges viewers to unsee what they are conditioned to see. This series is a visual experiment of an Eastern photographer trying to portray his culture without reinforcing colonial perspectives and exotic stereotypes. *Shifting Sands* stands to challenge deeply rooted stereotypes rather than reinforce them or profit from perpetuating them. The show is multi-disciplinary and takes the form of an interactive outreach, visitors are encouraged to participate in the artist's image-making process in a performative way.

This work re-envisages the experience of the Western museums today in order to demonstrate the relationship between art, artifacts and commodities and also brings attention to how colonial objectification of North Africans continues in the form of the modern-day museums.

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ARTIST STATEMENT

In my work, I bring attention to colonial stereotypes of North African culture and people using the tools of colonial power: colonial photography and postcards. To create my reconstructed colonial postcards, I use a lensless image-making process to reject the camera lens, which symbolizes my rejection of the colonial gaze.

I use sand to remove the identifying features of my subjects. Sand is associated with archeology and the tension between the preservation and loss of culture. Artifacts are preserved in sand until archeologists dig them up later. These objects tell us about whole cultures and histories. Through sand, cultures are preserved and rediscovered which otherwise would have been lost. By covering my subjects in sand, I preserve them and protect them from the colonial gaze.

Many artifacts were stolen from North Africa during colonial times which are now exhibited in museums. Even though these museums are preserving North African culture, they are also claiming and commodifying cultural artifacts and prevent North Africans from having access to their own artifacts. This tension between cultural preservation and cultural appropriation is embodied in the Western museum.

At the exhibition, there are six medium sized images on the wall and an oversized self-portrait print of mine on the floor. In my self-portrait, I provide actual sand to the visitors to participate in the covering. Through this performative act I demonstrate the difficulty of removing the colonial gaze from within ourselves, whether Eastern or

Western. Whether the image is covered or not covered, in some sense, the trace of colonization remains. As much as we are aware of the colonial gaze and try to erase it by shifting sands, it always remains beneath the surface and within ourselves. Visitors are encouraged to engage in this tension and participate in the image-making process using the sand to cover the details of my self-portrait as they wish. Images of what visitors did will be taken and hung on the adjacent wall.

The viewers later see postcards in display cases presented as precious artifacts. Then they see postcards of the same images mass produced on a rack and ready for pick up. Viewers will be able to take a postcard, write a message and an address and put it in a mailbox at the exhibition to be sent out later by the artist. The juxtaposition of the display cases and the postcard rack alludes to the way that art, artifacts, and cultures are commodified by the museum, much like the objects sold in museum gift shops. The museum perpetuates much of the work of colonialism.

Shifting Sands provides a different visual and museum experience to Western viewers which challenges colonial stereotypes and the Western museum as well as bringing attention to the role of colonization in self-formation, whether we are aware of it or not.

Brief History of the Artist

The story of *Shifting Sands* started with my father. He was the only educated person in his poor family of three brothers and six sisters. His young brother started school, but never finished. In his mid-twenties, my father became a teacher at a primary school. He financially supported the whole family who primarily earned money through

farming and was the first in the family to buy a camera. He was also the only person with a camera in his village and he documented a lot of the village's life and people. My father took many photographs of his family in black and white, and he was passionate about documenting his trips around Morocco. When I was born, he owned two cameras. At the age of six, I enjoyed looking at his photographs from time to time which were well organized in photo albums. He had an artistic touch in creating vernacular images. My mother told me that I used to take one of his cameras and pretend to take images of whatever I see. That is when I knew I loved photography at a very young age.

At the age of twenty-three, I finished college and had to find a job to support my family after my father died. I was appointed to teach in Agdz, which is about 100 miles away from the desert. The town is poor and is a popular tourist site for people around the world wanting to experience the feel of the "real desert". Since I speak many languages, I was able to communicate with several foreigners and hear how excited they are to see the desert and its peoples. Locals of Agdz, including Moroccans from other cities like me never thought of having that experience because the tours were expensive and designed for foreign tourists only. However, I was able to save some money, buy my first camera and travel to the desert for the first time independently. The desert experience was thought provoking and I was able to see how Western people were presented with a misrepresentation of Morocco by some Moroccans working in the tourism sector who perpetuate and reinforce false images of Morocco. In the following chapters, I will investigate these misrepresentations and the role of both Westerners and Moroccans in perpetuating stereotypes about Morocco.

A few years later, I was offered a Fulbright scholarship to teach my culture at the college level in the US. I came to the US and learned how these misleading representations are deeply rooted in the average American's imagination of Morocco. Americans often associate Morocco with the romantic film *Casablanca*, which was not even shot in Morocco and does not reflect Moroccan culture and people. After completing my program, I was lucky to be admitted to the Hite MFA program, sharpen my photography skills, and acquire necessary skills to be more expressive artistically. From these experiences throughout my life, the idea of *Shifting Sands* emerged.

INTRODUCTION

THE SMURFS AND DELACROIX

When most foreigners think about Morocco, for example, they imagine desert oases and camels. One such popular exotic image in the Western imagination is a nomadic Tuareg man wrapped in a blue headdress with matching blue garments sitting on a camel. The 'Blue men' is a nickname for Tuaregs because of their distinctive traditional dress. Tuareg men traditionally live a nomadic life in the desert and typically wear a long, flowing garment -usually blue or white- which enables them to cover their faces and heads. This headdress protects them from the sand and the hot and cold winds of the Sahara. The Tuareg region used to be a very large Berber ethnic confederation which inhabited the great Sahara. Tuaregs once lived a nomadic life but because of the creation of African borders by the colonizers in the beginning of the twentieth century, they were forced to settle down in the region from southwestern Libya to southern Algeria, Mali, Niger, and northern Nigeria. They still live nomadic life, but their confederation was set apart, and their movement became very limited. Borders were created in the mid-nineteenth century and eventually caused a split of the Tuareg's region, and also disallowed their nomadic movement to some countries like Morocco.

European writers, artists and researchers discovered the lifestyle of Tuaregs and made a lot of publications, many of which served the goals of colonization, that romanticized their lifestyle. Most of my encounters with Western people in Europe

showed that their stereotypical image of Moroccan life was limited to a simple desert lifestyle, like that of the Tuaregs. Europeans crave the simple premodern life represented by the stereotypical image of the Tuaregs, while Moroccans desire the modern comfort and financial ease they associate with Western life. Ironically, the mythical, exotic image of Morocco that was created and commodified by colonizers has been perpetuated by Moroccans seeking to profit from Western tourism. One example of this self-exoticism occurs among Tuareg “Blue Men” impersonators, whom I nickname Smurfs based on the American cartoon. While it is true that traditionally most Tuaregs wear blue clothing, there are no longer any true Tuaregs living in Morocco.

Smurfs who are working in the tourism sector perpetuate these exotic images and wear blue headdresses and clothes in imitation of traditional Tuareg nomadic dress, even though the Tuaregs no longer live in Morocco. The blue garments are mere costumes. They do not live a traditional nomadic Tuareg lifestyle, and they are probably not even ethnically Tuareg. When I first heard about this hoax from a conversation I had with a Moroccan ‘Blue Man’ impersonator, and after the conversation I had with Western people, I realized how pervasive these stereotypes are. I also realized how Western exoticism of Moroccans is internalized by Moroccans and used for monetary gain. From my conversations with Westerners and Western tourists in Morocco, I realized how Western movies, novels and postcards create and circulate misleading stereotypes about my culture on one hand, and on the other hand, how Moroccans are both consciously and unconsciously perpetuating exotic stereotypes.



Figure 1: Rachid Tagoulla, *Fantasia, After Delacroix*, 44" X 94" Inkjet print 2018. Taroudant, Morocco. © 2021 Rachid Tagoulla

What do pseudo-Tuareg Smurfs have to do with Delacroix? I shot this photograph entitled *Fantasia, After Delacroix* (**Figure 1**) in 2018 in Morocco at a national event called *Tburida*. *Fantasia* is the French equivalent of the Arabic word *Tburida*, which refers to an ancient Berber performance found across North Africa. The Berbers are the native peoples of North Africa. *Fantasia* is a Berber custom that dates back to the eighteen centuries in which cavalry men with rifles symbolically demonstrated their bravery through frightening and intimidating enemies in wartimes. *Fantasia* or the *Gunpowder Game* in English became a tradition and is often performed in front of the king and the local people in national Moroccan ceremonies and during religious holidays.

As an MFA student, I had the chance to show *Fantasia, After Delacroix* at an exhibition at the MFA art gallery. A commentator remarked that it had an alluring painterly quality. The event of the *Fantasia* performance was held in the evening, so I had to use a low exposure in order to take this photograph, which resulted in a painterly appearance. I printed this photograph very large to symbolically mimic the past reality

when the Berbers provoked the fear of the colonizers, especially the French, with the *Fantasia* performance. I told the commentator a bit about the history of *Fantasia* in Morocco and I asked him if he knew that the French romantic painter Eugène Delacroix was the first Westerner to paint and document the *Fantasia* tradition. In fact, he was the first to introduce it to the European art scene as *Fantasia* (**Figure 2**). The commentator was surprised to hear that and said that considering the history of Delacroix alongside the painterly aesthetic of my work *Fantasia, After Delacroix*, he was reminded of a time when Europeans were conquerors of North Africa.



Figure 2: Eugène Delacroix, *Moroccans Conducting Military Exercises (Fantasia)*, 60.0 (h) X 73.0 (w) cm. Oil on canvas. 1832.

Eugène Delacroix was a French artist who was among the first artists to depict Eastern people in paintings during the time of European colonization in North Africa. In 1832, Delacroix painted *Moroccans Conducting Military Exercises (Fantasia)*, also known simply as *Fantasia*. To a European audience at that time, *Fantasia* was an

intriguing, exotic show of an unknown culture. Delacroix's colors depicted a line of horsemen, holding rifles and wearing white garments. In this performance, the riders' race in one straight line in a nearly identical motion, raise their rifles, and after the leader gives a sign, the horsemen fire into the air or at the ground.¹ The sounds of their shots should be perfectly synchronized. This blend of gunpowder and dust is a celebration of the merge of courage and wartime, "horse and rider."²

Delacroix took advantage of the ties established between the Moroccan Sultan Abd al-Rahman ibn Hisham³ with the French and eventually was welcomed to be among the first friendly diplomatic mission of Comte de Mornay⁴ to Morocco in 1832. Delacroix desired to escape the industrial revolution⁵ in Europe and because of this mission he was privileged to discover the 'mythical land of Morocco' for the first time. The Moroccan traditions, costumes, diverse faces, and bright colors had captivated the young romantic artist who was craving to nourish his artistic imagination. His taste for exotic scenes and wild nature was eventually aroused. Paintings like *Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (1841) and *Lion Hunt in Morocco* (1854) are good examples of that. To him, both the clothing and the attitudes of North Africans stipulated visual similarities to classical Romans and Greek. Delacroix wrote:

¹ Abby Sewell, "These dreamy photos transport you to 8th-century Morocco," *National Geographic*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/destinations/africa/morocco/photos-fantasia-tbourida-equestrian-tradition/>.

² Sewell, "These dreamy photos transport you to 8th-century Morocco."

³ Abd al-Rahman ibn Hisham was born in 1778 and he was declared Sultan of Morocco in Fez on November 30, 1822.

⁴ Charles-Edgar de Mornay (1803 - 1878) was the first French diplomat to Morocco. He played a vital role in convincing Morocco to remain neutral in regard to the French Algerian war.

⁵ The Industrial Revolution happened between mid-eighteen and mid-nineteenth century. It was a cultural and economic transition from old industry and agriculture to a new factory-based structure facilitated by machines. This period was also known of huge demand to find raw materials.

The Greeks and Romans are here at my door, in the Arabs
who wrap themselves in a white blanket and look like Cato
or Brutus...⁶

Eventually, the artworks Delacroix painted during his trip to Morocco had a huge impact on the Europeans who craved seeing scenes and portraits which differed from what they were used to. Delacroix sold his paintings and constructed an exotic image of the culture of North Africa that persists in the Western mind until today.

Beginning of the mid-eighteenth century, French imperial ambitions required raw materials for growing industrialization. Rapid industrialization led European countries such as France to explore and colonize other Eastern countries like Morocco to extract natural resources there. The French sent explorers, anthropologists, and artists to document and collect information about certain countries in Africa prior to officially colonizing them. Artworks by Delacroix, for example depicted an ‘Orientalist’ vision of an exotic other. Morocco was presented as a primitive and pre-modern land with exotic men and women who needed to be civilized and modernized according to French culture. France raced for domination in Morocco and obviously took advantage of this false image that it used as an excuse to colonize it. A weakened Moroccan state obliged the sultan to sign a treaty to divide Morocco into French and Spanish districts but enabled him to symbolically reign normally. Morocco remained a French protectorate from 1912 to 1956.⁷

⁶ “Jewish Wedding in Morocco by Eugene Delacroix,” Joy of Museums Virtual Tours, accessed March 1, 2021, <https://joyofmuseums.com/museums/europe/france-museums/paris-museums/the-louvre/jewish-wedding-in-morocco-by-eugene-delacroix/>.

⁷ David Crawford, and Bart Deseyn, *Nostalgia for the Present Ethnography and Photography in a Moroccan Berber Village* (Leiden University Press, 2014), 15.

Displaying my photo *Fantasia, After Delacroix* triggered a thought process that inspired many questions. After the conversation about this work, I realized that even as a native Moroccan, I was viewing my own culture through a foreign lens. Like the pseudo-Tuareg Smurfs making money on Western exoticism of Tuareg culture, I was displaying a work of art that exoticized my culture and titled it after a European artist who did the same. Why did I connect my work to Delacroix with the title *Fantasia, After Delacroix*? By connecting my work to colonial-era artists and making similar images, am I reinforcing exotic colonial perspectives of Moroccans in my own work? Does the Western appetite for exotic images make my work attractive to Westerners and how might I challenge Western exoticism of Moroccan people and culture in my work? How might I challenge stereotypes rather than reinforce them?

TRUTH AND FABRICATION: SHIFTING SANDS

“You can observe a lot just by watching.”

Yogi Berra



Figure 3: Rachid Tagoulla, *Untitled*, 4 X 6 ft color dye sublimation print mounted on aluminum 2021. Louisville, KY. © 2021 Rachid Tagoulla

My self-portrait shown above represents the tension between truth and fabrication in photography, especially colonial photography, as well as the tension between truth and fabrication in myself. Somehow the self-portrait is both true and not true. The image **(Figure 3)** contains elements of truth, because I am a photographer and the 4x5 camera is my camera of choice. The turban represents both truth and untruth. The turban is an aspect of my Berber heritage; however, the turban also represents fabrication because

personally I do not wear it. The turban also represents fabrication because I have chosen to wear the turban in the image, not because I ever wear it, but because it creates an appealing image. I was not fully conscious at the time I took the self-portrait that I was exoticizing myself by putting on the turban. At first, I set out to take a self-portrait without wearing a turban. I only put the turban on to add an interesting visual element; however, I realized later that this unconscious decision was a trace of colonialism within myself. In addition, the fact that I never wear a turban and wear Western-style clothing is itself a trace of colonialism, since culturally before colonialism, many Berbers wore a turban or another head covering.



Figure 4: Rachid Tagoulla, *Retrace*, Shifting Sands series, 4” X 6” postcard 2021. Louisville, KY. © 2021 Rachid Tagoulla

In the postcard version of my self-portrait (**Figure 4**), I cover the entire image except the eye. I represent myself as an artifact buried in the sand. Beneath the sand, my genuine self and culture await my excavation. I cover over the rest of the image to

remove the colonial gaze from it but leave the eye to symbolizes the colonial gaze within myself. The solitary eye represents the reality that colonization always exists no matter what is covered or removed because colonization is within us. Identities have no borders and are always a complex element. Each one of us is a mix of cultures. For example, Westerners have been formed by the Northern African culture as much as Northern African have been formed by Westerner culture. We are all mixtures of various layers of cultures that constitute our identities. Whether Eastern or Western, our perspective of ourselves and others is influenced by colonialism. My goal in my self-portrait, *Retrace*, is to bring awareness of the colonial gaze not only outside us but also within us so that it can be challenged, and the true self can be revealed.

I have placed a large color dye sublimation print mounted on aluminum of my self-portrait on the ground in the middle of the *Shifting Sands* exhibition with sand covering it. This piece has a performative element because visitors are encouraged to move the sand around on the image as they wish. When visitors determine what to cover and expose of this image, they engage in my image-making process and face the same tension between truth and fabrication. I also had to decide what to cover and not cover in each reconstructed colonial postcard. In this way, this interactive piece is a representation of my outer image-making and inner decision-making process. Whether the image is covered or not covered, no matter how we shift the sands, the trace of colonization remains. Just like my wearing or not wearing the turban is a product of colonization, whether the image is covered or not covered, however it is covered, the trace of colonization is always visible.

COLONIALISMS IN NORTH AFRICA

Colonialism is the central theme of my work. Colonialism is considered a Western attitude and a behavior of gaining control over another country and politically and economically manipulating it as an ultimate goal. Beginning in the fifteenth century, Europeans colonized certain coastal areas in Africa and sent missionaries to the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Later on, England, Germany and France also went in search for new colonies. These expeditions were called the first wave⁸ of colonial expansion. Beginning of the nineteenth century, roughly between 1885 and the 1960s, the second wave of colonial expansion centered around the African continent in what was known as the Scramble of Africa. The first-time borders were created ever in Africa was by European countries such as England, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Italy. They claimed the land for themselves causing the separation of local cultures and a great deal of populations.

Colonialism did bring some positive changes to the colonies. Colonizers often invested in the colonies, developed infrastructure, and provided basic forms of health care, which was of course largely for their benefit. Colonizers also provided equipment needed for transportation, trade, and agriculture. However, violating human rights, imposing new rules, and forcing the locals to change their ways of living caused some locals to revolt against the colonizers. Moreover, some colonizers destroyed natural resources that were important to the local population and often disregarded the local

⁸ “First wave of European colonization” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, last modified November 24, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_wave_of_European_colonization.

people's heritage, culture and language. Colonizers deliberately excluded the locals from political and social decision-making.

Morocco and Algeria are two examples of neighbor countries sharing borders, ethnic aspects, religion, cultures and languages. They were even colonized by the same European country: France. Yet, the two countries had completely different colonial experiences. The French imposed settler-colonialism upon Algerians while Morocco experienced a much less violent French protectorate colonialism.

In 1830, France conquered Algeria and exercised complete domination. Thousands of Europeans, especially French civilians, moved to Algerian cities bringing European industry, western medicine, banks, schools and modern agricultural equipment. A million French people considered Algeria their home. Years passed by and the Algerians were dissatisfied with their French ruler. After the second world war, Europe was weakened and in 1954, the war of Algeria for independence began.

Battle of Algiers is a movie directed by Italian movie maker Gillo Pontecorvo in 1966 and describes this time. The movie is a dramatized documentary showing the post-war struggle of Algerian nationals to free their land from French colonial rule and focuses on the clashes in Alger, the Algerian capital city. This movie narrates factual events of the development of the Nationalist Liberation Front (FLN -1954) which is an anti-colonial and Algerian nationalist resistance group, which fought against the French administration. In an attempt to defeat this revolution and maintain their powerful status, the French oppressed the Algerians, limited their movement on their own land by implementing checkpoints, exercised torture, execution, rape and arbitrary internment in

camps. These events took place in 1957 when Algerian resistance fighters entered conflicts with the French army for the first time in an urban setting.

The movie depicts real examples of the brutality of French settler-colonization in Algeria. The director shows bloody and dramatic scenes of torture of the FLN militants. When the *Battle of Algiers* was first released, it was unlike the rest of the classical movies in which males were the heroes and women were happy housewives or romantic princesses. In the movie, Algerian women, besides men, contributed to the independence of Algeria from France. In a scene, FLN women deliberately removed their veils, cut off their braids, put on makeup, bleached their hair, and dressed up in the European fashion in order to participate in violence acts. In the movie, a French soldier secretly planted a bomb in the Kasbah and caused the death of many Algerian civilians. Consequently, the movie showed three women willing to sacrifice their lives in revenge. The movie featured these FLN women as heroes and courageous freedom fighters who dressed up as modern French women and were able to traverse several military checkpoints and carefully plant their bombs in public French locations.



Figure 11: Gillo Pontecorvo, Still image from the movie *Battle of Algiers* 1966. Antonio Musu/ Saadi Yacef © Rizzoli, Rialto Pictures.

The youngest woman in the movie (**Figure 11**) made a huge sacrifice to look like a modern Algerian woman to go easily through various checkpoints without hassle. She cut off her long braids, stripped herself of her traditional Muslim garb and wore European clothes. Three FLN women successfully fooled the French guards by presenting a pretty “Europeanized” face and were able to cross the checkpoints with bombs in their purses. French soldiers did not expect them to carry explosives in their bags and women were not supposed to be touched, so they were unsuspected. Through the history of Algerian colonialism, local oppressed women willingly unveil themselves for the sake of freeing their homeland.

Pontecorvo dreamt of creating a film as close to the truth as possible. Four years after Algeria’s independence, he collaborated with former FLN militants who fought against the colonial power that settled on Algerian lands over one hundred years earlier. To add a faithful aspect to the movie, the director used real urban scenes and unprofessional actors who were former resistance fighters. The movie depicted the Algerians’ persistence to end colonialism. Indeed, the French presence helped Algeria to develop and look modernized, but the local population needed to rule themselves and travel freely around cities without passing through several checkpoints. Unlike the rest of the Hollywood caption movies whose main purpose is entertainment, the *Battle of Algiers* is a groundbreaking cinematic work that tackled the problem of colonialism when force is used by the colonizer. While the movie tries to remain unbiased, it contains a remarkably balanced perspective by demonstrating that colonialism can be brutal and painful for both sides when bombs explode, and innocents die. This film also shows how complex the

situation would be when both sides resort to fighting as an ultimate solution. The movie is relevant today as it was when it was first released fifty-four years ago. This movie was censored from screening in France until 2003 after the US released it as a response to the American intervention in Iraq.

On the other hand, protectorate colonialism in Morocco was short and peaceful compared to the one in Algeria. Morocco was a French protectorate for only 44 years (from 1912 to 1956) while Algeria was viewed as an extension of France for 132 years (from 1830 to 1962). The French did not consider Algeria as a direct extension of their own country but rather a French peripheric. In Morocco, the French allowed the Sultan to remain in power and “protected” his kingdom from any local or foreign danger. The Sultan was advised by French residents or governors like General Hubert Lyautey (1912-1925). Also, Morocco was mostly a residence of French administrators, officials and businessmen unlike Algeria which had French civilians. Algeria won its independence from France after a violent war, while Morocco’s fight was fairly short and less furious. Today, the statue of national hero Amir Abdelkader in Algiers sharply contrasts the statue of French governor Hubert Lyautey in Casablanca, demonstrating how colonialism can differ from the two countries and suggest a variety of experiences of colonialism.

Right after Algeria obtained its independence in 1962, the new Algerian government sent back to France all statues depicting French heroes and replaced them by their local heroes. In the photo above (left) for instance, the statue is commemorating the Algerian leader who resisted against the invasion of France in 1830, showing a courageous pose, which mimic those of French military equestrian statues. By contrast, the statue of the French famous governor Hubert Lyautey (right) usually called “The

Maker of Morocco” stands still in Casablanca today since 1938. It was only moved a few hundred yards away to sit behind the fence of the French consulate a year before the Moroccan independence in 1956. These two examples of statues depict how the colonial experiences of these two neighboring countries can be different.

Of course, Algeria and Morocco shared common experiences such as inequality. The French used to oblige locals to come along with their domestic animals (donkey, camel, ...) to construct roads for free. The French took advantage of the locals for free labor. Also, thousands of people in Casablanca lived in shanty towns without paved streets, electricity or running water. Leaders were prevented from organizing and they were often arrested. The French also neglected the educational system and very few students were able to go to schools. The literacy rate was low before independence and those who got the chance to go to schools were taught to assimilate to French culture. Certainly, those students were lucky to gain skills to make them earn money to help their local families, but their education came at the cost of cultural erasure.

French army general and colonial administrator Marshal Hubert Lyautey served in Indochina, Madagascar, and Algeria before becoming the first French resident in Morocco (1912-1925). He conducted many military maneuvers in Algeria where he gained war experience. When he first arrived at Fes, the capital city at that time, he clashed immediately with revolts of the tribes that surrounded the city in protest against the signing of the protection treaty with the Sultan Moulay Yusef. There were many revolts, and many French soldiers lost their lives. Lyautey sent a letter to France saying: “I got here (Fes) yesterday, and then I met the Sultan. In the evening, the city came under massive attack from its east and north. We repelled two attackers by noon the next day,

after more than 12 hours of fierce resistance, during which they infiltrated into the city, so we were forced to have a street war, chasing them from house to house. Our losses were too numerous.”⁹

After analyzing the situation in Morocco, Lyautey had to transfer the capital city from Fes to Rabat and choose a new political approach to dominate Morocco. Some observers said that Lyautey adopted an Islamic approach which embodied reverence and mutuality. Mary Louise Pratt stated that Europeans adopted an anti-conquest tactic in which they claimed innocence and naivete.¹⁰ She explained it as follow:

The main protagonist of the anti-conquest is a figure I sometimes call the “seeing man,” an admittedly unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess.¹¹

Lyautey for example, ensured religious practices and protected traditional social institutions including courts and education. His ultimate aim was to have the French presence infused in the Moroccan life. He banned Muslims from accessing bars, and drinking alcohol in public, and also banned non-Muslims from entering mosques as well as proselytizing.¹² Lyautey also rewarded all Moroccans who contributed to his policy and served in French military tasks during the first world war where Moroccans fought against other Muslims, the Ottomans.

⁹ Khalid Alghali, “Lyautey, the ‘Protector’ of the Throne and the Religion,” *Zamane*, March 6, 2020, <https://zamane.ma/الليوطي-حامى-العرش-والدين/>.

¹⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 7.

¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 7.

¹² Yassine Benargane, “28 avril 1912: Nomination d'Hubert Lyautey, premier résident général du protectorat français au Maroc,” *Yabladi*, April 04, 2017, <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/53265/avril-1912-nomination-d-hubert-lyautey.html>.

Despite the end of the era of protection and the departure of Lyautey from Morocco, some of his “Islamic” laws, decisions and choices remain active until today. The Moroccan flag design, Rabat as the capital city, the criminalization of Muslims eating in public during the day during Ramadan, and the prohibition of selling alcohol are still in action. However, many anti-colonialists still see him as a colonial leader. Recently in the United States, a new manifestation of the rejection of slavery and colonialist figures emerged after the death of African American George Floyd in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. French president Macron has said that he stands against racism, but he will not unbolt any colonial-era statue, indicating resistance to recognizing the brutality of French colonialism. “The republic will not erase any trace, or any name, from its history ... it will not take down any statue” Macron said.¹³ Consequently, many of these statutes have been tremendously defaced or damaged.

The popular removal of the colonial-era figures in North Africa resembles the desire of African Americans and supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement to reject the historical enslavement of African Americans. The French king Louis XVI statue in Louisville, Kentucky after months of protests for the shooting of Breonna Taylor, does not look so different from the defaced statue of General Lyautey in Paris. Protesters in Louisville alongside others in the rest of the states, angrily spray painted over the colonial-era figures. Louisvillian protesters also destroyed some parts of a Louis XVI statue in an attempt to reject the colonial figures representing suppression and supremacy. In September 2020, the city thought that the damaged statue of the king whom the

¹³ “France won’t ‘erase’ history by removing colonial-era statutes, Macron says,” France 24, last modified June 14, 2020, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200614-macron-vows-that-france-won-t-take-down-statues-or-erase-history>

Louisville's founders named the city after, can be dangerous for the safety of the protesters and the public. Ultimately, the city decided to take it down after being downtown since 1967, when it was gifted from France as a symbol of friendship between the cities of Montpellier and Louisville.¹⁴

As an outsider, I was shocked to be living in Louisville during these remarkable and critical events in the history of the United States. I was speechless while watching these new forms of demonstrations in a rejection of slavery, colonialist figures, police brutality and white supremacy. Much like racism and discrimination against Black people continues today even with the gains of the Civil Rights movement, colonialism and its effects remain. As an MFA student in this political atmosphere, I was drawn to re-explore the traces of colonization within me, my culture and within others.

¹⁴ Lucas Aulbach, "Louisville removes downtown King Louis XVI statue at Sixth and Jefferson streets," *Louisville Courier Journal*, September 3, 2020, <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2020/09/03/king-louis-xvi-statue-in-downtown-louisville-removed/5701120002/>.

COLONIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

“The reading of public photographs is always, at bottom, a private reading.”
Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

Photography entered North Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as a tool of colonization. Indigenous North Africans, called Berbers, saw white men with their cameras as intruders and voyeurs who tried to interfere in their private realm by gazing through the lens.¹⁵ French photographers have always been curious to discover the sacred practices and private spaces of Muslims; however, these photographers were considered outsiders who had no respect for Islam and the importance of modesty. Berbers, like the Pueblo people in North America, did not have fears of the camera based on superstition. For example, they did not believe that the camera steals the soul of the photographed subject opposite to what the Aboriginal people in Australia think.¹⁶ However, Berbers were conscious of the intimate nature of the photographic image and refused to allow strangers to take their personal photographs.¹⁷

Throughout the years, colonizers obtained consent from native people to intrude in their private affairs and take pictures of them. White photographers crossed cultural

¹⁵ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Yellow Woman and A Beauty of The Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 175.

¹⁶ Christopher Pinney, and Nicolas Peterson, *Photography's Other Histories*. Objects/Histories (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 138.

¹⁷ Silko, *Yellow Woman and A Beauty of The Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today*, 177.

and traditional boundaries to photograph portraits. They came up with the idea of paying models to unveil these inaccessible women¹⁸ or often forced them to pose in suggestive ways to create an alluring image. French colonial photography exoticized Moroccans to attract Westerners to the protectorate, profit from selling exotic images, and aid in the construction of their civilizing myth. Many famous French photographers, such as Flandrin and Gesier for example, were famous for depicting women naked or in erotic poses (**Figure 12**), which satisfied European men's appetite for foreign women. Such images were printed as a form of postcards and were circulating Europe and the world.



Figure 12: Jean Geiser, *A Woman from Southern Algeria*, postcard 1900. Delcampe. Wikibooks website, accessed April 20, 2021. Public domain image

¹⁸ Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 17.

Flandrin's photographs for instance depicted Moroccan women in a sexual way and in classic European style¹⁹ rather than in everyday dress in order to attract Europeans. He also wanted to give the impression that indigenous women were vulnerable and needed to be saved by civilized European men. These photographs played an important role in serving the civilizing myths of colonization and spreading a false understanding of Moroccan people and culture, an imaginary invention of the West which was a tool for maintaining Eurocentric power over the orient.²⁰

Colonial photographs which exoticized North African culture were spread throughout Europe through the medium of the postcard. Two of the earliest colonial photographers who proliferated exotic images of North Africa in the form of the postcard were Rudolph Franz Lehnert and Ernst Heinrich Landrock.²¹ Many images from my show *Scènes et Types*, are reconstructions of their images.



Figure 13: Rachid Tagoulla, cover page of *Scènes et Types*, 3" ½ X 5 ½ " postcard collection book, 20 Vues détachables Héliogravure. © Lehnert and Landrock

¹⁹ David Crawford, and Bart Deseyn, *Nostalgia for the Present Ethnography and Photography in a Moroccan Berber Village*, 17.

²⁰ E. W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 1.

²¹ Joseph Geraci, Rudolf Franz Lehnert, and Ernst Heinrich Landrock, "Lehnert & Landrock of North Africa," *History of Photography* 27 iii (January): 294–98. doi:10.1080/03087298.2003.10441256.

Travel to North Africa was common by Lehnert and Landrock's time as was photography, but it was not common for tourists to have cameras. The postcard business began in response to the market created by these travelers and made images readily available as traditional photographs were expensive. These postcards didn't specify where exactly the picture was taken and when they had captions, these captions were often incorrect. Postcards sought to promote an image of the orient as "the exotic Orient of instinct and sensuality" in contrast to "the conventional West of reason, rationality and repression"²² rather than provide an accurate portrait of native peoples.



Figure 14: Rachid Tagoulla, *A Young Kabyle Woman Adorned with Her Jewels*, 3" ½ X 5 ½" postcard, *Scènes et Types* collection book. Ed, ND. 1900s.

All of the images of women captured by Lehnert and Landrock would not be ordinary women, because they would not have access to them. Instead, most of them are

²² Joseph Geraci, "Lehnert & Landrock of North Africa," *History of Photography* 27 iii (January 2015): 294–98. doi:10.1080/03087298.2003.10441256.

prostitutes or poor, promoting a sexualized image of North Africans. The pictures of men feminize them and are “suggestive of androgyny.”²³ **(Figure 16)**



Figure 15: Lehnert & Landrock, *Nude Tunisian. Youth Seated on Drapery*, silver gelatine print, c.1912. Musee de l'Elysee, Lausanne. © Lehnert & Landrock, Cairo.

²³ Geraci, “Lehnert & Landrock of North Africa,” 297.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND MANIPULATING THE COLONIAL GAZE

In her book, *Imperial Eyes, Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt uses the term Autoethnography to refer to the concept of colonized people representing themselves in ways that engage with the colonizers' conditions while also remaining devoted and loyal to their self-consideration. Autoethnographic insights help to identify and analyze the remaining effects of colonization by providing insider perspectives that challenge dominant narratives emerging from the colonial views. Autoethnography provides a way of managing the effects of colonization by promoting the self-understanding of the colonized, thus challenging "imperial thinking" which "continues to renew itself and mutate with great resilience."²⁴

Inspired by the autoethnographic approach, I "engage with the colonizer's conditions" through the use of photography, colonial postcards and the museum to create an exhibit, which reveals photography, postcards and museums as tools and products of colonization and oppression. I remain devoted to my self-consideration by creating a reconstruction of colonial postcards which challenges colonial exoticism and objectification of North Africans.

I chose the form of the postcard because the postcard is a commodity. It represents the European concept of possessing land and people for profit. Europeans used

²⁴ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 14.

North African bodies for labor, and also used them to sell postcards. The colonial photographers valued the physical labor of subjugated people and objects like clothing which they considered exotic. Rather than viewing indigenous people as humans and equals, they viewed and treated them as objects. My images attempt to subvert the colonial perspective of indigenous North Africans, which was discriminatory, and objectified and exoticized people.

Most of the colonial photos and postcards were taken in places that do not match their text description. They had captions with false descriptions and were circulated all over Europe. They spread incorrect information about their content. The text that is placed next to an image reveals colonial stereotypes. I was at the UofL library photo archive and found images (**figures 5, 6, 7, 8**) taken in Morocco. Among them there was one image of a man with two women and caption says: “a man with 2 wives” I thought about how this image would be viewed differently if the caption said, “a man with his mother and wife” or “a man with his 2 sisters.”? Then I found another image of a camel making a funny face, probably because it was eating. The caption underneath the picture of the camel read: “a bad camel.” I thought, “what is bad about this camel?” Is the camel bad for making a funny face? Who decides who is good or bad? Are the descriptions matching the colonizer’s assumptions about cultural beliefs or the view of the colonizer? Other images had similar messages.

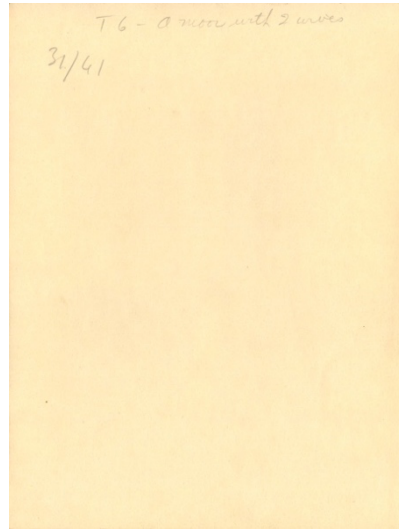


Figure 8: Anonymous, image of a man with 2 women has the caption, “a man with 2 wives”, 7” X 9” Gelatin silver prints, circa 1945. Photographs of France and Northern Africa, 1988_003, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville

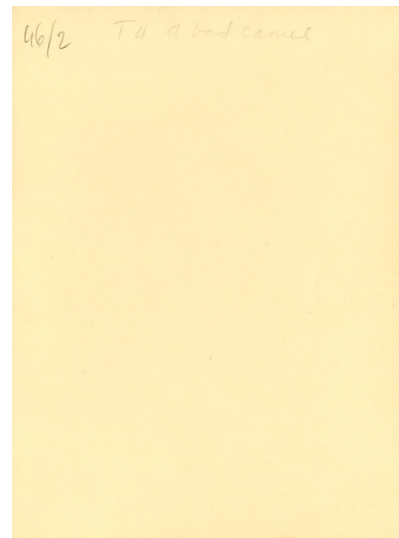
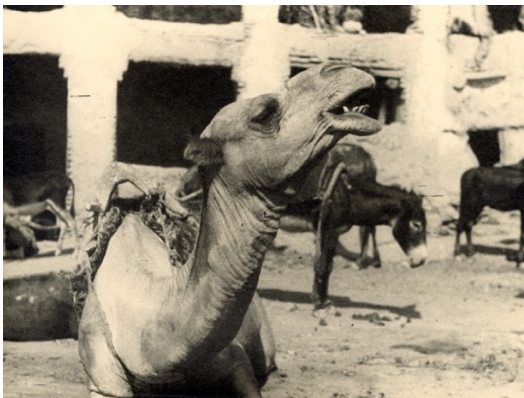


Figure 9: Anonymous, image of a camel has the caption, “a bad camel”, 7” X 9” Gelatin silver prints, circa 1945. Photographs of France and Northern Africa, 1988_003, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville

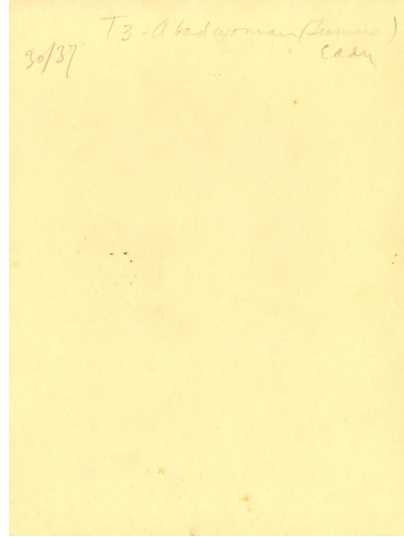


Figure 6: Anonymous, image of a woman has the caption, “a bad woman”, 7” X 9” Gelatin silver prints, circa 1945. Photographs of France and Northern Africa, 1988_003, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville



Figure 7: Anonymous, image has the caption, “a good woman” at the back, 7” X 9” Gelatin silver prints, circa 1945. Photographs of France and Northern Africa, 1988_003, Photographic Archives, University of Louisville

These captions demonstrate a colonial bias. Our biases greatly impact how we experience an image. In the captions of the colonial postcards, people are objectified and described as types such as “A Moorish Beauty” or “A Young Woman from South

Algeria.” The name of the postcard collection I work with primarily is called *Scènes et Types* (Scenes and Types), which demonstrates the colonial urge to classify and study indigenous peoples. In my work, I leave the original captions so that the viewers can reflect on the colonial biases of the images. In the exhibition, my artwork will not be accompanied with captions or titles because my purpose is to provide an experience of mystery that these postcards often provoke to the viewers. This will enable the public to give their own meanings and interpretations. Most of the colonial-era postcard images were released without names of subjects or places. However, I have named each image with an original North African name or the name of a place in North Africa in order to humanize these indigenous people and spaces. Choosing names for these people was a nostalgic experience because it reminded me of my homeland and people. A list of figures will be accessible to the audience as they enter the show.

A similar approach to names was also made by contemporary Tunisian artist Alia Derouiche Cherif, who works with orientalist iconographies to aesthetically reconstruct and create her own mixed-media style. She uses a decorative touch, collage, tile motifs, calligraphy, jewelry, and tattoos, and vintage frames to mount her images. She manipulates images to create a new world mixing provocation and devotion, nostalgia, and modernity.²⁵

Salma Ahmad Caller is a contemporary artist from the UK who also engages with colonial postcards through her cross-cultural experiences and mixed heritage. She was born in Iraq to an Egyptian father and a British mother and then moved to Nigeria and

²⁵ Nadia Zouari, “A Musk and Amber Gallery Ifriqiyettes... Alia Derouiche,” *id déco magazine*, Jan, Feb, March 2019, 37.

Saudi Arabia before she settled down in England.²⁶ Caller uses photographs, texts, drawings, and sound in a collage form. Caller wrote,

I use my process to tease out and investigate my own subjective experience of the ways in which cultures and hegemonies create and construct body image and identity and how they also profoundly construct the physical senses of the body, our sensations, carving out what we can or cannot see or feel. How cross-generational trauma and experience is a residue of the body... Collage has both a disruptive and a healing power to bring contradictions and oppositions into intimate conversation.²⁷

In her artwork: *Reclamation: Bodies of Dead Angels*, Caller tries to liberate the women on these colonial postcards by reclaiming and decolonizing her body and feelings and ultimately gives them a second life.

In 2018, Salma Ahmad Caller started to gather a group of artists, writers and poets who engage with colonial-era postcards of women. She called her project *Making the Postcard Women's Imaginarium* to reveal the generated misleading concepts behind the creation of the exotic Eastern. Caller's purpose for this is to create a meaningful space of deep understanding where diverse cultures meet and connect with the postcard women, recognizing and celebrating the individuality of each woman depicted in the postcards. *Anis al-Jalis: Someone to sit with you and ease your loneliness*, is one of her beautiful and popular pieces (**Figure 10**), "the name of a heroine slave girl in one of the Arabian Nights. She was beautiful, learned, and accomplished. The perfect companion."²⁸

²⁶ Salma Ahmad Caller, "About Salma," Salma Ahmad Caller website, accessed March 1, 2021, <https://www.salmaahmadcaller.com/about>.

²⁷ Salma Ahmad Caller website, "About Salma, Artist statement."

²⁸ Salma Ahmad Caller, email to author, April 15, 2021.



Figure 10: Salma Ahmad Caller, *Anis al-Jalis: Someone to sit with you and ease your loneliness*, 1189 X 1682 mm photograph taken using a vintage Vidicon lens 2019.
© Salma Ahmad Caller, 2019

My work is in conversation with the work of Salma Ahmad Caller and Alia Deriouche whose work connects deeply to my attempt to demystify colonial perspectives through the use of collage. Each one of us has distinctive approaches to tackling this issue but all our artworks embody a challenge to the traditional orientalist thinking and deliver it in a modern perspective. Our works depict the mystification of the oriental through an occidental lens and challenge the bias and ideology aiming to perpetuate Western hegemony.

Colonial postcards were originally used as proof that indigenous people were uncivilized and exotic. My reconstruction shows that colonizers were not civilized, but discriminatory. Measurements in the images represent the idea that Westerners were in Morocco judging the people and measuring their civility by their complicity in the

Western colonial project. Only the indigenous people who adopt Western culture and support the colonial project are seen as civilized. These images represent the way the colonizers viewed these people.

In my reconstructed image below (**Figure 5**), I manipulate the image using sand to remove certain details, allowing for fluidity of line but also referencing ancient history, time and space. I remove the identifying features of my subjects and keep their cultural markers such as headdresses, jewelry and clothing. I have selected cultural artifacts and symbols to signify collective Moroccan identity. The colonizer does not fully understand or value what these artifacts mean beyond the fact that they look exotic. I eliminate the faces and cover them with sand to show the objectifying nature of the colonial perspective and challenge the audience to be curious about the individual beyond the clothing and cultural objects. I invite the audience to ask questions about these individuals like, who were they? Were they fathers, sisters, mothers, brothers? Did they have fears or hopes? These questions reinforce the humanity of the person beyond the sand. To push the manipulation of the colonial gaze further, I added measurements and color cards which serve as a symbol of colonial stereotypes.



Figure 5: Rachid Tagoulla, *ittu*, Shifting Sands series, 32" X 44" inkjet print and 4" X 6" postcard 2021. Louisville, KY. © 2021 Rachid Tagoulla

Following the autoethnographic approach, I engage with the tools of colonization, photography and the postcard, but subvert them by creating an image through a lensless form of photography using sand. I use a scanner as my primary tool of photographic manipulation. I combine the scanner and sand to creatively manipulate the colonial postcards.

My rejection of the lens itself is representative of my rejection of colonial measurements and stereotypes. In my image-making process, I eliminate the lens of the camera in a symbolic rejection of the colonial sexualizing “lens” of indigenous North Africans. I view the camera as a weapon of dominance, a tool of colonization and

representative of the European gaze, a tool which recreates the Eurocentric violent visual regimes²⁹ and seeks the exoticism and commodification of indigenous people.

I reject the camera lens because not only was photography developed to serve the colonial project and discriminated against non-white subjects, but the camera itself was designed in a way that discriminates against non-White subjects. Color in photography does not guarantee an accurate representation of the world and there were several choices behind how photographic materials were developed.³⁰ Photographically speaking, the unhappy history of racial bias is that technologically, photography was and still is optimized for light skin, not people of color. Photochemistry was originally designed to adapt to the reflectivity of white skin tones³¹ and hence ‘Caucasians’ became a dominant market reference by Kodak, which was the main film manufacturer in North America.

She is for all practical purposes a living Shirley card, an image of a young white woman that was for years the standard photography techs used to determine “normal” skin-color balance when developing film in the lab.³²

Photographers and technicians mainly used this Shirley card between 1940-1990 when developing films in labs to assimilate their images as much as possible to the real

²⁹ Mark Sealy, *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2019), 1.

³⁰ Lorna Roth, “Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm: Colour Balance, Image Technologies, and Cognitive Equity,” *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol 34 (2009) 111-136: <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2196/3069>.

³¹ Roth, “Looking at Shirley, the Ultimate Norm.”

³² Richard Dyer, “Color Film Was Designed to Take Pictures of White People, Not People of Color: The Unfortunate History of Racial Bias in Photography (1940-1990),” *Open Culture*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.openculture.com/2018/07/color-film-was-designed-to-take-pictures-of-white-people-not-people-of-color.html>.

world and to what a human eye can consider normal.³³ At that time, it was taken for granted that science is absolute regardless of cultural or racial aspects. However, the development of film emulsion was mainly developed to serve and target a white consumer market in a segregated political scene. In fact, film emulsions could have been designed originally with more sensitivity to the darker skin tones. Today, it has been widely approved that the improvement of film emulsions has never been a problem of chemistry but the results of cultural choices.

By categorizing light skin as the norm and other skin tones as needing special corrective care, photography has altered how we interact with each other without us realizing it.³⁴

In fact, not only photography has optimized white skins over the colored ones but painting also had particular formulas written down throughout history to teach learners how to paint white skin, as the contemporary African American artist Titus Kaphar explained: “There’s literally formulas written down historically to tell me how to paint white skin, what colors I should use for the underpainting, what colors I should use for the impasto highlights, that doesn’t really exist for dark skin. It’s not a thing.”³⁵

Titus Kaphar studied the history of art and eventually had a conflict he struggled with frequently. “Our skin wasn’t considered beautiful. The picture, the world that is

³³ Syreeta McFadden, “Teaching the Camera to See My Skin: Navigating photography’s inherited bias against dark skin,” *BuzzFeed News*, April 2, 2014, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/syreetaamcfadden/teaching-the-camera-to-see-my-skin#.ywvPN9AyD>.

³⁴ Sarah Lewis, “The Racial Bias Built into Photography,” *New York Times*, April 25, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/lens/sarah-lewis-racial-bias-photography.html>.

³⁵ Titus Kaphar, “Can beauty open our hearts to difficult conversations?” *TED2020*, video 13:26, https://www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_beauty_open_our_hearts_to_difficult_conversations/transcript

represented in the history of paintings doesn't reflect me. My frequent struggle is that I loved and learned from the technique of these paintings, and yet I know that they have no concern for me."³⁶ Kaphar's paintings shed light on the relationship between colonialism and global slavery. His work speaks about inequality and racism from past to the present. People perceive his work as political or social, however he sees it as personal springing from events and stories he witnessed. Kaphar drags the viewers' attention to black, often marginalized, characters in famous classical paintings. To do so, he cuts out the surface of the paintings he reproduced or removes figures by painting over them. Kaphar stated: "... There are always multiple narratives. I'm asking the viewer to piece that whole story together without leaving behind the valuable narrative, in many cases, of those people who have been silenced over years."³⁷

Titus Kaphar uses various materials in his artistic process and the tar is one to name. In his artwork below (**Figure 16**), he is depicting a portrait of Ona Judge who was a black woman enslaved by George Washington. The painting is oil but the tar is on the skin. Kaphar believes that the tar has various symbolic meanings, and each meaning differs from each painting.

³⁶ Titus Kaphar, "Can beauty open our hearts to difficult conversations?"

³⁷ Titus Kaphar, "Painter Titus Kaphar 2018," 2018 MacArthur Fellow, video 3:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3SRX2vTwYo>.



Figure 16: Titus Kaphar, “*Ona Judge: Portrait in Tar*”. 2016. Oil on canvas. Collection of Ellen and Steve Susman. © Titus Kaphar

I take a similar approach as Kaphar in my work through the use of sand to cover the bodies of my subjects. Like Kaphar, I engage with the relationship between art and white supremacy. We are both inspired by historical images. Kaphar’s work is inspired by historical classical images and I use colonial postcards in my work.

Like Kaphar, Lalla Essaydi employs her unique perspective in her work to challenge hegemonic Western perspectives, in her case the perspective of an Eastern woman. She is a contemporary photographer who was born in Morocco and raised in a traditional Muslim home, but she lives now in the West. Her photographs reflect her new understanding of Western versus Eastern spaces and challenge the perception inherited by Western paintings towards Eastern women. Essaydi revisited the visual concept of the

Harem,³⁸ which is always portrayed in an exotic way by Western painters who actually had never been in a Harem before. Her series, *Les Femmes du Maroc*, is a famous example of Essaydi's artwork where she appropriates some of the traditional Western paintings and deconstructs them through photographs. Through this method, she exposes the Western orientalist myths. In her photographic series *Les Femmes du Maroc: Grande Odalisque* (**Figure 17**), Essaydi inspired her scene from the well-known oil painting *Grande Odalisque* by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in 1814. The woman in the painting is nude and exotic. According to Essaydi, she incorporates various elements which make the women less sexualized as she is portrayed in the original orientalist painting. In her photographs, she adds calligraphy using henna to tell the women's and her stories in the images. She says the text gives a voice to her subjects and lets the viewers engage with her artwork.

³⁸ A harem is a social space within a household for women and daughters where they have private talks and do chores and other activities.



Figure 17: Lalla Essaydi, *Les Femmes du Maroc: Grande Odalisque*, 48 x 57 7/8in chromogenic print mounted on aluminium 2008. © Lalla Essaydi

As a Moroccan photographer, Essaydi's work is very original and strong in terms of portraying Eastern women through an Eastern eye using Western imagery. Her works successfully engage with the viewers who are accustomed to explore the Eastern culture and history through a Western lens. Like my work, Essaydi's art is a re-exploration of Western visual exoticism of the East.

Ironically, in using Western imagery in our artwork, our work would still be considered exotic if displayed in an Eastern visual environment. This reality reveals the dilemma of reproducing an exotic image, even in a reconstructed form, and whether the reproduction challenges or perpetuates Western exoticism. Unlike Essaydi, I use sand to cover my subjects, rather than staging models and covering them in writing.

SAND, GEOGRAPHY AND POSTCARDS

The Photograph ceases to be univocal, flat, and uncontested indexical trace of what was, and becomes instead a complexly textured artifact (concealing many different depths) inviting the viewer to assume many possible different stand-points – both spatial and temporal – in respect to it.³⁹

Christopher Pinney

Sand has many meanings. For me, sand symbolizes my home. It can be found all over Morocco not only in the desert but also at the beach and in the mountains. It is unifying and represents the rich culture of indigenous North Africans. However, sand also represents stereotypes about North Africa. People think that North Africa is just desert, when it has a wide variety of climates and landscapes including deserts, beaches, and mountains.

I also associate sand with archeology and the tension between the preservation and loss of culture. Artifacts are preserved in sand until we dig them up later. Through sand, cultures are preserved and rediscovered which otherwise would have been lost.

I use sand to remove the identifying features of my subjects and keep their cultural markers such as headdresses, jewelry, and clothing. Rather than the objects being artifacts, I imagine the subjects as artifacts. I eliminate the faces and cover them with sand to symbolically preserve and protect the people beneath the sand from the colonial gaze. By covering the faces of the subject, I challenge the audience to be curious about

³⁹ Christopher Pinney, and Nicolas Peterson, *Photography's Other Histories*, 5.

the individual beyond the exotic clothing and cultural objects and emphasize their humanness. I invite the audience to ask questions about these individuals like, who were they? Were they fathers, sisters, mothers, brothers? Did they have fears or hopes? These questions reinforce the humanity of the person beyond the stereotype, beneath the sand.

The sand does not cover up the subject permanently. The sands are always shifting. The subjects are simply preserved, waiting for the onlooker to remove the sand and uncover the real human beneath it. Like the subject in the sand, our identities are a mixture of layers of cultures, mixed in different ways. We must be the archeologists who remove the sand and try to understand other cultures by connecting with the people, rather than being distracted by outward differences.



Figure 18: Rachid Tagoulla, *Damu*, detailed 4" X 6" postcard image from Shifting Sands series. © 2021 Rachid Tagoulla

Once the sand is removed, the postcard remains and becomes a symbol for human connection and communication. Unlike in the colonial era, the postcard in America was done in a documentary style which accurately reflected American culture and life.

Postcards became more common in 1907 after the advent of the postal service when average Americans could easily communicate with one another through the mail.⁴⁰

The American postcard was very influential in the work of Walker Evans, whose love of postcards was an inspiration for my work on postcards. Walker Evans was born in 1903 and started collecting postcards at an early age. The postcard documentary style had a clear impact on his photography endeavors. Walker Evans wrote, “My eye is interested in streets that have rows of wooden houses on them. I find them and do them. I collect them.”⁴¹ He was an obsessive postcard collector, and he owned a collection of over 9,000 postcards. Evans also had made postcard-format gelatin silver prints.⁴²

Like Walker Evans, looking at postcards was an important influence on my work. I draw inspiration from colonial postcard photographs and Walker Evan drew inspiration from American postcards. However, unlike Walker Evans, I make the postcard the primary work of art and the focal point of my exhibition. Walker Evans collected postcards which portrayed a more closely aligned representation of American life (**Figure 19**). Just as his artwork sought to show the reality of the American life, my artwork re-envisions and seeks to correct distorted images of North African life and create a corrected version of it.

⁴⁰ Liz Jobey, “Photographer Walker Evans: answers on a postcard,” *The Guardian*, February 5, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/feb/05/photographer-walker-evans-postcards>.

⁴¹ Jobey, “Photographer Walker Evans: Answers on a Postcard.”

⁴² Jeff L. Rosenheim, *Walker Evans and the Picture Postcard* (New York: Steidl and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 68.



Figure 19: Walker Evans, *Waterfront in New Orleans. French market sidewalk scene.* New Orleans, Louisiana, December 1935. Office of the Farm Security Administration. Library of Congress. Public Domain Image.

REINVISIONING THE MUSEUM AND PERFORMATIVE OUTREACH

“It is not possible to decolonize the museum without decolonizing the world.”⁴³
Ariella Aïsha Azoulay

The term ‘contact zone’ is defined by Mary Louise Pratt as the setting where the colonial and the native cultures encounter each other. Pratt refers to the contact zone to:

the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples from geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict...⁴⁴

This space of contact, according to Pratt, enables a transcultural interaction by members of colonized groups and the colonizers but occurs in a context of cross-cultural relationships of domination. It is a constant cultural contact between the dominant and the subordinate.⁴⁵ Obviously, these unbalanced transcultural encounters do not support fair interactions between the colonizers and the colonized.

⁴³ Sabrina Alli, “Ariella Aïsha Azoulay: ‘It is not possible to decolonize the museum without decolonizing the world,’” *Guernica*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.guernicamag.com/miscellaneous-files-ariella-aisha-azoulay/>.

⁴⁴ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

My exhibition creates a “contact zone” or space where colonial and native cultures encounter one another like a museum; a space for interpretation, appreciation and documentation. However, the relationships of domination are challenged, and the dark side of the museum is revealed. Museums are often viewed as spaces where people see art and learn about diverse cultures. However, museums are not neutral spaces. Museums are filled with stolen artifacts which are often the result of colonization. Museums reflect the Western desire to collect, categorize, and claim culture, even if it requires stealing artifacts from poorer countries. Because all the artifacts are removed from their original locations, locals can no longer have access to their own artifacts.

People usually go to the museum to discover the beauty of something, whether a painting or an art craft. They practice the ritual of the museum, which is appreciating and giving time to individual pieces of art or artifacts. On their way out, in the gift shop they find these same masterpieces mass produced on vernacular objects: t-shirts, mugs, bags, pencils. All visitors know that the objects in the gift shop are commodities, but they often do not think about how the pieces of art and artifacts in the museum itself are also commodities, many of which were stolen or acquired in immoral ways. As Azoulay says, “Imperial violence is not secondary to art but constitutive of it.”⁴⁶ Both the museum and the gift shop reflect the commodification of art and artifacts.

In my exhibition, the integration of the postcard rack is inspired by the fact that museums today are becoming more and more commodified. Gift shops are now very important for the museums’ annual revenue. “The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art,

⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

for instance, reaped a net \$6.1 million in store sales for the 2018 fiscal year, which was roughly 7 percent of its total revenue, according to tax filings.”⁴⁷ Today, because of decreasing public funding, museums and gift shops are even more integrated than ever. The term “museum-store” reveals a new type of museum experience that is becoming more and more common. There are retail spaces within the main museum buildings. There are now consultants who help museums decide how to display high dollar items in these new retail areas that will bring the museum more money than typical gift shop items.⁴⁸

My exhibition is a re-envisioning of the experience of Western museums today. The first artworks a visitor sees in my show are large sized images on the wall, the familiar sight upon walking into a museum. Then they see a 4 X 6- foot self-portrait metal print of the artist on the ground in the center of the space. Sand is provided to the public to enable them to experience my art-making process and move the sand around on my self-portrait.

I then display the reconstructed postcards in display cases to suggest how museums claim ownership of the art presented and display them as both artifacts and commodities. In the same way, colonizers objectified North African peoples and considered them a commodity, but also created a commodity by putting their pictures on

⁴⁷ Helena Madden, “From Shoppable Sculptures to Artsy Entrées: The World’s Best Museums Are Mixing Art and Commerce More Than Ever,” *Robb Report*, April 26, 2020, <https://robbreport.com/shelter/art-collectibles/museums-looking-beyond-gift-shops-for-revenue-2913389/>.

⁴⁸ Madden, “From Shoppable Sculptures to Artsy Entrées.”

postcards. However, rather than spreading misinformation like the colonial postcard, I hope to challenge colonial stereotypes with my postcards and commodities.

Lastly, they see the same images from the wall and in the display cases mass produced on a postcard rack. The postcard is both displayed art and commodity. Viewers will be able to pick up a postcard and write something on the back and put it in a mailbox at the exhibition to be sent out later by the artist. Stamps (**Figure 20**) featuring Uncle Sam's hat with different colored faces will be provided. Although these colored faces attempt to challenge white supremacy and promote diversity, to me the faces look like bullets because they have no distinguishing features. I chose this stamp as a reflection of American exercise of cultural and military violence of around the world in spite of American claims to be multicultural and tolerant of diversity.



Figure 20: Rachid Tagoulla, 2017 Uncle Sam's Hat Additional Ounce USPS Postage used to mail reconstructed postcards of *Shifting Sands*. © 2016 USPS, USPS.com/stamps.

Through this interactive experience, I demonstrate the relationship between art, artifacts, and commodities. I also show how colonial objectification of North Africans

continues in the form of the modern-day museum. My show experience brings attention to the role of the museums which profit from buying and selling cultural artifacts and presenting them to the public. Azoulay explains that in order to understand the role of imperialism today, we have to undo and reverse it.

To ‘unlearn’ imperialism, for Azoulay, is accordingly not simply ‘to refuse to recognize in the violent outcomes of imperialism the archival acceptability of its violence’, but to attempt to ‘reverse’, ‘rewind’ and ‘undo’ the ‘sedimented differences through which this violence is reproduced.’⁴⁹

Therefore, rather than making money from the exoticism of my culture like the pseudo-Tuareg Smurfs, I am educating the people by having them engage with colonial images in a subverted form. Exotic culture is no longer the source of entertainment. Instead, people are entertained by being educated about colonization and unequal power dynamics represented by the museum.

If the purpose of the museum is to create spaces for cross-cultural interaction and education, there are better alternatives which do not require stealing and oppression. Museums should have sister institutions in the countries from which they wish to obtain their artifacts so that artifacts can cross political borders and be shared reciprocally among cultures for educational purposes. Not only should the object be shared but also the local experts can travel with the items and provide accurate background and history of

⁴⁹ Alex Fletcher, “Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019),” Review of *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, by Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, London and New York: Verso, 656 pp., ISBN 978-1-78873-571-1.

items at conferences, workshops and in conversations with museum visitors. In this way there is a cultural exchange as well as an exchange of objects. The East and the West can come together through education and cultural exchange facilitated by the museums. From my own perspective, the best mutual understanding between nations could be undoubtedly achieved through art. Nowadays, there are huge governmental funding cuts that museums, art colleges and foundations suffer from. The government's lack of interest in a mutual relationship with non-Western countries would make this type of exchange difficult, but it is an important step in righting historical wrongs. Museums should be spaces which challenge historical oppression through creative, interactive educational experiences, which I call the performative outreach, that bring historical violence into the present.

In *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, Ariella Aïsha Azoulay invites us to imagine what would it require to rewind history, make history impossible, and “engage with the imperial violence as if it is taking place here and now.”⁵⁰ How do we unlearn imperialism and repair the world? She tells us to give up some ethical restrictions in order to unmake racism, empire, capitalism and ecological devastation. Azoulay calls attention to what she names “Imperial Shutter” which symbolizes the imperial spatial, temporal, and political regime which came to shape and structure institutions such as museums and archives as well as culture and historical discourses. Institutions deny their continuation of imperial violence and the plunder of objects, artifacts and resources.

Western museums deny native people the right to see their ancestors' objects. Azoulay provides an example of her Palestinian friend who was not allowed to enter a

⁵⁰ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 287.

museum to learn about his heritage because he was Palestinian. Azoulay noticed that experts and scholars deliberately reinforce the categories of imperial regimes. In examining photographs of slaves for instance, they see only representations of slavery rather than the stories denied when imperial history limits a person to a category of slave and therefore, push the classification of archival regimes.⁵¹ These are just some examples of ways in which museums perpetuate historical violence.

To remedy a history of violence, museums must hold themselves accountable for their violent histories and the ways in which they perpetuate that violence today.

Returning artifacts to their home countries and facilitating mutual exchanges would be a great step in recognizing their fault. In addition, exhibitions must raise awareness of historical violence in creative, interactive ways through performative outreach. My exhibition is an attempt to do just that. Rather than simply showcasing colonial images like a traditional museum, I present subverted images which challenge the way that the viewer sees the image. I bring attention to the commodification of culture and artifacts and the role of this commodification in colonialism. In my self-portrait, I reflect on the remaining influence of colonialism today on our understanding of ourselves as well as others. I consider my work to be a model for how museums might account for past wrongs and recognize the role of the past in the present.

⁵¹ Ibid., 195.

CONCLUSION

Colonial postcards perpetuated images of Northern Africa that left a deep visual heritage and bond between the East and the West which continues until the present. The “Orientalist Imaginarium,”⁵² as Salma Caller called it, is deeply rooted in the imagination of both the East and the West and it is our role as artists and researchers to engage with it and uncover the untrue stereotypes of the East which are normalized in the Orientalist Imaginarium. By using sand as material and by taking a lensless approach to manipulate colonial-era postcards, I manipulate the colonial gaze and subvert the colonial perspective of indigenous North Africans, which was discriminatory, and objectifying, and exoticizing. *Shifting Sands* is a new visual experience which brings awareness to the viewer of the colonial gaze outside us and within us so that it can be challenged. It enables the viewers to engage more with the subjects photographed and rethink the categorizations and exoticism of indigenous people and artifacts in modern Western museums.

During my MFA studies and the making of this work, I became aware of my own colonial photographic gaze inherited from the violence and oppression of European colonialism. This project pushed me to rethink and re-envision the role of artists and museums today in decolonizing, recognizing and bringing awareness to the public of the internal and external colonial gaze, whether we are Western or Eastern.

⁵² Salma Ahmad Caller, “About Salma.”

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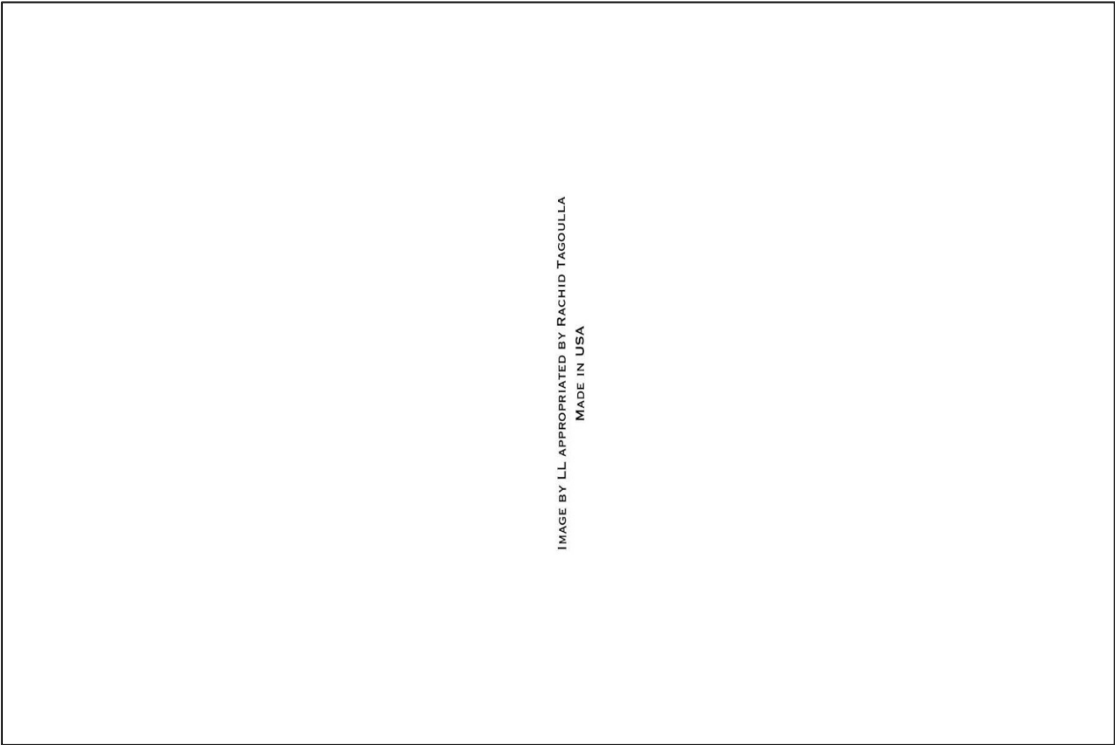
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APPENDIX: LIST OF IMAGES

- 1- *untitled 1*, back of postcards sample, 4" X 6" postcard. *Louisville, KY*. Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.
- 2- *addi*, Shifting Sands series, 32" X 44" inkjet print and 4" X 6" postcard, *Louisville, KY*. Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.
- 3- *iddr*, Shifting Sands series, 4" X 6" postcard Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.
- 4- *aiche*, Shifting Sands series, 4" X 6" postcard, *Louisville, KY*. Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.
- 5- *sultana*, Shifting Sands series, 32" X 44" inkjet print and 4" X 6" postcard, *Louisville, KY*. Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.
- 6- *untitled 2*, Shifting Sands series, 4 X 6 ft color dye sublimation print mounted on aluminum, covered by sand, *Louisville, KY* 2021. Collection of Rachid Tagoulla, 2021.



1- untitled 1, Back of postcards, 4" X 6" postcard



2- *addi*, Shifting Sands series, 32" X 44" inkjet print and 4" X 6" postcard



3- *iddr*, Shifting Sands series, 4" X 6" postcard



4- aiche, Shifting Sands series, 4" X 6" postcard



5- *sultana*, Shifting Sands series, 32" X 44" inkjet print and 4" X 6" postcard



6- *untitled 2*, Shifting Sands series, 4 X 6 ft color dye sublimation print mounted on aluminum, covered by sand

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION:

- 2018-2021 M.F.A. Studio Art & Design, University of Louisville, KY
- 2016-2017 B.A. Cinematographic & Audio-visual Screenwriting & Analysis,
University of Ibn Zohr. Agadir, Morocco
- 2005-2008 B.A. English Studies, University of Ibn Zohr. Agadir, Morocco

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

- 2019-2020 GNAS, GSC & MAGS Research Awards, University of Louisville, KY
- 2020 Commonwealth Center for the Humanities and Society Internship,
University of Louisville, KY
- 2020 International Student Tuition Support, International Student and Scholar
Services, University of Louisville, KY
- 2019-2021 Graduate Teaching Assistantship, University of Louisville, KY
- 2018-2019 Graduate Research Assistantship, University of Louisville, KY
- 2019 Hite Art Institute Travel grant for Morocco Study Abroad Project,
University of Louisville, KY
- 2017-2018 Fulbright Scholarship, IIE, University of Louisville, KY
- 2013 3rd Prize, "Al Arabi" Magazine photography contest, Kuwait
- 2012 Finalist for "Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports", USA
embassy, Rabat, Morocco.

- 2008 1st Prize, Ibn Zohr University photo contest, Agadir, Morocco
- 2005 1st Prize, Igoudar for the Cultural Exchanges, Agadir, Morocco

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

- 2019-2021 Studio Art and Visual Culture Instructor of Record, University of Louisville, KY
- 2019 Visiting artist, Conductor of photography workshops for university students, University of Ibn Zohr, Agadir, Morocco.
- 2019 Photography juror, LEO Magazine, Louisville, KY
- 2018-2020 Hite Art Morocco Study Abroad Program Coordinator, Hite Art Institute, University of Louisville, KY
- 2017-2018 Fulbright Teaching Assistantship, University of Louisville, KY
- 2013 Youth photography project instructor, Conductor of photography project for young adults, Moers, Germany
- 2009-2018 EFLT at Ministry of Education, Zagora, Agadir, Morocco
- 2008-2012 Photographer, Video Editor, Cameraman and Steadicam Operator, RGB Frames Audio-visual Company, Agadir, Morocco.

CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE:

- 2021 *The Anthropocene Epoch*, Schneider Hall Galleries, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, US
- 2019-2020 *Morocco, Many Eyes, One Vision*, MFA Gallery/ Wayside Expressions Gallery, Louisville, KY, US
- 2012-2016 Curatorial assistant and gallery coordinator at ClubPhoto d'Agadir, Morocco

RESIDENCIES:

- 2021 Collider Artist-in-residency Program, Louisville Public free Library, Louisville, KY, US
- 2013 Bollwerk 107 Artist-in-Residency, Moers, Germany

INTERNSHIPS:

- 2021-2022 Artisan Alley, Bloomington, IN
- 2021 IDEAS xLab, Louisville, KY
- 2020 Photograph Archive Collection. The Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY
- 2018-2020 The Louisville Conference On Literature & Culture Since 1900, University of Louisville, KY

MEDIA:

- 2020 The Filson. A publication of The Filson Historical Society, Vol 20, N2, Summer 2020, Louisville, KY
- 2020 Bidwell Art Library Graduate Research Spotlight, University of Louisville, KY
- 2019 Arts et Communication Masters, visiting artist, University of Ibn Zohr, Agadir, Morocco
- 2019 UofL magazine, News and Notes, Summer 2019
- 2019 Artabella Louisville Visual Art, Radio Interview on ArtxFM WXOX 97.1, Louisville, KY
- 2019 *Morocco, Many Eyes, One Vision!* Louisville Photo Biennial, University of Louisville & Wayside Expressions Gallery, Louisville, KY
- 2019 2019 Optimal Aging Conference, The Brown Hotel, Louisville, KY
- 2018 Marokko-Deutschland, Begegnung, Austausch, Entwicklung, Artist feature, Berlin, Germany
- 2017-2019 The Louisville Conference On Literature & Culture Since 1900 Photographs by Rachid Tagoulla. University of Louisville, KY
- 2017-2018 Rachid Tagoulla, guest lecture at the University of Louisville, Louisville, KY
- 2017 AfroShoot, An Afrikan vision of the world through the lens, Artist feature, Cambridge, United Kingdom
- 2017 “UofL Today with Mark Hebert” interview with Mark Hebert, ESPN Radio HQ, Metro TV and KET KY
- 2016 Timatarin Magazine, Artist feature, Agadir, Morocco

- 2011 9th International Exhibition of Photographic Art and 4th International Exhibition Photo-phyllles, Club photo Espoir Pessacais et le Jardin Botanique de Bordeaux. France
- 2014-2016 “Voices” IATEFL Bi-Monthly Newsletter, A photo journal, photographs and text by Rachid Tagoulla, United Kingdom

PRESENTATIONS

- 2020 Graduate Student Regional Research Conference presentation (GSRRC), University of Louisville, KY
- 2020 Multicultural Association of Graduate Students (MAGS) Research Award Symposium, University of Louisville, KY
- 2019 Visiting artist, Conductor of photography workshops for university students, University of Ibn Zohr, Agadir, Morocco.
- 2018 Hite Art Institute presentation, University of Louisville, KY

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

- May 2021 MFA group show, Cressman Center for visual Arts. Louisville, KY, US
- April 2021 *Shifting Sands* (MFA thesis exhibition), University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, US
- Feb 2020 *Time Identity*, MFA gallery. University of Louisville, Louisville, KY, US
- Oct 2019 *Lensless*, Cressman Center for visual Arts. Louisville, KY, US
- Nov 2018 MFA Inaugural Exhibition, MFA gallery, University of Louisville, KY, US
- May 2018 *Bridged Narratives II*, Katakata Gallery, Brixton, London, United Kingdom
- Apr 2018 4th NYFA, North African Women’s Perspectives, Laguardia Performing Arts Center, NY, US
- Mar 2018 *It's Your World- Art About the Future of Community*, 1619 Flux: Art+ Activism, Louisville, KY, US
- Oct 2017 *BODIES of the EARTH*, CAS, Centre of African Studies, Cambridge, United Kingdom

- May 2017 10th International Exhibition of Photographic Art, Clubphoto d'Agadir, Agadir, Morocco
- Feb 2016 Photographic Exhibition, Municipal Museum of Amazigh heritage, Agadir, Morocco
- July 2015 *Regards Croisées*. Municipal Museum of Amazigh heritage, Agadir, Morocco
- May 2014 *Portrait, Landscape*, 9th International Exhibition of Photographic Art, Clubphoto d'Agadir, Agadir, Morocco.
- Jun 2014 *Deux photographes, deux regards* Rachid Tagoulla and Rachid Ridouani, Agadir, Morocco
- Mar 2013 *Nomades d'Ici, Nomades d'ailleurs- déclin, survie, disparition, adaptation, Les Hauts-de-Saint-Aubin*, Angers, France
- May 2012 *Water*, 8th International Exhibition of Photographic Art, Clubphoto d'Agadir, Morocco
- Mar 2012 *Around the valleys*, Rachid Tagoulla and Sophie Ummad. Tiznit, Morocco
- Mar 2011 Club PHOTO-CIRKEL Exhibition. Der Galerie der Stadtbuecherei Oberursel am Marktplatz, Frankfurt, Germany
- Feb/Mar 2011 9th International Exhibition of Photographic Art and 4th International Exhibition Photo-phylles, Club photo Espoir Pessacais et le Jardin Botanique de Bordeaux. France
- May 2011 *Architecture... Identity*, ClubPhoto d'Agadir Exhibition, Agadir, Morocco.
- Apr 2010 *Small or Big, Human or Animal*, 7th International Exhibition of Photographic Art, Morocco
- April 2009 Regional Pedagogical Center, Inzgame, Morocco
- Jun 2008 1st Photographic Exhibition, University of Ibn Zohr. Agadir, Morocco

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS AND VOLUNTEERING

Society of Photographic Education (SPE) Member

University of Louisville Graduate Student Council Senator Proxy and Fine Arts Representative

University of Louisville Graduate Student Ambassador

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Member
ClubPhoto d'Agadir Member & volunteer
Louisville Photo Biennial Volunteer
Louisville Visual Art Volunteer
Artisan Alley, Bloomington IN Volunteer

Languages:

Tamazight (mother tongue)
Modern Standard Arabic (Fluent)
French (Fluent)
English (Fluent)