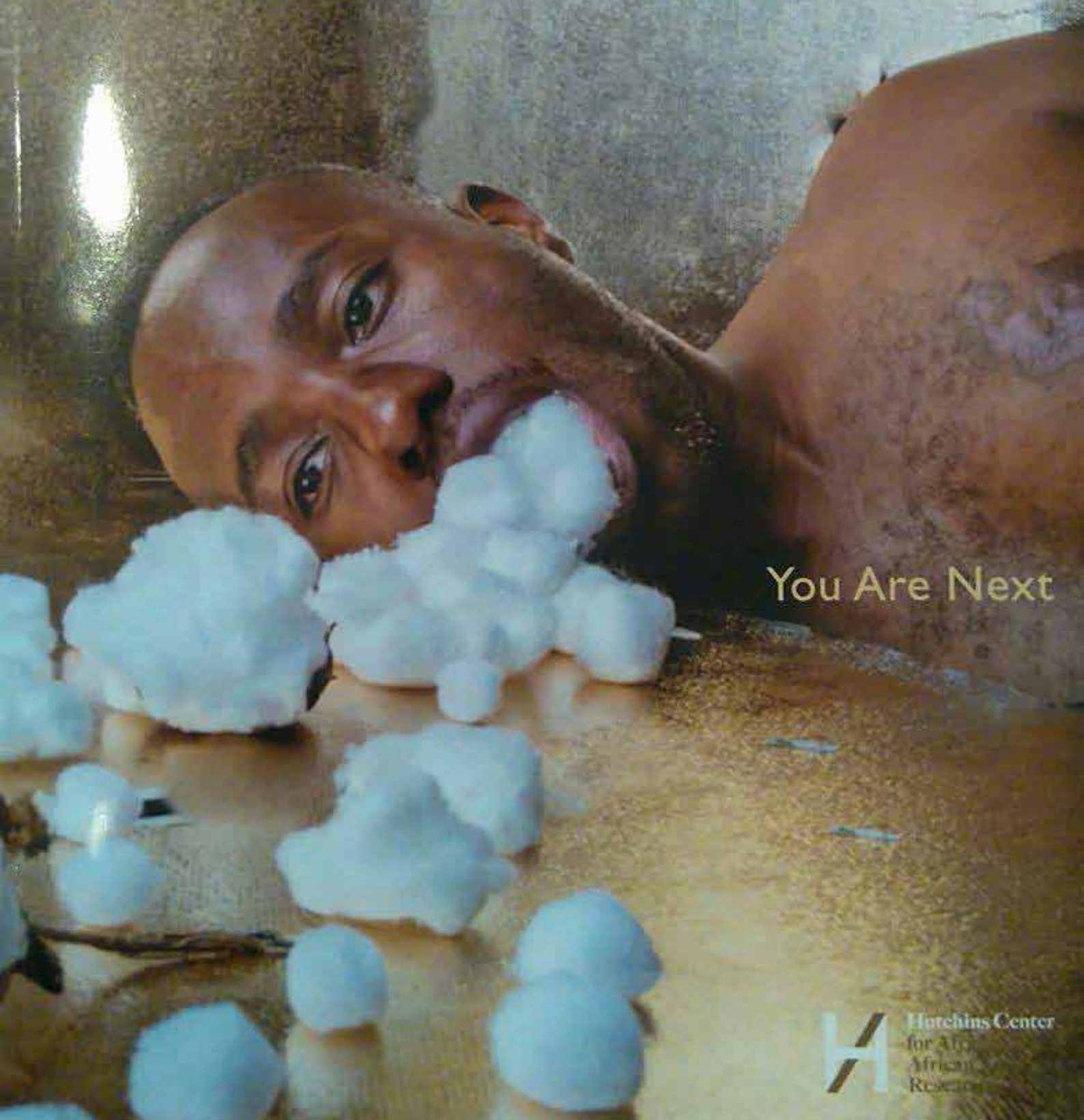


TRANSITION

The Magazine of Africa and the Diaspora 120



You Are Next

Leila Alaoui

in memoriam

Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw

THE PHOTOGRAPHER AND video artist Leila Alaoui was just thirty-three years old when she became a victim of the January 15, 2016 terrorist attack on the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. She was one of thirty people to die that day when members of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Mourabitoun opened fire on diners in the hotel's restaurant. At the time of the attack, Alaoui was working with Amnesty International, photographing the lives of women in the developing world as a way to help advocate for universal sexual and reproductive rights.

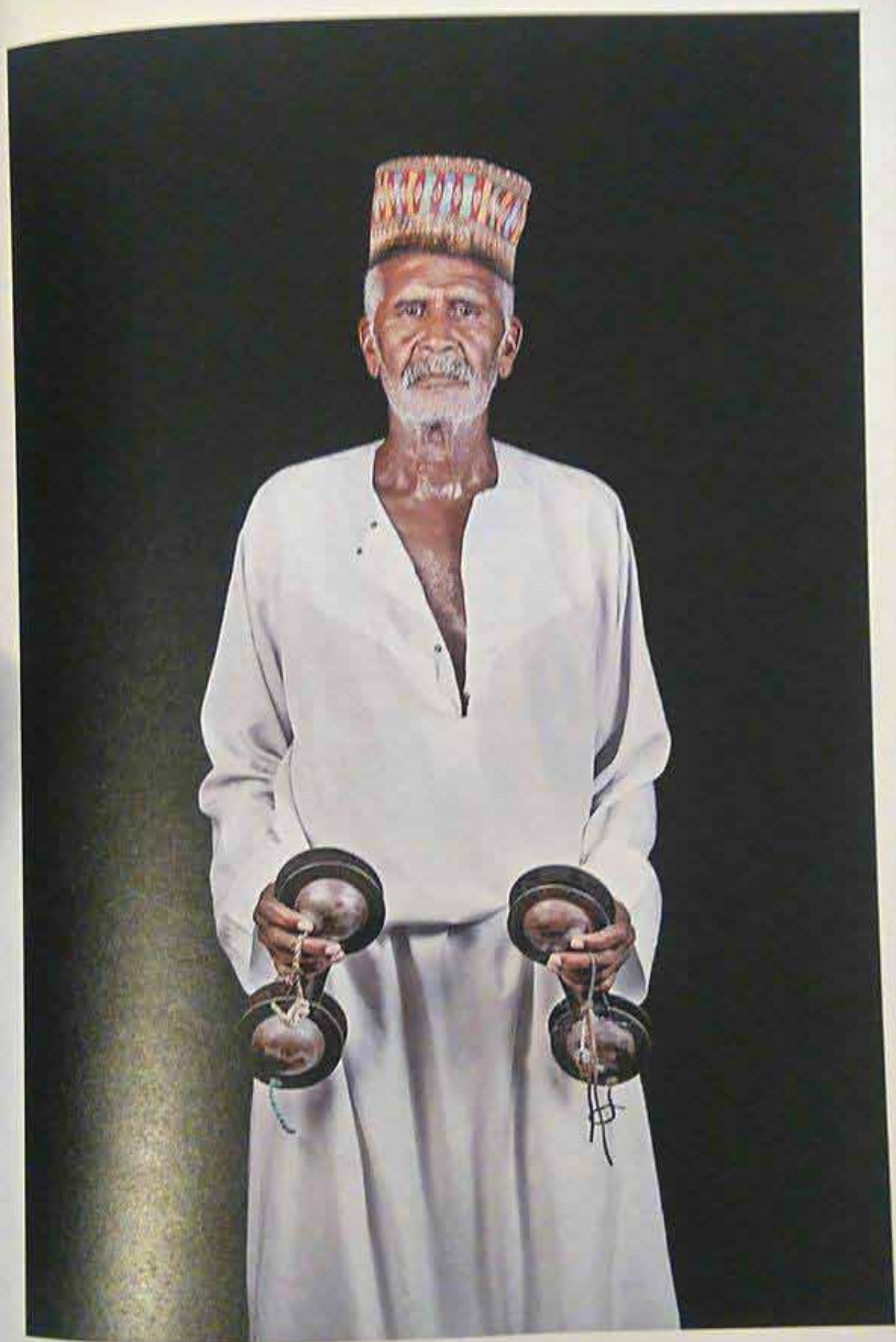
Of mixed French and Moroccan parentage, Leila Alaoui was born in Paris, raised in Marrakech, and studied photography and anthropology at the City University of New York. Her artistic practice was mainly concerned with recording and illuminating the lives of people in Morocco and other parts of North Africa, both in their home countries and throughout the Diaspora. *L'Île du Diable*, a single channel video, examined the lives of dispossessed, immigrant factory workers outside of Paris. A three-channel video, *Crossings*, focused on the plight of sub-Saharan African migrants who endure increasingly perilous conditions to reach what Alaoui characterized on her personal website as the "problematic utopia of Europe."

The photographic series *The Moroccans* may prove to be the artist's most enduring legacy. It is a series of bold color photographs of contemporary Moroccan men and women, dressed in various styles of traditional Berber and Arab garb, and posed in front of a plain black background. Each sitter confronts the camera head-on, fully in control of their own representation, commanding the gaze of the viewer. Some hold objects or animals. Others clutch at a fold of clothing or casually fold their arms. Alaoui allows all of her Moroccans a moment of photographic depiction that is characterized by great personal presence and dignity. We see each of them for who they are, an individual member of a larger cultural whole. Tragically, it was the utter lack of respect for the importance of human life and individual dignity, so present in these works, that ended Alaoui's life and arrested a promising career prematurely.



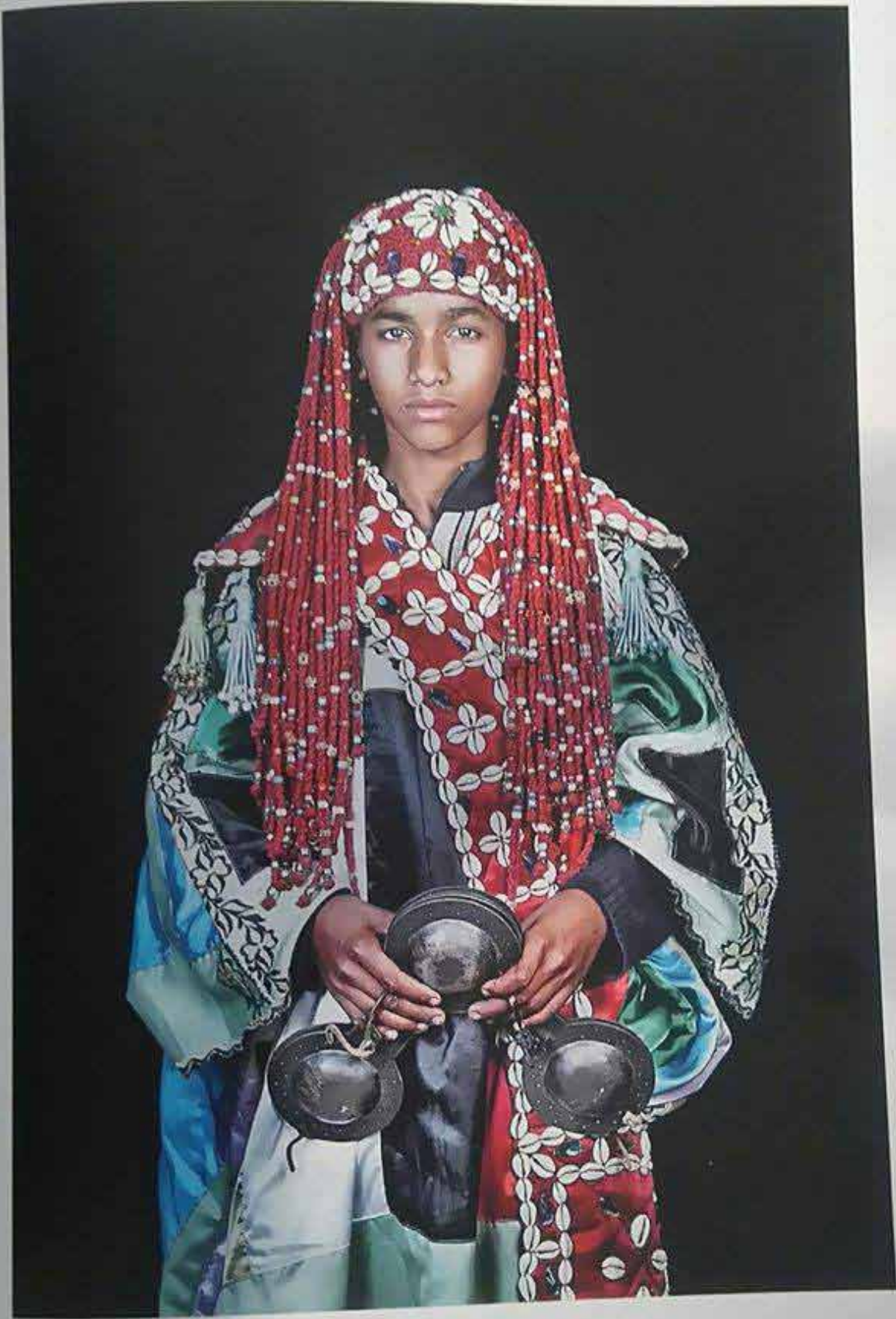
**Khamlia, Sud
du Maroc #**

1. Digital print
on baryta paper.
150 × 100 cm.
©2014 Leila
Alaoui. Image
courtesy of the
artist's estate
and Voice Gal-
lery, Marrakech.



**Place Jemaa
El Fnaa #5,
Marrakech.**

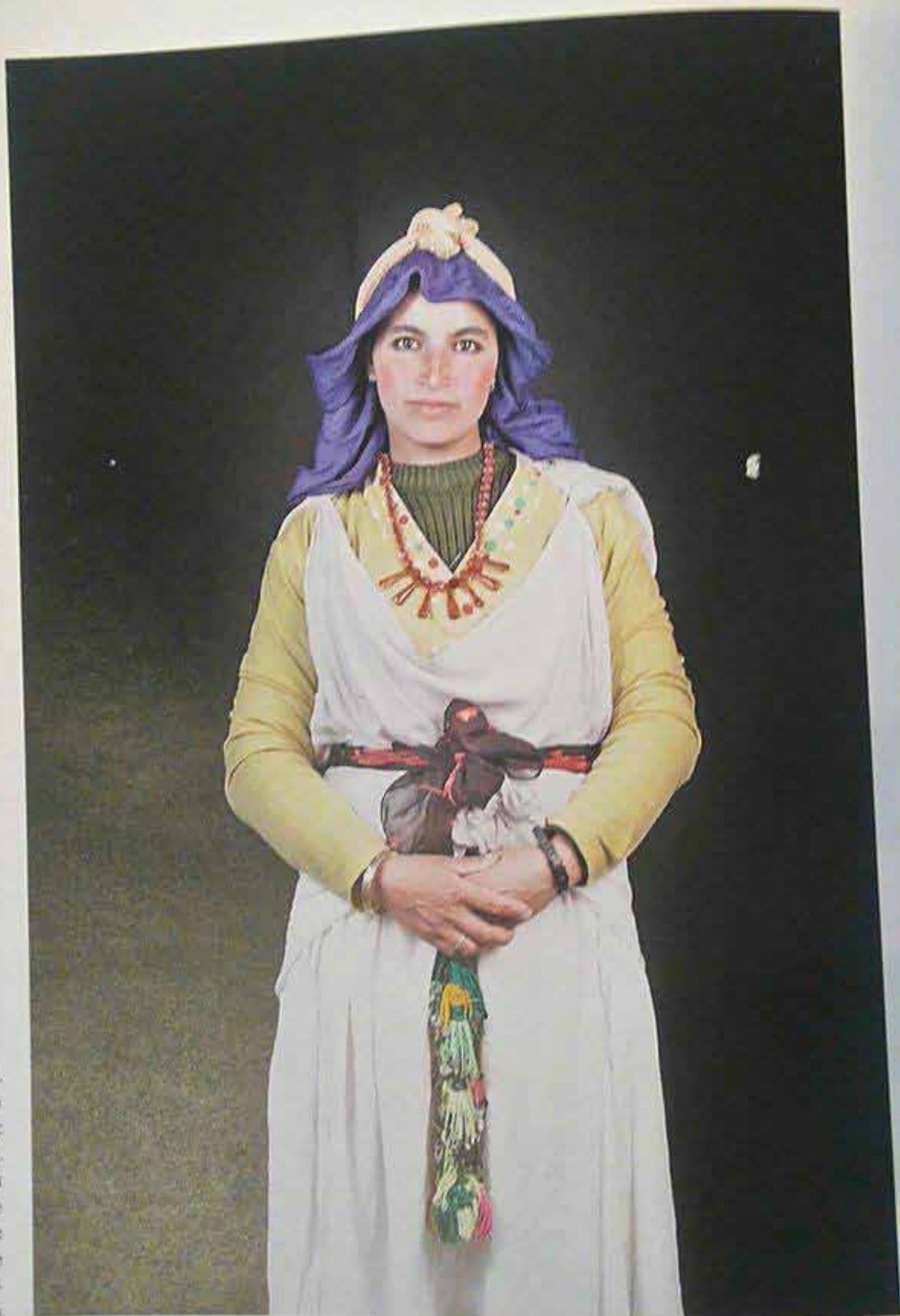
Digital print on
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Tamesloht.
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**Chefchaoun,
Nord du
Maroc.** Digital
print on baryta
paper. 150 x
100 cm. ©2010
Leila Alaoui. Im-
age courtesy of
the artist's estate
and Voice Gal-
lery, Marrakech.



Ait Hani #2.

Digital print on
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