**~~REFUGEES~~**  
Images of the Unseen – Lens on the Migrant Crisis (cooperation with Omar Marques)

Perhaps the largest challenge to have confronted the European Union in recent years has been the migration crisis. According to official data, over two million people reached the EU in 2015 and 2016, but less than one third have received refugee status and accompanying support within the territory of the European Union. The large numbers of asylum-seekers coming from countries where conflicts are rife, but which do not feature highly on the list of countries currently in a state of war (such as Afghanistan), have a much lower chance of staying in Europe.  
The migration crisis has posed a fresh set of challenges to the European Union, but has also brought to the fore divisions amongst member states, as well within them. These divisions are evident on many intersecting levels: political, ideological and cultural. They spark conflicts not only in national parliaments, but also in the private sphere, bitterly dividing family and former friends. This tremendous challenge, the shocking events and images of war, the conditions in which millions of people – millions – are living, seems without an end or a seemingly viable solution. The majority of states are not taking effective action, eyes wide shut, painfully slow in their offers to offer effective help.  
Between 2015-2017 Omar Marques documented the faces of the migration crisis, weaving in and out of both official and illegal camps for refugees, meeting hundreds of people affected by the war in numerous places of apparent refuge - Serbia, Greece, Austria and Hungary. Amongst thousands of photographs, we chose a few dozen, those which were in contrast to the familiar images of photo-reportage. The images underwent a specific modification contrary to the principles of traditional photo-journalism – the people in them have been erased, they are unseen. The photographs are a striking witness to the presence of refugees, yet the refugees themselves are no longer present. In this way, the distorted reportage transports us into a different sphere of contemplation – we are left only with the traces of hundreds of thousands of people. The operation of “subtracting”, erasing, camouflaging, aims to draw our attention to the absence of refugees in the heated political debate and public discourse. Omar’s photo exhibition presents and brings to the fore the question of the presence/absence of the millions of refugees who are in Europe, alongside us but strangely absent.   
  
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