

Synopsis :

Zwei Bier für Haiti

WEIMAR HOMELESS SHELTER

Photography by

Nathalie MOHADJER

Germany - 2006 / 2010

During my photo studies in Weimar, I came across the Weimar homeless shelter at the outskirts of the city. I went there for the first time in 2006 getting to know better the residents and the social workers and with the idea to document the lives of the occupants for an uninterrupted period of time using photography.

The shelter is divided into two parts: emergency shelters where the homeless can stay for the night but must leave during daytime and apartments where people live for good. They share flats in groups of two or three.

The shelter provides them protection, but far from the town centre. Generally they find a way to deal with this feeling of being rejected with a mix of gallows humour and alcohol.

In documentary photography there is the common belief that as a photographer you should remain at a certain distance until the people you want to photograph forget you are here and start to act natural.

Deliberately I chose to do the opposite. I made my presence as a photographer and decided for the first time to accept to change the context of interaction. Being there was a kind of happening: I was the photographer who decided to listen to the residents and it gave them the opportunity to say something and leave a trail.

Over the years I had many long conversations with the homeless at the shelter. Relationships of trust were built and many residents told me their most intimate stories. As they spoke, I started very naturally to take pictures of them -not one was staged- and tried to catch these moments as they were reliving it.

The series « Zwei Bier für Haiti » is named after a fundraising campaign organized by the residents after Haiti's terrible earthquake. Margitta, one of the occupant, decided that compared to the Haitians the residents "actually had it pretty good". Each of them will have to do without two beers in order to donate at least one or two euros. In the end, a total of 15 euros were raised.