

LEILA ALAOU

Crossings

Video installation, 6'20"

2013

Crossings explores the experience of sub-Saharan migrants who embark on the perilous journey to reach the elusive shores of Europe. The three-screen video installation focuses on the collective trauma provoked by the embodied experience of crossing boundaries and becoming a fragile community in a new habitat. While exploring the experiential textures of psychological and physical transition, the installation also gestures towards the concept of Europe as a problematic utopia in the African imagination.

Following weeks of research as a participant observer among migrant communities in Morocco, I nurtured the idea of an immersive audiovisual experience through which to share personal stories of migration and re-enact the disturbing sensations of the journey. Coming from a documentary photography background I was interested in the capacity of contemporary video art to explore the boundaries of traditional storytelling while avoiding clichés of victimization.

Filmed from the imaginary viewpoint of the migrants, "Crossings" incorporates fragments of reality among reconstructed fictional images and sound effects derived from true narratives. The result is a three-screen video installation combining harrowing voiceovers, static portraits of migrants and aesthetic video landscapes.