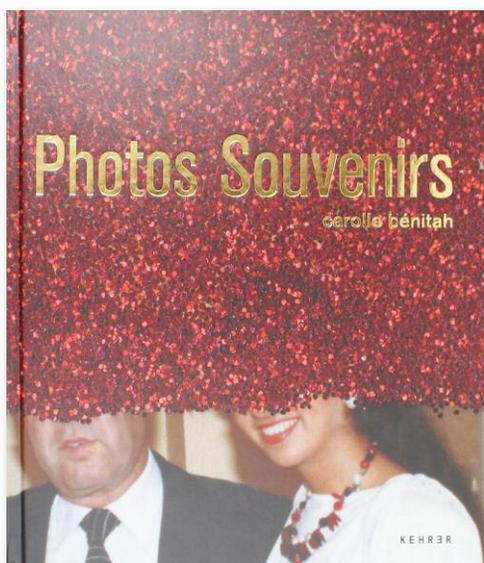




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NEW RELEASE

**Carolle Bénitah**

## Photos Souvenirs

Text by Carolle Bénitah

Designed by Carolle Bénitah, Julien Levy

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53 color ill.

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### Multilayered transformation of a personal archive by using needlework: cutting, embroidery, and beading

Carolle Bénitah, who worked for ten years as a fashion designer before turning to photography in 2001, incorporates the art of sewing and beading into her photographs.

The series *Photos Souvenirs* explores the memories of her Moroccan childhood and adolescence by reworking and threading old family snapshots. In what the artist describes as »excavations,« photos are unearthed from albums and shoeboxes, classified, scanned, transposed onto new paper, and finally hand beaded and embroidered by the artist. This final step, accomplished with red, black, or gold thread and wire and glass beads – chosen for their shine and delicacy – is a revelatory act for the artist:

*» I look into my own history, sometimes from a distance of 40 years and with experience that modifies my perception of the events. A human being's past, as opposed to the remains of some ancient temple, is neither permanent nor complete, but reconstituted by the present. With that in mind, I begin the needlework: embroidery and beading.*

*Embroidery is a uniquely feminine activity. In the past, the embroiderer was a paragon of virtue. Embroidery and waiting were also intertwined: women embroidered while waiting for their men to return home. Embroidery occupied a real place in the environment I grew up in. Girls from good families were taught to sew and embroider. It is the activity of perfect women. My mother embroidered her trousseau.*

*There is nothing subversive about embroidering, but I corrupt it through my intentions. I use its falsely decorative artifices to rein-*

*terpret my history and to denounce its failings. The two activities come together in a form of protest, embroidery—a sign of proper upbringing for a housewife—and the discourse I denounce did not make me what I was supposed to be: a good girl, a perfect wife, and a loving mother.*

*To embroider my photograph, I make holes in the paper. With each stitch, I stick the needle through the paper. Each hole is a putting to death of my demons. It is like an exorcism. I stab the paper until I don't hurt anymore.*

*Each photograph tells its story. Each photograph lifts the veil from the past. It is a story of revelation. It is work related to emotions. I tell my story about little red riding hood. It is the story of a little girl swallowed by the wolf. Here we are surrounded by stories of transgression, by hemmed in paths not to be overstepped, by disobedience.«*

**Carolle Bénitah's** work is part of notable public and private art collections, such as the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Among other venues, *Photos Souvenirs* was exhibited at Rose Gallery, Santa Monica, in 2015. Bénitah lives in Marseille, France.

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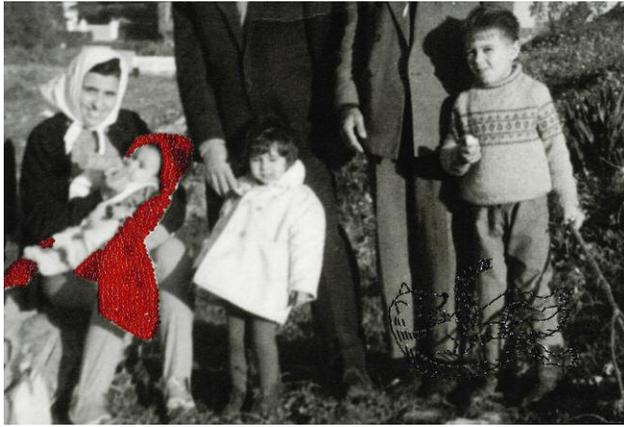
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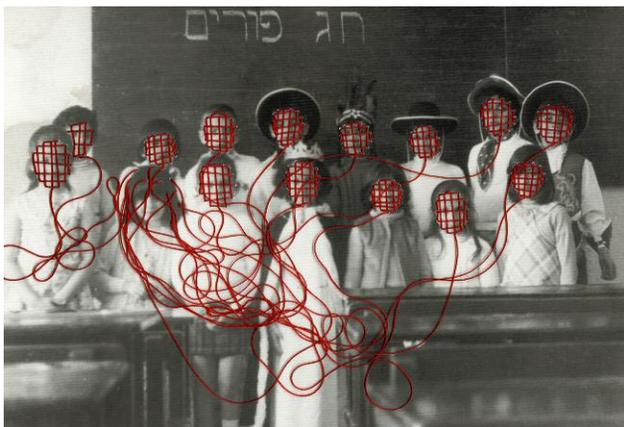
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