



Maidames

Chaza Charafeddine, 2017-2018

“Maidames” is about the interplay between reality and fantasy within the power relationship of female migrant domestic worker and her female employer. It is about the identification of the disempowered with the powerful as an act of transformation of self. This act manifests itself in the adoption of the aesthetic elements characterising the powerful. By embellishing herself with the attributes of power, the maid in her fantasy becomes the Madame. The moment of transformation is also a moment in which she feels the serenity and gravity of holding power as she wears the string of pearls and the silk dress. The beauty of the pose as reflected in the image she can see of her-self, suggests for a second that she too has the ability to be a Madame. The Madame, observing the scene, and irritated for a second, may think – oh my, is this scandalous? Then spots the colour of the skin in the image, and: too dark for a real Madame – she thinks.

Dorothee Klaus

Without disregarding in any way, the abusive and exploitative employment conditions of domestic workers in Lebanon, I have been interested in those relationships between maid and madam which are characterised by a more caring attitude of the female employer toward the domestic worker. I have been held by the observation that many female domestic workers start over time resembling their female employers. This seems to be happening in environments where maids consider themselves to be treated comparatively well – and where they are given some space to develop. They may internalize the traits and behaviors, even the aesthetic tastes of their madams. If their madam is a good cook, they aspire to become good cooks. If she is well organized, so will they be; if she favors minimalist or baroque style, so will they. However, as this transformation of the maid unfolds, and as she increasingly adopts habits and attributes of wealth and power, this process triggers questions: how far can the boundaries – or the fine differences – that separate maid and madam be pushed?

It is in the context of this complex and disturbing relationship that these pictures were created.

This project is dedicated to all migrant workers who raise our children, cook our food, clean our dirt, assist our elderly, and take care of our general well-being. To these brave women who do their best to learn our difficult language, to understand our social codes and traditions much quicker than we could ever understand theirs; to these women who left their families, their homes, their way of life, to make sure that their children will have a better life than their own. To those who endure daily discrimination, who are forced to swallow insults and stand the burden of being black or dark-skinned in racist societies like ours. To those among them who are abused, sexually or otherwise, while they practice their chores. To the woman whose gaze tells me every day: “How lucky you are, not to be me”.

Chaza Charafeddine



All photographs are printed with archival ink on Hahnemühle Photo Rag® Pearl 320 gsm 100% Cotton, mounted on dibond and framed with UV Filter glass



Melanie, 55x80 cm



Nadine, 55x80 cm



Ruby With Oud, 55x80 cm



Miss Vera, 55x80 cm



Judith, 55x80 cm



KuMaria, 80x55 cm



Nadine with Flowers, 80 X 50 cm



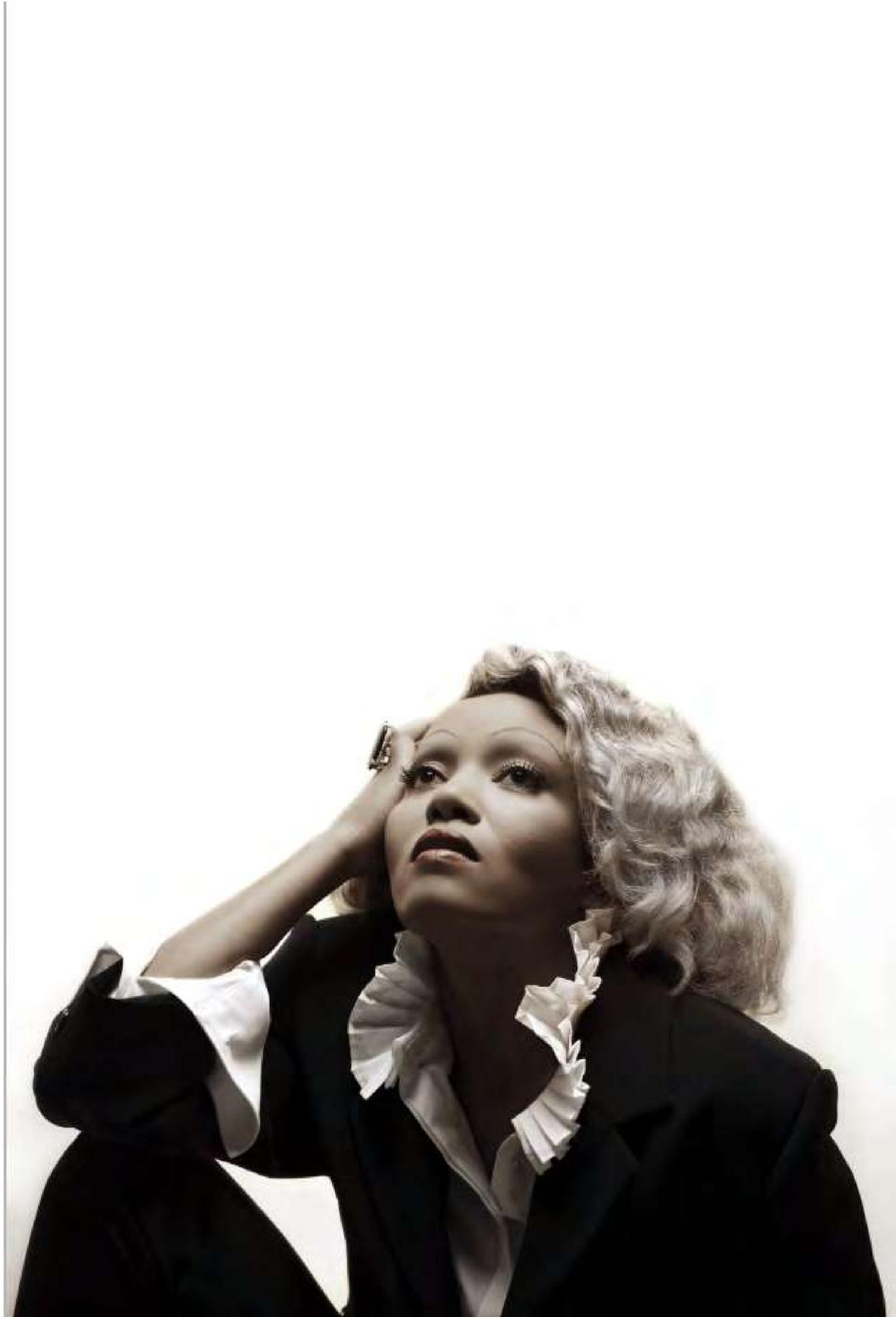
Mahalit, 70x50



Hanna In White, 70x50 cm



Melanie With White Fur, 80x55 cm



Bruktayt in Black, 80x55cm



Vera In Red, 55x80cm



Kumari, 70x50cm



Bruktayt With Hat And Cigarette, 100x70 cm



Nilou, 100x70 cm



Ruby With Hat, 80x55 cm



Bruktayt, 80x55cm



Mahalit With Tattoo, 80x55 cm



Hana Lielit, 80x70 cm

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