

IWALEWAHAUS

Press release

Stand: 2021-07-23

The Migration of Djinn

Chapter One: Codes of Conduct

Artist Talk & Exhibition

29.07.2021 // 19:00

Live Streaming Zoom & FB

Zoom_link

<https://uni->

[bayreuth.zoom.us/j/92200520839?pwd=VTUyQ0U3YUhXTlZvZ0FsUVJqeW1QZz09](https://uni-bayreuth.zoom.us/j/92200520839?pwd=VTUyQ0U3YUhXTlZvZ0FsUVJqeW1QZz09)



The language of the announcement corresponds to the language of the event (Die Sprache der Ankündigung entspricht der Sprache der Veranstaltung)

Text by: Sumeja Tulic

Bayreuth. One buys a bed, lays down a carpet, unzips the suitcase, hangs a clock, and eventually opens the window to the street, which from then on will be called “my street.” With few variations and much more minutiae, the immigrant begins the process of settling into the new home. This new home will be tasked with providing shelter and protection. It is where the most intimate aspects of life will take place: dreaming, remembering, and narrating.

Emphasizing the complexities of this immigrant experience, in *The Migration of Djinn – Chapter One: Codes of Conduct*, Btihal Remli (b. 1987, Germany) works with intimate spaces and rituals. She combines images of domestic, private space and handwritten text to scrutinize the belief in *djinn* in the Maghreb-Muslim communities of Germany.

The series consists of self-portraits showing Remli dressed in a trench coat, a Western sartorial choice, which Remli describes as “second skin” that the immigrant puts on in order to adapt. “What’s beneath the coat stays the same, just even more hidden,” she explains.



Btihal Remli, Always Say Assalama Alaykoum when you Enter Somewhere, Bayreuth, Germany, 2021
© Btihal Remli

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Remli's self-portraits are set in a domestic place, where she is seemingly transgressing instructions relayed by elders of her community.

“Don't pour hot water into the sink after sunset, or you could anger the djinn.”

“Turn around mirrors before you go to bed, or shaytan will watch you sleep.”

“Don't use the word djinn at home, or you could summon them.”

The instructions themselves are written out by hand along the narrow margin of each image. Some of these prohibitions stated in the vernacular Arabic dialect of the Maghreb region and handwritten in Arabic script by Remli's mother are also presented as neon signs.

The belief in *djinn* is essential to the Islamic faith. Djinn are described as creatures made out of smokeless fire, taking animal or human form while having neither inherently bad nor good qualities. According to Islamic texts, djinn are able to possess humans and control their behavior. Fits of anger, seizures, speaking in tongues, physical and mental illness, and even social misfortunes are said to be the workings of the djinn.

Although some of the Moroccan immigrants Remli spoke to defined their belief in *djinn* as superstitious, all of them adhered to the guidelines protecting them against the *djinn*. The implications of such belief have far reaching consequences, which Remli is quick to point out. A research paper she found while working on the project identified that a group of psychiatric patients in the Netherlands, all of whom were Muslims from Magreb, attributed hallucinations and similar sufferings to the workings of *djinn*.

The seriousness of the subject matter is duly reflected in Remli's photograph. The stoic expression of her face is not of defiance or disbelief but one of studious anticipation: *What will happen next?*

In cooperation with:



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The Iwalewahauss is part of the University of Bayreuth and is dedicated to contemporary artworks of visual and popular art from Africa, the African diaspora, Asia and the Pacific region. The Iwalewahauss collection includes over 12,000 works of art. It is the largest collection of contemporary African art in Europe. Exhibitions, lectures, films, conferences, parties, artist talks, artist residencies and workshops take place on 2,300m² (office space as well as exhibition and archive space).

Literally translated, Iwalewa means "character is beauty". Iwalewa is a Yoruba proverb spoken by one of the three major cultural groups in southwestern Nigeria.