

jan smith | nouadhibou



Nouadhibou means “where the jackals get fat”. It is also where ships go to die. Over 500 abandoned wrecks lie in Nouadhibou Bay, making it the world's largest ship cemetery.



In June 2008 I traveled to Nouadhibou to photograph its boats. Although only a few miles south of the Moroccan border, in Mauri-



tania, access is difficult and adventuresome. I traveled south by land from Casablanca, Morocco but was turned away at the border. With my cameras in tow I was accused of espionage.

Nobody believed I traveled to the remoteness of Nouadhibou to simply take pictures of rotting ships. After a night in a mine field and a brief stint in detention, I returned to Casablanca and managed to fly into Nouakchott. There, with the help of two strangers I met at the airport, I succeeded in traveling north to Nouadhibou.

It was impossible to ignore the inequalities around me. Slavery was formally re-abolished in 1981, but is still manifest in its most docile form as indentured service. Furthermore, illegal immigrants build miles of shacks on the beach, where they dry and husk octopus and rays for markets in Asia. All the while they scavenge

oil drums to build rafts to float to the Canary Islands. Many who try die.



Amongst all of this are the ships; originally a vestige of a nationalized fishing industry that found it cheaper to abandon its fleet than service it. This then provided cover for foreign companies to scuttle ships and fraudulently claim insurance.

Indeed, there are many visual stories to present from Nouadhibou. This one is about the abandoned ships, and finding beauty in what is meant to be forgotten.





Vessel 1 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 2 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 3 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 4 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 5 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 6 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 7 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 8 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 9 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 10- Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 11 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 12 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 14 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 15 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 16 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 17- Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 18 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 19 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 20 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008



Vessel 21 - Nouadhibou Nouadhibou, Mauritania 2008

↳ On Paper

↳ Production

Negatives: 35mm DSLR Infrared Adapted
Medium: Archival ink jet on cotton paper
All images are printed by the artist



↳ Dimensions

14x21 inches /41x53cm

↳ Signature

All images are signed in back with carbon pencil.

↳ Edition

5 signed and numbered prints per image

↳ On Glass

↳ Production

Negatives: 35mm DSLR Infrared Adapted
Medium: Ink on glass, laser etching
Base: Vaseline poured concrete
Lighting: LED on aluminum rail

↳ Dimensions

Glass: 14x21 inches /41x53cm
Base: 3x25x3 inches /8x63x18cm

↳ Edition

3 prints per image





📍 Jan Smith

Born in Mexico City, Jan is self-taught in photography. Originally he studied business and spent 15 years as an entrepreneur. In addition to photography, climbing and travel occupy important spaces in his life.

📍 Individual Shows

2010

- Pop. Density, Galería Epon México D.F.
- Nouadhibou, Galeria Mesa Fine Art, Dominican Republic
- Pop. Density, Espacio AF Polanco, México D.F.
- Ausencia y Abandono, Galeria Eduardo Fernandes, São Paulo
- Gunkanjima, Patio de la Fototeca, Zacatecas, México.
- Gunkanjima, Galeria Bateau Mouche, Toluca, México.
- Gunkanjima, Galeria Ibero, Puebla, México.

2009

- Gunkanjima, Espacio Cultural Japón, México D.F.
- Pop. Density, Galería Nina Menocal, México D.F.
- Nouadhibou, Galería Conejo Blanco, Mexico D.F.

2008

- Nouadhibou, Galería Piso 51, México D.F.

2007

- Ausencia y Abandono, Galería Uno, México D.F.

📍 Group Shows

2010

- Casa Francia, México D.F.
- Mexico Vivo, Museo Arte Moderno, México D.F.
- SP-Arte, São Paulo
- Galeria Conejo Blanco, México D.F.
- Galería Epon México D.F.

2009

- Burn Gallery, New York
- Sema Topaloglu Studio, Istanbul
- Espace Dupon, Paris

2008

- Casa Cor, São Paulo
- Atelier Art Gallery, Miami

2005

- Club Fotográfico Mexicano, México D.F.

↳ Interviews



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To learn where you may see Jan's work personally, or if you are interested in bringing Nouadhibou as an exhibition to your community, please contact:

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