



## *Kafila*

**M'hammed Kilito**

**September, 13 - November 11, 2023**

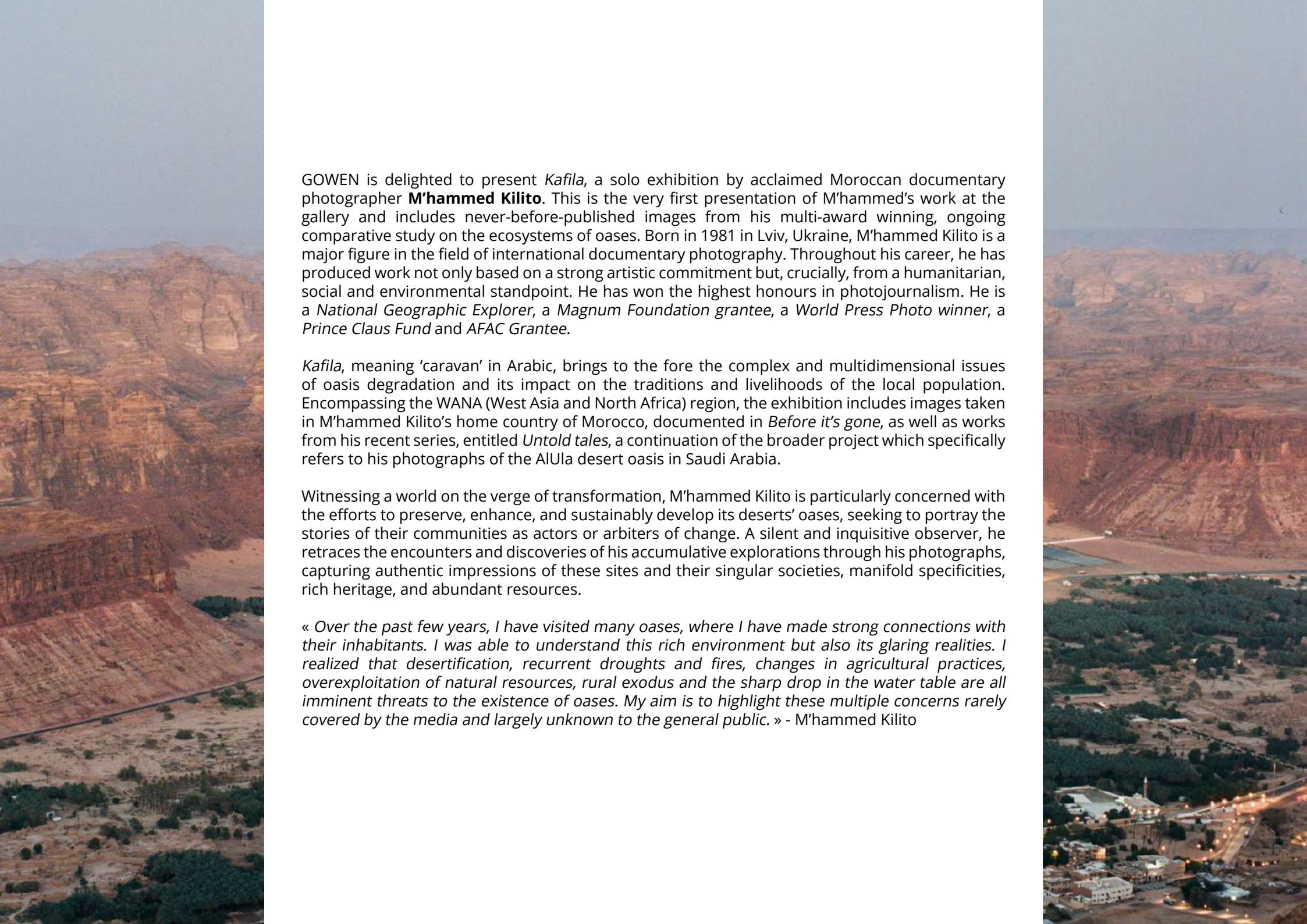


**M'hammed Kilito** (b.1981, Lviv, Ukraine) lives and works in Casablanca. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Montreal and a Master's degree in Political Science from Ottawa University. He is currently participating in the two-year VII Mentor Program. His work has garnered awards and grants, including: *World Press Photo Regional Prize*; *Louis Roederer Prize for Sustainability*; *National Geographic Society Explorer Grant*; *CAP Prize*; *Photography Prize of the Fondation des Treilles* and *Sheikh Saoud Al Thani Project Award*. He has also been a finalist for the *Leica Oskar Barnack Award* and nominated for the *Prix Pictet*.

His photographic works have been showcased at various festivals and venues worldwide, including: the Leica Ernst Leitz Museum (Germany); Sharjah Art Foundation (UAE); 1:54 Art Fair (France); Tate Modern (UK); PhotoESPAÑA Festival (Spain); National Museum of Photography (Morocco); Addis Foto Fest (Ethiopia); Format Festival (UK); Bosnia and Herzegovina National Museum (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Photo Vogue Festival (Italy) and Misk Art Institute (Saudi Arabia). His work has also been featured in publications such as *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The British Journal of Photography*, *Vogue Italia*, *L'Express*, *Liberation*, and *El Pais*.

Together with three other Moroccan visual artists, Kilito co-founded KOZ, a collective dedicated to telling compelling stories through long-term projects.

M'hammed Kilito is represented by GOWEN CONTEMPORARY.

An aerial photograph of a desert landscape. The top half shows rugged, reddish-brown mountains and hills under a clear sky. The bottom half shows a small oasis town with green trees, buildings, and a winding road, situated in a valley. The town is illuminated with lights, suggesting dusk or dawn.

GOWEN is delighted to present *Kafila*, a solo exhibition by acclaimed Moroccan documentary photographer **M'hammed Kilito**. This is the very first presentation of M'hammed's work at the gallery and includes never-before-published images from his multi-award winning, ongoing comparative study on the ecosystems of oases. Born in 1981 in Lviv, Ukraine, M'hammed Kilito is a major figure in the field of international documentary photography. Throughout his career, he has produced work not only based on a strong artistic commitment but, crucially, from a humanitarian, social and environmental standpoint. He has won the highest honours in photojournalism. He is a *National Geographic Explorer*, a *Magnum Foundation grantee*, a *World Press Photo winner*, a *Prince Claus Fund* and *AFAC Grantee*.

*Kafila*, meaning 'caravan' in Arabic, brings to the fore the complex and multidimensional issues of oasis degradation and its impact on the traditions and livelihoods of the local population. Encompassing the WANA (West Asia and North Africa) region, the exhibition includes images taken in M'hammed Kilito's home country of Morocco, documented in *Before it's gone*, as well as works from his recent series, entitled *Untold tales*, a continuation of the broader project which specifically refers to his photographs of the AlUla desert oasis in Saudi Arabia.

Witnessing a world on the verge of transformation, M'hammed Kilito is particularly concerned with the efforts to preserve, enhance, and sustainably develop its deserts' oases, seeking to portray the stories of their communities as actors or arbiters of change. A silent and inquisitive observer, he retraces the encounters and discoveries of his accumulative explorations through his photographs, capturing authentic impressions of these sites and their singular societies, manifold specificities, rich heritage, and abundant resources.

« Over the past few years, I have visited many oases, where I have made strong connections with their inhabitants. I was able to understand this rich environment but also its glaring realities. I realized that desertification, recurrent droughts and fires, changes in agricultural practices, overexploitation of natural resources, rural exodus and the sharp drop in the water table are all imminent threats to the existence of oases. My aim is to highlight these multiple concerns rarely covered by the media and largely unknown to the general public. » - M'hammed Kilito



An ecological mainstay against desertification and critical marker for climate health, oases are a refuge for biodiversity, constituting an original ecosystem based on the balance of three elements: the abundance of water, soil quality and the presence of date palms. These indigenous trees, with their parasol-shaped foliage, create a humid microclimate, providing protection from the wind and favouring other plant growth fundamental to its state.

As warnings on the effects of global warming and human intervention on oases gain urgency, Kilito's veracious, evocative, and cautioning photographs document the evolving existence of these natural havens. In his latest works, developed during the Oasis Reborn Residency program, he seeks to record and relay the beauty of AlUla with alternative representations to those idealised images of ancient, preserved tombs, sandstone outcrops and canyons routinely diffused into the public domain. Working on a temporal axis that encompasses the oasis-city's past, present, and future, he intends to capture perceptions of its material and immaterial heritage, reflections on its ongoing societal, cultural, and economic transformations, and aspirations for the future that may soon be defined through the construction of new architectural megaprojects.

Through the prism of diverse subjects, ranging from seasonal work to abandoned locations, urban neighbourhoods, archaeological remains, farms, and luxury hotels, M'hammed Kilito unites several facets of AlUla, presenting them as a comprehensive and immersive narrative.

*Kafila* aims to show that there are inhabitants, farmers, scientists, and citizen associations on the ground « *who are fighting to preserve these islands of greenery in the middle of the desert and to end this project with a message of hope.* »

Around twenty works are included in the exhibition.





### **Untold tales series (2022)**

*M'hammed Kilito pursues a comparative study of oases across the sundry territories of the Mashriq and Maghrib. This time in Alula oasis in Saudi Arabia. Witnessing a world on the verge of transformation, he is particularly interested in the efforts to preserve, enhance, and sustainably develop its deserts' oases, seeking to portray the stories of their communities as actors or arbiters of change. A silent and inquisitive observer, M'hammed Kilito retraces the encounters and discoveries of his accumulative explorations through his photographs, painting authentic pictures of these sites and their singular societies, manifold specificities, rich heritage, and abundant resources.*

*Kilito seeks to record and relay the beauty of Alula, in Saudi Arabia with representations different from those people have become accustomed to seeing of Alula.*

*Working on a temporal axis that encompasses the oasis-city's past, present, and future, he is set to capture perceptions of its material and immaterial heritage, reflections on its ongoing societal, cultural, and economic transformations, and aspirations for the future that may soon unfold through its megaprojects. Through the prism of a multitude of subjects, ranging from seasonal work to abandoned places, urban neighborhoods, archaeological remains, farms, and luxury hotels, M'hammed Kilito unites several facets of Alula and presents them as a comprehensive and immersive story.*

- Marilou Thibault and Bashar Al Idrissi



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
Panoramic view, Alula Oasis, Saudi Arabia  
Octobre 2022  
Print  
150 x 150 cm  
59.1 x 59.1 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 77

[Inquire](#)



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Rocking horse in the Al Alzizia neighborhood*  
November 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 96

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Stone house on a truck, AlUla, Saudi Arabia*  
December 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 78

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Ahmed, Yemeni farmer*  
November 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 97

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*A room in the abandoned Addeera school , AlUla,  
Saudi Arabia* November 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 81

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)

*A farmer offering dates*

November 2022

Print

80 x 80 cm

31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP

KIL 98

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Burnt trees, AlUla, Saudi Arabia*  
November 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 82

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Clean clothes of workers hanging on the trunk of the  
palm tree, AlUla, Saudi Arabia*  
October 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 83

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Hegra carved tombs, Saudi Arabia*  
December 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 88

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*On the road to the farm*  
November 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 99

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*View with ruins and palmgrove in background, AlUla,  
Saudi Arabia*  
October 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 72

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)

*Souhayl, Afghani farmer*

November 2022

Print

60 x 60 cm

23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP

KIL 100

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Abandoned car, AlUla, Saudi Arabia*  
November 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 71

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Palm trees in the old palmgrove, AlUla, Saudi Arabia*  
October 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 93

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### **Before it's gone series (2020 - ongoing)**

Located in arid and semi-arid regions and considered an ecological bulwark against desertification and an important refuge for biodiversity, oases constitute an original ecosystem, based on the right balance of three elements: The abundance of water, the quality of the soil, and the presence of date palms. The date palms with their parasol-shaped foliage create a humid microclimate, shaded from the wind and favorable to the development of plants. For the past twenty years, this balance no longer exists and these islands of greenery in the middle of the desert are suffering the impacts of human intervention and climate change. Indeed, according to official statistics from the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture, over the last century, Morocco has already lost two-thirds of its 14 million palm trees.

*Before it's gone* is an ongoing long-term project that documents life in oases with a focus on the complex and multidimensional issues of oasis degradation in Morocco and its impact on their inhabitants.

*«Over the past few years, I have visited many oases, where I have made strong connections with their inhabitants. I was able to understand this rich environment but also its glaring realities. I decided to work on this project to highlight these multiple concerns rarely covered by the media and largely unknown to the general public. My research also aims to better understand different approaches, practices, and programs applied to the valorization, conservation, and sustainable development of oases, which are known to be environmentally sensitive.» - M'hammed Kilito*



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Mohammed the potter of Skoura oasis, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 76

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Picnic on the grass, Tighmert oasis, Morocco*  
March 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 79

[\*\*Inquire\*\*](#)



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Mohammed the potter collecting wood,*  
*Skoura oasis, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
100 x 100 cm  
39.4 x 39.4 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 80

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Fint oasis, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 84

[Inquire](#)





M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Horse grazing at the oasis of M'hamid El Ghizlane,*  
*Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 85

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Water tower near Zagora oasis, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 86

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Details inside a house/museum dedicated to the  
oasian culture, Tighmert oasis, Morocco*  
March 2022  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 87

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Dromedaries market, Guelmim, Morocco*  
May 2020  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 89

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M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Empty swings at Oulad driss Village, M'hamid El  
Ghizlane Oasis, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 90

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Adobe wall in Tighmert oasis, Morocco*  
August 2020  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 91

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*A man looking for water in a well surrounded by sand  
dunes in Merzouga, Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 92

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Hamdani, traditional farmer I met in Zagora oasis,  
Morocco*  
April 2022  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 94

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## **Cinema camera series (2018)**

*«Cinema Camera» is the story of a meeting, that of the photographer M'hammed Kilito with the intimate and deeply humanist cinema of Hakim Belabbes. It is a tribute and a pilgrimage to the film's shooting location ... A story of cameras, human beings, looks and complicities. And just like the director who tells us stories, the photographer reveals here those of inhabitants of Bejaâd, a small town in the Beni Mellal-Khénifra region.*

*Flashback ... In 2008, Hakim Belabbes films «These hands» in the city where he was born. The film, which surfs between fiction and reality, focuses on the destinies of Bejaâd's craftsmen, the potter, the blacksmith, the weavers, the projectionist, ... So many simple lives that intersect and unfold before the eyes of Hakim Belabbes, for "the memory of Bejaâd".*

*In 2018, «These hands» celebrates its 10th anniversary, M'hammed Kilito follows the film's tracks to try to find the real characters who have moved him so much on the screen and offers them to pose, this time, in front of his camera; to explore and question too ... Ten years later, what has become of them? Some people accept, others refuse, the grocer of miracles and Dkaiki are no longer of this world ... M'hammed Kilito travels the streets of the small town, seizes its poetry, escheat, bits of deserted architecture, real details that graze abstraction. He meets and photographs the troubadour, the weaver, the potter, the blacksmith, ... He immortalizes the abandoned cinema, which is fading and peeling, as well as the projectionist who keeps the history and the archives.*

- Florence Renault-Darsi





M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Aves Pacis, Bejaad Morocco*  
February 2017  
Print  
80 x 80 cm  
31.5 x 31.5 in

Ed. 2 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 95

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Mustapha, photography studio owner, Bejaad,  
Morocco* February 2017

Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 16

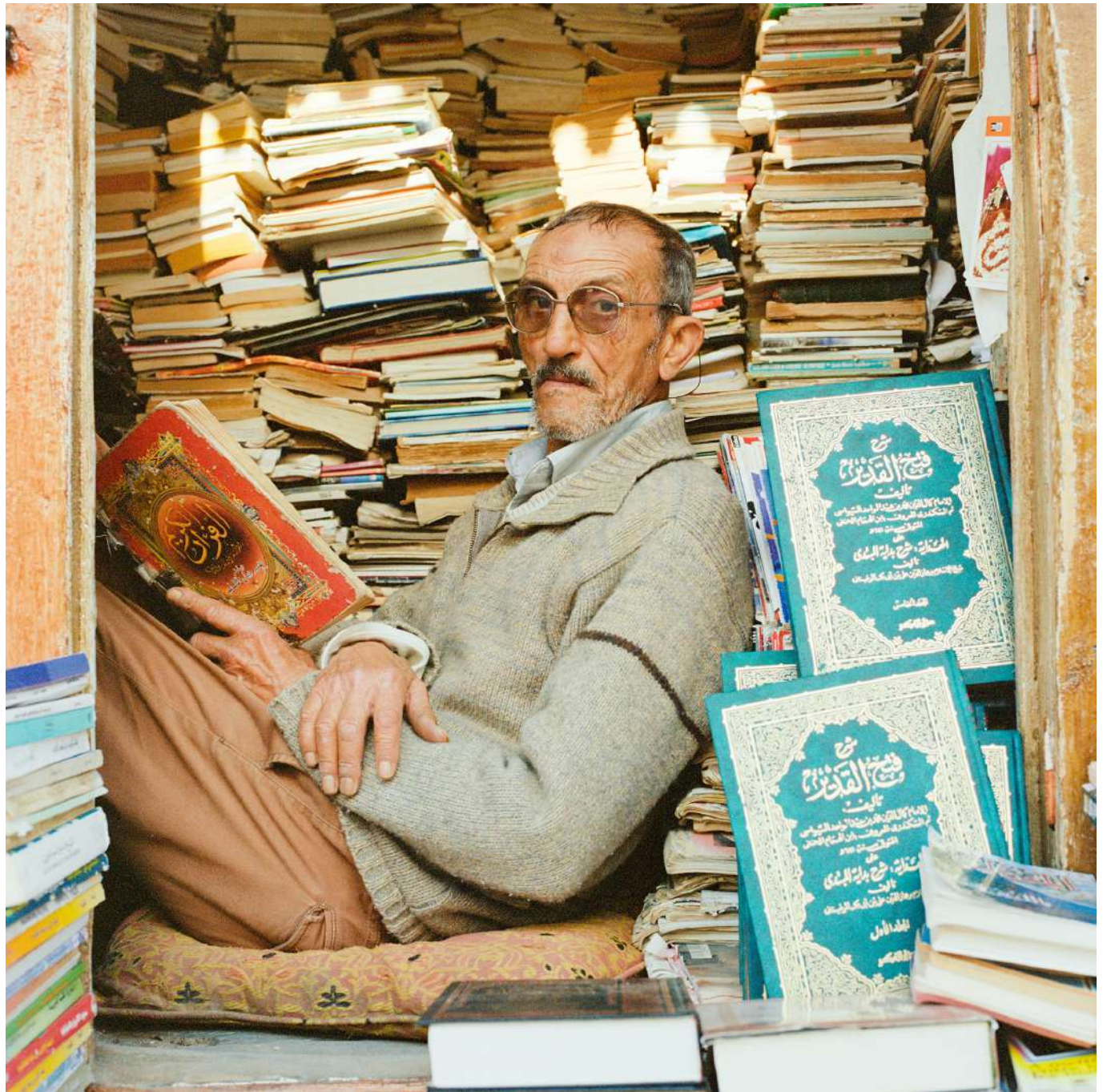
[Inquire](#)



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*S'occuper, Bejaad, Morocco*  
February 2017  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 1 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 09

**Inquire**



M'hammed Kilito (Moroccan, 1981)  
*Mohammed, the oldest bookseller in Rabat, Morocco*  
March 2020  
Print  
60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 in

Ed. 2 of 5 + 2 AP  
KIL 37

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