

El blanco

2016

In 2007 Ricardo Cases embarked on a trip across Mali in the company of a white man. Along the way he photographed everything that caught his attention and took portraits of his fellow traveller, a man from Seville whose primary activities were thinking and looking. On his return, Cases reviewed the material and started playing around with the images, with a view to connecting both groups of photographs: those of his travel companion and those of the territory they had visited. He realised however that the images were not sufficiently self-standing to tell the story he had intended, and after a few failed attempts he pushed the material into a drawer.

Years later, in 2015, he returned to the images and felt he was starting to connect with them. Some of them suggested ideas: the lack of legitimacy he felt as a photographer in talking about a place he experienced only in passing; the innocence in the gaze of the tourist who goes with the flow, stimulated by the journey's serendipity and by the exoticism of a foreign culture and reality; how it can sometimes be appropriate to linger on the surface, in the realm of the imagined, on the outcome of an experience so specific that it could nearly be a dream...

That's when he decided to structure the work around these new premises and edit this book in collaboration with Iván del Rey de la Torre, whose texts enter into a dance with the photographs, against that melody. The relationship thus established reveals how an image's importance often lies not in its materiality, but rather in the tracing of it that we carry around forever in our mind. When we fabricate new images, they are nothing but projections of those tracings.

That was the genesis of *El blanco*, a story where an examination of the West's representation of outlying territories leads us to question representation itself.