

# Aesthetica

## Shared Portraits

**RANIA MATAR: WHERE DO I GO?**  
 Robert Klein, Boston | Until 19 September  
[robertkleingallery.com](http://robertkleingallery.com)

Last year was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). As the milestone passes, the country is still feeling its lasting consequences, whilst grappling with economic crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, Beirut Port Explosion and, in recent months, further escalating conflict. In *Where Do I Go?*, photographer Rania Matar collaborates with women from the region, making portraits that visualise their stories, which are often shaped by the difficult question of whether to stay or go.

Matar sees her younger self in the people she photographs. As a Lebanese-born, American-Palestinian woman, the artist's cultural background and life experience continually informs her work. She was 20 when she left Lebanon in 1984 to study in the USA, and was part of the largest wave of emigration up to that point. "Many find themselves at that same juncture," she reflects.

The series evolved from seeing graffiti on a wall that said, in Arabic, "Where Do I Go?". Since then, the project has grown to involve more collaborators, who each tell a different story: some of communities, some of land, others of architecture. "They climb on rocks and trees, jump fully dressed into dirty water and waterfalls, crawl under thorns, trespass into abandoned buildings ... Just like living in Lebanon, we embrace the element of risk-taking and danger. It is part of who we are. It's in our DNA." For Matar, every picture is a shared act of authorship, and it's this methodology – rooted in agency – that makes these images so very successful. "They are my love letters to the women of Lebanon – those who stayed, and those who left but can never leave."



Tamara (With a Camera Obscura Reflection of Bujj El Murr Tower), Beirut, Lebanon, 2025 archival pigment prints, 25 1/4" x 30" - Edition of 8 © Rania Matar / Courtesy of Robert Klein Gallery