

THE SOIL WILL BECOME WET

ANNE SIMIN SHITRIT
אן שימין שיטריט

EXHIBITION ON VIEW
14.11-06.12 2025

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ANNE SIMIN SHITRIT

NOVEMBER 14 - DECEMBER 6 2025

Introduction

The exhibition *The soil will become wet* brings together a series of photographs taken between Jerusalem and the Iranian-Armenian border. This territory, inaccessible to Anne Simin Shitrit as an Israeli, represents the closest point of access to her mother's homeland, Iran. By combining family archives, contemporary landscapes, and prints on fabric, the artist explores the memory of exile and the silent transmission between generations. The decision to photograph the border arose from a deep interest in the ambiguity it embodies—between danger and aesthetic allure, between what we know and what we perceive. This geographical boundary resonates with the inner and emotional borders between mother and daughter, as well as with the separation experienced by the former between her past in Iran and her life in Jerusalem.

Throughout 2025, Anne Simin Shitrit worked in Ithaque's darkroom to prepare this exhibition. There, she produced analog prints depicting the physical landscapes of the Iranian-Armenian border and experimented with a new technique: liquid emulsion on fabrics brought from Iran by her mother. This demanding and often unpredictable process led her to embrace fragility as an essential element of creation. The material reacts, resists, and sometimes escapes control; it is within this tension that her work takes shape. This body of research marks a significant step in the artist's practice and reflects her desire to deepen the relationship between image, material, and temporality.

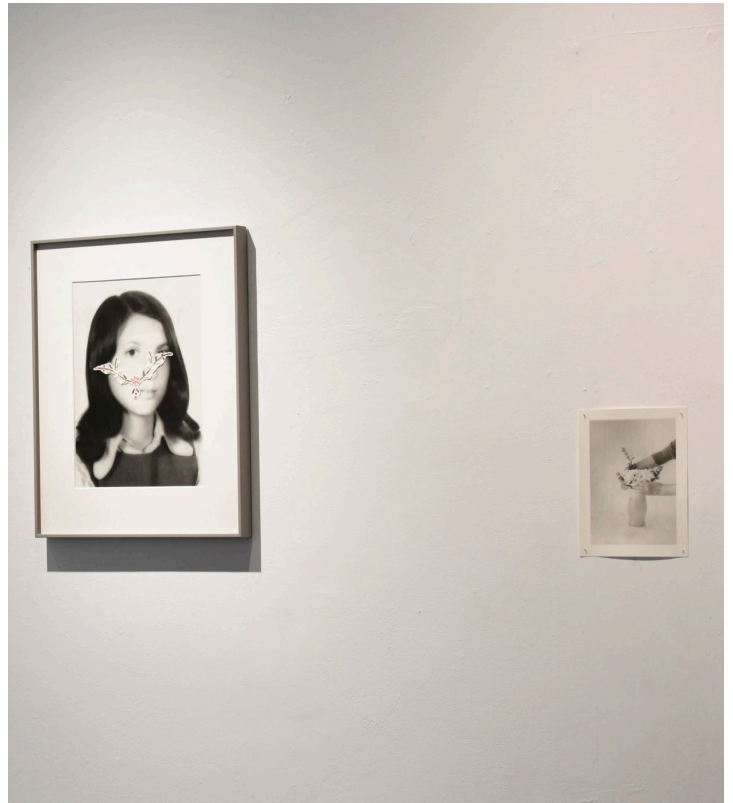
The Ithaque Team

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Exhibition view of *The soil will become wet* at Ithaque
(Paris, November 14 – December 6, 2025)

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From Jerusalem to the Iranian-Armenian border, Anne Simin Shitrit probes, through the medium of photography, the many barriers and unspoken tensions that mark not only her own destiny but also the tumultuous history of the Middle East. Engaging her body in this process, the artist confronted this issue physically during a perilous journey to Meghri, in Armenia. From this city in the Syunik region, her gaze turned toward the border with Iran - her mother's homeland. Through their intertwined fates, the photographer seeks to make visible and to question the manifestations of biopower and biopolitics, concepts central to Foucault's thought¹. Expressed both through technical experimentation and the pursuit of a precise, assertive style, Anne Simin Shitrit explores the aesthetics of a distant land that was once part of her maternal family's everyday life.

Defying sensationalist preconceptions and the usual visual archetypes attached to this region, the artist presents, with great restraint, images imbued with a penetrating calm and powerful evocative force, where tenderness reveals deep wounds and silences of a destructive kind. The border she depicts takes shape in the solid mountain range and the course of the Arax River. It is also materialized through human presence, in the heavy flow of freight traffic and the nearby settlements established mainly in the valley. Printed on liquid emulsion and adorned with floral motifs, this large panorama on Persian fabric becomes an occasion for Anne Simin Shitrit to employ a visual truncation, thus using a formal device to emphasize the impassable boundary standing before her. As if to resist numbness and reaffirm her "power to act"², she heightens her image with stylized flowers and a haunting question written by her mother: « ؟ تس ا قشع عون هچ نی ا » ("What kind of love is this?").

A snapshot in time of a personal trajectory entwined with the torments of history, this work provokes a double awakening. The first, photographic, captures the gaze she casts - as both artist and woman - on subjects where these identities are seldom granted a voice, while simultaneously immortalizing her presence in this highly symbolic space. The second, more intimate and psychological, is an impassioned search for origins and a deep introspection into her relationship with motherhood and memory.

¹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975.

² Literal translation of the concept of empowerment. See Jacques Rhéaume, "Puissance d'agir (empowerment) (empowerment – empoderamiento)," in Agnès Vandeveldt-Rougale & Pascal Fugier (eds.), with the collaboration of Vincent de Gaulejac, *Dictionnaire de sociologie clinique*, Paris, érès, 2019, pp. 513–516; <https://doi.org/10.3917/eres.vande.2019.01.0513>

As Henri Guelle aptly summarized, Anne Simin Shitrit was born to an Iranian mother and a Moroccan father, in a family that settled “in Israel, within an ultra-Orthodox and anti-Zionist Jewish community³,” where the young girl grew up “isolated, far from social interactions and even from the Western, secular past of her parents⁴.” This exhibition thus offers the photographer an opportunity to explore and question her relationship to the maternal figure and to exile. According to her, her “mother exchanged her passport for a *siddour* (a book containing the Jewish liturgical ritual). Earth for heaven, man for God, that is how she lived, in Jerusalem, for thirty-three years, without ever leaving it.” Emphasizing the paradoxes, silences, and contradictions of her own trajectory, the artist declares that “this city is a refuge, especially my mother’s Jerusalem, yet its streets and gates, this paradise itself, are made of bars and locks.”

Anne Simin Shitrit makes this reality strikingly visible in a powerful photograph where cables and chains intertwine frenetically around a tree whose growth seems tumultuous and constrained. It is tempting to see in it an allegory of her own destiny or that of her mother, without, however, forcing a single, reductive interpretation upon a work whose polysemic richness is undeniable. The Barthesian *punctum*⁵ will no doubt pierce and awaken something within the viewer entering Ithaque to contemplate the works presented before them⁵.

The journey to which the photographer invites her audience is both geographical and temporal. Moving between past and present, Anne Simin Shitrit exhibits a portrait of her mother dating from the time she lived in Tehran. Removed and reprinted in Paris, it allows the artist, in a sense, to bring her mother back into her life in an earlier form. Now a deeply devout woman, her mother can no longer be photographed by her daughter. Speaking on this tension, the artist notes: “The tension between the desire to represent her and the understanding of my own identity is subtle.”

³ Henri Guelle, “Anne Simin Shitrit,” in Anaël Pigeat (ed.), *L’art et la vie et inversement: Finale – Diplômés et Félicités 2024 des Beaux-Arts de Paris*, Paris, Beaux-Arts de Paris éditions, 2025, p. 256.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, Paris, Gallimard-Le Seuil, 1980.

We are indeed very similar, both physically and mentally. The reason I chose to recreate her old portrait is a way of questioning photography's ability to connect past and present, and more broadly, the relationship between identity and memory. Where does my mother end, and where do I begin?" The floral motif, superimposed and partially obscuring her face, becomes highly significant. It highlights the fractures in the tumultuous destiny of this unsettling *doppelgänger* of the artist⁶, draws particular attention to her gaze, and makes visible the complex relationships woven between the two women.

In light of this impossibility of fully capturing her mother's image, the view of a chained tree can also be interpreted as another stratagem for apprehending and understanding this individual, so close yet sometimes so distant. This specimen, photographed in her garden in Jerusalem, is in a sense a ruse that allows Anne Simin Shitrit to portray this elusive maternal figure who so profoundly challenges her.

The artist succeeds not only in finding a form of beauty and poetry in her work but also in offering an invitation to self-reflection and contemplation in a world of constant stimuli, where obsolescence and a lack of empathy prevail. The calves and lambs that cross her lens thus receive particular attention. Anne Simin Shitrit acknowledges identifying with these symbols "of innocence and pawn on a fatal chessboard"⁷, which exceed them. These sacrificial figures inevitably evoke the thought of René Girard⁸ or Joseph de Maistre⁹, resonating especially in a region where the unspeakable exists alongside the most sacred.

Through this photographer's eyes, barbed wire, mountains, fences, gates, curtains, and other small bells form a vast array of coercive elements pointing to the numerous existing borders — past or present, real or virtual, psychic or physical.

She succeeds in instilling in her compositions a sense of "uncanny strangeness," the famous Freudian *Unheimliche*¹⁰, where presence and absence are equally called into question.

⁶ Dimitris Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger: Literature's Philosophy*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2010.

⁷ Henri Guelle, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁸ René Girard, *La Violence et le Sacré*, Paris, Grasset, 1972.

⁹ Joseph de Maistre, *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, 1810, posthumous edition 1821, in *Œuvres complètes*, Genève, Slatkine reprints, 1979.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," 1919, in *The Uncanny and Other Texts*, trans. F. Cambon, Paris, Gallimard, 2001.

Deeply bound to her relationship with her mother, her work becomes an act of introspection - a way of making visible "everything that was meant to remain a secret, in the shadows, and has come out of it,"¹¹ to borrow Schelling's words.

A nod to the song « نوراب هـنوراب » (It's Raining) by Viguen, the title of the exhibition, The soil will become wet, evokes the promise of brighter days - days revived by rain and the hope of a bountiful harvest upon reconciled lands.

Maxime Georges Métraux
Historien de l'art, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne

¹¹ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, cited by Freud, *Ibid.*, p. 49.



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Panorama of the Iranian Border, 2025, Liquid emulsion on fabric with handwritten and floral details from an Iranian fabric, set of 5 pieces, 65 × 204 cm.

The Artwork consists of five pieces forming a single panorama of the border between Armenia and Iran, in the Meghri area by the Arax River. The landscape is marked by a mountain range that serves as both a physical and emotional boundary, as well as a heavily militarized site the artist reached through a perilous journey.

The artist layered pieces of fabric with images of the border, creating a tension between the softness of the material and the hardness of the emulsion, reflecting the weight and complexity of geographical and emotional boundaries. A haunting question runs through the work: «تسا قشع عون هچ نی ا» (What kind of love is this?).

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Panorama of the Iranian Border (detail), 2025,
Liquid emulsion on fabric with handwritten and floral
details from an Iranian fabric.

Detail in Persian : «What kind of love is this? »

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Panorama of the Iranian Border (detail), 2025,
Liquid emulsion on fabric with handwritten and floral
details from an Iranian fabric.

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Iranian Border 1, 2025, liquid emulsion on Iranian fabric, unique piece, 22 × 27.8 cm.

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Iranian Border 2, 2025, liquid emulsion on fabric, unique piece,
23.5 × 22 cm

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Iranian Border 3, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, unique piece, 12 × 23.5 cm

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Tree in Jerusalem home, 2023, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, unique piece, 125 × 165 cm.

The image of the fig tree in the garden of the artist's mother's house in Jerusalem serves as a symbolic portrait of the mother. Rooted in a land that is not its own, the tree survives through care and resilience, bearing fruit each year. In Jewish tradition, fruit-bearing trees cannot be cut down, a principle of preservation that deepens the image's meaning. The work becomes a metaphor for exile, endurance, and the enduring bond between mother and daughter.

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Portrait of Simin in Tehran (1967), 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper with Iranian fabric, unique piece, 26 x 35.5 cm.

This portrait, taken from an archival photograph of the artist's mother in Tehran before the 1979 revolution, becomes a bridge across time and distance. Scanned, transformed into a digital negative, and reprinted in the darkroom, the image brings Simini Ebrahimi into the artist's present in Paris. In this delicate act of re-creation, the portrait meditates on identity and resemblance, where mother and daughter meet, overlap, and mirror one another. It evokes a fragile attempt to reach across borders, to encounter the Simin of Iran, and in doing so, to encounter oneself.

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Untitled (1967), 2025, pigment inkjet print from a scan of an archival photograph, edition $\frac{1}{3} + 1$ AP, 39 × 116.5 cm.

Photograph taken before the Islamic Revolution in the Ebrahimi family home in Tehran. In Iranian culture, flowers carry profound symbolic meaning. Just as she once did in Tehran, the artist's mother continues to care for flowers and plants in her garden in Jerusalem. In her work, Anne reveals this enduring thread, a quiet continuity that links places, generations.

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The Hand of Simin, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition $\frac{1}{3}$ + 1 AP, 14 × 19 cm.

Deeply religious, Anne Simin's mother refuses to be photographed, in accordance with a Jewish tradition that discourages the depiction of the human body. The only image she allowed is of her hands, tending to the flowers in her home.

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Untitled, 2025, liquid emulsion on Iranian fabric, set of 4 pieces, unique work, 26 × 48.8 cm.

The works inspired by the artist's mother's house in Jerusalem explore the intimacy of domestic space. By photographing her garden and flowers, Anne Simin Shitrit also evokes another, more personal boundary that separates her from her mother. The wall she encountered at the Iranian border is mirrored in the house in Jerusalem, where distance and silence become an inner limit.

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Jerusalem home 1, 2025, liquid emulsion on fabric, unique piece, 23 × 23 cm.

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Jerusalem home 2, 2025, liquid emulsion on Iranian fabric, unique piece, 35 × 24.8 cm.

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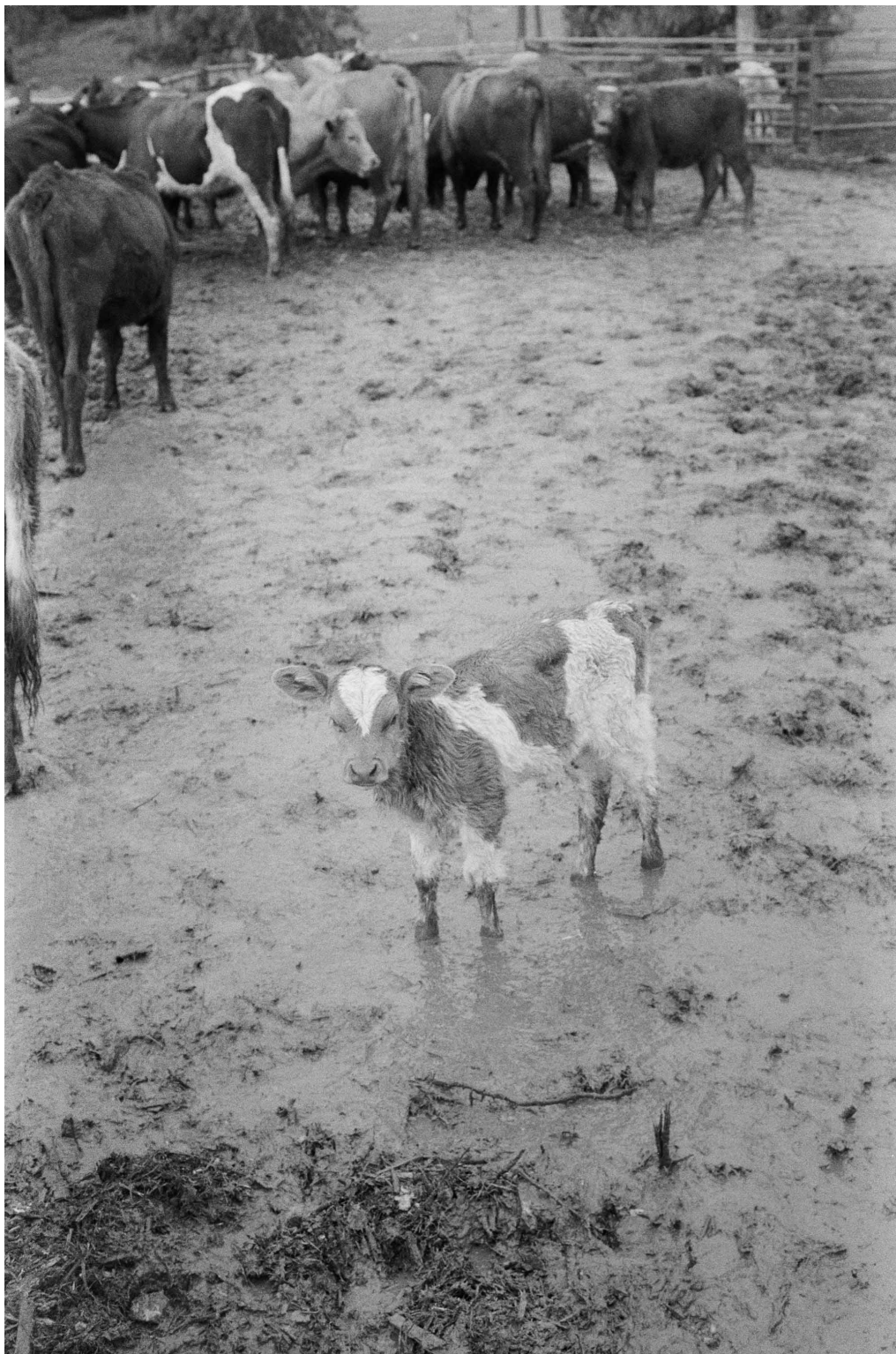
Jerusalem home 3, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper,
edition $\frac{1}{3}$ + 1 AP, 14 × 19.5 cm.

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Jerusalem Home 4, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition
1/3 + 1 AP, 13.6 × 19.5 cm.

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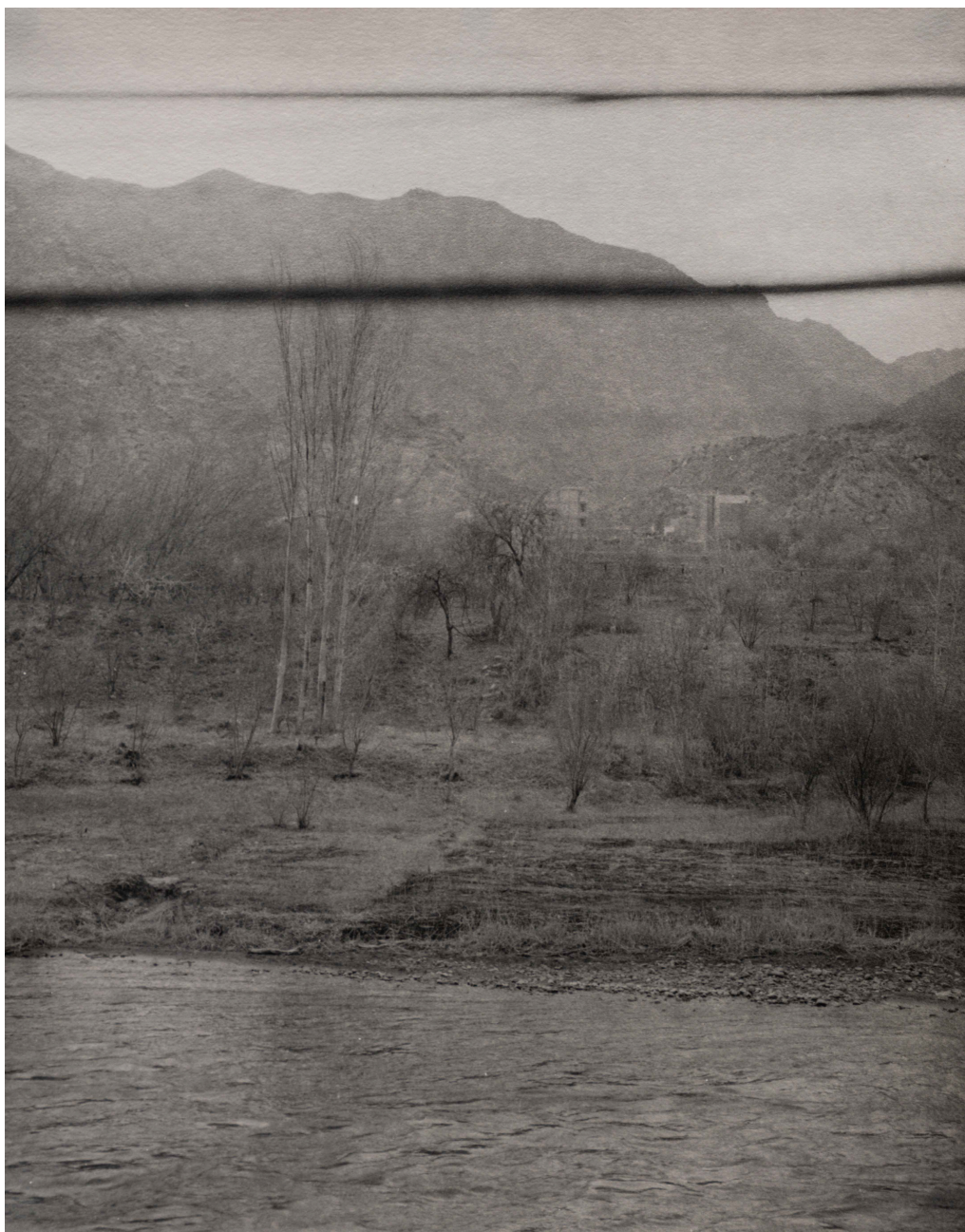
Untitled, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition ⅓ + 1 AP, 21.5 × 28.5 cm.

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Untitled, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition $\frac{1}{3}$ + 1 AP, 22.5 × 29.5 cm.

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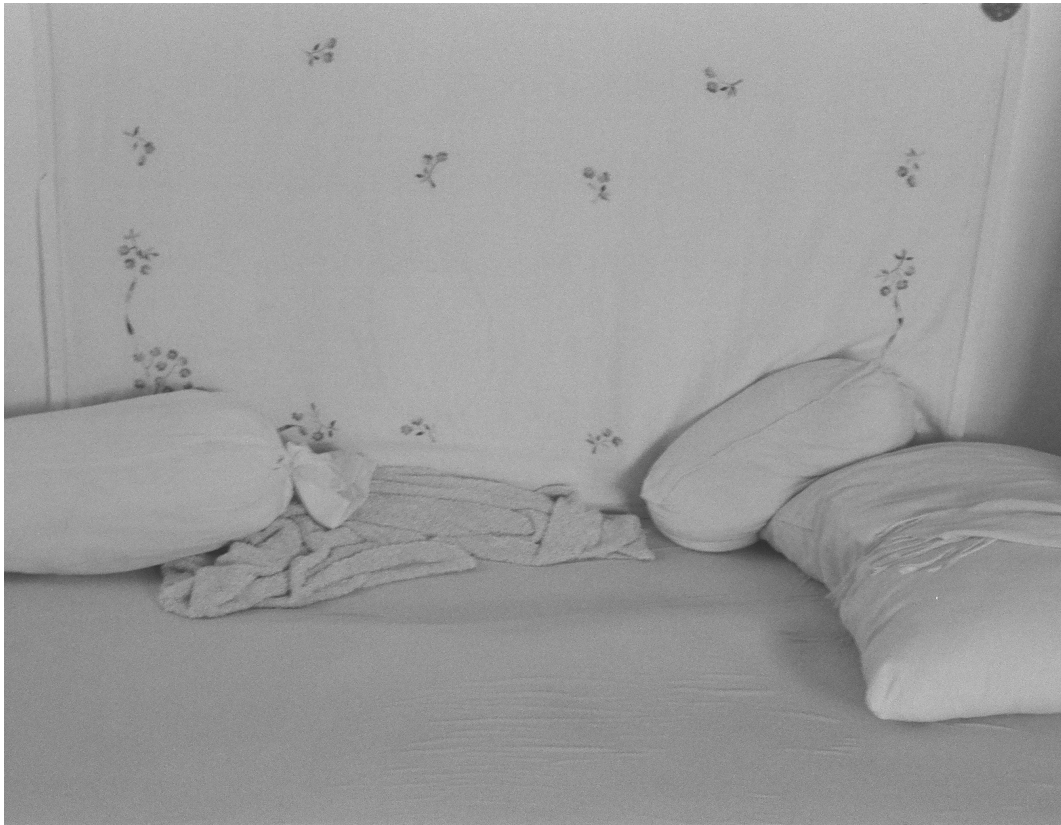
Aras river, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition $\frac{1}{3}$ + 1 AP, 29.5 × 23.1 cm.

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Jerusalem home 4, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition $\frac{1}{3} + 1$
AP, 22 × 28.9 cm.

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Bed of Simin, 2025, silver gelatin print on baryta paper, edition $\frac{1}{3}$ + 1 AP, 22 × 28.6 cm.

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Anne Simin Shitrit (born 1994 in Jerusalem) is an artist and photographer based in Paris. She graduated with honors from the Master's program at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (2024) and holds a Bachelor's degree from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design (2019). She also participated in the PHmuseum Folio Program (2024) and the Edmond de Rothschild program (2021).

Winner of the Lauren and Mitchell Presser Prize in 2024, she has received grants from the Porosus Foundation and Thanks for Nothing, and since 2025 has been in residence in the darkroom at Ithaque. In December 2025, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art will present a solo exhibition of Anne Simin Shitrit's work.

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Ithaque is an exhibition and creative space founded by Alexandre Arminjon in 2020, with the mission of preserving the expertise of analog photography. This hybrid venue, located in the heart of Paris, consists of two main spaces. The first hosts photography exhibitions, sensitive to diverse practices and cultures, the second is composed by two darkroom.

Since 2022, Ithaque has offered analog photography workshops for young audiences in Île-de-France. On the occasion of the bicentennial of photography, Ithaque was officially recognized by the French Ministry of Culture for its school photography workshop activities.

In parallel, the association Les Amis d'Ithaque, which funds the photography workshops and artist residencies, has been recognized as serving the public interest by the French tax administration.

Above all, Ithaque is a place for meetings, creation, and conviviality. To share the magic of the photographic development process, it offers exclusive events, private evenings, and workshops, all imbued with the unique atmosphere of the darkroom.

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