

# Lens MAGAZINE

Mark  
Edward  
Harris

CYRILLE A. PARRY  
Cloudy  
Tale

SHAMANISM  
RITUAL in  
KATMANDU  
*Carlota Leitão*

ALAIN  
DAUSSIN  
*A Window Into  
My Inner World*

A STATE OF  
"ARRESTED  
DECAY"  
JAMES T GUNDERSON

NLUZ  
2 PROJECTS  
LOVE

KAREN SAFER  
*My Favorite  
place on the planet*

SEUNGYEUN  
LEE  
*Dreaming In  
Black & White*

TIANQI LIAO  
UTOPIAN VISIONS

XAVIER  
PONCE  
BEING  
COLORBLIND

MELANIE  
HABERKORN  
Feminine  
Empowerment  
Projects

AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH MIEKE  
DOUGLAS  
*Postcards from Albania*

# M The M X Issue



**SHAMANISM**  
**RITUAL** *in*  
**KATMANDU**

*Carlota Leitão*

NEPAL | AUGUST 2023

# SHAMANISM RITUAL *in* KATMANDU

**S**hamanism in Nepal is characterized by a rich tradition of spiritual practices involving chants, rhythmic Drumming, and vibrant, colorful food offerings. Nepalese shamans, known as "Jhankris" or "Dhamis," often incorporate chants and mantras into their ceremonies. These vocalizations are intended to invoke and establish connections with the spiritual world. The chants, often sung in ancient languages, are considered vehicles to reach altered states of consciousness and facilitate communication with spiritual entities.



Shaman is invoking the spirits to treat the patient.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



## SHAMANISM RITUAL *in* KATMANDU



The shaman performs a healing and purification ritual, using heated plants to tap the patient's body. This is a ritual of cleansing, healing, or protection. It is believed that the plants used have special powers to ward off negative energies, remove spiritual blockages, or facilitate the healing process.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.

### *Carlota Leitão*

**T**he use of drums plays a central role in Nepalese shamanic practices. Percussive rhythms are fundamental in inducing trance states in shamans, allowing them to access the spiritual realm. The pulsating sound of drums creates a ritualistic atmosphere, marking the rhythm of the spiritual journey during ceremonies.

Food offerings play a symbolic and practical role in Nepalese shamanic practices. Fruits, grains, and other foods are presented as gifts to spirits. These offerings are considered gestures of gratitude

and respect, establishing a symbolic exchange between the material and spiritual worlds. The vibrant colors of the food may also hold specific meanings, symbolizing different aspects of life and nature.

Colored powders are finely ground powders used in shamanic ceremonies, often in vivid hues. They are sprinkled or tossed during rituals to invoke positive energies, ward off negative influences, and purify the environment. Colored powders are considered significant elements in creating a spiritual and auspicious atmosphere during shamanic practices.

These combined elements create a unique sensory experience during shamanic sessions in Nepal, where music, colors, and offerings converge to form a holistic expression of spirituality and connection with the divine.

In the context of the ritual, the environment where it takes place plays a crucial role. This space is more than just a physical location; it is a gateway to the spiritual realm, a backdrop where the connection between the shaman, participants, and the forces of nature becomes tangible.

## SHAMANISM RITUAL *in* KATMANDU

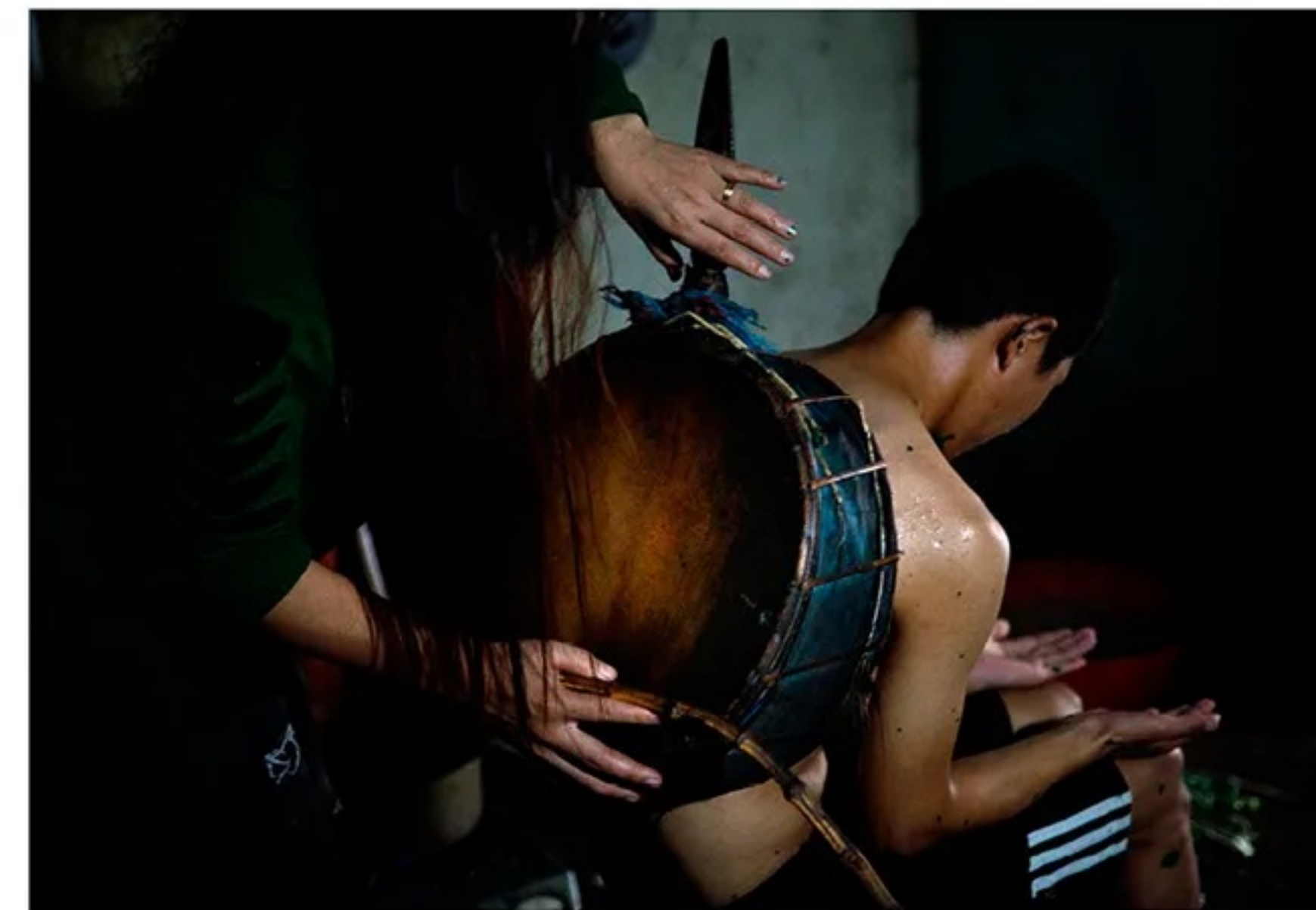
The space is carefully prepared to host the ritual. The atmosphere is charged with energy, with symbolic elements and ritual objects strategically placed to facilitate communication with the spirits and energies present.

Lighting, the sounds of nature, and the scents of herbs and incense

all contribute to creating an immersive atmosphere, immersing participants in a profound spiritual journey. Every aspect of the space is considered sacred, providing an environment conducive to healing, transformation, and connection with the divine.

### *Carlota Leitão*

A healing ritual where the drum sound is believed to have therapeutic properties. The drum's vibrations can positively impact the body's energy, aiding in removing blockages or restoring energetic balance.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.





**SHAMANISM  
RITUAL in  
KATMANDU**

The environment where the ritual takes place.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



Preparing the ritual offering, where specific colors may hold symbolic meanings, representing natural elements, sacred directions, states of being, or specific energies.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



Preparation of the space for a shamanic ritual.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



“Despite societal shifts, shamanism endures in Nepalese communities. My interest in documenting modern shamanic rituals aims to preserve cultural heritage. Through photography, I safeguard spiritual richness endangered by societal changes. These images serve as visual education, challenging stereotypes and fostering cultural appreciation. By exploring the duality of ancient practices and the present, I contribute to a valuable historical record, celebrating enduring diversity in culture and spirituality. I aim to capture and preserve the endangered spiritual richness through a single photograph, challenging stereotypes and fostering cultural appreciation.”



*Carlota Leitão*

# Carlota Leitão

In this shamanic healing ceremony, they dance, sing, and drum.  
Dancing: The rhythmic movements during dance are believed to help raise energy and establish a connection with the spirit world.  
Singing: Chants or songs often invoke spirits, set intentions, or create a sacred atmosphere during the ritual.  
Drumming is a common shamanic practice that alters consciousness. The repetitive beats can induce trance states, allowing the shaman or participants to access spiritual dimensions.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



**W**hile working on photojournalism assignments for several newspapers in Nepal, I asked a journalist colleague if he could establish contact and obtain permission for me to attend and photograph the entire ritual. After many contacts, we managed to secure authorization to photograph the ritual. Initially, I had to sit against the wall like everyone else was present and could only take photos from there. As time passed and people became more accustomed to me and my camera, I was granted a bit more freedom of movement. For the final ritual, they placed a chair in the middle of the room for me to sit and photograph from there.

My gear for this project is a Canon 5D Mark IV with an EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens.



In this shamanic healing ceremony, they dance, sing, and drum.  
Dancing: The rhythmic movements during dance are believed to help raise energy and establish a connection with the spirit world.  
Singing: Chants or songs often invoke spirits, set intentions, or create a sacred atmosphere during the ritual.  
Drumming is a common shamanic practice that alters consciousness. The repetitive beats can induce trance states, allowing the shaman or participants to access spiritual dimensions.  
Carlota Leitão © All rights reserved.



## SHAMANISM RITUAL *in* KATMANDU

*Carlota Leitão*

Carlota Leitão is a Portuguese photographer who finds inspiration in documentary photography. She seeks to create photos that tell stories and convey a message rather than focusing solely on aesthetics. Her work covers a wide range of topics, including Drag Queen Identities, medical emergencies, voyeurism, pandemic confinement, and humanitarian efforts. Her photographs have been featured in various exhibitions and publications across Europe and America.

Born in Portugal, Carlota Leitão holds a degree in Advertising Engineering and has pursued photography courses at the Instituto Português da Juventude (IPJ) and the Instituto Português de Fotografia (IPF). Over the years, her work has been showcased in numerous group and solo exhibitions, and she has received recognition

for her unique approach to documentary photography.

In addition to her social projects in documentary Photography, she founded Fullframe in 2009, a photography company offering professional services to businesses and brands. In 2012, she co-authored a technical book dedicated to running studio photography.

After a 10-year break from exhibitions, Carlota Leitão resumed showcasing her work in 2022 with two exhibitions at the Holy Art Gallery in London, and in 2023, she participated in a collective exhibition in Santiago de Chile.

She currently resides in Porto, Portugal, and frequently embarks on documentary trips.

**SHAMANISM**  
RITUAL *in*  
**KATMANDU**



---

*Carlota Leitão*

---

DOCUMENTARY WORK: [WWW.CARLOTALEITAO.PHOTO](http://WWW.CARLOTALEITAO.PHOTO)

COMERCIAL WORK: [WWW.FULLFRAME.COM.PT](http://WWW.FULLFRAME.COM.PT)

INSTAGRAM: [@CARLOTALEITAO.PHOTO](https://www.instagram.com/CARLOTALEITAO.PHOTO)