

Synopsis :

**MALU**

Photographic essay by  
**Fabrice LEROUX**

Saint Mitre les Remparts - FRANCE  
2009 – 2012

Malu, a granny like any other, like mine?

Some years ago I created a short film with my grandmother as the main character.

Maybe I'm trying to catch up on lost time, the final months when she didn't recognise me anymore and it was too painful for me to see her.

Malu's real name is Marie-Louise, like my grandmother. Life can be funny sometimes.

Getting close to forty, you start to look death in the face and then you see the distress of a life that has gone on too long. 95 years old and she's telling me that she finds the time long. As far as 80 was ok, but beyond, well it's too much....I who always felt that I would kill myself rather than face such a fate!

There aren't that many photos because it is the time spent with you, dear Malou, that is the most important. I wanted to steal absolutely nothing from you, but to have your consent, to share this work.

I wanted to show you to what extent beauty could still exist despite the age. Showing you some prints, your verdict was clear : *"Who is that woman wearing the same blouse as mine ? She's ugly!"*, then more emphatic: *"It's not me : look at me on my wedding day"*.

The time of past glory ?

She is 95 years old; she lives at home with us, she hardly ever leaves her room, and one day blurs into the next; however for the camera, nothing stays the same, it catches every tiny change.

Looking straight into her eyes, giving her support.

Stimulating some signs of life, some final laughter, even when you know how it was all going to end, as it did in May 2012.

The question of ageing, illness and the end of life sits somewhere between the universal and the intimate.

Photography allowed me to overcome my own shyness, like an opening towards the Other, a privileged relationship, a special authorisation; especially as with the passing of time, I would help you more from day to day rather than just being a simple bystander.

An added proximity and a double human and artistic relationship. The relationship is not the same when you feed the subject that you are photographing.

Ageing is a mysterious journey and Malu was a mystery of science. Looking back at my photos, each time I am astounded by the incredible physical changes, to the extent that in certain images I don't even recognize you anymore.

You think it's all over : she stops eating, goes off to hospital and the doctors start to tell us that...

No, not quite...like someone who doesn't want to go on living but just as she is at the point of drowning, she fights for air and hangs on. The instinct of survival.

Even though life seems no longer to have any meaning : she is deaf, hardly eats anything anymore, she doesn't see too well, speaks rarely; the television is on permanently as a sort of presence that she understands no more.

And the reflex of life is still there : terrifying and fascinating. The questions remain unanswered.