

Maria, una historia de amor

«Maria, A Love Story» is about the impact the birth of my daughter Zelig, now 3 years old, has had on the life of my neighbour Maria, a 76 year old widow.

Adapting to the new social context of the last decades, the classic idea of "Family" as an institution is being modified. The typical family made up of a mother and a father with various children and an extended, cross generational family, is being displaced. In today's industrialized societies there is an increasing number of single-parent families with no extended family living close by, which is my case. Like many other young, single, parents, I depend on my friends and neighbours for support. An "open door" policy allows for new and different family frameworks to form which adapt directly to need and circumstance. With this body of work, I explore one such relationship. Taking into account also the traditional and religious connotation of the name of Maria - which is that of my neighbor - and my own questions and secrecy around the theme of motherhood.

An intergenerational story is recreated from the use of archive photos and those of the present where different mother tongues are articulated in unison to redefine the notion of motherhood from our own experiences.

This love story was born from the need to understand and position myself in a confusing vital moment. This project is carried out by several hands, those of Zelig, Maria, my friends who have helped me in every sense of the word to overcome this streak.



Prenière échographie. J'apprends que je suis enceinte.



Sélie et moi.
Nos 12 premières heures ensemble. Photo prise par Anna le 27 octobre 2017.

(Left) My first encounter with Zélie.

The ultrasound when I learned that I was pregnant. I had not planned the pregnancy but I wonder if deep down I really had wanted it as I did have that desire to be a mother, while maybe not in this way. But, I felt the need to call it an "accident" for fear of what people would think, "you don't have a stable situation" they would say "This will end your career....But that wasn't what happened.

(Right) The first photo of Zélie & me.



Lettre à Zélie.

Letter to Zélie. I wrote this letter for Zélie to read when she's older. It explains our real story from my first encounter with her father Ahmed, in Beirut, Lebanon. This project has helped me find words to explain everything.



Zelie with her "baby". By playing she is inspired by what she experience close to me and what she feel to stage her perception of things.
Is-it a game essential to her awakening and her psychological balance? Are we educated for procreation and motherhood?



Chaque matin Zelig frappe à la porte de Maria en criant son prénom. Elle fait un caprice et elle ne lui ouvre pas à temps. Zelig et Maria ont pris l'habitude de petit déjeuner ensemble.

Maria, my neighbour.

Maria was born in this very building, on this same floor, on February 13, 1944. Zelig is growing up in the apartment in front of hers. Every morning Zelig knocks on Maria's door, shouting her name. If Maria doesn't answer in time, Zelig falls apart on the landing.



26.10.2019
Nous fêtons les deux ans de Zelle avec la "Abuvecinn" Maria. Tarte aux fraises et cava.

Zelle's second birthday at Maria's home on October 26, 2019.
The "annual" Whatsapp with Ahmed, Zelle's father, on November 2, 2019. The letter I've written for Zelle to open when she's 7 and in which I explain the enigma of her date of birth. I broke up with Ahmed when I was 8 months pregnant. The pressure from his Egyptian Muslim family was too much for me and our relationship. The cultural differences, the fears and the threats it was over.

2 DE NOVEMBRE DE 2019

How are you severine I hope you are okay I know that tomorrow zelle birthday I hope you are okay I know she is okay because she has a good mother

8:27 p.m.

Whatsapp de Ahmed



Ouvre-le à tes 7ans.



Robe de naissance offerte par la maman de Ahmed.

(Left) Family Archive. Maria in wedding dress.
(Right) Zelle's birth dress offered by Ahmed's mother. The main cause of my breakup with Ahmed was my refusal to marry imposed by his family.



1. 2008. 12.12. In the winter
 of 2008, I was in the mountains
 of the Alps. I was walking
 alone. I was walking alone.
 I was walking alone. I was
 walking alone. I was walking
 alone. I was walking alone.

[Left] Family archive. As if a metaphor to the disappearance of Maria's husband and a woman who turns to her son. «It was always the three of us until February 12, 2014, when «Tichou» decided to take another road forever, leaving my son and I behind, the same way he always did. The end.»

[Right] Maria's morning routine. Coffee & loneliness.





El lado de la vida es un amor que me trae para no ser de los que se olvidan!



(Left) Family Archive. Maria's husband sent her this letter when he was in the army in 1963.
(Right) Maria looks calmly towards the outside. Zelle has allowed her to open up to the world.



Xavi, 7 ans pose dans les ruelles du quartier Gothique à Barcelone.



Le secret de Maria.

(Left) Family archive. Maria's son.
(Right) An envelope that contains a secret. While working on this project, Maria confessed to me that she married pregnant, that it wasn't love, at least not at first. «Thank you» translates to the weight of tradition and family prejudice.



(Left) Archive photos. ID photo of Maria and her son.
(Right) I made 5 photographs of nature for Maria and asked her to choose one. She chose the cactus which she said reflects her relationship with her son who lives three streets from us, but who never comes to visit her. Xavi always does his thing, but he does call me every day at 9 at night. I think it's a matter of character.*



Maria et son fils Xavi à la plage en Matara, été 1958.



Consejos de la Maria

1. sea estudia mucho
2. vive con los familia
3. la viviana para el mundo
- 4 que agar lo que te gusta

Maria has left Zelle some advice from her experience raising her son Xavi.

A reflection of her loneliness.

1. Study hard
2. Live with your family
3. Be good to the world
4. Do what you want.



(Left) A portrait I made of Maria at her window of her apartment, from the window of mine. Life in close quarters.
(Right) Maria's letter to Zelle. "You are my life, I love you with all my heart."



Lettre de Maria à Zelle écrite le 08 novembre 2019.



Televidin (télévie) de Maria.


Ya me presentan a Dios de la libertad, pero como
yo me presento algo de digna que me me honro
dele ya
De la libertad de la fe.

(Left) Zelle kisses Maria, reminiscent of Sleeping Beauty.

(Right) Maria's teleassistance necklace for the elderly people living alone. Maria explains First Aid assistance responded 4 different times to calls from Zelle who hit the button by mistake, playing with the necklace. Finally Maria told them she didn't need the necklace anymore because she had Zelle!



Quando solo solo e triste sono
sotto un altro soffitto, quando
quell'ora sono completa di un
suo nome e un bacio una madre
piena e non c'è nulla di
più, una lunga strada e un
pelle.



Zelie and Maria as one. "When I feel lonely and sad, there is another story I need to remember. That of a mother and her child who became my neighbors. She was a single mother and it changed my life. Now I'm happy as I receive all the love in the world."







(Right) Maria was photographed on the terrace of our building in 1965.
(Left) Self-portrait on the same terrace in 2019.



Maria, look around you, everything changes and I'm here to ask you the same question.
«Am I a good mother? or not.»
And then there are others around us, those who always have a word to say, always for our good.
«I do as I can,» I almost force myself to tell them. But in the end, Maria, I do what I want.
Just, they do not know it.



paix love, mamam

(Left) My second birthday, 16 December 1983, Pau.
Motherhood has allowed me to name and solve family problems that I experience.

