

SEE ONESELF TO BELIEVE IN ONESELF

by Céline Fion

Acceptance of self, therapy of exile... More and more psys are inspired by the Anglo-Saxon techniques of PhotoTherapy. When representation repairs reality.

In appearance, the Diep expo Insight-Deep inside, presented last August in Dieppe and now visible in England, in Newhaven ^(*), appears to be more conventional. The black and white portraits represent men and women, sometimes pensive, sometimes determined, in a French campaign setting. All have one thing in common: they are Asylum seekers and participated in a Phototherapy workshop to reflect on the concept of exile. At the inauguration, they are also there to confront themselves to their analogic representation... «I wanted to spend time with them and, if possible, heal things through the workshop», summarizes Émilie Danchin, who signs this series. For many years, this Brussels-based adoption photographer and therapist, teaches this therapeutic technique, already well developed in the United States, much less here in Belgium. It places people in front of the goal, makes them comment images, sometimes even invites them to capture moments of reality with a target: to repair. «With a photograph, we cross the real and imaginary body, decrypts the artist and therapist. This triggers a relaxation, harmonizes the affects.» During one week, the refugee group worked on the realization of the exhibition. «They started with a portrait that they had on them, often taken at the

prefecture and on which one can read the anguish, describes an animatrice of the Center that accompanied the project. Émilie asked them to put them in an image they could invent, which they have drawn. Starting from there, we sought out places that could serve as a setting, and finally take a picture.» The photographic result, Émilie Danchin associates it with a «certificate of authenticity». For her, «a picture is like cutting a piece of the real. Even if it is known that to be rigged, it is universally accepted that what one sees is true. We have a proof that this has existed. All what happens at the emotional level is recorded. At the workshop, I told them, «You will put something in the image that you need. We will make it happen in the picture and you will have found it.»» Those are often good memories of life before the imposed flight which is immortalized: victory in a match for a distant professional footballer in the field, family afternoons in the Kabyle mountains, the Chechen forests, preparing a joyful meal in Syria...

AN EMOTIONAL MIRROR

«Resilience is about survival. What we know less is that when we are in survival, we can not swallow all negative emotions, decrypts Émilie Danchin. As soon as that calm comes after the storm, everything has to be learned and we have to start exist by realizing everything that has happened. Go find the good memories of the past, and put them here in the landscape, it is very important to be able to plan a life from now on.» A forty-year-old has held to face. Her gaze grabs the lens. Standing before this illustra-

TUMOR & SELFIES

In 2013, Pascale Darson is diagnosed with breast cancer. After having experienced the benefits of photography during the treatment phase, she plans to share with others.

How was photography linked to the disease?

I had this passion being young and this episode of my life really did reconnect me to my creativity. Cancer made me want to tell my story. It allowed me to take an active part in what was happening, to generate a link between me and others, between me and my story.

How did you use this media?

I kept my logbook. My device has become my dou-dou, it accompanied me everywhere. I have boxed the examination rooms, MRIs, Operations, the moments when my darling was shearing my hair that I lost... I was staging myself in self-portraits. You are at a time when your image escapes you, you start to lose weight or to grow. There's a loss benchmarks and control. Staging and choosing what to do to show oneself is a way of reappropriating events.

And today ?

I no longer have the same need, for I have come out of this tunnel; I am in the process of setting up an accompanying activity in this direction. This is important for me. Let me make people realize that they have that potential, I want to be in the transmission. It takes a little time and I do not want to stick to my past. I do not want to be a breast cancer specialist. I believe that the Photography can be a support for any difficult passage.

tion of herself, she explains: «This is the fact that I have to turn my back to the past, because I felt I was a prisoner.» Without emphasizing the voice, she uses strong words to describe her thoughts: «My life has changed after that exercise. There was a click. When I left my country, I was 40 years old, I had knowledge and friends on whom to rely. When you arrive at a place where you know nobody, you don't know how to begin a relationship, and people are reluctant. It hurt me a lot. But after this photographic experience, I understood that to feel sorry for this creates problems. This visual has soothed my heart.» A few steps away, a familiar gesture in a world saturated with selfies and other views, one of the participants shows the group her baby's snapshots everywhere, thanks to her smartphone. «The difference between thousands of representations of newborn and those that can be used in phototherapy is that of his phone, he does not really look at them, decrypts the Belgian therapist. However, even a small portrait identity picture can make it and we can talk about it during hours. It is a media that is like a hyper-emotional mirror, very deep, which will change our point of view.» (...)