



**In/sight** African Photographers, 1940 to the Present







# **In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present**

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
May 24–September 29, 1996

Curated by  
Clare Bell, Okwui Enwezor, Danielle Tilkin, and Octavio Zaya

This exhibition is funded by The Rockefeller Foundation and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Major continuing support and international air transportation are provided by Lufthansa.



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Back: Lamia Naji, *Catania, Italy*, 1994. Gelatin-  
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This exhibition represents a substantial turning point in the museum's history. For the first time, African and not European constructs inform the ideas surrounding the works on view. Founded on the tenets of European modernism and its tendency toward abstract forms, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, from its very beginnings, has served as both a catalyst and champion of avant-garde theories and approaches to art. *In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* is also rare in that it focuses major critical attention on issues of representation, a subject that either remained dormant or was subsumed by abstract idioms in past exhibitions. Painting and sculpture from Eastern and Western Europe, as well as North America, have been the mainstay of the museum for more than half a century. Only in the last few years have we had the means and opportunity to expand from that nucleus, leading us to address the globe at large and to include other mediums in our programming and collecting efforts.

Photography is now chief among the museum's pursuits. By broadening its engagement with twentieth-century art to encompass photography and multimedia, the institution has embarked on a dynamic journey, one that moves significantly beyond modernism's reflective inquiries to contend with art forms and discourses that challenge conventional ideologies while constantly advancing new methods of inquiry and debate. In bringing together thirty African-born photographers, this exhibition not only honors the achievements of these artists but highlights a medium whose fundamental relationship to the arts in Africa is largely unfamiliar to Western audiences.

As always, our sponsors have proved to be the most pivotal of advocates. In order to embark on this project, the museum needed crucial funds for research and printed materials. Above all, I would like to thank Alberta Arthurs, Director of Arts and Humanities, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, Associate Director of Arts and Humanities, at The Rockefeller Foundation for their unwavering support of the Guggenheim Museum's endeavor to organize a presentation of African art. My appreciation is offered to The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, most especially to Pamela Clapp, Program Director, for her assistance and support. I am equally indebted to Jürgen Weber, Chairman of Lufthansa German Airlines, for the company's continuing commitment to the museum and its projects.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the exhibition's four curators, who, in the spirit of collaboration and discovery that has defined this undertaking from its outset, have devoted a substantial amount of their time and creativity to selecting and writing about the photographs. The difficult task of locating so many photographers scattered throughout the world and bringing to light essential information about their work was accomplished only through their expertise and dedication. Finally, it is the artists and lenders who have truly made the showing of these works at the Guggenheim Museum possible. To them I owe my deepest appreciation.

From the beginning of our research, it became abundantly clear that in order to present the works of photographers from Africa who now reside or lived in diverse countries on and outside that continent, we would need to rely on the guidance of numerous individuals and organizations. What we could not anticipate was the enormous outpouring of support for the project at every turn and, above all, the extraordinary amount of time and effort given unselfishly by everyone involved in its realization. We are deeply indebted to the staff at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, especially Thomas Krens, Director, for providing us with the necessary resources to fulfill our ideas and the freedom in which to shape them. We would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to Jay Levenson, Deputy Director for Program Administration, for his counsel and aid in overseeing the museum's festival of African art. Our appreciation also goes out to Germano Celant, Curator of Contemporary Art, and Carmen Giménez, Curator of Twentieth-Century Art, for their support during various phases of the project.

The coordination of the project was truly dependent upon the boundless skills and tireless efforts of Regina Woods, Project Curatorial Assistant, who worked on every phase of the exhibition and catalogue; the proficiency, knowledge, and enthusiasm she brought to the project were extraordinary. We also extend our gratitude to Aileen Rosenberg, Assistant Registrar, for her invaluable assistance in working through the multifarious details necessary to bring the works to New York. Special thanks go to members of the museum's Art Services and Preparations team for their expertise and advice on fabrication, framing, and construction. They include Peter Costa, Project Services Manager/Exhibition Design Coordinator; Peter Read, Production Services Manager/Exhibition Design Coordinator; David Veater, Chief Preparator; Bryn Jayes, Assistant Preparator; Gillian McMillan, Conservator; James Cullinane, Senior Exhibition Technician; David Heald, Photographer; Sally Ritts, Photography and Permissions Associate; Ellen Labenski, Photography Assistant; Jocelyn Groom, Exhibition Technician/Administrative Assistant; William Smith, Exhibition Technician; Jon Brayshaw, Museum Technician/Carpenter; David Johnson, Museum Technician/Carpenter; Tom Radloff; and Miren Arenzana.

For their essential contributions, we also thank George McNeely, Director of Corporate and Foundation Giving; Amy Husten, Manager of Budget and Planning; Jin Hong, Controller; Maureen Ahearn, Accounts Payable Analyst; Christine Ferrara, Public Affairs Coordinator; Josette Lamoureux, Exhibition Assistant; and Stacey Williams, curatorial intern.

Outside the Guggenheim Museum, there are many individuals and organizations whose extraordinary assistance we wish to acknowledge, in particular Djibril Sy for his efforts in locating the rich holdings in Senegal of vintage photographs by Salla Casset and Meïssa Gaye. His generosity and kindness will not be forgotten. We are also enormously grateful to the following people in Dakar, Senegal and the United States for aiding him and the museum in accomplishing this important task: Awa Diarra Gaye; Awa Dia; Abdoulaye Casset; Steven L. Pike, Cultural Affairs Officer, and James Pollock, United States Information Service, Dakar; the staff of the Centre Culturel Français; Vieux Diba; Michael Pelletier; and John Hand.

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Alioune Bâ, Françoise Huguier, and Jean François Werner, who were most giving of their time and provided critical information about the photographers' work.

For their aid in identifying African artists who now live around the world, we gratefully thank Gilbert Beaugé, Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, Université de Marseille; Guy Lacroix, Centre Culturel Français, Nairobi; Brahim Alaoui, Director, and Laila Al-Wahidi, Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris; Vibeke Rostrup Boyesen, Project Coordinator of Images of Africa, Copenhagen; Geneviève Bréerette; Rose Issa; Gavin Jantjes; Mounira Khemire; Michket Krifa; Joan Rabascall; and Jean-Michel Rousset. Special thanks are offered to Ruth Charity, The Photographers' Gallery, London; Bernard Descamps; Najet Dridi; Guy Hersant; Sandra Percival, Director, and Nick Hallam, Public Art Development Trust, London; and Mark Sealy, Autograph, London. We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Agnès de Gouvion Saint-Cyr, Inspecteur Général pour la Photographie, Délégation aux Arts Plastiques, Ministère de la Culture, Fonds National d'Art Contemporain and her staff members Marie-Noëlle Corsin, Alain Decouche, and Hélène Vassal, Bureau du Mouvement des Oeuvres et de la Régie, which also generously lent artworks. We are deeply indebted to James Bailey and Marié Human, Archive Manager, Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg, for providing us with the prints for the works from *Drum* magazine and for their enormous help in locating missing information about certain photographers. Without their support and cooperation, we could not have realized this critical aspect of the exhibition. Our deepest appreciation is offered to the staff of *Revue noire*, especially Simon Njami, Jean Loup Pivin, Pascal Martin Saint Léon, and Pierre Laurent Sanner, for opening their archive to us and acquainting us with the work of many photographers from Africa.

The high quality of this catalogue results in large part from the exceptional efforts of Laura Morris, the museum's Associate Editor, who edited the book and oversaw every detail of its development. We also wish to recognize Cara Galowitz, former Manager of Graphic Design Services, who skillfully designed what constitutes the museum's first book devoted to photography; and Elizabeth Levy, Managing Editor, who guided it through production and showed great sensitivity to the needs of the original artworks. Our thanks are expressed to Carol Fitzgerald, Editorial and Production Assistant, for her dedication to the project; Susan Lee, Media Systems Assistant; Stephen Sartarelli, who translated artists' statements from the French; and Stephen Frankel. To Olu Oguibe we offer our most sincere appreciation for his essay; he continually brings to bear a remarkable level of criticality and scholarship to whatever subject he investigates.

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Finally, we extend our utmost gratitude to the lenders and, above all, the artists. Their contributions are clearly evident on the pages before you and on the walls of the museum. We are tremendously fortunate to have had the opportunity to present these works to a new audience in the United States.

In Western art history, the use of place to connote geographical boundaries is as common a concept as it is dubious. There is no shortage of exhibitions devoted to surveying the cultural production of particular countries, regions, and locales. Yardsticks for gauging collective ideologies, their function is often that of an agent of consensus, inscribing, reading, and seeking to make visible a homogeneous thread within the culture under examination. Like a tourist, art history often encounters differences only to sum them up with the most convenient terms at its disposal. Multiplicity poses a difficult hurdle because it carries with it a sense of ambivalence and instability that disrupts the bedrock of fixed preconceptions previously rendered immutable by the rigors of geography.

A pervasive differentiation between the subject (which has power) and the object (which does not) underlies all Western art; its very language is structured by active and passive modes of looking. Geographical considerations and their relationship to identity and culture have also been subsumed into an insulated dynamic that privileges one point of view over another. This is made apparent by the existence of a First World mentality, which, through its connotation of hierarchical status, promotes the idea of a Third World. Territory thus becomes a distancing device that authorizes Western representations by marginalizing or impeding those it seeks to regulate. The problem with embracing difference, as the late critic Craig Owens proposed, lies in its concomitant sense of unease. "Pluralism . . .," he states, "reduces us to being an other among others; it is not a recognition, but a reduction to difference to absolute indifference. . . . What is at stake, then, is not only the hegemony of Western culture, but also (our sense of) our identity as a culture."<sup>1</sup> Self-reflexive rather than revealing, the recognition of place in these terms functions as a way to affirm our resolutions about ourselves rather than to tell us about others.

Of course, perceptions of difference are by no means limited to considerations of geography, since they seep into every fiber of identity, whether it be gender, race, class, sexuality, or religion. The relationship between art history and terrain, however, becomes increasingly problematic when the discourse of Western art is focused upon non-Western cultures. Under these circumstances, cultural relativism habitually abounds, and inconsistencies and fictive narratives routinely stand for "truth." In the case of Africa, in particular, the sanctioned division of land has served to define and promote the oxymoronic myth of a unified subjectivity.

The remapping and exploitation of the African continent by European powers, which began in earnest in the mid-nineteenth century, continues to serve as one of the most insidious indexes for Western definitions of the lives of Africans. The Berlin Conference, of 1884–85, authorized the expansionist plans of Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and several other nations. The "scramble for Africa,"<sup>2</sup> set firmly into motion in the 1880s and abating only in the wake of World War II, established widespread European rule in Africa, along with a standard of reference that has continued to endure in the Western imagination. V. Y. Mudimbe explains: *Colonialism and colonization basically mean organization, arrangement. The two words derive from the Latin word colere, meaning to cultivate or to design. . . . It can be admitted that the colonists (those settling a region) as well as the colonialists (those exploiting a territory by dominating a local majority) have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs.*<sup>3</sup>

Within this paradigm, diversity was reserved for European civilization, while all African societies were treated as one. Mudimbe further observes, "During this period both imperialism and anthropology took shape, allowing the reification of the 'primitive.'"<sup>4</sup> Inasmuch as anthropology's very existence is ultimately bound to a Eurocentric frame of reference, its history, motives, and procedures have tended toward gross overgeneralizations.<sup>5</sup> In attempting to reconcile the social sciences with the natural sciences, anthropologists in the nineteenth century seized on archetypes to account for the differences they observed in African societies. The writer and poet Chinua Achebe attests:

*To the colonialist mind it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: "I know my natives," a claim which implied two things at once: (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand—understanding being a pre-condition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding.*<sup>6</sup>

In the nineteenth century, there arose a proliferation of ethnographic studies based in no small part on the prevailing discourses of power and economics that were used to advance the merits of European society, while denigrating the achievements and silencing the lifestyles of those in the non-Western world. Africa was booty in Europe's industrial pillaging for resources and surpluses, and its own economic (under)development was contingent on the ruling parties' capitalist policies.

Photography, as Jonathan Crary affirms, acted in the period as "a crucial component of a new cultural economy of value and exchange." Its relationship to money and entitlement assured "that a whole social world is represented and constituted exclusively as signs."<sup>7</sup> And thus the photograph became an essential tool to further scientific observation and to fulfill voyeuristic yearnings. Science publications, postcards, and photographic albums produced in the period constructed a veneer of Africa, tending to represent people and communities as either raw data or spectacles. Such representations had a twofold purpose, as both a model of ritual, dress, and habitat, and as aberrant disclosure or anathema. Individual identity was subsumed in favor of category or type, the body functioning as an exterior site investigable and regulatable by the observing Western eye. As Roland Barthes aptly observes, myth and photography often work in unison. He defines myth as "a system of communication . . . a message . . . myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form."<sup>8</sup> A photograph is "a mirror, what we are asked to read is the familiar, the known . . . but clarified, exalted, superbly elevated into a type."<sup>9</sup>

This exhibition is an attempt to broaden the parameters of the notion of place, thereby revealing the operations that contribute to the Western myth of Africa. Its goal is to present photographs created and disseminated by African artists engaged with issues of subjectivity—such as identity, self-determination, and difference—during a period that witnessed the nadir of colonialism and the formation of many independent African nations. The images are linked by a sense of presence. They provide vivid testimony to the manifold existences and ideas of their creators as well as of their subjects. At the same time, they may jolt us into recognizing our complicity in the concealment of those very lives.

Of the thirty artists represented, only a few have ever shown their work together or in the United States. In order to cover a large expanse of time, the 139 objects in the exhibition were chosen by series or groups of images within

a particular period or genre. Some comprise artists' first mature bodies of work; others are the most recent manifestations of their oeuvres. While the exhibition is focused on the work of African photographers, its subject is not relegated to Africa. Indeed, all the artists in the presentation were born there. Some have spent their entire careers in the countries of their birth; others, whether by exile, relocation, or personal choice, moved away, to locales either within the continent or abroad. If this fact of birth accounts for any similarities, it is also the site at which they scatter. Just as it is wholly impossible to sum up the experiences of a single individual, it is absurd to try and formulate the ideological constitution of a continent. Nor is it possible to compress fifty years of photographic creativity into a monolithic survey. Taking a cue from writer and philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah's words that "Africa is a 'multiple existence,'"<sup>10</sup> we selected photographers who have left their mark in varied genres, approaches, intervals, spaces, and milieus.

Because photography and its tactics of positioning and display have played such a critical role in propagating colonialist myths about Africa, it is the camera, not the continent, that links the endeavors of the photographers. Deceptively linked to the "real," photographs traditionally achieve the status of documents. For the artists assembled here, the photograph's lack of closure, its ability to invoke a presence without sealing off meaning, takes precedence over the absolute fixity that the ethnographer, among countless others, has assigned to it.

The presentation begins in 1940, when European occupation was slipping into decline. In Dakar, Senegal, Salla Casset and Meïssa Gaye were among a generation of photographers that established studios to meet the growing demands of a new class of urban clientele, who desired portraits to share with their families, friends, and associates. Working from his studio in Bamako, Mali, Seydou Keita often photographed his sitters outdoors and posed against patterned backdrops (initially his own bedspread<sup>11</sup>), because he preferred to work in natural light. His photographs, which typically took as much as one hour to shoot, were commissioned by state workers and employees of Railway Soudan, the major line linking Bamako to the fashionable city of Dakar. Keita's work from the 1950s includes depictions of well-dressed men and women, many of whom sport wristwatches or handbags. Appearing in his photographs may be a radio, telephone, Vespa, or even a car, items that Keita was able to purchase after the French left Mali and that he frequently offered to his sitters as props.<sup>12</sup> The photographs by these three artists are compelling in the way that their sitters confront the camera's gaze and in the relationship of model to picture plane. The latter is most pronounced in the use of a diagonal plane that projects the subject beyond the artifice of the studio and into the viewer's space.

Shot outdoors against simple canvases, in small northern towns of Côte d'Ivoire, the bust portraits of Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt from 1964 were commissioned by locals for identification cards that enabled them to vote and move more freely about the country. While the meagerness of dress and the frankness in pose of Augustt's sitters are in marked contrast to the more style-conscious clientele who sought out the studios of Casset, Gaye, and Keita, the resulting photographs offer evidence of their medium's critical role throughout Africa as a social and political agent of self-determination.

Presence is no less felt in Mohammed Dib's 1946 works, which suggest the movement of Algerian citizens within the public and private spaces and environs of his home in Tlemcen. A poet whose photographic activity ceased after that year, Dib cautions against substituting images for remembrances. Rendered at a distance or glimpsed in partial light, his subjects are difficult to fix in time and place, as if cloaked by memory.

Within the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, the immediacy and reach of popular culture throughout South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, East and Central Africa resonate in the photographs of a varied group of African-born photojournalists employed by *Drum* magazine. Based in South Africa, *Drum* became one of the most widely read periodicals throughout the continent at a time when that country was adopting increasingly oppressive apartheid policies and other areas were undergoing massive restructurings. Photography was a critical component of *Drum*, the highly anticipated cover girl of the month gracing its exterior, and images illustrating stories on everything from politics, religion, and crime to entertainment, society galas, and sports contained within its pages. *Drum's* darkroom, in fact, was the initiation ground for photographers such as Bob Gosani and Peter Magubane, whose acclaim continued well beyond their involvement with the magazine. It was a critical forum for burgeoning photographers who, though barred from directly contesting the South African government's practices of segregation, nonetheless set out to record their own experiences and those of their communities. Disguises and detainments were commonplace in their goal to faithfully depict current events. *Drum's* role in supporting these photographers' efforts and circulating their work provides an important link to interpreting how photography was consumed at large.

David Goldblatt and Santu Mofokeng, who are also from South Africa but work independently, present us with images that convey everyday existence tempered and at times urged on by political imperatives and the shifting ground of social and economic changes occurring within the country's townships and outlying provinces. Goldblatt's works from the 1960s, some of which were published in his 1975 book *Some Afrikaners Photographed*, depict a cross section of the population of Dutch-descended whites, whom he grew up among but knew very little of until undertaking his project. Mofokeng's photographs taken during the late 1980s, on the other hand, chronicle the experiences of black men, women, and children during the waning of apartheid.

A plethora of commerce and rush of humanity occupy Ricardo Rangel's photographs of Maputo, Mozambique. Taken over a ten-year period when men were scarce in the city, their having been called away to fight in the struggle for independence from Portugal, Rangel frames his female subjects in moments of conversation, unease, or isolation. He conjures the claustrophobic and erotic nature of modernity by calling our attention to those new spaces of femininity taking root.

Privy to his subjects' social circles, Malick Sidibé of Bamako was commissioned by young people to photograph their parties and outings. His images from 1970 of teenagers posing with their record albums, dancing together, and playing on the beach provide a glimpse into the often awkward and touching aspects of adolescence: the camaraderie between friends, the freshness of romance, and the optimism of youth.



The notion of presence also filters through the photographs of Cairo shopkeepers by Nabil Boutros of Egypt, and it defiantly lingers in the abandoned graffiti-littered chambers of a prison cell captured in dim light through the viewfinder of Guinean Mody Sory Diallo's camera. Unlike Boutros and Diallo, other artists working since the 1970s abandon the singular presence found in earlier photography, focused as it was toward serving the needs of a customer or neighbor, or documenting events. Replacing that presence has been an inquiring one; in more recent works, the studio, landscape, and body serve as tableaux, fictions that are exposed or rewritten through a given photographer's individual vision and ideas.

The self-portraits of Samuel Fosso taken in his studio in the Central African Republic when he was just a teenager in the late 1970s are reminiscent of the portraiture of earlier photographers, yet his use of dress, pose, and performance draws attention to slippages of identity rather than, for example, social status. Photographing himself in a wide variety of attire such as bell-bottoms and a cap, or stripped to his underwear and wearing a pair of rubber gloves, his eyes typically cast downward or obscured by sunglasses, Fosso presents the viewer with calculated personas behaving in an experimental space. His portraits are subject to different readings of the self and the ways it can be constructed around and within sexual politics and the social spaces of private and public arenas. The idea of a transitory self is evident in the spectral, phantomlike images that characterize photographs by artists such as Kamel Dridi, Touhami Ennadre, Jellel Gasteli, and Lamia Naji, and in interrogations of the body or the institutions that exploit it addressed in the light boxes of Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé or Zarina Bhimji.

It was Barthes who said, "Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful."<sup>13</sup> For artists such as Gordon Bleach, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, and Iké Udé, photography is a text, a scripted presence that both circumscribes and refutes the rhetorical forms of colonialist sensibilities, while nourishing fresh perspectives on subjectivity. The challenge for each of the artists in the presentation, as well as for those of us looking at their works, lies not in resurrecting an image of Africa as place, but rather in examining the matrix of experiences that invites questions about language, history, and environment.

## Notes

1. Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), p. 58.
2. According to Thomas Pakenham, scholars believe that the term was coined in 1884. See Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa: White Man's Conquest of the Dark Continent from 1876–1912* (New York: Avon Books, 1991), p. xxv.
3. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
5. For instance, Sander L. Gilman cites examples of shameless nineteenth-century studies on race, especially in relationship to female sexuality, noting such tomes as *Histoire naturelle du genre humain* and *Dictionary of Medical Sciences*. See Gilman, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality," in *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 76–108.
6. Chinua Achebe, "Colonialist Criticism," in Bill Ashcroft et al., ed., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 58. Originally published in Achebe, *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (London: Heinemann, 1988).
7. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 13.
8. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, ed. and trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), p. 109.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
10. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," in Ashcroft et al., p. 124. Originally published in Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (London: Methuen, 1992).
11. From an interview between Seydou Keita and André Magnin, which was conducted in August 1994 in Bamako, published in *Big City: Artists from Africa*, exh. cat. (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1995), unpaginated.
12. From a conversation with Françoise Huguier on November 18, 1995 in Paris. I am indebted to Ms. Huguier, who has had the opportunity to speak with Keita at length over the years she has known him, for the information she provided on his work.
13. Barthes, p. 110.





## Colonial Imaginary, Tropes of Disruption: History, Culture, and Representation in the Works of African Photographers

Okwui Enwezor and Octavio Zaya

To mount an exploration of African photographers, living or dead, exiled or residing on the continent, is to initiate an investigation of daunting magnitude. Equally, it means entering the terrain of transnational debates on questions of Africanity and issues of boundaries, race, culture, and politics, debates that are at once problematic and enriching. It also entails highlighting new insights on modern and postcolonial African identities and experiences, which may in turn lead to the uncovering of forgotten photographic material.

In pursuing this exploratory activity, it is practically impossible to examine African art and history of any period without taking into account Western anthropology's complicity in constructing and framing a natural history of critical intransigencies and visual codes, as well as the specific means through which the West has apprehended, consumed, and interpreted the African continent as a site of both scientific inquiry and popular entertainment. In building the framework through which this encounter has been accessed and codified as unimpeachable knowledge, photography has often been allied with anthropology. Such codification is exemplified by the tens of millions of postcards produced in the nineteenth century to sate Europe's appetite for exotic, colonized peoples as specimens of curiosity inciting a lurid benevolence. This ethnographic sensibility, which inspired Western artistic, cultural, and scientific pursuits in the past, seems inexhaustible today, as it continuously feeds the commercial hungers of popular entertainment, particularly in movies and pulp fiction. No continent meets the demands of these entertainments better than Africa. Looking toward the more distant past, the movies *Tarzan*, *King Solomon's Mines*, and *Birth of a Nation* come to mind, and a cursory examination of blockbusters made in the last fifteen years yields such examples as *Indiana Jones*, *Out of Africa*, *Congo*, *Ace Ventura*, and *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. Such movies indicate that Africa remains a territory of the Western imagination, often crudely constructed as an aberrant human domain or as a comical screen upon which the visuals of such imagination can be projected.

In movie footage and also in literature, Africa has been made completely invisible, obscured and masked, screened from our consciousness, and elided from the world's memory banks. For example, Africa is a void, a deep black hole that young Charles Marlow, in Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1902), hankered after to quell his passion for maps and the glories of exploration. Says Marlow:

*Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces [our emphasis] on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, "When I grow up I will go there." . . . But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after. . . . It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness.<sup>1</sup>*

Marlow was seized by the giddy urge to possess and own, to occupy and have the power of sanction and legislation, and to impose his will and mastery over territories, territories that could only exist as *blank spaces*. Today, Marlow's passion and hankering might be read as a deformity, but his desire was very much in tune with late-nineteenth-century reasoning, a time of explorers, missionaries, and mad scientists. Just as Marlow's attitude reflected the

reasoning of even the most enlightened people of the period, *Heart of Darkness* set the contemporary literary tone for the early twentieth century's perception of Africa: Africa as a tangle of bad dreams, hallucinations, disease, madness, and moral decrepitude, Africa as a place where the mind wilts in the humid frenzy of incomprehensibility and cruelty. Of course, Conrad (who himself actually embarked on Marlow's journey to the Congo) as a fiction writer took the liberty to conjure up images that would adequately frighten the European mind and thus reinforce the idea of Africa as a no-man's-land filled with evil, from which only the strongest could emerge unscathed.

The specific ways through which spurious Western agents have constructed a dense catalogue of knowledge about Africa, in the process distorting its rich and long historical and cultural traditions, are telling. Such distortions, as Nicolas Monti notes in his remarkable book *Africa Then: Photographs, 1840–1918*, “formed the romantic myth in which the European bourgeoisie tried for the last time to manifest two opposing values: freedom and power.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, what the European powers that conquered, colonized, and exploited Africa produced is a rendering of the continent as an amoral, primitive, and marginal site of dark, brooding forces, misery, and pestilence, a place that both cripples and fervidly arouses the imagination of the traveler, explorer, missionary, bounty hunter, and colonist. Indeed, it is a matter of quite some contradiction that Africa is also often promoted in the West as the cradle of civilization, an Eden where the last vestiges of a primeval paradise—with its lowland savannahs, misty peaks of mysterious mountain ranges, evergreen valleys, and thundering waterfalls—can be glimpsed from safari trails and game parks. There, in a pure state of nature, purged of any kind of native mediation, the spirit soars, the “heart of darkness” collapses and gives way to untrammelled beauty, awe, and innocence. It is out of such invocations that many Europeans have embarked on trips to Africa. One famous example is the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who, before abandoning poetry and setting out on his exploration of Africa, declared with fanfare and fantasy in 1873 that he was quitting Europe for odd climates that “will tan me.” Above all, he craved freedom from a corrupt France, which was terrorized by the Catholic Church. He ran away “to swim, to trample the grass, to hunt, above all, to smoke; to drink liquors strong as boiling metal.” He continued, “I shall come back, with limbs of iron, my skin dark, my eye furious.” What strange desires these were, desires that only the most fictional places on earth could fulfill. Of course, the Africa of Rimbaud's imagination became, upon his arrival, a place whose peoples he regarded as “stupid and savage.”<sup>3</sup> Fifty years later, André Breton and his Surrealist cohorts, in their love for delinquency and juvenile rebellion, celebrated Rimbaud, in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), as “a Surrealist in the practice of life and elsewhere.” The irony of Rimbaud's racist impulse, and the fact that he ended up in Aden (Yemen) and Harar (in what is now Ethiopia) as a gunrunner and slave smuggler, was obviously lost on them.

As a result of the errant experiences and accounts of many such individuals from the West, Africa has remained a foil for Europe's civilizing tendencies and delusions of superiority, “a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest.”<sup>4</sup> Let us eavesdrop on Rudyard Kipling focusing his imagination upon two vast territories: India, the subcontinent where he was stationed, and Africa, the continent where he was born. He writes in “The White Man's Burden” (1899):

*Take up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.*<sup>5</sup>

In this last line, "Half devil and half child," Kipling, like his contemporary Conrad, provides us a peek into the binary code that not only gave impetus to, but also defined and justified, colonial subjugation. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, a massive effort was made by European powers to open up the African hinterland for trade and also for the pursuit of Christian missionary activities. The contest between the French and British for the control of trade from the Red Sea led to the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In his essay "The Power of Speech," V. Y. Mudimbe notes that "the more carefully one studies the history of missions in Africa, the more difficult it becomes not to identify it with cultural propaganda, patriotic motivations, and commercial interests, since the missions' program is indeed more complex than the simple transmission of the Christian faith."<sup>6</sup> As part of Europe's conquest of Africa, missionaries and explorers came, followed by photographers, anthropologists, and various other experts, under the guise of these firmly established scenarios and motivations. African self-images grounded in centuries of civilization would be condemned by the European scientific and intellectual communities as heathen, unclean, primitive, and savage. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in *Philosophy of History* (1840), writes that Africa "is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European world."<sup>7</sup> This prejudice was developed later by Count Arthur de Gobineau and others. Its refutation would become the lifelong quest of the Senegalese historian and anthropologist Cheikh Anta Diop. According to Diop's writings, the invention of the savage meant equally the invention of a master who must tame and guide him. Such notions would pave the way for Europe's final assault on and subdivision of the entire continent into colonies.

On February 23, 1885, at the Berlin Conference, under the auspices of Otto von Bismarck, fourteen European nations redrew the map of Africa, dividing the continent between themselves and conferring the right to explore, prospect, and draw subboundaries as they saw fit, as long as these activities did not interfere with the territorial claims of other member nations. This mad drive, for it can be called nothing else, set in motion what is known historically as the "scramble for Africa." After the rush was over, only three African countries, Ethiopia (Abyssinia), Liberia, and Morocco, maintained their standing as independent states.

The brutal and total annexation and occupation of Africa lasted for less than a hundred years. But it left an indelible mark in its notion of African national identities, since such identities were more or less figments of the

colonial imagination. Borders were drawn indiscriminately by the European powers without any consideration of the location of specific cultures when the cartographers arrived. Beginning in the 1920s, attempts to reverse the course of this territorial violence were made, thereby challenging European hegemony and political and cultural authority. These protestations, which gained momentum from the 1930s, laid the foundation for a protracted battle for independence. The first independent states to come out of this struggle were Egypt, under Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954, and Ghana, under Kwame Nkrumah in 1957. These two figures helped usher in a new postcolonial era, but, more importantly, they almost single-handedly defined the ideological positions of Pan-Arab unity and Pan-African unity.

Although African nations won independence, Western stereotypes and misconceptions about Africans persisted. It is pertinent to illustrate the kind of image of the African that has survived for generations in the West, since photographic representation is essentially about the image and its construction as a visual analogue. Returning to *Heart of Darkness*, in a passage characterized by both racism and the most implacable earnestness, Conrad enacts a deliberately false description, as if to write a summation of the Western perception of the image of the African savage:

*And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam gauge and at the water gauge with an evident effort of intrepidity—and he had filed teeth, too, the poor devil, and the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on each of his cheeks. He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge.<sup>8</sup>*

It is the person and context of the above description that are the subjects of this exhibition. While we cannot redeem such distortions, the works in the exhibition provide a different account of that African landscape and history, difficult as they may be to (re)present in two dimensions. Over the course of its encroachment in Africa, no medium has been more instrumental in creating a great deal of the visual fictions of the African continent than photography. Yet, ironically, in attempting to defuse the power of these historicist fictions, we must rely upon photography and its vast array of signs, which also stand at the juncture of this refutation.

### **Photography and the World as Image**

In its more than one hundred fifty years of existence, photography has left us a deep and startling archive of human identity, its memories, presences, and absences. In a sense, what it has deposited in our care, for our gaze to linger upon, are the traces and imprints of vanished moments, while it leaves unaccounted the motivations behind the making of individual photographs. As a supplement, referent, or index, the photograph invokes the perception of a presence on a flat surface. Yet the photograph in reality documents the absence of the subject represented. Drawing



on this apparent contradiction, Roland Barthes writes that “the Photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else.”<sup>9</sup> Moreover, photography’s prodigious ability to inhale and disseminate so much information multiplies this false sensation of the inscription of presence, thus frustrating efforts to categorize the medium’s meaning as a stand-in for visual and/or experiential truth.

As we gather together the stories or pictures created through photography, we must, however, insist on the necessary contingency of all historical accounts, particularly in the case of modern African history, as we scan its progression across the scarred pages of the legacy of European colonialism. An empirical doubt must arise when we are confronted with the “veracity” of certain data—historical records and accounts, and images, especially photographs—built around Africa. In pausing on the issue of photography as an instrument furthering certain historicist fictions, charting and inscribing a visual palimpsest of the West’s perceptions about otherness, we must question what is often seen as photographic truth and the notion of photographic images as stable, fixed information. Can decontextualized images be facts contained within an unembellished history? Can they represent an empirical record of experience or serve as objective stand-ins for history?

For photographs to have any meaning beyond their functions as memento mori and as instruments of evidence and record, we must acknowledge another stabilizing factor: the gaze, that which Gordon Bleach has aptly termed “the negotiated space of viewing.”<sup>10</sup> When we take on Africa as the subject and African photographers as the interlocutors in this “negotiated space of viewing,” the difficulty of interpreting what has been encoded as visual truth arises. Because there is now no prior existence of a language per se with which to discuss photographic activity in Africa (although photography in Africa is no different from that in any other region of the world), what is revealed in interpreting the gaze or the field of vision is its implicit contest for the power of ownership. We must raise the question that has often encircled theoretical investigations into the nature of photography: who owns the image? Is it the property of the photographer or the viewer, whose prejudices and habits of viewing disturb the field of recognition, thereby unsettling the still waters of the photographic image, its codes and (mis)representations, and its disintegration as a unitary embodiment of the subject represented, particularly when the clues left behind are optical rather than experiential? Bleach poses this problem as a “disorientation: the powers and dis/pleasures of how it feels to (be) look(ed at) are integral to an account of the subject of vision.”<sup>11</sup>

In considering the work of the thirty photographers selected, who were all born in Africa but may have lived within or outside the continent, and who are diverse in nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion, we are attempting to explore the critical issues that underpin their practices, identities, and experiences as Africans. In one way or another, Africa as seen through this exhibition is not a monolithic supposition, nor is it merely an idea that can be bent to our wishes and desires. Consequently, all the participating photographers touch on the nodes of these demands. They speak from positions that allow us to explore their various cultural and artistic imperatives, while opening up avenues to examine the dynamic relationship between past and present, history and memory, time and space, origin and authenticity, desire and ambivalence, and ethnic and sexual identity. However, what is truly

enriching, thrilling, and even vexing is the diversity of approaches, disciplines, and strategies that the artists have brought to photographic practice. They invite us to call upon the processes and resources of cultural, social, and personal transformation as they are unraveled within African realities and within experiences of relocation and diaspora.

Several photographers represented anticipated such issues that defined and at times unsettled aspects of the African experience. Their responses to our request to submit personal statements for this catalogue, as well as other writings by them, have been central to our formulations and interpretations. The artists' individual subjectivities and attitudes about representation are also mapped upon the meta-territory of the exhibition site. Santu Mofokeng of South Africa, for instance, writes that in the context of apartheid, "I had a rationale for documenting the lives of black people in the South Africa of yore, but, now that things have changed, it has become more difficult to legitimize my role as a documentary photographer in the traditional sense. As I get more intimate with my subjects, I find I cannot represent them in any meaningful way. I see my role becoming one of questioning rather than documenting. The projects I have undertaken recently are about the politics of representation."<sup>12</sup> Nigerian-born Rotimi Fani-Kayode, one of the most promising young African photographers until his untimely death in December 1989, wrote, "As an African working in a western medium, I try to bring out the spiritual dimension in my pictures so that concepts of *reality* become ambiguous and are opened to reinterpretation."<sup>13</sup> Fani-Kayode wished to repossess "the exploitative mythologizing of Black virility" and "the vulgar objectification of Africa . . . to reappropriate such images and to transform them ritualistically into images of our own creation."<sup>14</sup>

These critical positions are an important part of the emerging discourse about contemporary cultural production within an African context. However, though many issues have been raised in this regard, much work remains unearthed or unexhibited. There are structures that historically have staked claim, appropriated, restricted, and controlled the access, diffusion, circulation, and representation of African art, from London to Paris to Zurich, which have also affected African photography. So how do we address questions of representation, self-imaging, and artistic freedom when those initiatives are counteracted by stronger economic imperatives, and when the contingencies of social and epistemological control are made to bend to the influence of power and access? The answer at the moment is that there is little that can be done until the scholarly and historical import of these primary materials is made public. Hence, this exhibition is necessary.

### **Signs of Disaffection: Photographic Truth, Technology, and Ethnography**

Once seen as both a novelty and a scientific breakthrough, photography has quietly been assimilated into the realm of tradition. It no longer suffices to discuss photographic activity solely on the basis of its mimetic capabilities. Before the invention of photography, painting served this documentary function. And, just as photography supplanted narrative painting, cinema and television in turn have attenuated photography's formerly exclusive

claim to the infinite reproduction and dissemination of the image. Today, video, digitized images accessed via computer, and CD-ROMS occupy this terrain.

Nevertheless, photography remains one of the most enduring and focused instruments of documentation, regardless of its fragmentary constitution, falsehoods, and *mise-en-scènes*. Its allure and seductiveness still conscript our gaze, turn us into voyeurs, and utterly redefine our status as observers. Today, the aforementioned technologies have set up new kinds of visual fields that convert the retina to an active sensorium of bodily experiences, where codes of photographic meaning constantly seem to be turned into instruments of subversion. Through this enmeshment, a relationship is established in which the very status of the image can be not only altered and made contingent but also proliferated through myriad networks, modes of production, and multiple routes of delivery. However, it is important for us not to become engulfed by the latter visual fictions no matter how seductive and apparently stable they may seem.

With the advent of new imaging techniques, photography has crossed the boundaries set up by Walter Benjamin in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), an illuminating reading of the potential effects of the productivist economy and the reproducibility of photographic images upon the ways that art is traditionally valued. It is not that formerly dominant modes of visualization have changed or that their meanings have been obviated; rather what it is that images recount and conduct within the field of vision has shifted perceptibly. Jonathan Crary elucidates this shift when he writes: "If these images can be said to refer to anything, it is to millions of bits of electronic mathematical data. Increasingly, visibility will be situated on a cybernetic and electromagnetic terrain where abstract visual and linguistic elements coincide and are consumed, circulated, and exchanged globally."<sup>15</sup> In this proliferation, it is the subject of the encounter in the electromagnetic terrain that poses the greatest challenge to the reading of the photographic index as a document of experience. Crary grasps this dilemma and invests it with a set of questions that pierces the skin of what has been termed the discursive space of photography: "What is the relation between the dematerialized digital imagery of the present and [that of] the so-called age of mechanical reproduction? . . . How is the body . . . becoming a component of new machines, economies, apparatuses, whether social, libidinal, or technological? In what ways is subjectivity becoming a precarious condition of interface between rationalized systems of exchange and networks of information?"<sup>16</sup>

The questions raised by Crary bear particular relevance in how we image and consume the idea of Africa in that "interface between rationalized systems of exchange and networks of information." As technology changes, so do the possible ramifications for our relationship to material culture and visual information. If we suppose that visual information is now available as cartographic inscriptions both coupling and delinking digital codes, does it yield access to a new kind of vision and a new and renovated subject no longer bound up with the fetishism and voyeurism of traditional photography, particularly that type prevalent within the discipline of ethnography?

From the mid-nineteenth century on, with the growth of colonialism and territorial expansion, a commodification and categorization of those peoples perceived to be different was practiced by Westerners. As a documentary tool,

photography was important in providing lasting evidence of the fieldwork of anthropologists, the discoveries of explorers, and the results of scientific studies. The intense imagination of the West's ethnographic lens is revealed, for example, in the Orientalist fantasies of paintings by Eugène Delacroix and of French photographic *scène et type* postcards that turn the bodies of nude Algerian women into objects intended purely for the erotic pleasure of the colonial gaze. Following Malek Alloula's seminal study of *scène et type* postcards, *The Colonial Harem* (1986), Salah Hassan writes, in an astute interrogation of Orientalism, that "Delacroix's painting [*Women of Algiers*] and the postcards were part of the visual tradition built on preconceived notions essential to Western images and perceptions of Oriental women."<sup>17</sup> Even for the naive Western consumer, to comprehend the subject as framed by the ethnographic lens is to participate in the decapitation or cannibalization of the subject, as the grossly misrepresented African body is consummately fed to the passions of a false imagination, working in consort with the notion of scientific inquiry.

In nineteenth-century studies, subjects could be put through all sorts of bizarre apparatuses in order to display and quantify their encoded gestalts. Physiognomy revealed the body as an avatar containing knowledge available only to science, which could be documented as evidentiary truth by the analytical mechanism of photography. Anthropometric photography was particularly useful in this exercise, because in providing measurements it purportedly gave "objective" interpretations and records of the body as a specimen or type. Brian Street writes that "the nineteenth-century focus on the physical and visual features of cultural variety gave to photography a particular role in 'the formation of a particular discourse of race which was located in the conceptualization of the body as the object of anthropological knowledge.' . . . Anthropological interpretation of the body was conceptualized through 'physiognomy'—the belief that the facial and bodily features indicate specific mental and moral characteristics."<sup>18</sup> Today, even within the "enlightened" corridors of postmodern discourse, the question of difference is still based less on the existence of a multiplicity of identities than it is on the equating of difference with race and otherness. Ethnography still replicates and enters into the service of power. According to Crary, "Problems of vision then, as now, were fundamentally questions about the body and the operation of social power,"<sup>19</sup> in the guise of benevolent scientific investigations.

What then are the purposes of the purported meaning of photographs? What forms of knowledge do they expose? For whom and for what? How can we trust or be sure of what is being proffered as a form of representation when it is invested with a knowledge beyond mere incident? Elizabeth Edwards writes:

*Central to the nature of the photograph and its interpretive dilemmas is its insistent dislocation of time and space. . . . Closely related to temporal dislocation in a photographic context is spatial dislocation. In the creation of an image, photographic technology frames the world. Camera angle, range of lens, type of film and the chosen moment of exposure further dictate and shape the moment. Exposure is an apposite term, for it carries not only technical meaning, but describes that moment "exposed" to historical scrutiny. The photograph contains and constrains within its own boundaries, excluding all else, a microcosmic analogue of the framing of space which is knowledge.<sup>20</sup>*

These fraught questions come into play in Barthes's critique of Richard Avedon's objectifying portrait of William Casby (1963). In the picture in question, a tightly cropped, straight-on view of the face of an aged African American man, Avedon took pains to excise all obtrusive details that might have inflected a different context to the reading of Casby's portrait by zeroing in on the most delectable detail, the mask. Barthes follows Italo Calvino's use of the word "mask" to "designate what makes a face into the product of a society and of its history."<sup>21</sup> The photograph is modified by an important linguistic signifier, the title that reads "William Casby, Born a Slave." Clearly, this is less a portrait than a sociological and anthropological study. The title points to the limitations of the photograph as a carrier of truth, for the portrait of Casby needs the stabilizing factor of language employed not for clarification or as a source of knowledge but solely for the viewer's delectation. In Barthes's context, Casby's picture purports to tell us the essential truths of photography's "assuming a mask" in order to signify, when in reality it is feeding us information about the otherness of the subject. The photograph seeks to reveal Casby's difference from the rest of society. He is an endangered, dying breed, a monster who must be preserved, even if the process of preservation is essentially false. Indeed, the photographic meaning of Avedon's project might have been completely lost to the viewer without this signpost, the title that points to an irredeemable otherness. Avedon was thus able to create by means of his camera, linguistic modification, and position of power as an objective observer a sample or fragment of a "type', the abstract essence of human variation . . . perceived to be an observable reality."<sup>22</sup> The temptation is to consume this image as if it represented a form of knowledge more profound than its trashy voyeurism. We are tempted to use this inevitable detail to represent the whole, to allow the specific and incomplete to stand for generalities, and to allow one image to become "a symbol for wider truths, at the risk of stereotyping and misrepresentation."<sup>23</sup>

Here, then, is Barthes's interesting reading of Avedon's image. Seeing the mask as a "difficult region" of photography, he goes on to elaborate that "society . . . mistrusts pure meaning: It wants meaning, but at the same time it wants this meaning to be surrounded by a noise. . . . Hence the photograph whose meaning . . . is too impressive is quickly deflected; we consume it aesthetically, not politically."<sup>24</sup> Are we to assume then that Avedon's title, which Barthes ignored in his commentary, was purely incidental and not a calculated titillation serving to reveal to the photographer's audience a different kind of essence lurking beneath the mask? No, Casby's portrait was constructed precisely because Avedon wished it to be consumed both aesthetically and ethnographically. The portrait was made for the picture gallery or for the coffee-table book. To put Avedon's portrait side by side with those of his African contemporaries, such as Seydou Keita or Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, delimits the mask and calls it into question. The projects of these two great portrait photographers from Africa undress—in part through the dialogue that existed between sitter and photographer—the pretense of excavating a deeper meaning from the subject, a meaning that ethnographic framing assumes as its lens pans across the body of the othered subject.

We can name in our aid three important technical elements in the interesting contest of power that ethnographic authority employs in solidifying its scientific foundation: camera placement and lens angle, the position of the

photographer in relationship to the subject, and the “natural” environment selected by the photographer to enact the subject’s authenticity. Elaborating on this technique and framing of authenticity, Edwards writes, “The ‘real’ or the ‘natural’ or ‘authentic,’ and the elements selected to represent that reality, depend on the status of the objects concerned within the overall classification of knowledge and the representation of those objects in a way which will be understood as ‘real’ by the viewer.”<sup>25</sup> In examining the entire spectrum in which photography worked in collusion with ethnography and anthropology to both frame and undermine our knowledge of Africa, Edwards continues, “In anthropology ‘significant’ structures of a culture are observed, the fragments of informants recorded and the final work born of synthesis and then generalization; the fragments become moulded to a unifying account of ‘culture.’ So, in photography, the specific moment becomes representative of the whole and the general.”<sup>26</sup>

For the ethnographer, the African subject functions and exists in this delimited terrain to better yield access to the kind of knowledge that the pseudoscience of nineteenth-century phrenology skillfully appropriated. It is not the subject depicted who is really of interest but what he or she is supposed or ought to represent, what the body type reveals. Stripped of the most rudimentary of human attributes, of speech, choice, and subjectivity, the subject might as well be a piece of dead wood. In this case, the African subject—who neither signifies nor embodies consciousness—is beyond redemption and is, in Conrad’s words, “a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge.”

### **Negritude, Pan-Africanism, and Postcolonial African Identity**

The emergence of the concept of negritude in the late 1930s, in particular as a dialectical framework in the development of African and Caribbean postcolonial literary discourse, is also pertinent to the broad discussions that flow from this exhibition. The first appearance of the term *négritude* was in the startling epic poem by the great poet Aimé Césaire of Martinique. In “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal” (“Notebook of a Return to the Native Land”), published in 1939, Césaire set down the psychic and temporal order that would come to define this very important branch of modernism. He writes simultaneously out of righteous scorn and penetrating irony:

*oh friendly light*  
*oh fresh source of light*  
*those who have invented neither powder nor compass*  
*those who could harness neither steam nor electricity*  
*those who explored neither the seas nor the sky but those*  
*without whom the earth would not be the earth*  
*gibbosity all the more beneficent as the bare earth even more earth*  
*silo where that which is earthiest about earth ferments and ripens*  
*my negritude is not a stone, its deafness hurled against the clamor of the day*  
*my negritude is not a leukoma of dead liquid over the earth’s dead eye*

*my negritude is neither tower nor cathedral  
it takes root in the red flesh of the soil  
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky  
it breaks through the opaque prostration with its upright patience*<sup>27</sup>

Though Césaire originated the word, its conceptualization and subsequent growth as a cultural movement were not his alone. The Senegalese statesman, poet, and essayist Léopold Sédar Senghor was Césaire's partner in giving negritude its stamp and urgency in the tepid dawning of Fascism under the gray skies of Europe. Negritude's founding in Paris shortly before World War II was based on a fundamentally modernist vision intermixed with the ideal of an originary essence of African identity. This ideal, however, relates more to Senghor's beliefs, which were rooted in a kind of archaic revisionism, than to Césaire's more fragmentary, indeterminate Caribbean syncretism. The dates of negritude's emergence coincide more or less with the earliest works in this exhibition. This connection is not coincidental.

As negritude's tenets were taking hold (mostly among young Francophone African and Caribbean intellectuals in Paris such as Leon Damas, David Diop, René Depestre, Frantz Fanon, and Tchicaya U'Tamsi), the irreversible changes that would eventually inaugurate the struggle for the end of colonialism were being forged by the Pan-African ideology of Nkrumah and the "scientific socialism" supported by Anglophone intellectuals who rejected Senghor's negritude and Africanité as essentialist particularism, both emotional and regressive. At a writer's conference in 1962 in Kampala, Uganda, the young Wole Soyinka (who in 1986 was named Nobel laureate in literature) of Nigeria retorted with disdain, while discussing negritude, that "a tiger does not go about asserting its tigritude." A few years later, in 1966, poet Christopher Okigbo rejected an award he had won in Senegal on the grounds that it was based on the absurdity of race and ancestry. Benin's minister of culture, philosopher Paulin Hountondji, criticized Senghor's position because he avoided political issues and was "engaged in the systematic elaboration of 'artificial cultural problems.'"<sup>28</sup> The points of these attacks are to be found in Senghor's unshifting position vis-à-vis Africanité, negritude, and the past. Often, his beliefs seem dangerously close to the ideas of nineteenth-century scientific anthropology, which privileged notions of originary essence. For example, Senghor emphasized the past at the expense of the present. He wrote, "There is no question of reviving the past, of living in a *Negro-African museum* [our emphasis]; the question is to inspire this world, *here and now*, with the values of our past."<sup>29</sup> Another bombshell that had intellectuals scrambling to the lectern for a rebuttal is this assertion: "The Negro is a man of nature. . . . He lives off the soil and with the soil, in and by the Cosmos. . . . [He is] sensual, a being with open senses, with no intermediary between subject and object, himself at once subject and object." The "Negro-African museum" evoked by Senghor's words is at once a recombined theory of essentialism and a recapitulation of Gobineau.

Negritude's rejection by many African intellectuals on the grounds that it was revisionist and regressive seems to be confirmed in the photographs made by Joseph Moïse Agbojelou, Mama Casset, Salla Casset, Meïssa Gaye, and

Keita in the same period. Nowhere in their works do we detect the sitters' desires to live in that so-called Negro-African museum. In fact, what we see is their reluctance to be confined in such a natural-history or ethnographic setting. Looking at the majestic portraits of the worldly and sophisticated men and women who frequented the studios of these photographers, we find the unique intersection and cross-referencing of notions of tradition and modernity. Even Senghor himself sat for a portrait by Salla Casset. These photographs produced just before World War II and thereafter contest Senghor's Africanité, an ideal rooted in an almost incontestable, primal authenticity, which was drawn from the powerful residues of oratory and represented by the griot and traditional folklore.

The interpretation we may draw from this vehement cultural and ideological dispute is that the African self-image in the late 1930s and the 1940s was already being radically transformed. The subjects of these photographs are the electorate who would cast the decisive vote for independence and initiate the radical break with colonialism. Indeed, the subjects of these portraits are African, but they are not contained by the questionable episteme of ethnographic delectation and otherization. Their subjectivities and desires in a modern and modernizing Africa conflict with the Senghorian interpretation of an originary African essence. For if, as he argued, tradition was the mother of the primal essence, then technology no doubt should have represented its antithesis and negation, an incendiary apparatus imported from the West to deracinate and desacralize tradition's deeply planted taproot. But technology in the modern world was never the antithesis or negation of tradition. What simply happened, as James Clifford notes, was that "after the Second World War, colonial relations would be pervasively contested. . . . Peoples long spoken for by Western ethnographers, administrators, and missionaries began to speak and act more powerfully for themselves on a global stage. It was increasingly difficult to keep them in their (traditional) places. Distinct ways of life once destined to merge into 'the modern world' reasserted their difference, in novel ways."<sup>30</sup>

Before World War II interfered with the drive for self-governance, Africa's sense of itself was changing. Like James VanDerZee in Harlem, New York and Richard Samuel Roberts in South Carolina, Mama Casset, Salla Casset, and Gaye had already established studios in Dakar and Saint-Louis, Senegal that catered to the elite and common folk of those cities. They methodically documented an important milieu in that negotiated space bridging the gap between colonial and postcolonial identity, between the self and the other, between modernity and tradition. Keita set up a studio in Bamako, Mali at the end of the 1940s, largely continuing the same kind of portrait work, but with a lyrical, modernist sensibility that is as fresh today as when his photographs were made. The aforementioned photographers' popularity as the preeminent image-makers of their time is attested to by the presence of their works in many family collections. Encountering their work today, we feel ourselves deeply embedded in a site of recognition, in a temporal zone between the pathos of loss and rejuvenation. Their photographs chart an ontological space, a period of modern history that has remained largely neglected.

The existence of photographs of the 1940s provides us with an insight into the diverse and complex sensibilities that made up the face of Africa as it entered a new era. The images give us access to vivid, but by no means complete, visual records of a continent gripped by, yet emerging from, the political, economic, social, and cultural structures



imposed by colonialism. Given their incompleteness, these photographs represent only a part of that visual history created and documented by Africans. Many of them, such as the cache of photographs borrowed for this exhibition from little-known family archives in Senegal, are difficult to trace and hard to locate. They nevertheless exist. This vast archive of images staged for posterity remains a crucial testimony. Today the photographs reside scattered and buried in colonial archives, obscure private albums, and commercial business records that have either been abandoned, neglected, or totally forgotten. This hoard remains for historians and archivists to retrieve, catalogue, interpret, and preserve for future generations.

The present exhibition constitutes part of that effort. In examining issues of modern and contemporary African representation and identity, and the interpretation and dissemination of history, it calls attention to a continent whose long historical traditions have crossed, touched, and influenced all the consequential byways of human history. That Africa has long been disparaged by innuendo and misrepresentation, its contribution to history eluding comprehension and appreciation over the years, in part accounts for the selection of photographs in the exhibition. We have passed over images of wretchedness and misery, of disasters, genocide, war, hunger, and dictators—plentiful elsewhere—in order to celebrate Africa, to throw its artistic modernity and contemporaneity into sharp relief.

In presenting African visions, the exhibition also suggests how their staging testifies against the dominant notions, preconceptions, and normative codings entrenched in modernist iconography. What we seek to reveal is a whole transactional flow that refutes both Senghorian negritude's salvage paradigms and a complacent Western historicity of morbidly inscribed ethnographic yearnings, lusts, prejudices, appropriations, and corrosive violence. The exhibition presents an African subjectivity from east to west, from north to south, emerging out of the entire continent's multiracial, multiethnic, multilinguistic, and multireligious realities. The continent was also caught up in the dystopic upheavals of modernity, whose currency—from Pablo Picasso's and Georges Braque's Cubist pastiches to Henri Matisse's Orientalism and Breton's Surrealism—was built on a syncretic practice of quoting, renovating, and discarding disparate elements refined across cultural borders. In crossing those borders, signs of authenticity disintegrate, disparaging all claims to an originary essence or purity.

Clifford thoroughly challenges "such claims to purity" and essence as they have persistently marked and circumscribed African representation. He writes that such claims (which, in any case, simultaneously represent negritude's and Western ethnography's attitudes) "are always subverted by the need to stage authenticity *in opposition to external, often dominating alternatives.*"<sup>31</sup> It is by no means an exaggeration when Clifford notes that something happens "whenever marginal peoples come into a historical or ethnographic space that has been defined by the Western imagination. 'Entering the modern world,' their distinct histories quickly vanish."<sup>32</sup> But he goes further in amending and supplementing this view of quickly vanishing cultures by contesting a cultural reading based on the preservation of "endangered authenticities." Thus, he suggests that "geopolitical questions must now be asked of every inventive poetics of reality." But "Whose reality? Whose new world?"<sup>33</sup> he asks.

Africa is no different from other places in the shifting, indeterminate landscape of current world conditions,

in which every process of cultural texturing goes through a combinative loop of excisions and additions to contradict the persistent ethnographic dramatization of otherness. From the sense of “impurity” and “inauthenticity,” we observe that when “intervening in an interconnected world, one is always, to varying degrees, ‘inauthentic’: caught between cultures, implicated in others. Because discourse in global power systems . . . elaborated vis-à-vis . . . a sense of difference or distinctness can never be located solely in the continuity of a culture or tradition. Identity is conjunctural, not essential.”<sup>34</sup> In a global system under rapid transformation, “who has the authority to speak for a group’s identity or authenticity? What are the essential elements and boundaries of a culture? How do self and other clash and converse in the encounters of ethnography, travel, modern interethnic relations?”<sup>35</sup> Here, purity becomes incapable of performing even a metonymic duty, embedded as it is with inauthenticities.

### **Portraiture, Reality, and Representation**

Prior to the period of independence, those representations of Africa’s social reality available in the West were the work of European photographers. The ubiquity of these photographs produced in mass numbers as souvenirs obscures the existence and availability of work by African photographers who were active in the colonies as early as the 1860s. A. C. Gomes, for instance, established a studio in Zanzibar in 1868 and opened a branch in Dar es Salaam later on; N. Walwin Holm started his business in Accra in 1883 and was, in 1897, the first African photographer inducted as a member into the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain. Other photographers active during the later part of the nineteenth century were George S. A. Da Costa (in Lagos from 1895), E. C. Dias (in Zanzibar in the 1890s), and F. R. C. Lutterodt (of Ghana, who worked in Accra, Cameroon, Gabon, and Fernando Po in the 1890s). Many other names are currently lost to history.

The material available on these photographers suggests that they were not (either thematically or historically) linked to the decline and the disintegration of European colonial dominance. Nor could we say that they were involved in any way in the destructuring of European hegemony in African existence. Since very little early photography by Africans is available publicly, it would be difficult to claim their production as the embodiment of some counterdiscursive “native” sensibility in an insurgent photographic practice that could have overthrown the imperialist mechanisms of European invincibility and superiority. Within artistic practice, the reclamation of African subjectivity, in any kind of considered manner, existed within the practice of painting, in what Olu Oguibe identifies as a reverse appropriation in the work of the Nigerian painter Aina Onabolu, who was working in Lagos during the early 1900s and in Paris in the 1920s.<sup>36</sup> Kobena Mercer identifies the same process at work in Mama Casset’s portraits of the 1920s and 1930s. He writes:

*Whereas the depiction of Africans in prevailing idioms of photo-journalism tends to imply a vertical axis which literally looks down upon the subject, thereby cast into a condition of pathos and abjection, Mama Casset’s portraits are often set on a diagonal whereby the women he portrays seem to lean out of the frame to look straight out to the viewer, with a self-assured bearing that evidences an interaction conducted on equal footing.*<sup>37</sup>

This positioning and sense of confrontation coincide with the reflective discourses advanced by the African liberation struggle, discourses that affected the work of the portraitists represented in the exhibition. Thus, the period of independence, which began roughly at the end of World War II and ended in the early 1970s, was not a period of amnesia, *tabula rasa*, and newborn Africanity, but a time of sociopolitical resurrection, reassessment, and transformation. The temptation to search for some sort of "natural" or "pure" state of African photography emerging from this period is great. To proceed from such an assumption, which anticipates an allegedly original photography and an "other" photography, would overlook and mar the very existence and repercussions of the colonial enterprise. On the other hand, it conforms to the idea of an imagined "difference" that marks borders around those "other" cultural practices, isolating and fetishizing them. This kind of paternalistic identification thus separates the viewer from African cultural production and from the social conditions that have shaped its forms. At the same time, it reaffirms the imaginary unity of Western photography and the myth of its own distinctiveness, authenticity, and superiority.

Likewise, in assuming the illusion of an allegedly universal photographic language, we may be reinforcing the systematic process and hegemonic position of Western projection, identification, and appropriation. Too often, many Western critics, curators, and scholars, instructed and trained within the theoretical frame of Western photography, seem predisposed to applying their presuppositions to non-European photographers or artists, thus ignoring or dismissing specific sociocultural situations and ideological conditions that inform artistic practice in other regions of the world.

Kwame Anthony Appiah discusses an instance of Western projection in his revealing *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*: "The French colonial project, by contrast with the British, entailed the evolution of francophone Africans; its aim was to produce a more homogeneous francophone elite. Schools did not teach in 'native' languages, and the French did not assign substantial powers to revamped precolonial administrations. You might suppose, therefore, that the French project of creating a class of black 'évolués' had laid firmer foundations for the postcolonial state."<sup>38</sup> Appiah also asserts that "the majority of French colonies have chosen to stay connected to France, and all but Guinée . . . have accepted varying degrees of 'neocolonial' supervision by the metropole," either culturally, militarily, or economically. And, in most cases, the colonial languages of the British, French, and Portuguese remained the languages of government after independence, according to Appiah, "for the obvious reason that the choice of any other indigenous language would have favored a single linguistic group." These arrangements and policies might have been the only compromising response to the fact that not even the new states with the smallest populations were ethnically homogeneous: "The new states brought together peoples who spoke different languages, had different religious traditions and notions of property, and were politically (and, in particular, hierarchically) integrated to different—often radically different—degrees."<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, in this period that promised African independence from Europe, the liberation struggle was formulated through many visions and schemes that were ideologically, culturally, and politically articulated within European

history and philosophical traditions. Both Senghor's Africanité and Nkrumah's "scientific socialism" were nothing more than Eurocentric ideas projected and presented either as Africa's own self-conception (in the case of the former), or as a universal and globalized paradigm that unequivocally occluded African historicity and its concrete political and cultural existence (in the latter). If the former internalized and ontologized racism, as Tsenay Serequeberhan pointedly evidences in his piercing analysis of Senghor in his book *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, the latter, by employing the abstract and universalizing language of Marxist-Leninist idealism, subordinates African existence to the terrain of a homogenized historicity determined by the "historical logic" of the international hegemonic power of the Western proletariat and of European modernity.

Other writers, statesmen, and intellectuals associated with the African liberation struggle, such as Césaire, Amílcar Cabral, and Fanon, focused instead on establishing an African political tradition grounded in African historicity. They articulated a critique exposing the contrast between the unfulfilled promises and ideals of African "independence" and the political realities of the new states. Aware that newly independent African countries were still connected to colonial attitudes and values, they enunciated a notion of liberation as a process of reclaiming African history.<sup>40</sup> The "return to the source" established by Cabral as the basic direction for the movement he directed in the 1960s in Guinea-Bissau is not, however, a return to tradition in stasis; nor is it engaged, as Serequeberhan explains, "in an antiquarian quest for an already existing authentic past." On the contrary, in "returning," the "Westernized native" brings with him "the European cultural baggage that constitutes his person," absorbing the European values into a "new synthesis." Serequeberhan elucidates, "In this dialectic European culture/history is recognized as a particular and *specific* disclosure of existence, aspects of which are retained or rejected in terms of the lived historicity and the practical requirements of the history that is being reclaimed."<sup>41</sup>

The works of photographers like Agbojelou (working in what is now Benin), Augustt (Côte d'Ivoire), Mama Casset (Senegal), Salla Casset (Senegal), Gaye (Senegal), Keita (Mali), Moumoune Koné (Mali), Boufjala Kouyaté (Mali), and Youssouf Traoré (Mali) are instilled with the euphoria and the disappointment, the pride and the insecurity, the confidence and the contradictions of this period of transformation. Even if none of these photographers directly problematized cultural, political, and social issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, they employed narrative means that contribute to unraveling the issues under discussion and to situating them within the specific historical and ideological framework of the African experience of this period. Taken as a collection of disparate images and aspects of traditional and modern forms and effects, these photographs reveal African societies in flux. Even Agbojelou's traditional and more luxurious portraits of weddings and other political, cultural, and religious ceremonies offer tradition as something alive, not sealed in the antiquity of a "reconstructed" culture.

In general terms, the portraits by these photographers are descriptions of individuals as much as they are inscriptions of social identities. Although most of them are frontal poses of individuals and groups in the photographers' studios, the portraits expose as much as they hide from view through the complexity and sophistication of representation. Set as they are within a historical model of photographic configuration, these

portraits are not necessarily telling any "truth" about their subjects, but, as products of signification, they are claiming a specific presence in representation. Portrait photography, in general, creates the illusion of fixed, immutable presences in images rendered as real bodies. When we pose, we either imagine what people see when they look at us and then try to act out this image, or we want to look like someone else and imitate that appearance. We imitate what we think the observer sees, or what we see in someone else, or what we wish to see in ourselves. This process of reconfiguration and acting out of an ideal is what is so fascinating in the character studies of African studio portraiture. It evidences not only a social transformation but a structural and ideological one, in which the complex negotiations of individual desires and identities are mapped and conceptualized.

Probing how the subject inserts itself into this matrix, Peggy Phelan, following Jacques Lacan, asserts: "Like a good correspondence, the model's reply to the inquiry of the photographer is based on the quality of the photographer's question. Portrait photography is the record of the model's self-inquiry, an inquiry framed and directed by the photographer's attempt to discover what he sees. Models imitate the image they believe photographers see through the camera lens. Photographers develop the image as they touch the shutter; models perform what they believe that image looks like. And spectators see again what they do and do not look like."<sup>42</sup> As is the case with all portraits, those by these African photographers vacillate between glamorizing the sitters and uncritically reflecting their projections and desires. These portraits do not only render reality; they penetrate and evaluate it. These portraits are archetypes, models for the way their sitters wanted to appear. The portrait is, therefore, the outcome of an elaborate constitutive process. As John Tagg writes: "We cannot quantify the realism of a representation simply through a comparison of the representation with a 'reality' somehow known prior to its realisation. The reality of the realist representation does not correspond in any direct or simple way to anything present to us 'before' representation. It is, rather, the product of a complex process involving the motivated and selective employment of determinate *means of representation*."<sup>43</sup>

While reminiscing on that transitional period of the late 1940s, Keita comments that, by then, "men in town began to dress in European style. They were influenced by France. But not everybody had the means to dress like that. In the studio I had three different European outfits, with tie, shirt, shoes, and hat . . . everything. And also accessories—fountain pen, plastic flowers, radio, telephone—which I had available for the clients." Most of Keita's pictures depict individuals in traditional African clothing, but the variety, elegance, or origin of these clothes (already cultural inscriptions in themselves) is not precisely what these portraits emphasize; what they reveal is their own sociocultural value as signifiers of status and their functional role in the construction and transformation of identity.

Keita also recognizes that he helped his models to find ways to look their best. In his studio, he displayed samples of his photographs so customers could choose how they wanted to look. "I suggested a position which was better suited to them, and in effect I determined the good position," Keita admits. His clients were as conscious of their poses as of their dress and accessories. All elements amount to the construction of solemn images composed as

signs of wealth, beauty, and elegance, which act—with the complicity of the photographer—as surrogates for the essences of their subjects.

The clients and subjects of portraiture by Salla Casset, Gaye, and Keita are primarily family members and friends, civil servants, bureaucrats, society ladies, and well-to-do people. Confirming his own position as a sought-after photographer, Keita comments, “Even our first president of the Republic [of Mali] came.”<sup>44</sup> Most of the photographs, whether taken inside or outside the studio, place the models against plain or patterned backgrounds. In most cases, the backgrounds isolate the model with accessories and props; particularly in Keita’s majestic photographs, they may blend with the subject’s clothes, emphasizing the faces. Despite the realism and purported individuality and particularities of these portraits, the generic solid or decorative backgrounds and the props give them an abstract quality. Certainly, Casset, Gaye, and Keita were not trying to create or document a taxonomy of social types, but the generic character of such elements seems to counteract the subjectivity of individual models.

Portraiture in Africa recorded how models wanted to be remembered, or inventoried their past; sitters could then witness their own (or somebody else’s) transformation as well as the disappearance over time of customs and cultural symbols. While the portrait, as a *memento mori*, could suggest a pathos to the model in its reminder of mortality, it could also be put to societal uses. Much of the most stimulating work of Augustt, for instance, consists of portraits made for identity cards in the mid-1960s. They are technically as sharp and clear as Keita’s, but stylistically straightforward and uncomplicated. Augustt’s portraits, of the poor, workers, job-seeking rural people, and others, make up a much broader social sampling than Keita’s. The head-on-stare of Augustt’s models evokes a cross between the mug shot, documentary photo, and old-fashioned studio portrait, although the portraits themselves assert an unusually modern quality.

Portraits also have religious functions in different African cultures. In a continent where technology is always narrated as being at loggerheads with tradition, photography—from the moment it was conscripted into service to create funerary objects—has been renovating and supplementing an existing tradition. Within this context, the portrait, in addition to being a presence in the world, carries great symbolic value, for it is said to represent the spirit of the subject, as an index, a pure trace of the body. In various African cultures, photographic portraits have been appropriated so that the images are perceived, almost literally, as surrogates for the body. Families cherish them. They protect and guard them against evil spells and ill will. Their codes and meanings, their aspect of liminality between the realms of the seen and the imagined, are invested, almost, with the potency of magic. Christian Metz writes about photography having the character of death. Photography, he notes, “is a cut inside the referent, it cuts off a piece of it, a fragment, a part object, for a long immobile travel of no return.”<sup>45</sup> While this scenario essays photography as a fascinating outtake of immobility, we would argue the opposite, that the portrait as the object of an elaborate funerary enterprise exists in a rather complex metaphysical location, where it is subsumed within many traditional codes. Rather than being fixed in the immobility of death, the deceased’s portrait is rescued from that still ether of abjection by the performative surrogacy enacted by the synecdoche of metaphysical transference.

Thus in various contexts, the portrait's meaning in Africa possesses its own distinct codes, its own play of signifiers. It enters into the service of myth and fetishism when its perceived opticality is turned into a rich and complex field of signs invested with ritualistic meaning. In eastern Nigeria, among the Igbos, the portrait has come to occupy the realm of the immanent. After a person dies, his or her portrait is usually placed on a bed and addressed by mourners as if it were the live person. In such moments of private communication, the portrait serves as a totemic symbol that banishes the death and projects more than a likeness. It also serves as an aid for eternalization, fixing the subject within the temporal space of remembrance.

Another example of the portrait as part of the accoutrements of funerary ritual is found in Ethiopia. In the 1880s, photography was, according to Richard Pankhurst, "assimilated into the country's traditional structures."<sup>46</sup> Prior to this assimilation, it had been customary for mourners in funeral processions to display the effigy of the deceased along with his personal belongings. This tradition was transformed with the introduction of photography. Pankhurst writes that "with the advent of the camera such articles tended to be supplemented—and the effigy even replaced—by photographic portraits of the departed which mourners held high above their heads, while they wailed, ritualistically, and perhaps recounted episodes of the deceased's life and achievement."<sup>47</sup> Another example of portraits used as objects of ritual performance can also be found in *ibeji*, the Yoruba cult of twins, which Oguiibe discusses in this catalogue.

The works of Samuel Fosso of the Central African Republic enter another type of photographic performative space by drawing on concepts of mimicry and by expanding, enacting, and theatricalizing the relationships between and limitations of identity and representation. Fosso's self-portraits suggest that, in the transformative atmosphere of the 1970s (a period that, as a result of the legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism, was still entangled in struggles for independence, social upheavals, civil wars, and revolutions), African male subjectivity was located in disguise and displacement, in the negotiated space between the construction and dissolution of identity. Much in the same manner that Cindy Sherman would later analyze stereotypes of women, in 1976 Fosso started a large series of self-portraits picturing himself disguised as different and easily recognizable "types," in which the presumed "reality" they refer to is interestingly absent, as if they were anonymous characters. In Fosso's work, these characters are like reliquaries in the theater of the imagination. The photograph has lost the naïveté that, to some degree, commanded the composition and aesthetic decisions of earlier portraitists, who were still somehow allied with the "reality" of their subjects. Fosso openly undertakes and absorbs photography as a degeneration of that reality, as a corruption of any stable representation.

### **Social Narratives**

In addition to the buoyant economies and political shiftings after independence, some African countries were marked by declining living conditions for rural populations, increasing dependency on Western trade practices and controls, an intensification in the looting of archaeological sites, a general squandering of African cultural

patrimony, and the deceptions, confusions, and displacements related to the sociopolitical experience of many African cities. During the 1960s and 1970s, all of these problems were still caught in a web of uncertainties and the domination of the colonial powers. Thus, while some cities (like Bamako) prospered as a result of their relationship with and aid from Western nations (France and the United States), others (like Maputo, Mozambique) were the victims of the imperial (Portuguese) refusal to give up power without violence. In very general terms, these contrasting economic and political realities gave rise to opposing social experiences—one of tranquility and leisure, the other of war and devastation—which, in turn, guided many African photographers toward social issues and engaged them in the voluptuous, traumatic extremes of the African metropole.

Malick Sidibé of Mali focused his attention on the young metropolitan youth of Bamako who gathered and partied at city clubs, which were named after their favorite idols, such as the Spoutniks, Wild Cats, and Beatles. Even though Sidibé saw himself as a practitioner of photo-reportage, his 1970 series of photographs (see pp. 90–93) gives us a privileged, private vision of then-contemporary conventions and artifices of young Malian metropolitans, as they danced the twist or the jerk, or moved to the beat of Cuban music. These photographs convey neither the casual character nor the fluency and naturalness of photo-reportage. An insider, Sidibé had the confidence of his subjects, who commissioned him to record their activities. Most of these photographs were posed, stylistically framed to accommodate Sidibé's interest in social interaction. This is particularly clear in the series of photographs Sidibé shot by the Niger River, ten kilometers from Bamako, depicting the Sunday activities of the young. While they may have been self-conscious subjects for Sidibé's documentary lens, they were also the inspiration for his artistic achievement.

Ricardo Rangel's photographs (see pp. 94–101) are more stirring and emotionally charged than Sidibé's, as was Maputo in comparison to Bamako. Mozambique's war of liberation was particularly long, lasting throughout the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s. The country became independent in 1975, only to face a horrifying guerrilla war launched first under the instigation of the racist, illegal regime of Ian Smith in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and later, after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, fed by Pretoria's apartheid terrorists. The enduring and devastating consequences of these prolonged conflicts are recorded in the poignant and contrasting realities captured by Rangel over his lengthy career. His photographs, however, are not just documents of an agonizing period of isolation, poverty, and social downfall, but the subjective vision of a talented photojournalist critically engaged with his country's liberation from colonialism.

Although it seems that his photographs preserve the character of photo-reportage (piercing across all sections of Mozambique's social fabric, excavating Maputo's underbelly while the war of independence raged outside), Rangel imbued his varied subjects with that same kind of sensitivity and transcendence found in the work of other socially concerned photographers such as David Goldblatt, Santu Mofokeng, and Nabil Boutros. Rangel's celebrated photographs of the prostitutes—women without names, jovial and sad, nameless women with their wigs and provocative clothes—who were a familiar feature of the bars and corners of Maputo's Araújo Street express their



mixed emotions through an incommensurable subjectivity, while simultaneously conveying an impenetrable feminine identity.

The increasing interest over the decades in documenting the varieties and contradictions of African reality is most apparent in photography in South Africa, although it is certainly strongly evident in work from Guinea and Mali as well. Today, those extraordinary achievements can be seen in the works of internationally recognized photographers such as Goldblatt and the *Drum* magazine contributors Bob Gosani, Peter Magubane, and Jürgen Schadeberg. Their photographs not only capture various lifestyles of South Africa in the 1950s and 1960s, but also the political upheavals that brought apartheid to the world's attention. The work of Mofokeng, who was trained by Goldblatt, comes out of this tradition, expanding it to encompass the artist's interests in the discourses of representation.

Goldblatt's pictures (see pp. 102–07) are commanding photographic essays. They expose the many aspects and faces of an immeasurable South Africa: its landscapes and people, its mines and small towns, its complacency and repressed joy. Little in these images hints at a social urgency, for Goldblatt did not *document* South Africa per se. Rather, he was looking for what he describes as “something of what a man is and is becoming in all the particularity of himself and his bricks and bit of earth and of this place and to contain all this in a photograph.”<sup>48</sup> He was hunting for revelations, essences of his country's core, extraordinarily clear, quintessential details, at once recorded by and existing apart from the picture. His 1960s series devoted to Afrikaners is remarkable precisely because it grasps that “something.” These photographs show not only the faces of apartheid, its leaders and henchmen, its intimacies and “innocence,” they also bare its very soul, the aspect of its lurking terror.

Mofokeng uses techniques from straight documentary photography to address the politics of representation, in an exploration of his place in South Africa's polarized society. Thus, he positions himself as a witness who brings to his images (see pp. 119–24) social awareness, formal refinement, and aesthetic complexity. By means of this successful combination, he affects contrasting and highly lyrical compositions that resist both explicit political interpretation and a reduction to purely formal terms. Mofokeng is not interested in bold statements or in individualities. What his photographs made throughout the 1980s convey are the common threads, the familiar contexts, and the shared experiences of blacks in the townships of South Africa, through the artist's poetic sensibility as one who shares their reality yet is aware of his own potential to intrude or misrepresent. None of these pictures is a contrived narrative; none of these images is clichéd. As Walker Evans might have commented, “It is prime vision combined with quality of feeling, no less.”

Like Goldblatt and Mofokeng, Egyptian-born Boutros combines in his photographs (see pp. 113–18) the impelling forces of two allegedly opposing photographic traditions: one related to the aesthetic and formal tenets of painting, the other focused on recording the factual world. The former quality in Boutros's photographs stems from the fact that he started his artistic career as a painter. Evident in his work—from refined portraits to desert landscapes to nocturnal views of Cairo—is his interest in creating narrative structures and character studies that

are capable of transcending their details, of rendering the essence of Egypt. His photographs conjure the sensuality and perfection of form, which is infused with a quasi-visceral quality. The result is an almost abstract association, an "air," that, as Boutros's work reminds us, is precisely what Barthes called *animula*, "that exorbitant thing which induces from body to soul."<sup>49</sup>

Although seemingly removed from this urge to document the process of Africa's liberation from European systems of reference, Mody Sory Diallo's almost abstract photographs of 1994 (see pp. 125–27) show the walls of the infamous Camp Boiro, where those who dissented from Sékou Touré's Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in Guinea were detained and tortured. The subjects of these pictures are not the walls themselves, but the erased presence of those who inscribed upon them words and symbolic signs of their resilience. This commemorative drive impels Diallo's current goal of creating an agency to collect and archive existing political and cultural images in order to preserve the fragmented memory of his homeland.

### **The North African Paradigm**

If it has seemed throughout this analysis that photographers from sub-Saharan Africa have focused mainly on the human form, its social context, and how it is represented, a review of their North African colleagues suggests other distinctive concerns. Historically, along with economic impediments, Islamic prescriptions could explain the fact that in Egypt, for instance, even though photography was introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century, most photographers were either Westerners or Christian Armenians until very recently. The Islamic aniconic mandate, the prohibition against realistic representations of the body, was strictly observed and was, therefore, a very strong inhibitor of photography's acceptance. In 1839, when the first photographs arrived in Egypt, the Khedive exclaimed, "This is the work of the Devil!" But we may find a similar response even in Germany. In his essay "A Short History of Photography," Walter Benjamin quotes the denunciation published by the *Leipziger Stadtanzeiger* around the same time:

*To try to catch transient reflected images is not merely something that is impossible but, as a thorough German investigation has shown, the very desire to do so is blasphemy. Man is created in the image of God and God's image cannot be captured by any human machine. Only the divine artist, divinely inspired, may be allowed, in a moment of solemnity, at the higher call of his genius, to dare to reproduce the divine-human features, but never by means of a mechanical aid.*<sup>50</sup>

Thus, these variances in the work of North African photographers have not resulted from specific cultural differences alone. The tendency toward abstraction and the interest in a more lyrical, sometimes metaphysical, approach can be understood as the desire to escape the stereotypes that Orientalism imposed on photographic representations of the Arab world.

In the case of writer and photographer Mohammed Dib, photography is a projection onto a presence, and a present, that is the future of a time past. As an artifice against death, photography, like writing for Dib, suspends time to capture the fleeting moment, to give it an eternal present. There is nothing in his images that is imprecise or

tentative. On the contrary, as in a poem, everything serves a purpose and is strictly irreplaceable. In his pictures of anonymous people and architectural compositions (see pp. 83–89) made in Algeria during the 1940s, Dib did not search for a truth, but for the impasses of the everlasting.

Although time is not the main impetus for the photographs of Kamel Dridi (Tunisia), Lamia Naji (Morocco), and Touhami Ennadre (Morocco), their works procure for themselves presence and meaning through a sense of time. In striving to capture the transience of light, Dridi searches for what Michket Krifa aptly describes as “the magic moments of chiaroscuro’s offerings.”<sup>51</sup> In Dridi’s sensual photographs, these offerings are the radiating presences of light within the shadows of mosques and other interiors. The transitory, however, is best illustrated in Dridi’s fugitive images of a praying woman, the 1978 series depicting his mother (see pp. 128–35). In them, that shared desire to look at, to verify, and to give resolution to reality remains unsettled, always immanent but never completely gratified. At most, the viewer is left impassive in that indeterminate predicament of the transitory, somewhere perhaps between the promise of the future and death.

Working in the 1990s, Naji devotes her photographic practice (see pp. 137–42) to the unraveling of light within darkness. For her, they are inseparable. In confronting darkness, she may cast upon it those uncertain features of herself that she may suspect she has, or her most obscure desires. This transference provides an opportunity to liberate light within the scene of its concurrence with darkness and to allow for the possibility of discerning the difference between darkness and its projections. Each photograph becomes, consequently, a spiritual quest for discovery, an opening to self-knowledge.

Inspired to take pictures at the time of his mother’s death, Ennadre has embarked on a quest beyond that which prompted Barthes to write *Camera Lucida*; Ennadre’s concern is not the preservation of a photographic memory, the ensnaring of a fleeting presence, or the restitution of that which has been lost. It is true that Ennadre recognizes that his work “is simply a kind of witness to this person [his mother] I once knew.” In his photographs, nevertheless, this witnessing is experienced as a traumatic event, an encounter with a supreme moment, or an ultimate experience, in which the space between life and death dissolves, erasing any trace of time, that purloining agent. Through a great variety of subjects, Ennadre has always presented his images within the experience of that moment of collusion between life and death. Perhaps his 1982 pictures of a stillborn baby exemplify this borderline with the most startling and potent evidence (see pp. 146–51). François Aubral asserts that Ennadre is fascinated with “the moment of truth in which death is already there and life has just ceased to be.”<sup>52</sup> The overwhelming darkness in these works, perhaps not paradoxically, is what gives presence to them and grants life to that powerful moment of transition.

By contrast, the world of Jellel Gasteli—who, like Ennadre, is based in Paris—is one of light, the incomparable light of his childhood in Tunisia. At its most blinding, light in his work not only transfers an atmospheric effect, but creates a softly geometric abstract environment. The redundant, disembodied quality of his light suggests the opposing qualities that Krifa mentions in relation to Dridi’s light. Gasteli does not use light to emotional effect, but its resplendence and its texture allude, not to the visual images themselves, but to what they insinuate. In his

*White Series (Série blanche)* of the 1980s and 1990s (see pp. 143–44), the repeated theme functions as an element in a plot; a means of restitution and memory of his childhood, it evokes narrative without offering a culminating visual image. In his work, the vanished past and its restitution by means of photography may remain mysterious, but they are never implausible.

### **Imaginary Territories, Symbolic Homes**

It has been argued that the exemplary site of postmodern consciousness is rooted in exile and diaspora, where boundaries are repeatedly effaced and defaced. The twentieth century is seen as the embodiment of the age of mass immigration, refugees, and displaced people. Exile and diaspora carry debilitating connotations: romanticism and loss, ambivalence and desire, memory and estrangement, myths of authenticity and origin. For many, the process of crossing boundaries is hardly an appealing option. In his essay “Reflections on Exile,” Edward Said notes that “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.” He sees its manifestation, especially within the violent erasures organized and orchestrated by modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers, as an “unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.”<sup>53</sup>

Many African artists seem caught in this insurmountable vector, hemmed in by a constant state of emergency. In addition to physical destabilization, they endure a daily fight against erasure by the subjective practices and representations of their new symbolic homes, while attempting to hold on to the frayed and wilting memories of imaginary territories considered to be original homes. The Africa of the twentieth century eludes fictions of origin. Where on the map might we locate Zarina Bhimji, a Ugandan artist of Asian origin who lives in London? Or Bleach, a Zimbabwean of British origin living in the United States, or Iké Udé, Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, and Fani-Kayode, three relocated Nigerian artists who grew up in the United States, Scotland, and England, respectively? Or even Goldblatt, whose parents, escaping from czarist oppression in Russia, settled in apartheid South Africa? Or those North African artists who live in the dreary shadows of France’s return to racial essentialism? Such are the actively lived contradictions of the African experience. They raise difficult questions about the notion of origin and authenticity, revealing the bald fictions of essentialism. Beyond the pale of their recollected histories, all these artists bear the scar of exile in the sense of living a double consciousness.

If home is the palace of memory, Udé reconstitutes its faded forms by building, via the all-pervasive archive, a critique of its representations. The archive, of course, is suitably useful to photography. In *Uses of Evidence* (1996) (see pp. 171–76), Udé coopts its character to query two opposing values and perspectives: representation and knowledge. In his installation, which literally mimics the exterior and interior of a physical structure, he sets up a dichotomy between what is represented and revealed as knowledge on the outside, and what is hidden or made nonexistent on the inside. However, this suppressed and willfully concealed information, as Udé argues, must be

made available to a fruitful examination of the erasures and misrepresentations built into ethnographic practices. In developing the work, he has considered how the images could potentially contradict and supplement that commonly accepted knowledge.

In this sense, we may view *Uses of Evidence* as a manifestation of both a physical and a psychological construct. In the installation, the exterior shows photographic murals of Tarzan, wildlife, and frenzied crowds of "natives" in states of dispossession, display, and distress. Culled from media sources and quasi-scholarly documentary materials, these appropriated images serve as useful reminders of how Africa is recollected through the lens of the West. In the interior, he creates a hushed melancholic ambience, a hermetically sealed world where he installs images from private family albums and archives. The portraits represent loved ones and friends in the context of their contemporary realities. This wallpapered interior, inaccessible to us except through cutouts that metaphorically suggest picture frames, evokes a kind of terrible beauty, a world filled with sweet sorrow, loss, and memories. On the one hand, the interior's configuration alludes to the questions of idealization that Sigmund Freud links to his conceptualization of love. On the other hand, the exterior accentuates those moments of ambivalence that Julia Kristeva denotes as the abject. *Uses of Evidence* explores how the disparate materials (though divided into two fenced-off groups) converge to define the same subject, opening up dangerous chasms for both oppositionality and romanticization. Udé mediates this potential conflict by building into his work a critique that questions assumptions and memories of Africa.

Bamgboyé, on the other hand, obviates the role of the appropriationist in the self-portraits, interiors, and landscapes he renders as videos, light boxes, and photographs, which are constituted out of performance and props standing as repositories for cultural symbols and stereotypes. Out of memory and identity, both blurred by cultural relocation, Bamgboyé presents himself in his substantiality in his photographs (see pp. 165–67). He departs from the traditional literal representation of self-portraiture in a truer assault on the real, to rediscover himself and to establish some sort of intersubjective relationship with the viewer, by which the emotional and the speculative can be bridged. In this way, Bamgboyé avoids fetishization and availability as object, deconstructing the sexual codes projected on the African male body and demythicizing his own role as photographer and sitter, as can be seen in the image from the 1994 *Puncture* series showing a wound in the genital area (see p. 165). Bamgboyé refuses to idealize himself in many of his light boxes, trying not so much to enthrall the real, but rather seeking, like Francis Bacon, to render the reality of the subject beyond its circumstantial characteristics, so as to keep no more than its biting essence. Bamgboyé concedes to Ludwig Wittgenstein's comment, "We need friction. Away from the smooth ground!"

Friction is precisely what Fani-Kayode suggested in the last series of photographs (see pp. 152–57) that he made before his death in 1989. These beautiful color photographs are informed by Fani-Kayode's attention to the fact that "the great Yoruba civilisations of the past, like so many other non-European cultures, are still consigned by the West to the museums of *primitive* art and culture" and that "the Europeans, faced with the dogged survival of

alien cultures, and as mercantile as ever they were in the days of the Trade, are now trying to sell our culture as a consumer product."<sup>54</sup> Fani-Kayode was also conscious of his own potential complicity in sanctioning such a consumerist role. He wanted to avoid any acquiescence to the "reconstructed ethnicity" that accentuates the classification of collectible and tourist art objects into stereotypical ethnic categories. He outlined a territory in which he could "reappropriate such images and transform them ritualistically" into contemporary images of his own creation. This complex, fabricated territory makes the established assumptions about black-male representation counterfeit by averting a single, obvious meaning or point of reference from which the viewer may activate the systematic routines of projection, identification, and appropriation.<sup>55</sup> Fani-Kayode used masks and indecipherable signs and symbols of Yoruba cosmology not to promote an artificial recuperation of precolonial tradition, but to complicate and diffuse the viewer's experience of the work, creating some kind of cultural and sexual friction. In this sense, we can understand Fani-Kayode's practice as parallel to "the Osogbo artists in Yorubaland who themselves have resisted the cultural subversions of neo-colonialism and who celebrate the rich, secret world of our ancestors."

Bleach positions his work in the theoretical, but by no means impractical, problematic of the camera as truth-teller and calls into question the camera's stable order. He turns the camera's versatility against itself, subverting its existence as an apparatus for encoding on the two-dimensional a visible, material object in space. Bleach's carefully orchestrated photographs of his 1991 *SCRYPT* series (see pp. 158–63), in which the process of their production determines the end product, is supported by photography's two constants of time and space. Within a fixed time, he performed repeated traversings of a self-determined triangular space, which become in the photographs residual marks. Because of the long exposure and the split-second intrusions of his body in the viewfinder, his repeated walks were evidenced upon the film only by the coding of the intense flashlight he carried as he moved his body through the space.

The calligraphic, squiggly emanations that float on the surface of his photographs are like agitated maps, visual and mental palimpsests. The making of these photographs draws from a series of relationships between time and space, inscriptions and erasures, presences and absences, constructions and deconstructions, coding and decoding, all of which are staged over and over. What we encounter in the space (observable as a result of the arc of light and the large-format camera's long exposure) has little to do with the transposition of a physical referent onto our plane of vision. What is revealed is only the referent's echo, a self-portrait turned into signs, like EKG patterns, a map of the body's insubstantiality. As a lost form, the body's absence becomes a suggestion supported by time and tremulously held in a space littered with the ghostly forms of other worlds and imaginary landscapes, which slowly disintegrate into memory.

In Bhimji's work, the human body (taxed by racial innuendo and embroiled in the Logos of mutation and difference) is encountered as a vast archive, abstracted and absorbed by mechanisms of social, scientific, and legal control. In the places she photographs, access is barred to all but the most privileged. By entering and photographing in these territories, she calls attention to issues of representation and their relationship to sites of power. She reveals

how collected information, translated as knowledge, is vetted and organized, sorted and regimented, activities that often omit the unsavory. Bhimji's orientation contests these processes, opening them to new probings and determinations.

Bhimji brings a peculiarly nineteenth-century sensibility to her photographs of human-body parts and membranes collected and sealed in formaldehyde. Yet, it could be argued that her work departs radically from the objectification of abjection, disease, and abnormality that Victorian photography cast onto its studies of human anatomy. The elaborate stagings of her photographs, whether taken in hospital wards, doctors' offices, or pathology laboratories, or as part of her study of eugenics, comprise a Foucaultian reading of photography's fascination with the human body as a site of disintegration and degeneracy. Her focus questions the terms of the body's depiction, while also bringing to attention its violation in moments of ritualistic violence, mutilation, distortion, and dislocation. Bhimji's morbidly sensuous color photographs of hospital wards and laboratories transport the viewer to forbidden worlds, places of sorrow, loneliness, and terror, or exile and dislocation. We go to the spaces in which she works either to get well or to die. Visiting them is an incommensurate experience, which Bhimji's work throws sharply into relief. We find ourselves cast afloat on a sea of abandonment, where we are always incomplete and where time defeats every facility of consciousness.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, and the world becomes engulfed in an end-of-millennium anxiety that also looks toward the future, does Africa, in spite of the marginalizing imperatives of its past history, share in this outlook? Can we indeed mark the end of the influence of Western ontologizations about Africa, at least within the grid of representation? The answer to these questions is a resounding yes. On a political and social level, the dissolution of colonialism in many parts of Africa in the 1950s and the subsequent emergence of the postcolonial states provided the first opportunity for its reversal. Secondly, the recovery of a subjective African awareness of its own responsibility as a key voice—speaking not only out of its past but its contemporary realities—within the shaping of world culture has been very important. With a multiplicity of cultural specificities and identities, Africa thus reengages these fraught questions with new knowledge and self-images. Indeed, this exhibition, with its diverse voices and aesthetic philosophies, reveals avenues to that transcendence. The work of the thirty photographers in the exhibition bears testimony to this endeavor and to the means through which African subjectivity can be freed and detangled from Western epistemological constructs and colonial structures.

Looking at the diverse works through an ostensibly Western gaze, we are struck by their forceful, though not necessarily conscious, intentionality. Written across the photographic images is the inherent problematization of that gaze, which tends to place the African subject in a matrix encoded within ethnographic memory. On the most fundamental level, this disjuncture between what the African photographer sees and what the ethnographic lens remembers lies at the core of the exhibition. This contest, in which the African subject is limned across the phantasmagoric screen occupied by the respective positions of the spectacle and spectator, challenges how viewers—

Western and non-Western alike—will grapple with the images in this exhibition. Of great importance is how the viewer's perception might possibly be enmeshed with that ethnographic memory. Kaja Silverman notes that these processes of enmeshment and the production of stereotypes or otherness by projecting and distancing provide "the imperative to get back to those images that provide the fantasmic grounding for all of our fantasies and object choices."<sup>56</sup> Whatever the fantasies and desires of the viewer engaging these images may be, the intentions of both the photographers and the complexity of their radical visions delimit these choices while challenging and opening new critical perspectives from which we may reexamine our relationships to Africa, its history, and its identities.



## Notes

1. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Dover Books, 1990), pp. 5–6.
2. Nicolas Monti, ed., *Africa Then: Photographs, 1840–1918* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 4.
3. Arthur Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell/The Illuminations*, trans. Enid Rhodes Peschel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). All quotations are taken from Peschel's introduction and Rimbaud's poem "Bad Blood."
4. Chinua Achebe, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in *Hopes and Impediments: Selected Essays* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 3.
5. Quoted in Tsenay Serequeberhan, *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings* (New York: Paragon House), p. 4, from T. S. Eliot, *A Choice of Kipling's Verse* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), p. 143.
6. V. Y. Mudimbe, "The Power of Speech," in *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 45.
7. Quoted in Serequeberhan, *African Philosophy*, p. 6.
8. Conrad, p. 33.
9. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), p. 28.
10. Gordon Bleach, "Home Movies," in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* (New York), no. 3, fall/winter 1995, p. 43.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Santu Mofokeng, statement originally submitted for this catalogue.
13. Rotimi Fani-Kayode, "Traces of Ecstasy," in David A. Bailey et al., ed., *Ten • 8: Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s* (Birmingham, England) 2, no. 3 (spring 1992), p. 68.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 2.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Salah Hassan, "The Installations of Houria Niata," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 3, fall/winter 1995, p. 53.
18. Brian Street, "British Popular Anthropology: Exhibiting and Photographing the Other," in Elizabeth Edwards, ed., *Anthropology and Photography: 1800–1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 130.
19. Crary, p. 3.
20. Elizabeth Edwards, "Introduction," in Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*, p. 7.

21. Barthes, p. 34. Illustration, p. 35.
22. Edwards, "Introduction," p. 7.
23. Ibid.
24. Barthes, p. 36.
25. Edwards, "Introduction," p. 7.
26. Ibid., p. 8.
27. Aimé Césaire, "Notebook of a Return to the Native Land," in *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 69.
28. Quoted in Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 40.
29. Ibid., p. 44.
30. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 6.
31. Ibid., p. 12.
32. Ibid., p. 5.
33. Ibid., p. 6.
34. Ibid., p. 11.
35. Ibid., p. 8.
36. Olu Oguibe, "Reverse Appropriation as Nationalism in Early Modern African Art," unpublished paper, presented on April 27, 1996 at the conference Cultural Responses to Colonialism, Reynolda House, Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, N. C.
37. Kobena Mercer, "Home from Home: Portraits from Places In Between," in *Self Evident*, exh. cat. (Birmingham, England: Ikon Gallery, 1995).
38. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 166.
39. Ibid., p. 161.
40. For a more specific and thorough analysis on the writing and ideas of these authors and ideologues, consult Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*.
41. Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, pp. 108–09.

42. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 36.
43. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 154–55.
44. All quotations from Seydou Keita, "Seydou Keita (Portfolio)" (interview with André Magnin), *African Arts* (Los Angeles) 28, no. 4 (fall 1995), pp. 90–95.
45. Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," in Carol Squiers, ed., *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 158.
46. Richard Pankhurst, "The Political Image: The Impact of the Camera in an Ancient Independent African State," in Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*, p. 234.
47. Ibid.
48. David Goldblatt, *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (Sandhurst, Sandton: Murray Crawford, 1975), p. 7. Excerpt reprinted in this catalogue.
49. Barthes, p. 109.
50. English translation of Benjamin's quotation in German in Tagg, p. 41.
51. Michket Krifa, *Les Offrandes de l'ombre* (n.p.: Editions Eric Koehler, 1995), p. 7.
52. François Aubral, "Lumières noires," *Déjà-vu* (Tokyo, 1993). Unpublished English translation quoted by Nancy Spector, "Touhami Ennadre: The Trace of Time," *Vital: Three Contemporary African Artists*, exh. cat. (Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1995), pp. 26 and 28, note 8.
53. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in Russell Ferguson et al., ed., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990), p. 357.
54. All quotations from Fani-Kayode, pp. 68–69.
55. For a more thorough analysis of Fani-Kayode's photographs, see Octavio Zaya, "On Three Counts I Am an Outsider," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, no. 4, spring/summer 1996.
56. Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 181.





Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1941



Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1943



Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1941



Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1948





Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1942



Meissa Gaye, Untitled, 1935-36



Salla Casset, "La Militante du SFIO," 1952



Salla Casset, "Libidor (Livre d'or)," ca. 1949



Salla Casset, "Driyanké (Driver Yankees)," ca. 1950



Salla Casset, Untitled, ca. 1948



Salla Casset, "President Léopold Senghor," 1948



Salla Casset, "Le Couple," ca. 1955





Salla Casset, "Les Coépouses," ca. 1950



Salla Casset, Untitled, 1945



Salla Casset, "Serigne Yaram Mbaye Marabout," 1951



Salla Casset, "Diéguebou Ndaw," 1952



Salla Casset, Untitled, ca. 1952



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1949



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1952-55



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1956-57





Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1956-57



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1958



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1958



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1952-55



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1952-55



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1949



Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1956-57

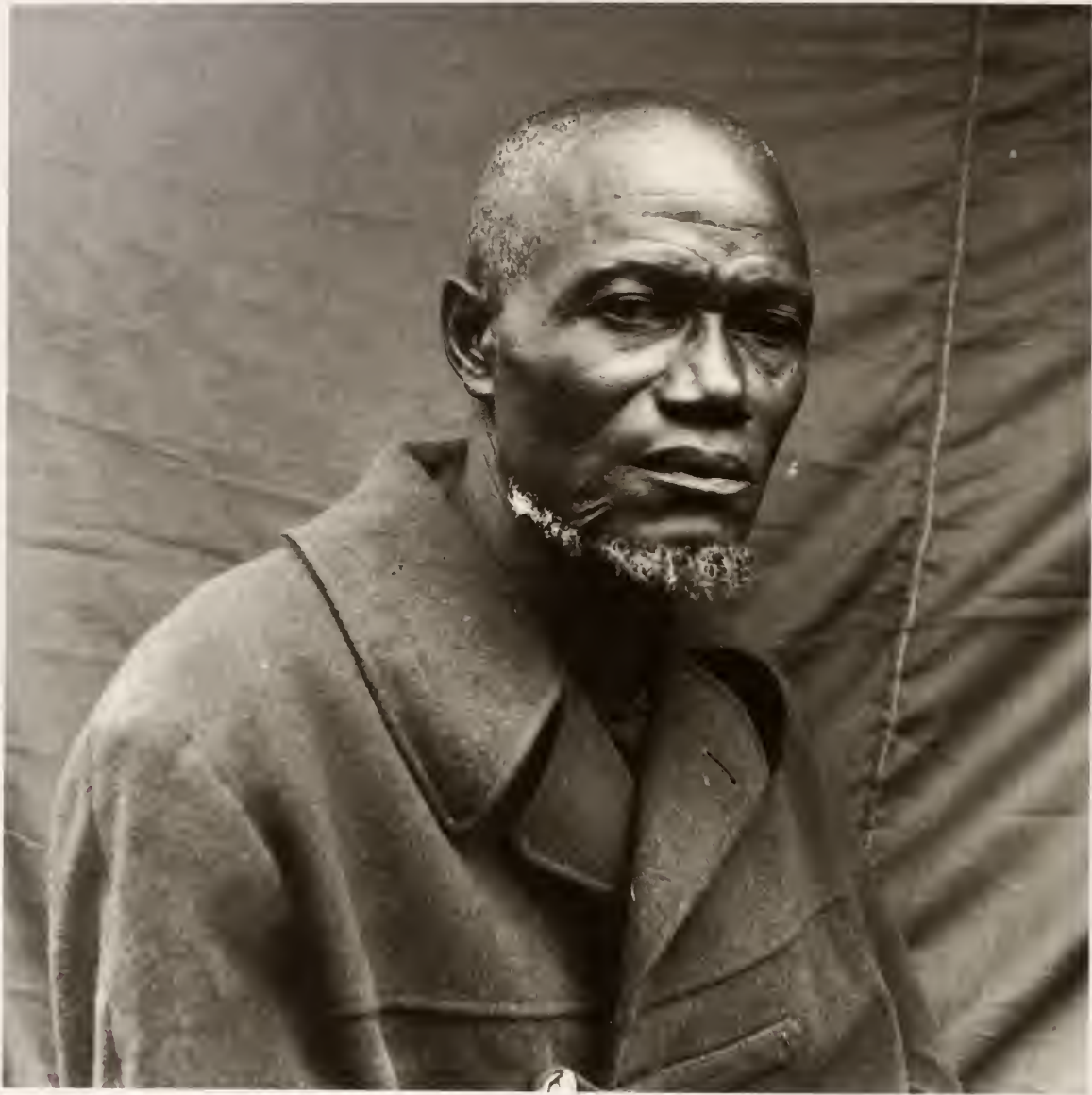


Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1959





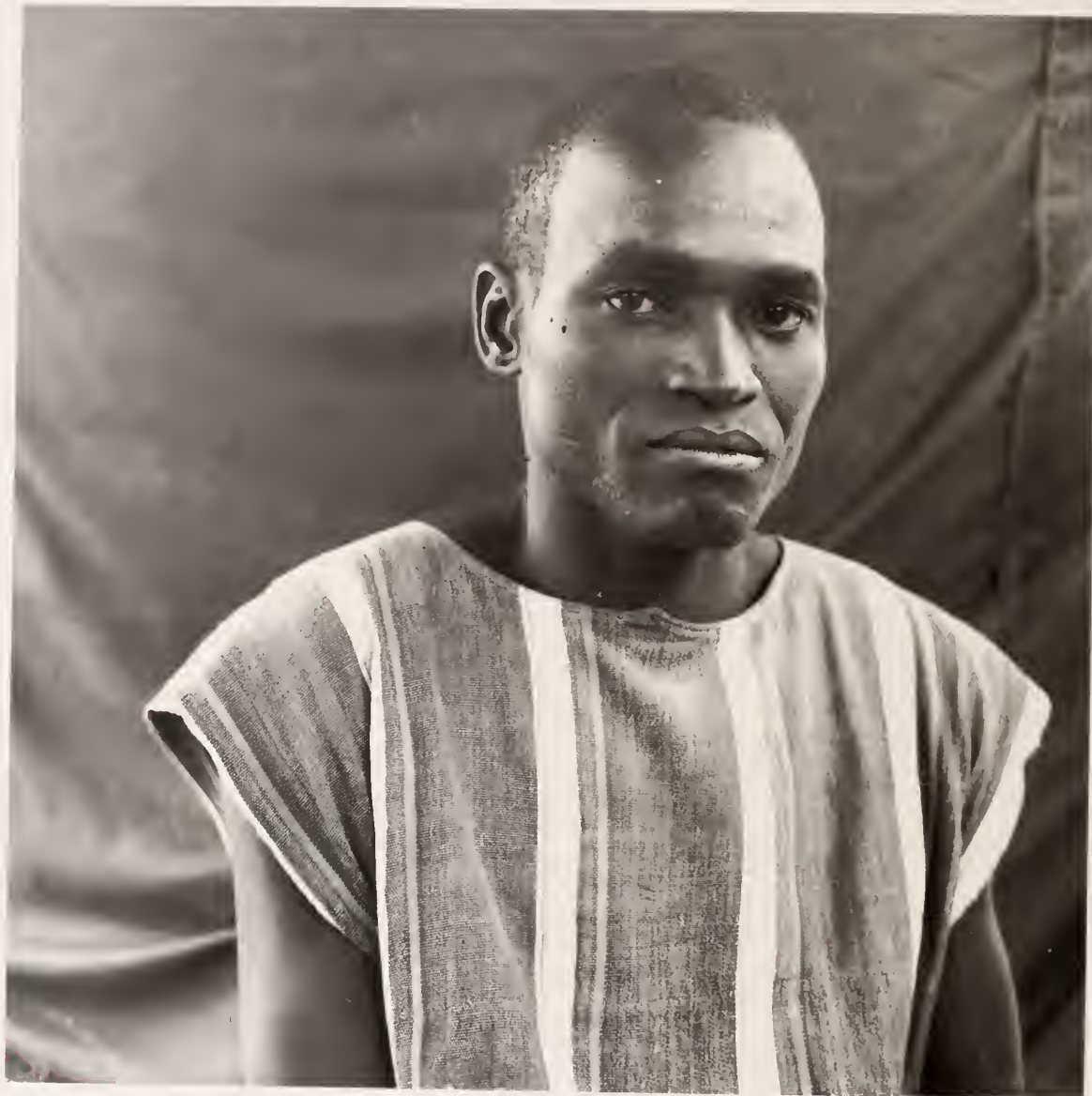
Seydou Keita, Untitled, 1956-57



Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, Untitled, Pangnergakaha, September 9, 1964



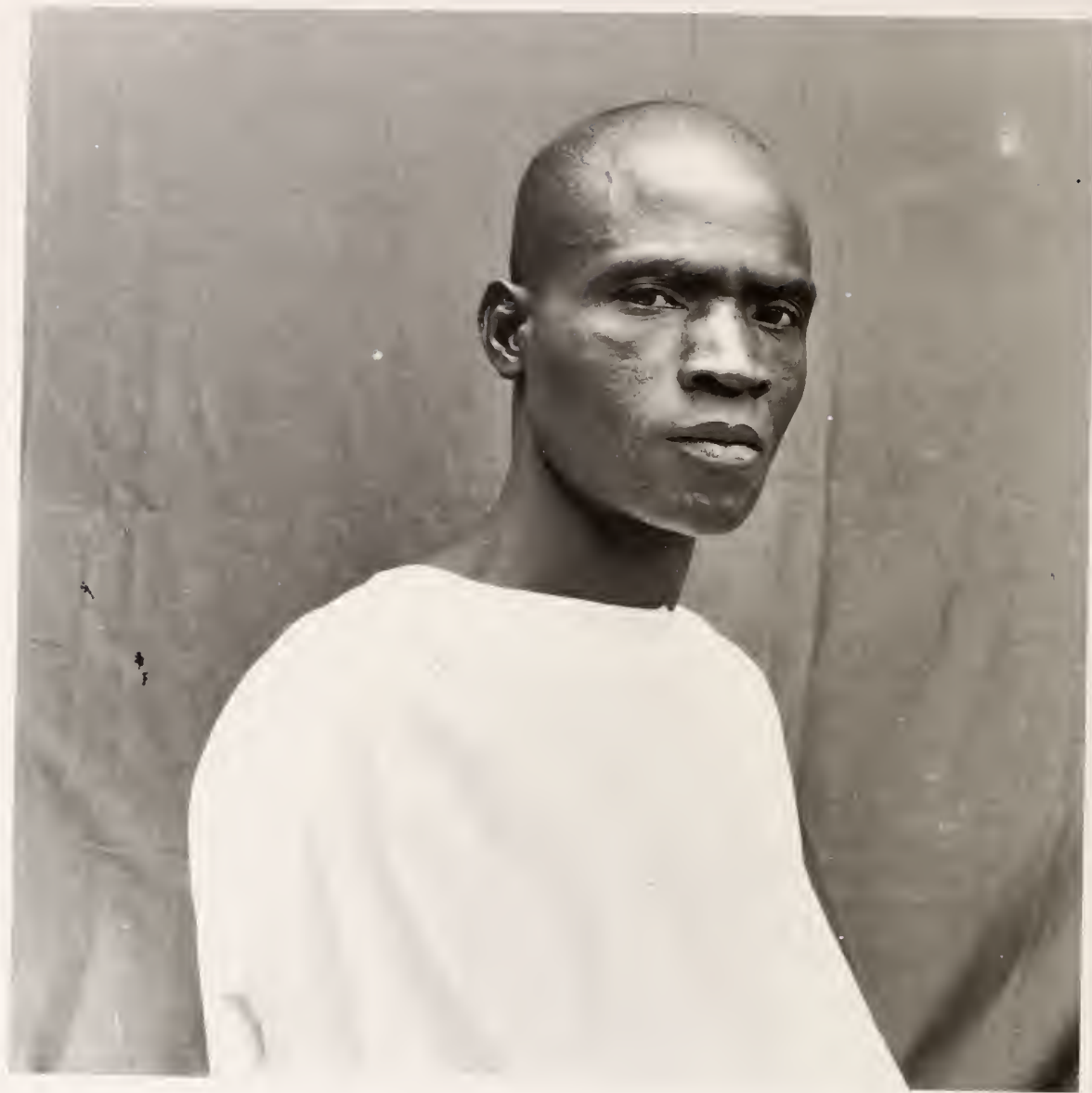
Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, Untitled, Kalaha, July 22, 1964



Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, Untitled, Kiémou, October 4, 1964



Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, Untitled, Moroviné, August 16, 1964



Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt, Untitled, Piegbo, August 24, 1964



Mohammed Dib, **Marabout Mausoleum in El Eubad (Mausolée de Marabout à El Eubad)**, 1946



Mohammed Dib, *A Village Fountain (Une Fontaine de village)*, 1946





Mohammed Dib. **Family Seated on a Patio (Tlemcen, Algeria)** (Famille attablée dans un patio [Tlemcen, Algérie]), 1946



Mohammed Dib, **Untitled (Sans titre)**, 1946



Mohammed Dib, **Medieval Road in Tlemcen (Algeria) (Rue médiévale à Tlemcen [Algérie])**, 1946



Mohammed Dib, **Holiday Procession near Tlemcen (Algeria)** (*Procession de fête aux environs de Tlemcen [Algérie]*), 1946



Mohammed Dib, **Cemetery of the City of Tlemcen (Algeria) (Cimetière de la ville de Tlemcen [Algérie])**, 1946



Malick Sidibé, Untitled, April 1970



Malick Sidibé, Untitled, April 1970



Malick Sidibé, Untitled, April 1970





Malick Sidibé, Untitled, April 1970



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960-70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960-70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960-70



Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70





Ricardo Rangel, From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70



David Goldblatt, **The commando of National Party supporters which escorted the late Dr Hendrick Verwoerd to the party's 50th Anniversary celebrations, de Wildt, Transvaal, October 1964**



David Goldblatt, *Policeman in a squad car on Church Square, Pretoria*, 1967



David Goldblatt, *Wedding on a farm near Barkly East*, December 1966



David Goldblatt, **A plot-holder, his wife and their eldest son at lunch.** September 1962



David Goldblatt, *A farmer's son with his nursemaid in the Marico Bushveld*, 1964



David Goldblatt, On an ostrich farm near Oudtshoorn. The man who founded this farm was 94 years old and lay dying in another room. His home had been furnished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the best that ostrich feathers could then buy. Virtually nothing had been changed or added in 45 years. The wife (his second) still used a cool-room for storing the meat she had salted, for she had heard that refrigerators sometimes 'ontplof'. Hester, the widowed daughter by the first marriage was 59 years old. She called her stepmother, aged 49, 'Ma'. While the old man muttered in his dying and the wife tiptoed, Tante Hester, playing richly on the organ, sang psalms flatly in High Dutch. 1967



Samuel Fosso, Untitled, ca. 1977





Samuel Fosso, Untitled, ca. 1977



Samuel Fosso, Untitled, ca. 1977



Samuel Fosso, Untitled, ca. 1977



Samuel Fosso, Untitled, ca. 1977



Nabil Boutros, **People—Cairo**, 1992



Nabil Boutros. **People—Calro**, 1992



Nabil Boutros, *People—Calro*, 1990



Nabil Boutros, *People—Cairo*, 1992





Nabil Boutros, *People—Cairo*, 1990



Nabil Boutros, **People—Cairo**, 1992



Santu Mofokeng, *Shebeen, White City Jabavu, Soweto*, 1987



Santu Mofokeng, **Koelie Dulker**, October 1989



Santu Mofokeng, **Tavern, Boitumelong**. April 26, 1994



Santu Mofokeng, **Afoor Family Bedroom**, December 1988



Santu Mofokeng, *Winter in Tembisa*, 1989

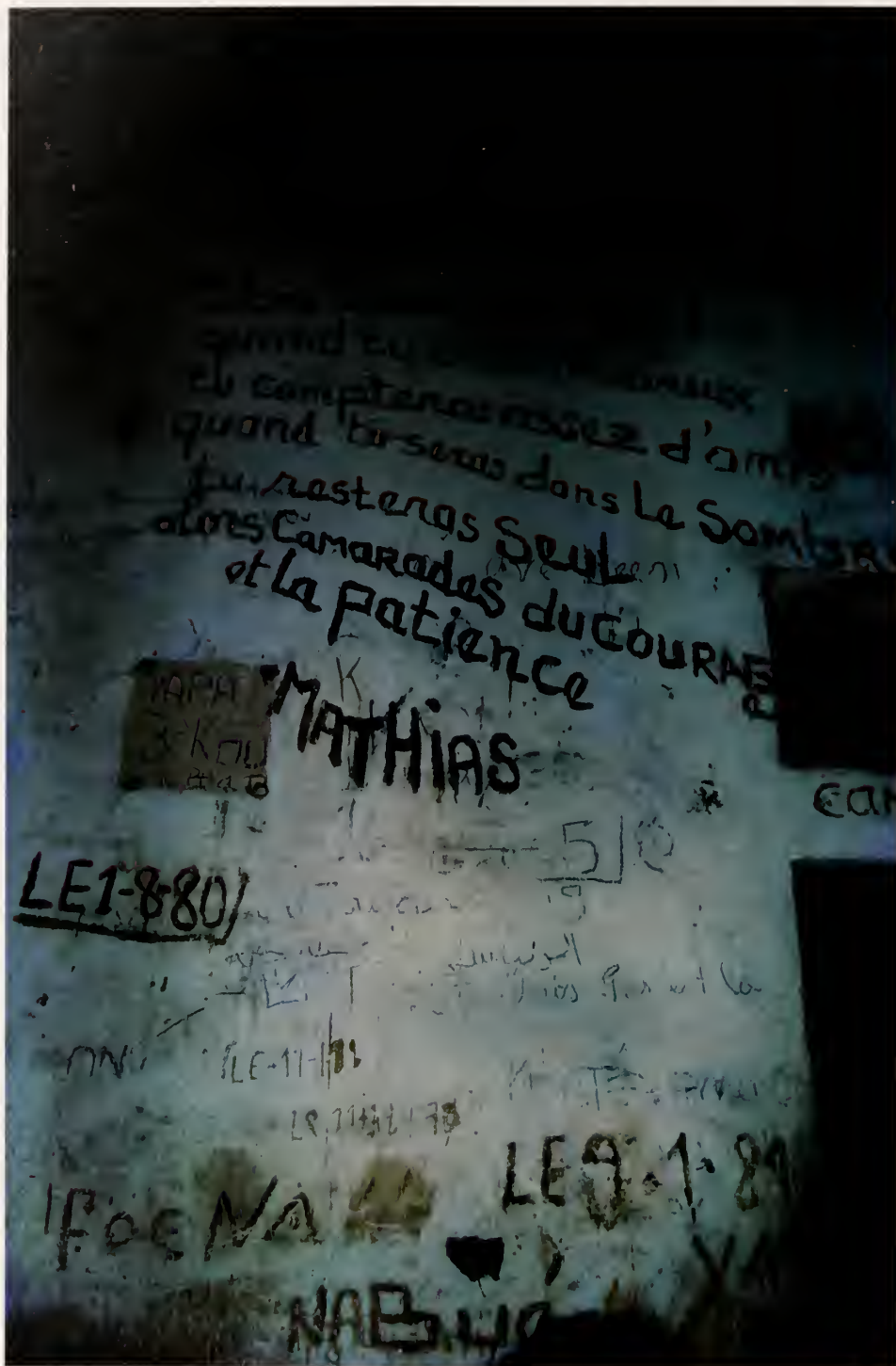


Santu Mofokeng, Near Maponya's Discount Store, 1987





pp. 125–27: Mody Sory Diallo, **Camp Bolro**, 1994



quand on se souvient d'amis  
et comptera rosez d'amis  
quand on sera dans le sombre  
tu resteras seul  
les camarades du courage  
et la patience

APR  
3 KOU  
1-1-8

MATHIAS

LE 1-880

5/0

LE 11-11

LE 11-11

LE 1-880

FOENA

NABWA





pp. 128-35: Kamel Dridi, *My Mother's Prayer* (*La Prière de ma mère*), 1978

















p. 137: Lamia Naji, **Palermo, Italy**, 1994  
pp. 138-39: Lamia Naji, **Fez, Morocco**, 1992  
p. 140: Lamia Naji, **Milan, Italy**, 1994  
p. 141: Lamia Naji, **Catania, Italy**, 1994  
p. 142: Lamia Naji, **Turin, Italy**, 1994

















Jellel Gasteli, Untitled from **White Series (Série blanche)**, 1994



Jellel Gasteli, Untitled from **White Series (Série blanche)**, 1994

pp. 146-51: Touhami Ennadre, **L'Hôtel Dieu—A corps-cri—Moira**, 1982

















Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), **Untitled**, ca. 1989



Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), From the series **Tulp Boy**, ca. 1989



Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), **Untitled**, ca. 1989



Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), **Adebiyi**, ca. 1989



Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), **Untitled**, ca. 1989





Rotimi Fani-Kayode (in collaboration with Alex Hirst), **Every Moment Counts**. ca. 1989



Gordon Bleach, **building walk: 2**, from the series <sup>5</sup>CRYPT, 1991



Gordon Bleach, **spurious artifact: 12**, from the series <sup>5</sup>CRYPT, 1991



Gordon Bleach, **spurious artifact: 7**, from the series **CRYPT**, 1991



Gordon Bleach, *spurious artifact: 31*. from the series *CRYPT*, 1991



Gordon Bleach, *spurious artifact: 24*, from the series *CRYPT*, 1991



Gordon Bleach, *spurious artifact: 23*, from the series *CRYPT*, 1991

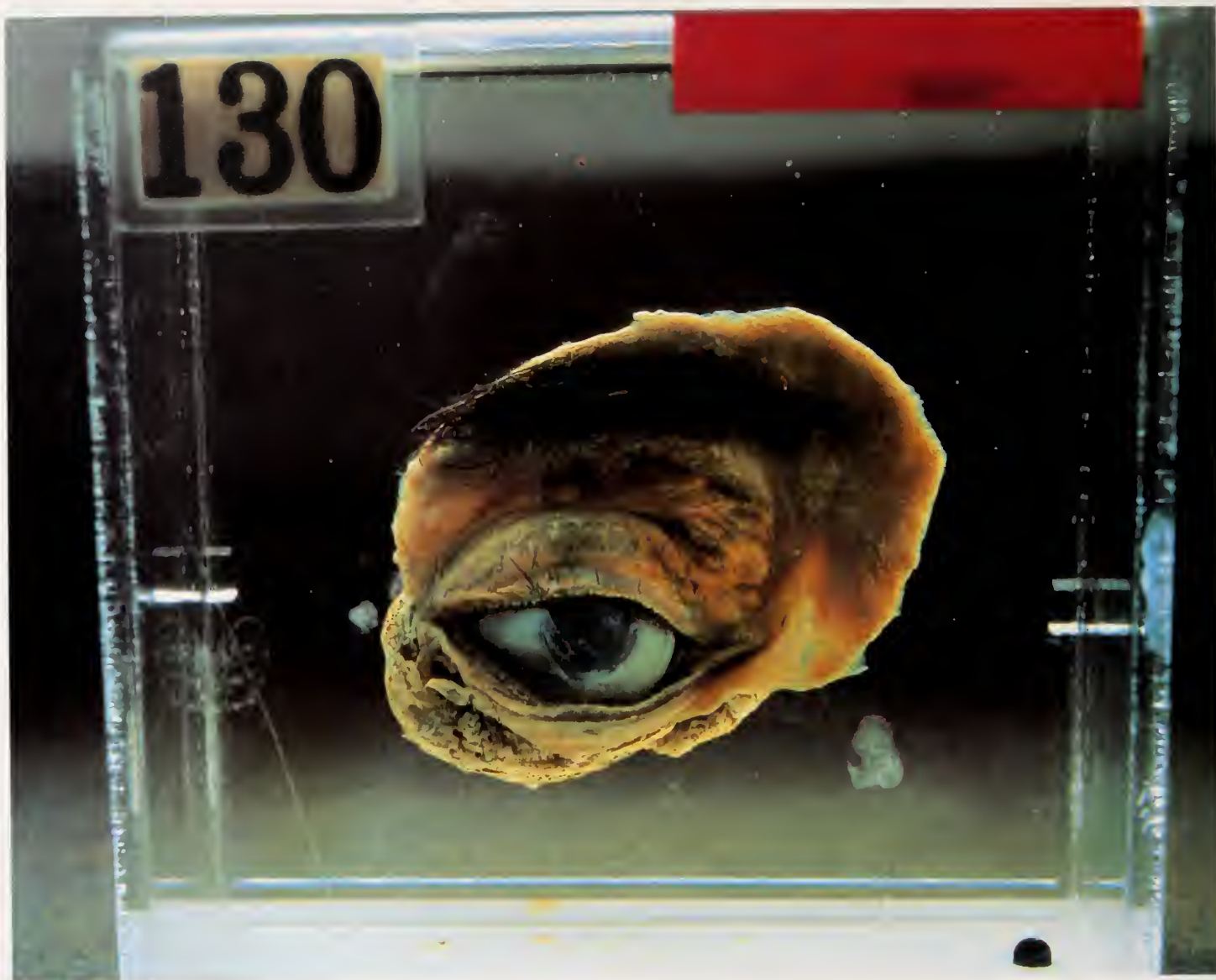
p. 165: Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé. From the series **Puncture**, 1994  
pp. 166-67: Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, From the series **Celebrate**, panels 2 and 3, 1994











Zarina Bhimji, *We are cut from the same cloth*, 1995



Zarina Bhimji, *Indelible*, 1995

Iké Udé, **Uses of Evidence**, 1996

p. 171, top: **The Woman In Egyptian Art**; p. 171, bottom: **Authors & Performing Artists, Nigeria**; p. 172, upper left: **UdeAgu Family**; p. 172, upper right: **Chika**; p. 172, bottom: **Unidentified Friend, Mr. Osuagwu, Mr. S. Obinna UdeAgu** (from left to right); p. 173, top: **Self-Portrait**; p. 173, bottom: **Diabel Faye**; p. 174: **Nnebemchi UdeAgu**; p. 175: **Chi-chi UdeAgu**; p. 176, top: **Untitled, 1**; p. 176, bottom: **Untitled, 2**



Adam Fiberesima *Composer*



Afi Ekong *Painter and fashion designer*



Christopher Okigbo *Poet*



J. Olooluwa Omidéyi *organist*



C.O.D. Ekwensi *Novelist*



Ralph Opara *Actor-producer*













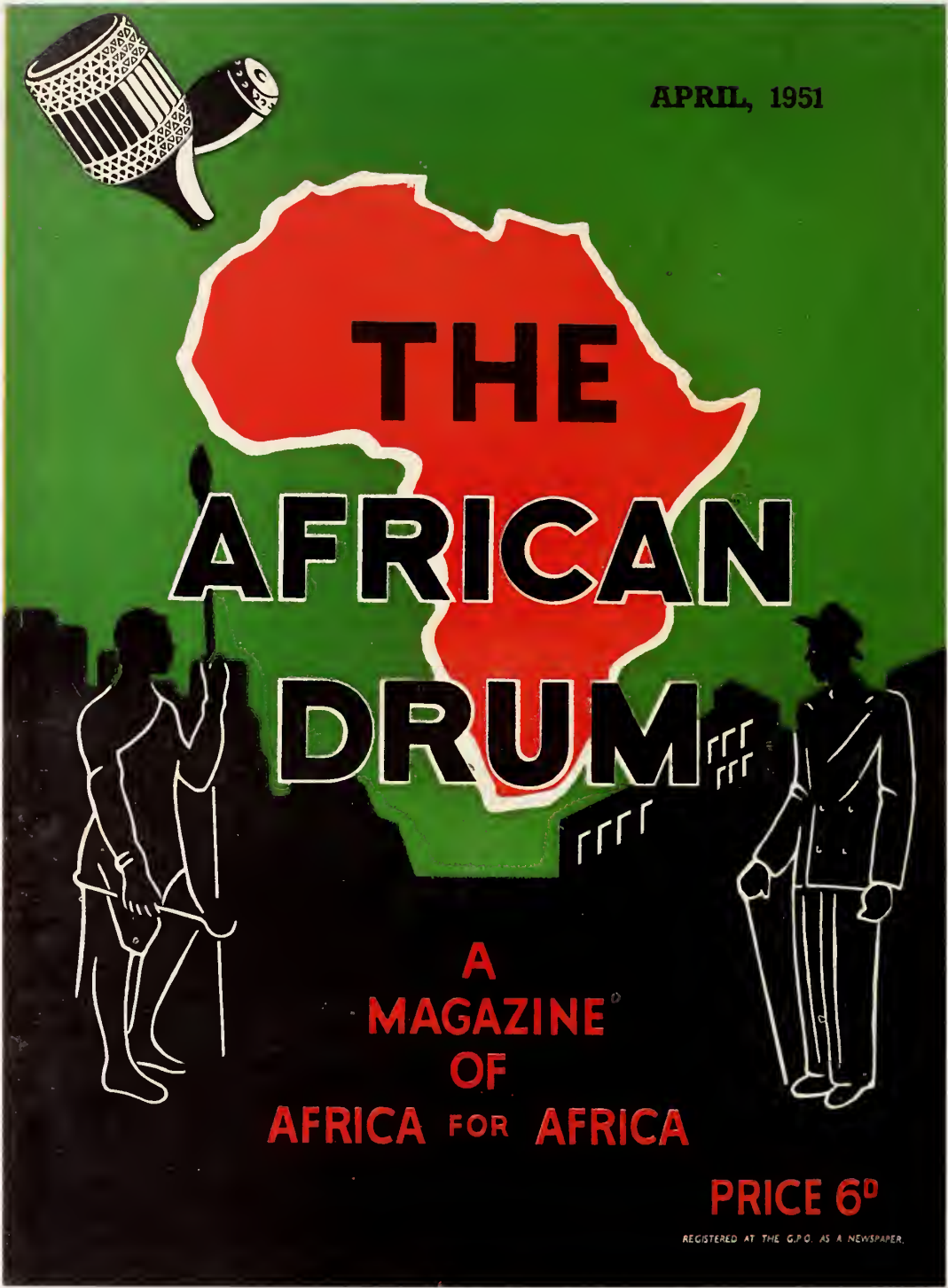




“Dates have a fundamental significance in the annals of South African history,” said a South African friend of mine as we drove through one of the high-walled, manicured suburbs of Johannesburg. “But are dates any less significant in the annals of other countries’ histories?” I thought to myself. Nothing in the speaker’s voice, however, possessed any hint of irony. In fact, he was in earnest, thus leading me to attune my eyes and ears to the perpetual presentness of South Africa. For there, the violent and bloodied past does not habitually invade the present, but coexists with it uneasily, as an illegitimate authority, a desecrated memory. Unlike those places where collective amnesia (as in the case of Holocaust deniers) aids state structures to efface the effects of horrible crimes, in South Africa, dates, as indispensable as they are painful to invoke, are actively kindled moments, in addition to being symbols of recollection and temporal gauges used to define certain vast spaces subsumed within memory and history. Dates animate the often hoarse, raspy, and acrimonious core of the nation’s political and social discourse. For the South African majority, they are essential, their significance no small measure. For this majority, dates are like memorials that haunt the often elusive ground of solace, from the legacy of the Boer Trek of the 1830s and 1840s to the overgrown tombstones that commemorate the sixty-nine victims of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960. Recalling how violence is manifested under dictatorships, Charles Merewether writes that in its mechanisms there is “a vested interest in removing from consciousness the death of people in order to displace memory as an active element of hope and the impulse of collective consciousness. Terror is anonymous in nature, while mutilation and disappearance avoid identification so that human identity and death are desacralized.”<sup>1</sup> It is precisely this persistence of violence in South African history that, in many ways, defined life for many people on the margins, often dislocating them to a no-man’s land of dispossession, to that chasm where “immense aggregates of humanity loiter as refugees and displaced persons.”<sup>2</sup>

From the time the Dutch arrived and established a trading post for the Dutch East India Company in 1652 in Cape of Good Hope, the story of South Africa has been one of occupation, colonial pillage, and contested territories, histories and identities. The introduction of apartheid in 1948, after the electoral triumph of the Afrikaner National Party, gave birth to a succession of laws including the Population Registration Act (1950), which allowed the government to classify people on the basis of race and color, and the Group Areas Act (1950), which authorized the forced removal and physical separation of people along racial lines. The Native Laws Amendment Act (1952) ushered in the notorious pass laws, which curtailed and controlled the movement of Africans within South Africa. As apartheid’s agenda was solidified, each law introduced under its aegis—such as the Separate Amenities Act (1953), Bantu Education Act (1953), and Separate Development Act (1955)—further decimated any indigenous participation in the fragile polity fabricated by the British and the Boers. These laws, which always carried the threat of violence, beleaguered any notion of a shared and representative national culture or identity, which inevitably led to a protracted, internecine struggle for freedom.

In a sense, the long struggle against apartheid forced South Africa to bear the greatest burden among all the “modern” nations in qualifying for that designation. Simply put, it was an outlaw country. Everything in its rancorous



APRIL, 1951

# THE AFRICAN DRUM

A  
MAGAZINE  
OF  
AFRICA FOR AFRICA

PRICE 6<sup>D</sup>

REGISTERED AT THE G.P.O. AS A NEWSPAPER.

The African Drum (South Africa), April 1951. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg



history of well over three centuries pointed out the anomalousness of its status as a “modern” nation. And even when pretentiously applied, such adjectival qualification amplified the hollow sound emanating from the utterance of that noun. For South Africa was never a nation. Its renegade governments worked diligently for the greater part of the twentieth century to uphold, for its Caucasian minority populace, the façade of its destiny as a nation, a place in which only the tiniest number of people were deemed to hold rights as citizens. This notorious disregard for international standards conferred upon South Africa and its “citizens” the status of international pariahs, thus isolating the country for decades.

In February 1990, when Nelson Mandela walked out a free man from the Victor Verster prison in Robben Island, after twenty-seven years of confinement by the apartheid regime, the country took its first tentative steps toward acknowledging the monumental wrongs of apartheid and its brutal political, economic, and cultural repression. Four years later, on April 27, 1994, after the first democratic elections, South Africa became united as one under a nonracial democracy, the African National Congress government led by President Mandela.<sup>3</sup> The election ushered in the first concrete platform for the rejection of codified racism as state policy. Finally, South Africa could be said to have truly entered the modern era. Yet, in spite of its new democracy, South Africa remains heavily shadowed and haunted by the fundamental breach of its past. Indeed, it cannot escape the many years of censure, nor can it so easily obliterate pain and bitter memories.

And, thus, to enter South Africa today is to step into the harsh glare of two opposing conditions: one that is assertive, welcoming, tolerant, forgiving, optimistic, hopeful, reconciliatory, and determined to move forward; the other tentative, distrustful, intolerant, intransigent, xenophobic, pessimistic, self-righteous, and regressive. During my stay in Johannesburg this past January, I thought about South Africa’s reality in terms of these paradoxes, in terms of its actively lived contradictions and its dividedness. This division is rendered starkly when one takes the short drive from the heart of cosmopolitan Johannesburg (with its high gates and ubiquitous iconography of signs reading “24-Hour Immediate Armed Response”) to the much different world of Soweto, twelve kilometers away. Yet, this contrast does not in itself fully suggest the country’s rich complexity, fascinating character, and beauty.

### **Beyond Renaissance and Awakening: 1950s South Africa and *Drum***

*Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.*

*Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.*

*It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.*

*We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?*

*Actually, who are you not to be?*

—Nelson Mandela

Brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous: these were the qualities used by many South Africans in the townships during the 1950s to define the substance of their lives, the peak of their coming to voice. Difficult and unfathomable as

it might seem, given the bleak prospects of existence under apartheid's hegemony, life was nonetheless lived with relish in many townships, precipitating a rare period that, today, many remember wistfully. It is almost as if the millions who later would be railroaded and systematically destroyed by the pernicious apartheid policy anticipated that the decades ahead would be devoted solely to the struggle to assert and reclaim the validity of their rights as empowered human beings and citizens. Jürgen Schadeberg, the first picture editor of *Drum* magazine and a highly respected photographer, who documented many of the memorable moments of the decade with sharp clarity and great compositional skill, notes, "The 1950s were exciting years. The ideas, the ideals, and the achievements of that time should not be forgotten."<sup>4</sup> Peter Magubane, who brought an intimate humanism to his photographs and with equal ardor left a legacy of great images from the period, spoke to me about how unbelievable that period was in the now-vanished Sophiatown, then known as the Paris of Johannesburg. He recalled its hedonism, joy, romance, and sense of place.<sup>5</sup>

In an attempt to extract the full essence of the period, "Doc" Bikitsha writes that "terms like renaissance or awakening do not do justice to it." He further notes, in a tone nourished by undisguised sadness and a sense of loss, that the decade of the 1950s in South Africa "was a period of unequalled black fulfillment and achievement. . . . The period could, in my opinion, be described as one of miracles. These miracles were reflected in the writing, politics, trade, fashion, sport and other activities. And there were talented writers who recorded all this glory and triumph. In the forefront of the recorders of this historic period were the *Drum* school of writers."<sup>6</sup>

When *Drum's* first edition was published in Cape Town in March 1951 under the name *The African Drum*, its first editor and cofounder, Robert Crisp, with typical white South African attitudes toward Africans, envisioned it as an entertainment magazine dealing with aspects of "tribal" life, even though its target was an urban audience. Not perceiving themselves in the stereotypical and racist light under which Crisp attempted to cast them, the African populace at whom the magazine was directed roundly rejected its message. *The African Drum* was a failure, a vital lesson its subsequent owner would heed. After three issues were produced, Jim Bailey, the son of a mining magnate, took over the magazine as its sole proprietor, a role he would play until he sold the publication in 1984. Bailey changed its name to *Drum*, restructured its editorial direction, and moved its offices to Johannesburg. In order to ensure its survival, he had to radically reformulate the magazine's image as a forum for Crisp's condescending, imagined ideas of African "tribal" life to a sophisticated outlet for young journalists, writers, and photographers. Bailey brought from England the twenty-five-year-old Anthony Sampson, an old friend from Oxford, to serve as the magazine's editor. A few years later, having solidified his base in South Africa, Bailey expanded the parameters of *Drum* so that it became a quasi-continental organ. Added in succession were editions in Nigeria (1953), Ghana (1954), East Africa (1957), and Central Africa (1966) to fulfill that pan-African determination.

At the height of its popularity, *Drum* enjoyed enormous readership. Even a North American and West Indian edition was distributed. The magazine's circulation per issue stood at 450,000 copies, reaching far into many literate, cosmopolitan areas of Africa. But more than anything else, it was *Drum's* keen insight into Africa's popular



Bob Gosani, "Ladies with painted faces, flowing scarves, dangling earrings and gypsy dresses . . . men in 'jazzy' outfits . . . under the dingy lights of the Bantu Men's Social Centre at an April Fools' Day fancy dress party," Johannesburg, 1955



top: Jürgen Schadeberg, *Drum* office, 1955. Clockwise, from left: Henry Nxumalo (assistant editor), Ezekiel Mphahlele (sitting; fiction editor), Casey Motsisi (standing; writer), Can Themba (writer and later assistant editor), Jerry Ntsipe (photographer), Arthur Maimane (boxing editor), Victor Xashimba (darkroom technician and photographer), Dan Chocho (reporter), Ken Mtwetwa (accountant), Benson Dyanti (circulation manager), Bob Gosani (chief photographer). Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg

bottom: Photographer unknown, Mr. and Mrs. Molebatsi, Sharpeville Township, 1952. Collection of Julia Molebatsi

culture, contemporary life, and emergent sense of modernity that garnered wide devotion among this urban audience. With equal vigor—as well as measured discretion, for *Drum* could easily be banned like so many other publications presenting anything antagonistic toward apartheid—*Drum* also confronted serious sociopolitical issues within its pages. The magazine was witness to the worsening political and economic conditions in South Africa, and the independence and liberation struggles in Central, East, and West Africa. The names of those political figures appearing in *Drum* are deeply inscribed on the pages of world history: Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba, Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Tom Mboya, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and others. *Drum's* various editions also covered momentous events such as the drawn out Treason Trials that lasted several years in South Africa, the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, the Accra conference for Pan-African unity in Ghana, the Kabaka of Buganda's exile by the British, the capture of Lumumba by General Mobutu's forces in Congo, and the independence movement in Nigeria.

Writers like Peter Abrahams, Ayi Kwei Armah, Nadine Gordimer, Alex La Guma, and Lewis Nkosi contributed essays and stories to the magazine. It was also in *Drum* that Alan Paton's bestselling novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* was first serialized. Of its staff writers in the 1950s, Arthur Maimane; Casey Motsisi; Ezekiel Mphahlele, who would later migrate to Nigeria and become a professor of literature; Henry Nxumalo, known as Mr. Drum for his ability to take on very difficult assignments; and Can Themba stand out like beacons. Their stories gave enormous texture and shape to the mood of the period, examining its politics, fun, culture, aspirations, even its petty crimes and capturing in words the fast-paced and changing lifestyles of various communities, such as Alexandra, Orlando, and Sophiatown, some of which would disappear forever.

*Drum's* photographers gave visual substance and glamour to the lives that comprised the intimate portraits of those stories. With equal scrutiny and attention to their diverse subjects, be they celebrities, hoodlums, or politicians, the photographers took pictures in the segregated, teeming, vibrant slums of South Africa's townships. Their nuanced images display an expressive freshness and energy borne out of an irrepressible hope and optimism. The photographers looked for their images in the most unexpected places. They donned disguises and had themselves arrested, whatever it took to obtain images to illustrate important stories. Schadeberg went to great lengths for the convict-labor story, as did Bob Gosani for the prison story, Magubane for the mine-workers story, G. R. Naidoo for the children's hospital story, and Lionel Oostendorp for the story of a drowned "Colored" boy. Still, in the end, *Drum* was less a voice of political consciousness than it was an entertaining lifestyle magazine covering concerts, singers, nightlife, weddings, gangsters, shebeens, beauty contests, and other social events.

By casting a critical gaze at territories that existed beyond the margins, the work of the *Drum* photographers transcends the prosaic. Offhandedly charming or accusatively caustic, the photographs are more like sociological excavations than purely documentary artifacts. By defying the conventions of traditional documentary photography, these pictures ably penetrate the surface of appearances to probe the psychological states of their subjects as well as their environments. Envisioning the circumstances of their production, we are struck by their deep implication.



Drum (Nigeria), April 1958. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg



Drum (Ghana), August 1958. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg



Drum (South Africa), October 1958. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg



Drum (North America and West Indies), June 1966. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg

There is never a dull moment in the stories the photographs tell. For example, Ian Berry's intimate and revealing view of life in the capacious but subterranean world of the Moffies' drag culture, shot at the famous Madam Costello's Ball in Cape Town, poignantly captures that group's racial intermixture and its air of camp, sadness, and joie de vivre.

Stepping away momentarily from South Africa's bureaucratic and statutory taxonomy of racial and social differentiation, we enter the vibrant scene of Ghanaian youth culture captured by the lens of Christian Gbagbo, *Drum* (Ghana)'s principal photographer. His eclectic pictorial investigations utilize a descriptive technique to focus attention on a spectrum of subject matter, from the active political environment of royal visits and Pan-African conferences to the music scene. One of his stories centered around the frenzied, happy-go-lucky world of the Tokio Joes, the flamboyant, stylish, and funky youth of Accra. With their suavely modern way of life, which drew on the international influences of the English teddy boys and the thumping beat of rock and roll, alongside J. T. Mensah's lilting songs of urban romance, the Tokio Joes signed their name onto the map of a new era.

In Nigeria, Mathew Faji's photographs connected viscerally with the core of a country that commanded the immense respect of its neighbors. His camera went beyond the urban metropolis, which he mythicized in dramatic tableaux of assorted pop stars, beauty queens, and expatriates, soccer mania and murder mysteries. Faji reached into the active fulcrum of the political intrigues and scandals of Nigeria, which gained independence in 1960, photographing his various subjects with an intense realism that nevertheless eschews overdramatization. Faji's photographs of Nigeria's multicultural society make up a polyphonic enunciation of emancipatory promise, an essential record of the collective experience with which his country attempted to step into the future.

*Drum* represents more than a mere publication in the minds of many people. It was a window into their aspirations and desires, and, in many ways, it was an eyewitness to those events defining the course of South Africa's political and social landscape in the years following World War II. It fulfilled an important role as a documenter and a disseminator, especially if we consider the magazine's importance in the African context. In the current exhibition, the selection of *Drum* materials has been limited to those from the 1950s and 1960s in South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana, rather than including its later years. The photographs from *Drum* demonstrate how photojournalism functioned and transported ideas as nations were emerging from or entering different milieus in that vital period.

It could be said that *Drum* was at the outset an onerous Eurocentric conceptualization of excess in service of a complex typology privileging Africans' alleged difference from accepted codes of civility. But what demands even greater attention are the strategies by which the selfsame Africans, having recognized and rejected the crudity of *The African Drum's* attempt to falsify their identity, subverted that conceptualization. Equally pertinent is how the writers and photographers of *Drum* brought to the fore ideas about disparate African subjectivities that existed





top and bottom: Ian Berry, "Oh, so this is what they call a Cape Moffie Drag," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1959. Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg

apart from the constructs of the colonial enterprise, beyond the brooding fictions and fears apartheid concocted to legitimate its annihilating procedures.

In many ways, the work of the *Drum* photographers exists beyond the realm of the visual and assumes an important ideological function, occupying a phantasmagoric space of the real, making concrete the manifold experiences captured by the camera.<sup>8</sup> Merewether, in contrasting the manner in which photojournalism is embedded in the activities of the public sphere with that of photographic portraiture's tendency to address the private sphere, notes that "the difference between the two is not simply a matter of genre and style, but the way photography transgresses and redefines the subject of taboo, that is, notions of the sacred, of intimacy and the private sphere."<sup>9</sup> We can access the full meaning and importance of *Drum's* photography through such transgression and defiance, which in many instances came with serious repercussions.<sup>10</sup> Thus, with penetrating authority, the seductive, albeit compelling, images from *Drum* name "through an accumulation or excess of memory" the divided and irradiated space of desanctified memory. As such, the publication of *Drum* in the 1950s and 1960s remains vital and provides a key platform disturbing the various hedges erected by a repressive political order. It also provides real grounds for discursive narratives involving issues of desire, identity, and community as we map different cultural moments in Africa. Although these issues might be looked upon today as the last province of postmodern epistemological closure, their enunciation opens up routes to many discourses that will continuously demand elaboration, as long as photographic practice by Africans remains a fruitful and engaging encounter.

## Notes

1. Charles Merewether, "Naming Violence in the Work of Doris Salcedo," *Third Text* 24, fall 1993, p. 35.
2. Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," in Russell Ferguson et al., ed., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 359.
3. On June 26, 1955, three thousand delegates from a variety of political organizations, including the African National Congress, South African Colored People's Organization, South African Indian Congress, and Congress of Democrats, assembled in opposition to apartheid. At the conclusion of the meeting, the groups drafted a document known as the Freedom Charter. Advocating a multiracial and equal society in a democratic South Africa, it was subsequently adopted by the ANC and for almost forty years remained the key ideology through which the party pressed for the end of apartheid.
4. Jürgen Schadeberg, "Taking Pictures in the 1950s," in *Softown Blues: Images from the Black '50s* (Pinegowrie, South Africa: Jürgen Schadeberg, 1994), p. 19.
5. Peter Magubane's comments on Sophiatown and *Drum* were made during an interview I had with him at his home in Johannesburg in January 1996. He also talked in detail about his work and colleagues at *Drum*, speaking with particular fondness and respect for Bob Gosani and Schadeberg, the latter with whom he has had a few public disagreements about the authorship of particular images published in *Drum* during their tenures as staff photographers.
6. "Doc" Bikitsha, "The Golden Age of Black Journalism," in *Softown Blues: Images from the Black '50s*, p. 8.
7. Under apartheid's racial classification system, anyone considered neither Caucasian nor Indian (also known as Asian) nor African (Bantu, Native, or black) fell into the in-between category of Colored. That category conferred upon the bearer certain rights that were routinely denied Africans, ameliorating the hardships that Africans encountered daily, such as being required to carry passbooks and being barred access to good jobs, public establishments, Caucasian areas of town, and other civic amenities. To be Colored was thus to sit on a hierarchical position above that of *kaffir* (what would be termed "nigger" in American parlance).
8. Merewether, p. 35.
9. *Ibid.*
10. As with most dictatorships, mere suspicion of hostility toward the apartheid regime was met with brutal force. No form of media frightened the regime more than photography did, with its powerful testimony that could be used to expose and counteract the sanitized, propagandistic images working in the government's favor, or to fashion an oppositional artistic practice of self-representation. Magubane, for example, was incarcerated, spending nearly six hundred days in solitary confinement, and was banned by the government for five years, during which he was not permitted to practice photography.





Peter Magubane, **Drum** (South Africa) cover, December 1957

*Step it out! Swing it! Young Africans have a chance to meet marriage partners freely without supervision before they marry.*



Cloete Breytenbach, "Cape Town Goes Thumbs Up in a Terrific Welcome to Luthuli! Somandela Luthuli!," **Drum** (South Africa), June 1959

*Garland of ferns tickles Luthuli's ears as he tells one meeting on his tour of Cape Town, "Nigeria is to be free in 1960 and, perhaps, we too might well enjoy freedom in 1960. . . . What a glorious opportunity it is for us to be able to seek a formula whereby people of different races can live in friendship together. I like to believe that the powers-that-be reserved South Africa to be a place where race relations could be worked out for the benefit of the whole world. I say this generation is fortunate—fortunate to be able to surrender itself fully to a struggle."*



Cloete Breytenbach, "Cape Town Goes Thumbs Up in a Terrific Welcome to Luthuli! Somandela Luthuli!," *Drum* (South Africa), June 1959

*These Xhosa words mean "We will follow Luthuli!" On a Sunday morning the song shook the roof of Cape Town's station as a train brought the beaming, round-faced Chief into the middle of a crowd during a triumphant visit by chief Albert Luthuli, President-General of the African National Congress.*



Lionel Oostendorp, "Cape Town's Eoan Group Hits the Sky with *La Traviata*. In the Banqueting Room of Her Sumptuous Home, Beautiful Violetta Valery Gives a Supper to Her Friends. Here They Listen to a Drinking Song by Alfred Germont, Her New Love," **Drum** (South Africa), May 1956

*It's exactly one hundred and three years ago since the famous Italian opera La Traviata was performed in Venice. This year the Eoan Group of Cape Town presents the first Coloured Arts Festival in a mammoth programme which commenced in March and will go on to August, and to launch their programme they have presented most painstakingly an opera, La Traviata, for the first time by Coloured artists in South Africa.*





Lionel Oostendorp, "Cape Town's Eoan Group Hits the Sky with *La Traviata*. A Number of Violetta's High Society Friends Have Their Fortunes Told by a Gypsy."  
**Drum** (South Africa), May 1956

*It's exactly one hundred and three years ago since the famous Italian opera *La Traviata* was performed in Venice. This year the Eoan Group of Cape Town presents the first Coloured Arts Festival in a mammoth programme which commenced in March and will go on to August, and to launch their programme they have presented most painstakingly an opera, *La Traviata*, for the first time by Coloured artists in South Africa.*



Bob Gosani, "'Bishop' Limba Comes to the Reef! Cape's Richest Priest Tours Union with Faithful Group and Fabulous Mobile Fleet," **Drum** (South Africa), December 1953

*The new "Messiah," Bishop James "Tata" Limba and his wife, "U-mama," arrive at Randfontein in their immaculate Buick 8 car. Out of the confusion of warring African religious sects since the beginning of the century, some have survived and become powerful organisations. One of them is "Bishop" Limba's "Church of Christ" in Port Elizabeth.*



Mathew Faji, "The Effect of Islam. Is It Good—or Bad—for West Africa?," *Drum* (Nigeria), November 1958

*Eid-el-Kabir Festival: The Moslem religion is rich in ceremony. It is the Eid-el-Kabir Festival, and the Federal Premier, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, leads worshippers at the Obalande praying ground in Lagos. Solemn and pensive, on the Premier's left, stands a boy of 11, a blood right royal. He is Prince Oyekan Adele, scion of a formidable father. His Excellency, Oba Adele II of Lagos.*



Mathew Faji, "The Effect of Islam. Is It Good—or Bad—for West Africa?," **Drum** (Nigeria), November 1958

*How has Islam affected the people of West Africa? Has it helped to emancipate them from ignorance and fear? Has it helped them in their struggle for political freedom, social enlightenment and higher education? Or have the squabbles between West African Christians and Moslems tended to widen the political and social gulfs between them and led to the possibility of a Pakistan-India situation emerging in West Africa?*



Peter Magubane, "End of Round One/Women," *Drum* (South Africa), September 1957

*Anti-pass marches of women (at Standerton, above) took place in a new period of protest in a much more determined mood and in quick succession. On 9 August 1956, 20,000 women of all races, from the cities and towns, from reserves and villages, took a petition addressed to the Prime Minister to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. He was not in. The petition demanded of Strijdom that the pass laws be abolished.*



Christian Gbagbo. "All Africa Met Here," *Drum* (Ghana), March 1959

*All Africa is waking up, growing up, joining up. We have arrived at one of the great turning points in history. . . . For ten days Accra—and the whole of Ghana—played host to over 300 men and women from more than 25 African countries who had gathered for the conference. Their subject was the future of Africa. The delegates were at the conference for two reasons: to work out how best Africa could be freed from colonialism and imperialism; and to set the foundations for a Union of Independent African States. Accra's Community Centre Hall was crowded to hear the opening address of Dr. Nkrumah. . . . The hall was draped with flags, and on one of the walls was a map of Africa with slogans which were the theme of the talks: "Peoples of Africa unite. . . . We have freedom and human dignity to attain."*



Christian Gbagbo, "A Partnership Begins," *Drum* (Ghana), February 1959

*A dramatic meeting. An historic moment. The head of a newly born state, M. Sékou Touré of Guinea, steps down from a plane on to the tarmac at Accra. There to greet him is the head of another new state—a bare eighteen months senior to his own—Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The two men embrace. Their two countries embrace as well. A courageous start has been made on a noble and imaginative project—a West African Federation which may one day bind the states of this area into a powerful union, a notable influence for the peace and happiness of the whole world.*



Lionel Oostendorp, "Cape's Hide-and-Seek Wedding! Carriage and Four Took Bride to and from Reception after Groom Had Been Smuggled Out of the Way for a While,"  
**Drum** (South Africa), April 1957

*They have just about the most beautiful weddings in the world in Cape Town. It's the Malays who go in for them—lovely bridal dresses, picturesque horse-drawn carriages, and of course those famous pretty girls. And adding a touch of excitement is the Moslem custom of keeping the bride and her man from being together during the ceremonies.*





Lionel Oostendorp, "Cape's Hide-and-Seek Wedding! Groom Even Got Married in Bride's Absence. Before All-Male Audience and Immam, a Deputy Said 'I Do' on Bride's Behalf," **Drum** (South Africa), April 1957

*They have just about the most beautiful weddings in the world in Cape Town. It's the Malays who go in for them—lovely bridal dresses, picturesque horse-drawn carriages, and of course those famous pretty girls. And adding a touch of excitement is the Moslem custom of keeping the bride and her man from being together during the ceremonies.*



Lionel Oostendorp, "In Vain Three Boys Waited for News of Their Friend," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1958

*Lying somewhere in the dam, with Table Mountain towering above, was the body of 13-year-old Suleiman Arendse. Suleiman, carrying a bag of oranges, had left home with a cheery wave to his mother to spend the afternoon at the dam with three school friends. When they got there, Suleiman and one of his friends peeled off their clothes and went for a swim, but in a few moments everything was changed—Suleiman had disappeared. And while attempt after attempt to get the body of Suleiman Arendse failed, his three friends sat forlornly nearby. They are Mogamat Francis (13), Salie Malik (13) and Eunice Charles (10).*



Bob Gosani, "At Home with £50 Winner! *Drum* Takes the Good News to Dyke Sentso!," *Drum* (South Africa), April 1954

*We travelled nearly a hundred miles from Johannesburg to a tiny Free State dorp, Vredefort, where he is a successful school teacher. You can stand at one corner and count the houses and the people on your hands. . . . This is how the winner of *Drum's* great Short Story Contest received the news of his success. Dyke Sentso takes a picture of his family—Llewelyn (3), Blythe (1), Urona (5) and wife "Lalie."*



Peter Magubane, "Death in the Dark City," **Drum** (South Africa), September 1957

*The whole Reef wants to know who killed Boy Mangena: thug, knifeman, bully and now just an unbefriended corpse. And the cinema outside which Boy's body lay stiffening was showing a film called The Great Sinner! It seems that Boy himself was one of those who traded in sudden death. The dark city (Alexandra Township, Johannesburg) is making Sodom and Gomorrah of old look like picnic spots for a Sunday school. At the moment, a gang of the slickest criminals this city has seen rules.*



Ranjith Kally, "Whites in Cato Manor Shebeens," *Drum* (South Africa), July 1957

*Bra Mack and Bra Bill (in hat) sit in the sun outside a Cato Manor slum shack. Who said Cato Manor isn't fit for a White to live in? Bra George, Bra Mack, Bra Bill and Bra Baldy like it there. And they'd tell you to your face that, cut-throats or not, the people there are human just like anybody else.*



Christian Gbagbo, "The Birth of the Giant," **Drum** (Ghana), August 1962

*A dam on the Volta . . . for years a dream. Now that dream has become a reality. And for Ghana it will bring in an era of new prosperity.*



Gopal Naransamy, "Manhattan Brothers Mellow: Dambuza Mdlele, Joseph Mogotsi, Rufus Koza, Ronnie Sehume," **Drum** (South Africa), January 1956

*Whether they are shouting the blues or howling the boogie-woogie beat or jamming the jazz idiom or moaning the sad ballads of love, the Manhattan Brothers are always in harmony. . . . In November 1955, at the Bantu Men's Social Centre, Johannesburg, the "sound" celebrated 21 years in show business. In the gala opening of the anniversary celebrations, the Brothers crashed through a paper screen into their current hit-parade song . . . "The Urge." In the words of the song, they told of their love and devotion to the stage. . . . "This urge for you is everlasting. As constant as the sun and the rolling sea."*



Gopal Naransamy, "Manhattan Brothers Mellow: Miriam Makeba," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1956

*A year ago (1955) the Manhattan Brothers discovered a great voice in Miriam Makeba. Then she was just a small-town girl with a voice—which was about all she had. They saw possibilities in her and signed her for a year. . . . The Nightingale, Miriam Makeba, animates with voluptuousness. The body jerks project appeal. A ball of fire.*





Christian Gbagbo, "A Flashback to the Royal Tour," *Drum* (Ghana), March 1962

*The Royal tour of West Africa will long be remembered as one of the most memorable events of recent years. Drum here presents a souvenir of those days, bringing vividly to life again the pageantry and enthusiasm with which our people greeted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. Anything for a good view of the Queen.*



Christian Gbagbo, "A Flashback to the Royal Tour," **Drum** (Ghana), March 1962

*The Royal tour of West Africa will long be remembered as one of the most memorable events of recent years. Drum here presents a souvenir of those days, bringing vividly to life again the pageantry and enthusiasm with which our people greeted Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. At the Fish Market, Accra, the enthusiasm was clamorous.*



Bob Gosani, "Drum's Secret Camera at the Pretoria Bare-Fist Fights!," *Drum* (South Africa), November 1955

*Every Sunday afternoon at about 4:30 a horde of rowdy "amalaitas" (bare-fist fighters) advances slowly to the little township of Bantule, Pretoria, from various directions to the accompaniment of mouth-organs. Some of the amalaitas, most of them domestic servants, come as far as seven miles. They come down in groups of 30 and 50, and each group has a leader. The leaders of the various groups jump and prance about, shouting praises about the strength of their groups while making all manner of pugnacious gestures as they approach Bantule.*



Mathew Faji, "A Village Samson," *Drum* (Nigeria), December 1959

*They say he is as strong as an elephant, and indeed his deeds justify the comparison. At 27, Uzoma Nwachuku has stirred the wonder of all Nigeria with his feats of strength. There is the story of the day he "fought" a winning tussle with a Volkswagen bus at Diobu, near Port Harcourt. Uzoma had been abused by the driver for refusing to step out of its way. Uzoma didn't mince words, but promptly took hold of the vehicle from behind and held on while the driver started the engine and tried to move off. But so great was his strength that the vehicle didn't budge. Only when the driver had apologised did he let go.*



Peter Magubane, "A Day at the Races," *Drum* (South Africa), July 1958

*The cynics say it's a game for the needy, the greedy and the seedy. Tradition says it's the sport of kings—and presidents, too. But the ordinary guy is saying more and more, "It's the game for me." Just now the excitement is mounting because soon the biggest race in the South African racing calendar—the Durban July—will be on. All the country's top horses will be there, and folks are already putting on their best dreams for the occasion. It's the common meeting ground, the "July." Doesn't matter if you're white, black, financier or tsotsi, the bookies are prepared to take your money—and prepared to pay out if you can find that exclusive winner. Success. It was a winner all the way. And boy, were the odds generous! First a little jig, and then off to the office to collect.*



Peter Magubane, "Death Rider," **Drum** (South Africa), October 1957

*Miss Amaranee Naidoo, a shy and attractive young girl who was at one time too nervous to ride a bicycle, has won fame throughout Natal, South Africa, by her daring escapades on the Wall of Death. And while other girls of her age are wondering who their next "date" will be, she often wonders if she will be alive for another date.*



G. R. Naidoo, "This Is a Hospital," *Drum* (South Africa), February 1958

*At Weenen, a small farming town in Natal, there is a hospital where the conditions are perhaps more shocking than at any other in South Africa. Tuberculous sleep almost one atop another on bare floors. Patients suffering from other diseases and illnesses mix freely with the tuberculous, and in fact sleep together. In one ward, children sleep under the beds of the men patients.*



Peter Magubane, "Rand's Dustbin Babies," **Drum** (South Africa), November 1957

*Abandoned babies. Tiny kids, just out of their mothers' wombs, thrown away. It's happening twice a week on the Rand at least, probably much more. . . . Some babies, however, have never been cast off even though their mothers must work. Here, they are left in a creche in Johannesburg.*





Peter Magubane, "The Flame-Throwers!," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1957

*Johannesburg kids think up new crazy crime; they set victims alight with benzine and drug themselves into a daze with the stuff. The benzine kids, so called because of their habit of inhaling benzine fumes until they're tipsy, as if they have smoked dagga, are a batch of young kids aged from 8 to 14 who have their headquarters at the Bantu Sports Ground, Johannesburg. They call themselves the "Fuku Ranch" and their headquarters also serve as their home. Most of these kids grew up in the dust and blood and poverty of the slums of Moroka, Pimville, Orlando Shelters and Alexandra although a dash of them are Evatonians.*



Mathew Faji, "The Case that Rocked Nigeria," *Drum* (Nigeria), February 1962

*At first people wondered what all the fuss was about. The Nigerian Federal Government passed a law to enable it to inquire into the affairs of the National Bank. But some leaders saw the legislation as a threat to personal liberties. The issue was joined in court and the judges ruled that the law is invalid. Victory to Senator Chief Adebayo Doherty, the former managing director of the National Bank who fought the Government in its bid to inquire into the National Bank. The court ruled in his favor, and it is smiles all round.*



Bob Gosani, "A 'Native' by Mistake," *Drum* (South Africa), July 1956

*Mr. Holyoake, the Coloured who was classified as a "Native," has won his appeal with the Reclassification Appeal Board. He is Coloured again. From the end of 1955 the Coloureds have been harassed by the need for the reclassification of their racial status in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950. To be reclassified as an African could, everybody understood only too well, mean a whole new train of daily embarrassments and disabilities, but hundreds of Coloureds went over to the Native Affairs Department, and there came up grim stories of comb and pencil tests, nose and ear inspections and of people being summarily classified as African.*



Bob Gosani, "Township Jazz Brings Black Music to the Limelight and It Was Such Fun Having Shantytown in City Hall!," **Drum** (South Africa), August 1956

*It all started with the huge, compelling party poster splashed magnetically over Johannesburg. The poster also carried a controversy, sensitive as a winter blister. There would be shows for Euros only and shows for Non-Euros only. All this would take place at the Johannesburg City Hall. There the music, song and dance of the townships would be presented by the Union of South African Artists. So if this Union claims to champion the cause of us Blacks, why the heck should they go in for segregation and separate audiences and black dates and white dates? At the end of the seventh show, Township Jazz moved to the Taj Mahal Night Club where the artists and friends were treated to a party to celebrate the success of the run.*



Bob Gosani, *Drum* (South Africa) cover, May 1956

*Drum lets you in on its secret of how a pin-up is born. Drum staff checking for minute specifications for the May cover of Drum. Lynette Kolati of Western Township, Johannesburg, made it for the cover!*



Christian Gbagbo, "When Hi-Life Invaded the Congo," *Drum* (Ghana), October 1961

*Hi-Life came to the Congo with a merry beat that was taken up in city, village and forest. It was brought there by Rex Ofosu's Golden Eagles Band and Berylle Karikari's Ghana Modern Ballet Group, and was a gay reminder of home for our boys with the UN Forces. Some of our Ghanaian soldiers had been in the Congo trenches for days when along came a real Hi-Life band and broad-smiled Ghanaian girls—in the flesh. The troops let themselves go, and the entertainers rose to a fresh peak. For the happy moment the Congo's troubles ceased to exist.*



Bob Gosani, "Two Years of Thoko Shukuma," *Drum* (South Africa), October 1956

*"Shukuma" means, "Get you moving." Here Thoko is sizzling through a hot number with the "Lo Six." She sings with her whole body. After wowing Reef jazz-cats, de black ones an' de white ones, in Township Jazz I, Thoko Skukuma Thomo an' de "Lo Six" went spinning through the Free State.*



Peter Magubane, "Emily Motsieloa," **Drum** (South Africa), May 1956

*This is the story of a heart of gold; the story of Mrs. Emily Motsieloa. . . . She went through hundreds of military camps, she and her husband's De Pitch Black Follies. They thrilled thousands, she and her husband. . . . In 1947 she retired from the Merry Blackbirds Orchestra, of which she was the founder. That's the best reputed orchestra in Black Africa. . . . And her Children's Choir is Johannesburg's proudest buttonhole today. . . . Aunt Em. Motsieloa and one of her young music-makers hitting a top note joyously.*







Compared to all other image-making techniques and preoccupations that we loosely refer to as the visual arts, photography has come a long way in a very short time. Today, the hand-held contraption that George Eastman built in Rochester, New York in 1888 to take advantage of the roll film he had developed has so advanced and proliferated that we are offered models so inexpensive we can discard them after only one use, thus completely belying the fact that just over one hundred-and-fifty years ago it required a bill on the floor of the French parliament, sponsored and promoted by some of the most powerful minds of the age, to obtain from the government an annuity for Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in exchange for the rights to his photographic process. And the ever-burgeoning business enjoyed by photo-processing laboratories and drugstore counters around the world today shows that our attachment to the photograph has not waned since the publication in 1840 of that witty lithograph by Théodore Maurisset, *La Daguerrotypomanie*, which captured the craze for the photograph gripping Parisian society and also predicted many of the developments that have taken place in photographic history. Photography has allowed us to share images of locations and sites as remote as the farthest corners of our galaxy and as intimate as the innards of our own bodies, and it has placed at our disposal records of events and likenesses of personalities both close and distant: the exhilarating moment of the delivery of a child, as well as the sting of the hour of departure; the family group miniature set on an office desk as a sign of respectability, as well as images of the powerful with which we underline our own connections, or allegiances, to power.

Photography arrived in Africa on November 16, 1839, the same year that Daguerre announced his invention in France and less than two months after the Englishman D. W. Seager made the first daguerreotype in the United States. But for the sabotage of the painter and amateur photographer Horace Vernet, who made the first images in Egypt in 1839, the earliest photographic images by an African, which were produced by Vernet's patron and benefactor, the Khedive and Vice-Regent of Egypt, Mehmet, could have also appeared in that same year. Mehmet, who had marveled at the image-making possibilities of the photographic process, lost little time in his desire to understand and take control of this process, to wrest from Vernet the power of the new technique, and to apply it to the reproduction and preservation of images of his spouses. To this we shall return shortly. Soon after Vernet's pictures of Egypt appeared in Europe, photography and the camera became a permanent part of European campaigns of exploration in Africa, sometimes with relative success but often woefully unsuccessful and remarkably vain. Nicolas Monti has suggested, with much merit, that the culture of tourism had its very beginnings in the lucrative European trade in photographic images of Africa. As a result of the graphic representations of aspects of African life, created by adventurers and colonial personnel through the photographic process, many people were drawn to the continent not only by the geography thus revealed but also by a new, more convincing and eminently enticing portrayal of the alleged sensuality of the African. And so successful was this commerce of images that by the turn of the century, American photographer F. Holland Day was manufacturing studio images of "Nubians" and "Ethiopian chiefs" shot in America with African American models, a voyeuristic, typecasting practice that would eventually be manifest, in its worst form, in the junglification of Africa by Hollywood in the following century.

As the voyeuristic camera made inroads into Africa, so did the camera as an instrument of war. By 1855, the English photographer Roger Fenton had established the camera as a tool of war reportage through his coverage of the Crimean War, and by 1861, Mathew Brady had begun to apply Frederick Scott Archer's collodion process to the pictorial documentation of the American Civil War, leaving behind moving images of loss and horror rather than records of triumph. In both cases, the camera was, quite arguably, very much a journalistic instrument rather than part of a military campaign. In its earliest wartime use in Africa, however, the camera was a tool ideologically posited decidedly on the side of incursion. In 1896, Edoardo Ximenes, an Italian journalist and cofounder of the magazine *Illustrazione italiana*, brought war photography to Africa as a reporter on the Italian campaign in Abyssinia. Accounts of Ximenes's exploits in Abyssinia indicate his position in favor of the Italian infringement upon that African nation. And Ximenes was not the first photographer in Ethiopia. The man credited with introducing photography into Ethiopia, in 1859, the German missionary Henry Stern, had himself been imprisoned for "displeasing" Emperor Tewodros II, thus discouraging the use of the camera in that country until later in the century. The camera would eventually play a fateful role in the politics of the great Abyssinian monarchy in the early twentieth century, ultimately leading, for the first time in world history, to the fall of a monarch and presaging the dubious employment of photography in the McCarthy era in the United States.

Although it is known that Khedive Mehmet acquired command of the daguerreotype process from Vernet shortly after its introduction in Egypt in 1839, information on African photographers working before the turn of the century is scarce. While this in itself does not, of course, demonstrate, as some would have us believe, the absence of African practitioners of the art, nevertheless we do not find records and images specifically attributed to them—and which provide us with an insight into the nature and purposes of African photography—from much before the turn of the century. In explanation, Monti indicates possible cultural impediments to the acceptance and propagation of the photographic medium, one of which is a superstitious misgiving about the camera and its magical abilities. But this was a worldwide phenomenon in the early years of photography. In Germany in 1839, for example, the *Leipziger Stadtanzeiger* had qualified the very idea of the photographic reproduction of the human image as blasphemy, insisting, "Man is created in the image of God and God's image cannot be captured by any human machine." This, the Leipzig publication maintained, had been proven "by a thorough German investigation." In addition, stock European accounts of superstitious responses to photography in Africa, narrated in nearly the same words whether they describe the Khedive of Egypt or the Mulena Mukwae of the Lozi of south-central Africa, cannot be relied upon to provide us with a faithful representation of African attitudes toward the photograph. Wherever open hostility developed toward the camera, it almost always arose in response to the invasive tactics of its European operators rather than from a peculiar African inability to understand or accept the medium. In our own times, such was the reaction among the Nuba following Nazi propagandist Leni Riefenstahl's staged documentaries in their area in the 1970s.

Monti does, however, point to a more relevant and crucial political and cultural impediment to the development

and recognition of African photography in the nineteenth century. Writing about the photographic documentation of European colonies in Africa, he notes in *Africa Then: Photographs, 1840–1918* that “the authorities who commissioned and financed a good part of the first photographic campaigns were, it seems, aware of the risk of ‘natives’ getting possession of this means of expression and using it as an instrument of subversion by showing the true conditions of their people.” It is noteworthy that, even in the face of opposition and active discouragement, Africans nevertheless took possession of the camera and photographic processes. Before the end of the century, a good number, some of whose identities have come down to us, had established fairly successful and lucrative practices around the continent. Among them are N. Walwin Holm, who established his studio in Accra in 1883 and would be admitted into the British Royal Photographic Society in 1897, before moving on to Lagos to establish a legal practice; George S. A. Da Costa, who began professional photography in Lagos in 1895; F. R. C. Lutterodt, who established his practice in Accra in 1889 but eventually traveled and worked all over Central Africa during the 1890s; and a handful of photographers active in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Addis Ababa, among other cities, at the turn of the century.

By the early twentieth century, photography was a profession highly regarded throughout Africa and studios run by professionals, many of whom were quite familiar with developments and techniques in Europe, were in operation in most cities. The case of Da Costa, a highly successful administrator and salesman who gave up his position to study photography and establish a studio, is revealing. Described by Allister Macmillan in 1920 as “the ablest and best-known professional photographer in Nigeria,” Da Costa had been manager of the Church Missionary Society Bookshop in Lagos between 1877 and 1895, until he resigned and took up photography, spending quite a sizeable sum on training and eventually becoming a photographer of remarkable achievement. Not only did the colonial government entrust him with the task of photographically recording the construction of the Nigeria Railways, work for which he was equally acknowledged in London, in 1920 Macmillan hired Da Costa to work on *The Red Book of West Africa*, which occasionally, especially in northern Nigeria, required battling the hostile elements. It would be in order to point out that Da Costa’s work represents his times quite remarkably in its variance from the conceptions feeding and shaping the popular imagination outside the continent. Rather than conjuring a society of “cannibals” and “heathens,” Da Costa’s photographs of early twentieth-century Africa lead us to a cosmopolitanism steeped in awareness of other cultures, a world of burgeoning elite and savvy literati, a society of international merchants, highflying attorneys, widely traveled politicians, newspaper tycoons, and society ladies, the same images we find in contemporary portrait painting of the period. Quite remarkably, also, photography, through the work of Da Costa and others and with its head start on portrait painting in Lagos, where the earliest significant work in that genre dates to 1906, avoided the reputation that it came into in Europe as spoiling antagonist and was considered particularly acceptable.

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, the Lisk-Carew brothers set up a popular practice to cater to the needs of both local and visiting clients. Of their business Macmillan wrote in 1920: “There is probably no establishment in Freetown

that is visited by more passengers from the steamers than that of Messres Lisk-Carew Bros. The reason of its popularity is because of its extensive stock of postcard views of Freetown and Sierra Leone." In Accra in 1919, J. A. C. Holm took over the studio of his father, N. Walwin Holm, who had become an attorney in Lagos. The younger Holm, who had joined his father's photographic studio in 1906 at the age of eighteen, is described by Macmillan as "an exponent of photography in all its branches." Holm produced several images of Accra and its elite for *The Red Book of West Africa*. In addition to Holm's studio, a number of smaller shops applied themselves to the demands of the growing population of urban elite. Photography was a lucrative business, and the photographer enjoyed a unique sense of place within the community, having access to the people, enjoying their confidence, and understanding their peculiar needs and demands with respect to the medium. The African photographer was thus better positioned than the foreigner within specific cultural frameworks that made his services accessible and affordable. With their privileged knowledge and location, as well as their ingenuity, photographers were able to devise novel uses for the medium and to introduce it within their communities and social circles.

By the early twentieth century, African photographers enjoyed the trust and acceptance of not only their communities but of expatriates. The advent of journalism and newspaper publishing at the turn of the century, and the growth of this industry as part of the nascent anticolonial struggle in the 1930s, gave African photographers the opportunity to expand their practices and to gain greater exposure and respectability. Government yearbooks and other projects employed the services of photographers; colonial functions and royal visits provided commissions. Whereas a publication like the Amharic weekly *Aimero* in Abyssinia relied heavily on the work of Armenian photographers, others like *Lagos Weekly Record* and *West African Pilot* relied on African photographers for their images. Among other publications using the work of African photographers for their photographic illustrations were London's *West Africa Magazine* and local trade journals like *Nigerian Teacher*.

In the decades that followed, such talented photographers as Peter Obe in Nigeria, Mohammed Amin in Kenya, Peter Magubane in South Africa, and Seydou Keita in Mali would emerge. Obe, perhaps his country's greatest photographer, not only produced work for numerous African publications and clients, but also for foreign news and photographic agencies. With a decidedly aesthetic intent, Obe approached every photographic moment—regardless of its ultimate utility as private or documentary image—with the weight of his technical and visual sophistication. Amin earned the recognition and respect of clients in Kenya, as well as of the establishments in Europe who sought his work. Today, he oversees a vast archive of important work that he produced over several decades and that represents mastery in every genre of photography. Magubane and David Goldblatt are the finest and most significant South African photographers of their generation. In bringing that country and its people to the world, Magubane has enjoyed the reverence of the international photographic community. And so has Keita, who in the past decade has reemerged, like blues legend John Lee Hooker, as a visionary comparable to only a few others in the twentieth century.

Just as the African condition in the late twentieth century is defined considerably by expatriation, so has the



top: Peter Obe, **Yoruba Schoolchildren, Lagos**, originally published in Michael Crowder, ed., *Nigeria 1960: A Special Independence Issue of Nigeria Magazine* (Lagos: Federal Government of Nigeria, October 1960)

bottom: Peter Obe, **Kanuri Woman, Bornu**, originally published in Michael Crowder, ed., *Nigeria 1960: A Special Independence Issue of Nigeria Magazine* (Lagos: Federal Government of Nigeria, October 1960)

cartography of its photography undergone metamorphosis and expansion. As cultural critics and historians are beginning to learn, to look to the continent alone for its cultures, its art, music, and literatures, is to sidestep a significant manifestation of its present. Among the continent's most important contemporary photographers is Rotimi Fani-Kayode, who was also the most significant and influential British photographer of his generation. In his brief lifetime, Fani-Kayode worked principally within the traditions of Yoruba photography and image-making while defining for the 1980s the British gay aesthetic in photography. Perhaps no one else has exerted such a powerful force upon England's photography since his death in 1989 at the age of thirty-four. Unfortunately, after his death, a good body of Fani-Kayode's work was exposed to intervention and corruption by a partner whose understanding of the image and of the photographic medium was essentially closed to Fani-Kayode's depth and criticality of meaning.

In the 1980s and 1990s, artists no longer restrict themselves to the photograph *per se*, and photography is once more defined not simply by the camera but within the broader frame of the photographic medium, just as it was in the days of the hand-tinted photograph, when the camera was only one element in a larger process of photographic image-making, and just as it always has been for Africans. Among the artists working with this new understanding are such notable African photographers as Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé, who has worked in Europe and North America, and Gordon Bleach, who teaches in Eastman's Rochester and has worked in his own country, Zimbabwe. Bamgboyé—a descendant of the legendary Yoruba sculptor Bamgboyé and a distant protégé of both Fani-Kayode and the stage personality and photographer Geoffrey Holder, whose 1950s work presaged and may very well have influenced that of Robert Mapplethorpe decades later—brings a mastery and awareness of the entirety of diverse photographic mediums to his explorations of the exoticized body, thereby bringing into crisis and cutting off photography's century-and-a-half long exploitation of the African body.

In addition to those named are the hundreds of thousands of professional photographers across Africa attending to the photographic demands of their localities, who, together with those above, provide us with material toward the formulation of a theory of African photography. Stephen Sprague observes, for instance, that "the large number of photographs available from individual Yorubas [sic] and from photographers' negative files form a vast visual data bank . . . [that] might be utilized in a number of ways." Although there are unanswered questions resulting from a lack of proper attributions and occasional dubiousness arising from the practice of often better-known Western photographers who are known to have scratched out attributions from photographs and appended their own imprints, it is the period from the turn of the century into the early twentieth century that establishes for us the earliest body of verifiable African work in photography. We are able, nevertheless, to gain considerable insight into the general perception and application of the photographic medium by Africans before and after that time. And in these we find logical parallels to the West, as Sprague equally points out about Yoruba photography, and even more interesting peculiarities, which define a different understanding framed by a divergent philosophical perspective on the questions that have hitherto occupied the discourses of photography.



## Photography and Its Discourses

Since its birth, photography has generated innumerable questions and contentions, all deriving from an inclination, which, incidentally, is peculiar to the West, to view the photographic process as different and separable from the larger body of techniques and processes of image-making. Yet it is difficult, even futile, to ascribe to photography any uniqueness beyond its facility to replicate and miniaturize, and thus make the fixed image portable and readily available. In cultures where the multiple was already a long-standing artistic tradition in place to meet the demands of the community, and portability was the norm rather than the exception, even this quality of repeatability was only convenient rather than unique.

Much has been made in the history and criticism of photography, too, about its fidelity, or lack thereof, to reality. On this, contemporary theorists of the medium remain as divided as its earliest commentators were. For the intellectual and ruling circles of late-Enlightenment Europe, photography proffered a mathematical exactitude of reality, a reducible, calculable mechanism for the scientific reproduction of nature. In the essay "Fixing the Face," Tristram Powell quotes the Victorian Lady Elizabeth Eastlake as remarking: "What are nine tenths of these facial maps, called photographic portraits, but accurate landmarks and measurements for loving eyes and memories to deck with beauty and animate with expression, in perfect certainty that the ground plan is founded upon fact." Lady Eastlake's comment bears an element of a certain naive faith in the fidelity of the photograph that would pervade not only the mind-set of the aristocracy in the West but particularly, and with greater danger and more insidious consequences, the various institutions of science and the state. Confident of this supposed fidelity and transparency, whole disciplines came to rely upon the evidential potentials of the photograph. Sociology appealed to it for concrete statistical purposes, anthropology for indubitable evidence of the evolutionary order of the human species, and in extension, as justification for its mission of salvage exploration outside Europe. Jurisprudence and other apparatuses of state control invented new systems of criminal cartography based on the consciously exaggerated faithfulness of photographic likeness, and the fundamental right to contest institutional truth was curbed by the supposed impeachability of the new tool.

Behind this rather essentialist and fundamentally flawed view of photography lay the myth of automatism, the conviction that photography, unlike all the other techniques of representation, had become, through its supposed substitution of the machine for the human hand, the sign of the absence of subjectivity and fallibility of human agency. Writing over a hundred years after Lady Eastlake, in 1971, the philosopher Stanley Cavell replicates this view with a deeper and more disturbing clinicality in *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*:  
*So far as photography satisfied a wish, it satisfied a wish not confined to painters, but a human wish, intensifying since the Reformation, to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation—a wish for the power to reach this world, having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another. . . . Photography overcame subjectivity in a way undreamed of by painting, one which does not so much defeat the act of painting as escape it altogether: by automatism, by removing the human agent from the act of reproduction.*

Similarly, in his 1974 essay "On the Nature of Photography," Rudolf Arnheim writes of "the fundamental peculiarity of the photographic medium; the physical objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light," thus lending further philosophical authority to the concept of a mechanical, objective process devoid of the compromise or choices of human intervention.

Like Arnheim and others who have propagated this idea, Cavell builds his assertions on a number of fallacies, among which is the assumption that the human inclination is to escape subjectivity, every indication being, on the contrary, that the proclivity of the human species is to seek what is beyond, and to challenge the veracity of that which professes, objectivity. The second major fallacy underlining Cavell's position, and which Arnheim uses as the fundamental principle in his argument, is the assertion that photography removes the human agency in the reproductive process. Rather than the sign of subjective or human absence in representation, photography on the contrary, though mechanical, is first and foremost a human invention entirely dependent on human manipulation, from its beginning in the conception and manufacture of the camera and its peripherals, to its primary conclusion of the photographic process in the image.

The myth of the triumph of reason in the Enlightenment, upon which Cavell rests his assumption of the human desire for objectivity, survives on the denial of the very limited reach of the rationalist ideal and on a propensity to overlook the fact that at no time in the history of the Enlightenment, from its outset to its demise in the age of High Modernism (at the very tail end of which Cavell writes in 1971), was there a popular submission to the preeminence of the rational. Instead, the focus of the human will was in the opposite direction, toward a recognition and acceptance of the undesirability and impossibility of the objective. Thus, when Lady Eastlake speaks of the photographic image, she speaks of it not as an objective reproduction of reality but as an evocation, as a cartograph or map whose acceptance rests upon the knowledge that its "ground plan is founded upon fact." And even when John Ruskin speaks of the photographic image as a "portable" reality, he speaks not of an objective reproduction of reality or what Arnheim describes as "the manifest presence of authentic physical reality" but of a miniaturization, in other words a new reality that differs quite essentially from that which it evokes, if only by virtue of its portability. In essence, the only phenomenological invariable of photography is the materiality of the photograph, the creation of a new reality, a new, independent, and concrete object on and in the form of paper, glass, or any of the other innumerable surfaces upon which the photographic image can be placed.

More recent, and perhaps even more intriguing, is the contention that the history and appeal of the photographic medium lies principally in the uniqueness of its process. Following the argument for mechanicality, André Bazin writes in *What is Cinema*: "The essential factor in the transition from the baroque to photography is not the perfecting of a physical process . . . rather does it lie in a psychological fact, to wit, in completely satisfying our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part. The solution is not to be found in the result achieved, but in the way of achieving it." In their 1975 essay "Photography, Vision and Representation," J. Snyder and N. Allen note that "the use of a machine to lay down lines and the reliance on the natural laws of

refraction and chemical change to create pictures are viewed as the decisive differences” between photography and other processes of picture-making. Yet these positions are indeed historically inaccurate because they fail to acknowledge the origins of the photographic process in the desire of its early practitioners, whether the scene painter Daguerre or the scientist and amateur landscapist William Henry Fox Talbot, to achieve better results, images either more personally or commercially viable. It is noteworthy that Talbot had named his invention the calotype, from the Greek *kalos* (beautiful sketch), and when Talbot’s process was introduced to the Friday evening meeting of the Royal Institution in London on January 25, 1839, the inventor Michael Faraday had aptly described it as the “Art of Photogenic Drawing,” not failing to locate the emphasis on the product, the drawing. From the *camera obscura* to the *camera lucida*, the drive for further inventiveness remained in the artist’s frustration with the fleeting image and the wish to capture and preserve the form produced by those reproductive contraptions.

A second observation to the contrary is that general interest in the photographic process—as distinct from the minority sect of intellectuals and philosophers and the handful of practitioners who over the years have sought to position themselves apart from the greater photographic community through uncertain professional claims and guises—always was and still remains in the result, the end product. The desire to take control of the process is driven, quite indubitably, by this interest in the product and its use. At no time, not even in the much-hyped era of modernist autonomism, did the vocation of image-making rest on a preoccupation with the nature and relevance of processes in and of themselves; rather it was based on the nature and value of the image. The efficacy and convenience of the photographic process, even the magicality associated with it in its early history, are subordinate to the true human appetite and fascination for the production of form, and the opportunity that photography provides for participation in the making of images. When a columnist wrote in *Scientific American* in 1862 that photography contributes to human happiness a “thousand fold more,” it had less to do with a fascination for light, science, and chemicals than with a human desire to make and acquire images. In discussing photography in Africa, it should be of interest to look at the foregoing contentions in the context of the continent and its traditions of making and consuming images.

### **The Substance of the Image**

One of the most naturalistic traditions of image-making in Africa, besides the royal portraiture of ancient Ife, is that of the *ako* funereal effigy (see p. 242) among the Owo of western Nigeria, a tradition that, as Rowland Abiodun observes in *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*, may date from before the sixteenth century. Not long after the death of an important person, an event is held at which a life-size effigy of the deceased is attired in his or her clothing and then either interred or allocated to a shrine commemorating the dead. There is an insistence on verisimilitude in the portrayal of the dead, and this demand for faithfulness in the likeness, it has equally been pointed out, has its origins in antiquity.

The earliest Western scholars addressing this memorial observance did not fail to dwell on the element of

verisimilar representation, which seemed unusual within a culture of greatly stylized sculpture, and in the light of its other known traditions that refrain from replicating likeness. Yet, Abiodun rightly cautions:

*The effigy with its ako naturalism should not be judged for its photographic realism, but for its efficacy within the context of the ako ceremony, which is . . . to make the end of this life, and the beginning of the next one, honorable and dignifying for one's parents, whose goodwill is needed by those still on earth.*

For this reason, the eyes of the effigies are always wide open, quite remarkably so, because the deceased to which they refer must keep awake on the other side, watchful over the living, as Abiodun observes. To represent them otherwise is to ignore a crucial element of the supplicatory act and to run a risk.

Despite its verisimilitude, *ako* is not portraiture *as we know it*. At its very extremes, portraiture in the Western tradition may venture beyond accuracy into the fictive territories of distortion and hyperbole but never into invocation. Depending on its medium, the portrait may veer between what we have come to describe, rather unwisely, as “photographic” realism and the borders of acceptable flattery. Yet it remains a recollection, the transfixion or invocation of a precedent moment. Its phenomenological claims rest on its referentiality and finiteness. Even in its wildest departures from the frames of the verisimilar, as in those nineteenth-century Western photographic portraits that incorporate various signs of historical or religious association in order to imbue the middle-class sitters with the hitherto aristocratic attributes of grace, wealth, enlightenment, and soulfulness, portraiture *as we know it* remains ensconced by its nature as a play on memory. In *ako*, however, we find a different kind of portraiture: representation as anticipation. The verisimilitude we are introduced to is a mediated gesture between faithfulness and faith, between reflection and projection; it is a configuration of representation as both reflection and invocation beyond the limitations of transparency. For that which projects, that which anticipates and conjures, though faithful it may yet be to appearance, cannot be transparent since to be transparent is to convey that which already exists, that which precedes rather than supersedes the agency of its representation: to remain, as it were, within the reaches of death. The essence of verisimilitude here is not transparency but efficacy, the fulfillment of an intent beyond the materiality of the image.

This understanding fits within a broader aesthetic of essence whereby the image is true as long as it efficaciously meets the specifications of its particular application within an intricate matrix of cultural expectations. Whereas the conventional qualification of such circumstance would be that the image is successful, that is to say that it fulfills its purpose, if success also equates truth within this aesthetic, this success is not restricted to the registration or excavation of the phenomenological contours of the subject through iconographic or iconological appendage. It does indeed extend the phenomenological to include the nonmimetic. Thus an image, be it photographic or otherwise, though it may not in verity refer to a subject, may yet be applied to the representation of that subject as long as it sufficiently encapsulates the perceived or intended attributes of that subject. A good example of this is found in another Yoruba ritual, that of *gelede*, in which matriarchal images are produced to reflect youth in order to flatter the elderly; flattery as a lobbying strategy is the essence of *gelede*. Although the image may refer to or be

directed at an individual, it nevertheless behooves the image-maker to take the liberty to supersede the transparent, thereby redefining faithfulness and introducing the essential gesture. And where necessary, the image-maker may depart entirely from the physically referential or, in other words, employ an image other than that of the target of ritual flattery as long as it is still perceived to embody the spiritual essence of that target. Thus, whereas in Western portraiture the search for *inner truth* in a subject may extend to distortion and mediation of the verisimilar, but never so far as to depart entirely from the confines of physically cognitive reference, within the aesthetic governing *gelede* and Yoruba representation in general, it is precisely such departure that may be the gesture necessary for successful imaging. The uniqueness of *ako* within this aesthetic, however, lies in the fact that this liberty is contained by the need to produce images that the deceased subjects can recognize and identify with themselves. This requirement in itself constitutes a different gesture, what we might refer to as a gesture of semblance.

*Ako* introduces us to a philosophy of the image that invalidates the contest over transparency in the discourse of image-making, one that must be central to our understanding of photography in Africa. The tradition of funereal effigies is not restricted to the Owo and may indeed be found all over Africa, and it is within this tradition of the gesture of semblance that we find one of the earliest applications of photography by Africans. In Ethiopia, as soon as a rapport with the camera was reestablished and photography was popularized in the nineteenth century, the medium was incorporated into funereal rites. Upon a death, a photograph taken of the deceased while alive would be retrieved, often replicated, and then borne in the funeral procession. Citing Guèbrè Sellassie's remarkable *Chronique du regne de Menelik II rois des rois d'Ethiopia*, published in France in 1930–31, Richard Pankhurst notes in his essay "The Political Image: The Impact of the Camera in an Ancient Independent African State":

*It had been customary in funeral processions since time immemorial for mourners to display an effigy of the deceased, together with his horse and other valuable property. With the advent of the camera such articles tended to be supplemented—and the effigy even replaced—by photographic portraits of the departed which mourners held high above their heads, while they wailed, ritualistically, and perhaps recounted episodes of the deceased's life and achievement.*

*A notable occasion when this new prop of the mourning ritual was used was the funeral in 1906 of the governor of Harar and cousin of Emperor Menelik, Ras Makonnen, who was also father of the future and last monarch of Ethiopia, Ras Tafari. Though the practice was observed within the aristocracy in the beginning, as the greater population had access to photography, it became part, also, of the popular culture of mourning. Such application of photography was particularly evident during the dictatorship of the Dheghe in the 1970s and 1980s under Haile Mariam when the government presided over a decade of war and mass extermination similar to the decade of the missing in Latin America. Families carried the portraits of their missing and dead in processions and wailing rituals, and often to the sites of excavations of mass graves where the photograph was not a mere effigy of the dead but also a totem of damnation.*

Yet this practice had less to do with any greater faith in the accuracy of the photographic image, or an interest in the photographic process, than with a recognition of the medium's convenient delivery of an image. It is worthy of note that the photographic image was named *se'el-fotograf* in Amharic: a term that translates exactly as "photographic



top left: Photographer unknown, Ako effigy for Madam Alade, Ipele-Owo, Nigeria, 1972. Wood. top right: Photographer unknown, Photograph of Madam Olakoli Abiodun, Owo, Nigeria, 1947

bottom: Photographer unknown, Emperor Menelik's grandson and heir, Lij Iyasu, with his elderly and much trusted tutor Ras Tessema Nadew, ca. 1909–11. The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London RAI no. 35596

image," but also reminds us of Faraday's "photogenic drawing," for the word *se'e'* alone can be applied to a drawing, painting, design, or photograph. The painter Wossene Kosrof, an Amharic speaker, indeed confirms this use. Although within the realms of state politics in Ethiopia, the evidentiary capabilities of the photograph would be called into service time and again, as already mentioned, leading first to the fall of the prince and heir-apparent Lij Iyasu in 1916, and later to the forced abdication of Haile Selassie in 1974, the broader understanding and application of photography was and remains referential and evocative. Iyasu was deposed in 1916 on the supposed strength of photographic evidence, a mysterious photograph having been furnished in support of the accusation that he had Muslim sentiments and was therefore unfit to be a Christian monarch. However, several sources point to a popular conviction among the people that the implicative photograph was a forgery produced by an Armenian photographer in Addis Ababa at the behest of foreign intelligence operatives intent on the fall of the young prince, thus signing not only the possibility of such discrepancy, but, even more importantly, a lingering Ethiopian distrust of the supposed indubitability of the photographic image.

Another Yoruba practice provides further insight into the general African position on the question of the transparency of the photographic image. Among the Yoruba of the old Oyo empire, the cult of twins is a prevalent practice that, according to records, certainly dates back to earlier than the nineteenth century. For unique dietary reasons, the Yoruba have the highest rates of twin births in the world, and in earlier times the fragility of twins led to high infant mortality. For deceased twins, therefore, a practice was begun that the explorer Richard Lander described in 1826 as one of "affectionate memorials." Made in honor of the dead, *ere ibeji*, or twin images, are nevertheless tended and nurtured by the living as if they were the children they commemorate. Originally, these images were created in wood, by a sculptor whom the priest appointed, and upon production sacralized. A twin mother would carry the sculpture with her in the same manner as she would a living child, and in some known instances, families passed down their twin images from generation to generation, several decades after the children's death. In recent times, commercially produced plastic dolls have been sacralized and put to this use, as John Picton has observed, a practice that in itself constitutes an important redefinition of the memorial image.

Even more relevant to our purposes is the employment of photography in the place of sculpture. It is not clear at what point in history the Yoruba began to use photographs as *ere ibeji*, but indications are that the practice may well date back to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. A photographic image of the dead twin is used in the same manner as a wood sculpture: kept in the altar to the twins and brought out for rituals. When no images of the twins exist, a family may have a sculpture made, and then commission a photograph of the sculpture for convenience and better display in the home. But when the photograph of the human is available, no use or reference is made to the traditional wood sculpture. In his essay "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves" of 1978, Sprague observes:

*Photographs are often made of twins and other children to hang in the parlor with the photographs of other family members. Then, if a child dies, there is a portrait by which to remember him. The procedure becomes more complex when one twin dies*



top: "In this example the surviving girl twin was photographed once as herself in her own clothes, and once as her dead twin brother in matching boy's clothes. The photographer, Simple Photo, made a 'full plate' enlargement for me in the same way that he would for a client. He mounted the finished enlargement in the usual manner on a 10" x 12" cardboard mount with a printed border." From Stephen F. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," p. 56

bottom: "A rare representation of triplets. The two boys died, and the surviving girl was photographed as herself, and in matching boy's clothes to represent her brothers. The male image was printed twice, once on either side of the girl's image to show the triplets sitting together. By Simple Photo." From Stephen F. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," p. 57





"This little girl, Taiwo, holds a multiple-printed hand-colored photograph representing herself and her dead twin sister sitting together. It is actually the same image of Taiwo printed twice. The photograph is used by her mother in place of the traditional *ibeji* (twin sculpture)." From Stephen F. Sprague, "Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves," p. 56

before their photograph is taken. If the twins were of the same sex, the surviving twin is photographed alone, and the photographer prints this single negative twice, so that the twins appear to be sitting side by side in the final photograph [see p. 245]. If the twins were of opposite sexes, the surviving twin is photographed once in male clothing and once in female clothing. Sometimes these two exposures are made on separate negatives, which must then be printed together. . . . The photographer attempts to conceal the line blending the two separate exposures in order to maintain the illusion of twins sitting together in a single photograph.

And yet greater complication occurs when more than two children are involved. In what Sprague considers an unusual case involving triplets (see p. 244, bottom), “the two brothers died, and the surviving girl was photographed once as herself in girl’s clothes and once in matching boy’s clothes. . . . The photographer then printed the ‘boy’ image twice, once on either side of the girl, to give the proper illusion of triplets.” The result, which is not perceived as a trick but rather as a normal responsibility of the image-maker, is the most beautifully conceived photograph possible, and the most significant comment on the substance of the photographic image.

As can be seen from these and other examples, the Yoruba associate photography not with objectivity but with the possibility and necessity of illusion, which is contrary to the mainstream, Western articulation of the photographic medium. In the example of the cult of twins, the camera is first subordinated to the art of the sculptor, through the use of photographic images of ritual sculpture and in an interesting coalescence of fascination and disregard, and then brought into service as an extension of the image-maker’s tools. The fundamental requisite for the application as well as the effectiveness of the photographic medium in this tradition is the redefinition of *objectivity*—from the canonical objective to the photographic objective—and the supremacy of faith over faithfulness. By overlaying the right apparel, the photographic image of the living twin becomes that of the dead. (The reverse, using the image of a person taken either in the course of life or right before death to stand posthumously for the deceased, would be acceptable in the West and, in fact, has made numerous appearances over photographic history.) And much as it may be argued that the image remains indeed that of the living twin, the figure before the camera, the image in question is not the figure before the lens but that which emerges after the photographic moment. The obvious intent is not to concede transparency to the photographic image but to recognize and underline, instead, its nature as chimera.

In the 1980s, Fani-Kayode extended this tradition of essential subjectivism by applying photography to the imaging of Yoruba deities and principles connected with the cult of *abiku*, the changeling fated to repeat death and rebirth, and especially of the most engaging yet singularly photogenic Yoruba deity, Eshu, the divinity of ambiguity and fate. While the representation of deities may be restricted to the mimetic translation of myth—the integration of convoluted iconic and philosophical principles into a pantheistic visual representation, in other words the generation of the iconic—it demands fluid manipulation of an artistic medium even within the frames of its canon. Few African divinities lend themselves to easy translation, and the employment of the photographic in the interpretation of the metaphysical rests on the premise that the medium possesses the flexibility to extend itself

beyond mimesis and sufficiently lends itself not only to the skill and will of the image-maker but also to the dictates of the patron and an intricate cultural matrix. In his re-creations of Eshu, Fani-Kayode captured the physical and conceptual essence of the trickster god: mischievousness, ambiguity, multisexuality, indeterminacy, perpetual mobility, and unpredictability, attributes that defy the confines of the mimetic trail and yield only to subjective intervention. The grin/grimace comes forth most unnervingly on the face of the potentially wicked divinity, who deliberately sets friend against friend, violates his/her sibling before their own mother's eyes, defies all predictions, and, most importantly, signifies the futility of absolutes, including the fiction of transparency or visual truth.

For the Yoruba, therefore, the camera is not a detached mechanical contraption superseding human agency, as Cavell thought; nor is photography the peculiar process in which "the objects themselves print their image by means of the optical and chemical action of light," as Arnheim ludicrously said. Instead, photography offers the unique case of combining possibilities of fidelity not readily available to the human agent with those of manipulability requisite to the fulfillment of the essence of the image. Early in their acquaintance with photography, the people recognized the indispensability of human agency in the photographic process. And in their use of photography, its practitioners emphasized the affinity between the medium and other processes. A close look at one of the twin photographs Sprague has called to our attention (see p. 244, top) reveals the photographer's manipulation of the figure's proportions so that, though of the same figure, the image of the female twin is smaller than that of the male. Through this simple yet highly ingenious technique, gender attributes and dissimilarities are codified, and the living twin's femininity is emphasized. In a second photograph, that of the triplets referred to above (see p. 244, bottom), a different, even more sophisticated technique is employed. By a subtle change in the placement of the knees in the seated figure's pose, the female image is made to look shorter than the male. Thus, her brothers, for whom the woman serves as photographic surrogate, appear bigger and taller in the final print. Here we certainly find no evidence of a mythical "human wish to escape subjectivity . . . by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the act of reproduction." There are no indications, either, of any concern for what Snyder and Allen describe as "the use of a machine to lay down lines and the reliance on the natural laws of refraction and chemical change to create pictures" (a concept that, in any case, means absolutely nothing to either the average American or Yoruba maker and consumer of the photographic image). Instead, human agency is assumed as an essential element of all image-making, including the photographic. Photography is regarded and employed in the same manner as sculpture, or as painting and drawing—as the Ethiopians indicate in their choice of the word *se'e*—as yet another process of image-making, a process of *making* rather than *taking*.

This understanding of photography as indistinguishable from the other image-making processes, and in particular as manipulable rather than clinical, is further manifest in a fundamental distrust of the photographic medium among the Yoruba and in other African cultures, an attitude we might best describe as one of requisite ambivalence. As Sprague illustrates in his essay, the camera's record is considered inadequate in itself unless it fits into a frame of canonical specifications of representation that governs all image-making without exception. In portraiture,

including that of twins, for instance, the image in profile is considered inaccurate since it on the one hand fails to register the totality of countenance and therefore of individual character and being, and on the other introduces an element of distrustfulness or timidity into the personality. Thus, the camera in and of itself is incapable of articulating the contours of accuracy, and the responsibility to direct this supposedly truthful and objective instrument toward *truth* ultimately rests on its human operator, the real image-maker.

We return then to the question of the significance of process in relation to the image. Again it is useful to recall, if only to dismiss, Bazin's insistence in *What is Cinema* that "the essential factor in the transition from the baroque to photography is not the perfecting of a physical process . . . rather does it lie in a psychological fact, to wit, in completely satisfying our appetite for illusion by a mechanical reproduction in the making of which man plays no part. The solution is not to be found in the result achieved, but in the way of achieving it." Chinua Achebe makes a seemingly parallel observation when he writes in "The Igbo World and Its Art" of "the Igbo aesthetic value as process rather than product." But there ends the analogy, for process in Achebe's reading of the Igbo aesthetic specifically implies the act as distinct from the means of making, since both are often of equal significance in the bid for efficacy. Whereas Bazin's theory rests on a precisionist equation of scientific agency, that is, the assumption that the application of a specific body or level of instrumentation yields a calculable result with minimal human input, the aesthetic articulated by Achebe places its accent on the details of human facture, on *making* rather than *registering*. Yet, much as the act is an essential element of the image-making process in Africa, the product (the image) and its efficacy (its ability to satisfy demands largely unrelated to mechanical specifications) are what ultimately count. Such is the condition of the image. And we could argue that this is essentially the case with photographs used in the veneration of twins or the Amharic funeral procession, or Magubane's photographs of mines, or indeed Fani-Kayode's images of the deity of ambivalence. A preoccupation with the mechanical intricacies of the darkroom or the details of physics, chemistry, and light have no place in the process and purpose of image-making beyond their assistance in striving for greater effectiveness.

From the foregoing, we may attempt to articulate a theory of the photographic in which its essence resides not in the details and mechanics of reproduction but in the signifiatory possibilities of the emergent form: what we might call the substance of the image. Though this may suggest an essentialist functionalism, it is nevertheless in the image, rather than in the apparatus of its creation, that the relevance of the medium is situated. The fallibility of this image is taken for granted, as is its subordination to the dictates of human agency. This fallibility necessitates a frame of ambivalence, which, although often subsumed under the illusion of scientific verity in the West, governs the production and consumption of the photographic image in Africa. Whether used in the imaging of gods, in the rituals and logistics of mourning, or indeed in the recovery of the literal moment, photography is perceived as lacking in inherent integrity and thus open and available to the whims of power. Rather than the innocent registration of a literal configuration emptied of the extra-aesthetic, the photographic image is rightly understood as a domitable site whose frames must be guarded and contested. In the end, it is that which levels photography

with the rest of the image-making processes, namely its lack of integrity, that also underscores its significance, its substance.

### **The Location of Meaning**

It is within this framework that we can meaningfully approach two incidents mentioned earlier that reveal an important aspect of the photographic image in Africa and bring us to a conclusion. These are Khedive Mehmet's attempt to place himself behind the lens and take control of the photographic process shortly after the arrival of the daguerreotype in Egypt, and the reaction of members of the Ethiopian court to Edoardo Ximenes's application of the camera in Abyssinia. Vernet's frustration, through the supply and use of suspect photographic chemicals, of the Khedive's effort, which earned himself access to the forbidden territories of the monarch's women's quarters, signalled the beginning of the contest between the African and the outsider for the photographic image. Mehmet realized that in bringing so manipulable a medium as photography to bear upon the body of another, the presence behind the camera must be one with that other and must share, in a fundamental sense, a certain identity with the subject; if not, the photographic process becomes an act of trespass and violation.

In *Africa Then*, Monti recalls an incident of 1896 in which an Ethiopian nobleman protested the copious use of the camera by Ximenes, noting rather ruefully that Ximenes had "too much in his camera already" and wondering whether he wanted "to take away the whole country." Not only was Ximenes taking photographs in a period of great political sensitivity and thus constituting an intelligence threat to Abyssinia, but, more importantly, his respondent was perhaps not unaware of the possibilities of the seamless, loose image. Both Mehmet and the Ethiopian nobleman discerned the site of significance in the photographic process as the manipulable image. Both understood that the primary element in this process is not the mechanical but the human agent. And like the Yoruba and their photographers, both knew that the contest for meaning in photography must lie in the substance of the image.

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**Artists' Biographies,  
Statements, and Works in  
the Exhibition**

In most cases, statements were written or selected by the photographers for this publication. Authors' initials are those of the exhibition's curators. Titles of works were provided by the lenders. In the captions, height precedes width, followed by depth when relevant.



Cornélius Yao Azaglo Augustt was born in 1924 in Kpalémé, Togoland (now Togo). His family was of the Ewe ethnic group. When Augustt was eighteen years old, he bought his first camera, a Kodak, but he did not learn the technical aspects of photography until the early 1950s, when he moved to Bobo-Dioulasso, a small city northwest of Ghana, in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). There, he learned from two local photographers about outdoor photography as well as studio and darkroom techniques.

In 1955, he moved again, this time to Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire), where, in 1958, he opened his Studio du Nord. Later on, already known as a talented photographer, he was particularly in demand for his black-and-white portraits. Since the early 1980s, however, with the arrival of color photography in Côte d'Ivoire and an influx of traveling photographers there, he has all but ceased his photographic activity. —O. Z.

**Statement**

The photographs presented in this exhibition were taken by Augustt in 1964 in various villages in northern Côte d'Ivoire, using a medium-format (6 x 6 cm) Rolleiflex camera equipped with a standard lens. The subjects posed in natural light before a very simple backdrop made from a cloth stretched between makeshift stakes. In a single day, Augustt might take dozens of portraits, in series, for use in I.D. cards.

One should remember that starting in 1960 (the date Côte d'Ivoire gained independence) there was a great demand for photographs for

national identity cards, which were required for participating in elections. Following the needs of his clientele, Augustt often left his studio in Korhogo and traveled into the surrounding villages populated by Senufo farmers, known for their passion for work and the harshness of their existence on barren lands.

In accordance with the administrative requirements in effect at this time for this type of photograph, the subjects' faces are slightly turned to one side so as to show only one ear. The photographs show each person in full, but since only their faces were to appear in the final image, most subjects posed without any concern for how they were dressed or how they looked, presenting themselves to the lens as silent blocks. For most of them, this was their first contact with photography.

In short, in almost all cases, these are portraits of men, a fact that reveals the secondary role played by women in rural areas in the political life of the country at that time. —J. F. Werner

**Works in the Exhibition**

Untitled, Kalaha, July 22, 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.4 x 25.4 cm,  
sheet: 27.9 x 35.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 79)

Untitled, Moroviné, August 16, 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.4 x 25.4 cm,  
sheet: 27.9 x 35.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 81)

Untitled, Piegbo, August 24, 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.4 x 25.4 cm,  
sheet: 27.9 x 35.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 82)

Untitled, Pangnergakaha, September 9, 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.4 x 25.4 cm,  
sheet: 27.9 x 35.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 78)

Untitled, Kiémou, October 4, 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.4 x 25.4 cm,  
sheet: 27.9 x 35.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 80)



Oladélé Ajiboyé Bamgboyé was born in 1963 in Odo-Eku, Nigeria, where he received his primary education. In 1976, he moved to Glasgow, Scotland, where he continued his schooling, graduated, and later became a specialist in chemical and process engineering. In the mid-1980s, Bamgboyé took up photography. At the beginning of the 1990s, he moved to London, where he pursued his photographic activities and began to make films, videos, and photo-installations.

Since 1987, he has exhibited his photographs and other works in solo and group exhibitions at galleries and alternative spaces in France, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Nigeria, South Africa, and South Korea. He is the recipient of many grants and prizes, and his work has been featured in such contemporary-art publications as *Artscribe*, *Flash Art*, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and *Parachute*. Bamgboyé's visit to Nigeria in 1995 initiated the new multimedia and culturally charged works that he has been producing in London since then. —O. Z.

**Statement**

After I graduated from my formal training in engineering, what I felt most was a yearning for more control over my creativity and a need to work with issues of direct cultural and social relevance, considering in particular my cross-cultural experiences and inspirations that resulted from having been raised in both African and European cultures. From the outset, without any appreciable black culture or community in Scotland then, I developed a photographic practice initially focused on the nature of self and cultural identity. Through living and working abroad, most recently in London, I have had rich experiences within thriving black communities for the first time since I emigrated from Africa to Britain at an

early age. In 1993, I was offered a Gilbenkian Foundation grant to extend the ideas inherent to my photographic practice into the medium of filmmaking, and since that time film and video have become increasingly important working mediums for me.

Both personal experience and a critical framework based broadly in the disciplines of anthropology, psychoanalysis, and cultural and postcolonialist theory continue to inform my current inquiries, which use the mediums of film, installation, photography, performance, and video art. With my mixed background in science and art, gaining a familiarity with technology has not been a daunting task, nor has understanding where the boundaries between art and technology collide and inform each other in contemporary terms. It is therefore logical that the increasing international influence of hypermedia (resulting from the convergence of text, image, sound, and video in electronic media) should also have an impact on the future nature and direction of my artistic practice. The concerns in this “new world order of art” are presently centered around issues of authorship and collaborations across platforms. The continuing Westernized perspective inherent within this new internationalism of art has significant impact on the artists in this show and, as a consequence, on non-Western art practices as a whole. It is these concerns that will be addressed in and challenged by my present and future works.

#### Works in the Exhibition

From the series **Celebrate**, panels 2 and 3, 1994

Duratrans display transparencies and light boxes; each panel: 102 x 74 x 21 cm, overall: 102 x 148 x 21 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, London  
(pp. 166–67)

From the series **Puncture**, 1994

Cibachrome print, 80 x 80 cm  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,  
Gift of the artist, 1996  
(p. 165)



Born in 1963 to a family of Asian immigrants in Mbarara, Uganda, Zarina Bhimji studied fine arts at Goldsmiths' College in London (1983–86) and completed her postgraduate studies in mixed media at the Slade School of Fine Arts, receiving her M.F.A. in 1989. She has exhibited widely over the past decade, mainly in England, as well as in Germany. In addition, Bhimji has been an artist-in-residence at several colleges, museums, and alternative spaces in Great Britain, experiences that have frequently resulted in traveling exhibitions of her work. She is also an accomplished lecturer and is particularly interested in exploring and interacting with the environments and institutions in which she researches and exhibits her photo-installations. Her investigations into history, tradition, and language, as well as issues of representation, categorization, and control, emphasize her interest in the construction of culture and identity.  
—O. Z.

#### Statement

The work I am undertaking for the Art in Hospitals project has come out of my experience working in the pathology museum at a London hospital. I am exploring my direct interest in the body in terms of vulnerability/fear. The search for “truth” is not my strong point.

There are four documentary-style photographs of dissected body parts. My responses to the pathology museum were grief, fear, and disempowerment. The four images are as follows:

Specimens in glass cases on museum

shelves *Listen to the room*

Foot *Indelible*

Eye *We are cut from the same cloth*

Lung (blue tint) *Monster*

There are four additional images, which are abstract still lifes. These four images are as follows:

Chiffon & orchids *Listen to the room*

Black rubber & tulips *Indelible*

Red chiffon *We are cut from the same cloth*

Blue/black hair *Monster*

The four images of the first set are placed in areas that are not accessible to the public. These areas are ones devoted to learning, i.e., a lecture hall and its adjacent corridor. The four images of the second set are installed in a public area of the hospital.

While I was working in the hospital, I was aware of mortality and the atmosphere of death. To take this further, the specimens in the pathology museum offered no voice. The titles of the two series correlate mourning as a strong emotion. There is a sense of “fragmentation, mutilation and destruction.” “Fragments and dismemberment are at issue here.” “It is representable only by a language of excess.” “The coherence of the body is totally shattered.” There are questions concerning “the objectivity of science, the cool clinical observation of the dissecting table” (quotations from Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor of Modernity* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1994], pp. 9–19).

The still lifes have come out of my being and working in the hospital. The questions of death/mortality are posed under a thin veil of eroticism. This is informed by the use of a sense of material, and the pleasure of food and smells. The use of textiles gives an understanding of material as well as a sense of clothing taking on the sentient qualities of skin. It is the cloth's implicit tactile and sensory qualities that often find their way into the surfaces of the photographs. Like human skin, cloth is a membrane that divides an interior from an exterior.

#### Works in the Exhibition

**Indelible**, 1995

Cibachrome display transparency and light box, 76.2 x 101.6 x 24.4 cm  
Collection of Charing Cross Hospital,  
commissioned by Public Art Development Trust  
(p. 169)

**We are cut from the same cloth**, 1995

Cibachrome display transparency and light box, 76.2 x 101.6 x 24.4 cm  
Collection of Charing Cross Hospital,  
commissioned by Public Art Development Trust  
(p. 168)



Born in 1953 in Mutare, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Gordon Bleach has had an impressive academic career, which has helped shape the highly technical processes and sophisticated imagery of his photographs. In the early 1970s, Bleach moved to South Africa. During the 1980s, he completed his M.A. and Ph.D. in applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town and started showing his photographs in Cape Town and Johannesburg galleries.

In the mid-1980s, he relocated to the United States, where he taught at Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, as an adjunct professor in mathematics (1986–91) and in information science and technology (1988–91). He also taught computer science at the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1992. Beginning in 1991, he studied photography at Rochester Institute of Technology (M.F.A., 1994) and then art history at the State University of New York at Binghamton (Ph.D., 1996). Currently, he is a visiting assistant professor in the history and theory of art at the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences, Rochester Institute of Technology. He has also been exhibiting regularly in Rochester and has been lecturing extensively throughout the United States on art theory and African issues.  
—O. Z.

**Statement**

The photographs on exhibition are from <sup>s</sup>CRYPT (1989–), an ongoing project that writes and stages the archive—“memory *building*” in a double sense. Initially located in the Rochester

Institute of Technology’s library during its major expansion (1989–91), <sup>s</sup>CRYPT addressed the procedures by which an archive and its material structure are fabricated. The images displayed here record small geographic and architectural pathologies (building walks, spurious artifacts) performed on the construction site. Long exposures of up to an hour were used to question the self-evident immediacy of photographic documentation. Since the aberrational structures were traced, built . . . dismantled, and returned during exposure, they are only partially legible in the final images. Furthermore, their archivist-builder appears blurred to the point of invisibility. Library construction eventually shuttered and entombed what remained of the scenes and their spray-painted inscriptions. The spurious artifacts are now dispersed across the official building, and the borrowed materials encrypted in their proper place.

<sup>s</sup>CRYPT is triangulated with two other projects. A photographic sequence of *cartogenic landscapes* (1982–86) alludes to the beauty and pathology of the South African landscape during the late apartheid years. The hybrid visual text *taken from point G* (1993–) draws from an art-historical investigation of cartographic and photographic archives from countries (Zimbabwe, South Africa, England, the United States) on three continents. Shared colonial fantasies as well as spatial-temporal dislocations are illuminated, and the unsettling effects on contemporary national identities are traced.

**Works in the Exhibition**

**building walk: 2**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 158)

**spurious artifact: 7**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 160)

**spurious artifact: 12**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 40.6 x 50.8 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 159)

**spurious artifact: 23**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 163)

**spurious artifact: 24**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 162)

**spurious artifact: 31**, from the series <sup>s</sup>CRYPT, 1991  
C-print, 50.8 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 161)



Born in 1954 in Cairo, Egypt, Nabil Boutros studied decorative arts while living in that country. In the 1970s, he moved to Paris (where he now lives) and focused his studies on fine arts, particularly painting. Boutros started his photographic career in 1979, but he has (until as recently as 1990) continued his work in decoration and design in the fields of theater, television, and advertising. From 1983 to 1986, he exhibited his paintings in several galleries in Paris. Since 1988, he has participated in many solo and group photography exhibitions in France and Egypt and has completed a variety of commissioned photographic projects, on such subjects as the restoration of the Sphinx of Giza (1992) and the Temple of Akhmim (1993), and the spectacles organized at the Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris (1995).  
—O. Z.

**Statement**

Born in Egypt, I have lived its rich complexity, its rhythm, and its light.

Egyptian society never ceases to experience tensions and mutations due to its heritage and its ability to assimilate "modernity." Being conscious of this, my approach to the country is first and foremost a discovery of the people, as well as the places and objects surrounding them. For me, the photographic act is a kind of passport leading one toward others and not a permit to steal their images.

A work protocol has become an imperative for me, like a kind of ethics: I have opted not for surprise effects with shock value, but for a kind of induction. I try to find the essential through, and in spite of, the cumbersome details of the photographic fact to show "this

exorbitant thing that leads from the body to the soul" (Roland Barthes).

This work strives toward a vision of the "inner" Egypt, whose face will only reveal itself if one shows great respect and understanding.

**Works in the Exhibition**

**People—Cairo, 1990**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.4 x 25.6 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 115)

**People—Cairo, 1990**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.8 x 23.7 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 117)

**People—Cairo, 1992**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.8 x 23.7 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 113)

**People—Cairo, 1992**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.4 x 25.6 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 114)

**People—Cairo, 1992**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.2 x 25.6 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 116)

**People—Cairo, 1992**

Gelatin-silver print; image: 34.1 x 25.5 cm, sheet: 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 118)



Born in 1933 in South Africa, Cloete Breytenbach began his career as a news photographer in 1952 and worked for nearly ten years as a contributor to various South African publications, including *Drum* magazine. In 1962, he immigrated to England and was hired as a staff photographer by *London Daily Express*, where he worked for five years before returning to South Africa in 1967. Breytenbach traveled throughout Europe and to other parts of the world during those five years, and he sold many of the photographs he took there to *Time*, *Life*, *Paris Match*, *Bunte* (a South African magazine), and other publications.

In the work that he has done in Africa, where he covered various liberation and political struggles, Breytenbach has shown himself to be a photojournalist of great determination and resilience. In Angola, he photographed the long war of independence waged against the Portuguese from 1961 to 1975 and the sixteen-year civil war that broke out in 1975 between the forces of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, working right up to Angola's first elections in 1994. He also covered conflicts in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Central Africa, as well as the 1973 Yom Kippur War in

Israel and the last few weeks of the Vietnam War in 1975.

More recently, Breytenbach has devoted his attention to producing television documentaries and various travel features worldwide. To date, he has published eleven books and has had his work exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions within and outside South Africa. He is a recipient of several honors, including the Asahi Pentax International awards in Tokyo. He lives and works in Cape Town, South Africa.  
—O. E.

**Works in the Exhibition**

"Cape Town Goes Thumbs Up in a Terrific Welcome to Luthuli! Somandela Luthuli!," **Drum** (South Africa), June 1959  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 36 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 194)

"Cape Town Goes Thumbs Up in a Terrific Welcome to Luthuli! Somandela Luthuli!," **Drum** (South Africa), June 1959  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 36 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 195)



Salla Casset was born in 1910 in Saint-Louis, Senegal. He was working as a carpenter when his older brother (the celebrated Mama Casset) introduced him to photography. He perfected his technique by studying with French photographers Ténéquin and Oscar Lataque, who worked in Dakar, the capital. He opened his first studio in Dakar on Blanchot Street, and later, in 1942, moved it to 13th Street in the Medina. As one of the first indigenous photographers in Senegal, Casset traveled throughout his homeland and neighboring countries in West Africa to take pictures. Casset's work was very popular in Dakar, especially during the 1940s and 1950s, and his photographs still decorate the living rooms of many homes there. He died in 1974.  
—Alassane Cisse

**Statement**

In Dakar, Senegal, "Salla Casset" is a famous stop on the "rapid" (interurban) bus line in the Medina. Salla Casset's popularity is tied to his work as a photographer, a profession for which he demonstrated great talent and passion. During his lifetime, he was greatly admired for his work, and his fame stretched beyond the borders of Senegal. He went all over Senegal and many other African countries to record images of historic events and political, religious, and traditional figures. "Quality first, profit second," was his motto. He demanded a lot from himself," says his oldest son, Abdoulaye Casset, who currently manages his father's studio with his brothers.  
—Alassane Cisse

**Works in the Exhibition**

- Untitled, 1945  
Gelatin-silver print, 13.5 x 8.9 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 62)
- Untitled, ca. 1948  
Hand-colored gelatin-silver print, 18 x 24 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 58)
- "President Léopold Senghor," 1948  
Gelatin-silver print, 17.7 x 12 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 59)
- "Libidor (Livre d'or)," ca. 1949  
Gelatin-silver print, 23.8 x 17.7 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 56)
- "Les Coépouses," ca. 1950  
Gelatin-silver print, 12.9 x 18 cm  
Collection of Awa Dia (p. 61)
- "Driyanké (Driver Yankees)," ca. 1950  
Hand-colored gelatin-silver print, 23.8 x 17.9 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 57)
- "Serigne Yaram Mbaye Marabout," 1951  
Gelatin-silver print, 17.7 x 12 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 63)
- Untitled, ca. 1952  
Gelatin-silver print, 17.9 x 24 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 65)
- "Diéguebou Ndaw," 1952  
Gelatin-silver print, 18 x 23.9 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 64)
- "La Militante du SFI0," 1952  
Gelatin-silver print, 17.9 x 13 cm  
Collection of Awa Dia (p. 55)
- "Le Couple," ca. 1955  
Gelatin-silver print, 18 x 12.9 cm  
Collection of Abdoulaye Casset (p. 60)



Born in 1950 in Gongoré, Mamou, Guinea, Mody Sory Diallo has served in his country's government in various capacities: assisting in the literacy campaign directed by the secretary of state, and working for the Ministry of Information and Ideology and for the Ministry of Administrative Reform. In 1984, when private initiatives were newly permitted after the overthrow of Guinea's dictatorship, Diallo embarked on a project to document important events in the recent history of his country. He began by photographing the infamous Camp Boiro, where opponents of the Marxist-Leninist regime of Sékou Touré had been detained and tortured. Currently, Diallo is committed to the creation of an independent agency in Guinea to collect and preserve the national patrimony of images relating to social, political, cultural, and economic concerns. Diallo has exhibited his works in the exhibition *Premières Rencontres de la photographie africaine*, Bamako, Mali (1994) and in French institutions. The Photographers' Gallery, London presented a solo exhibition of his work in spring 1996. —O. Z.

**Statement**

Guinea gained independence in 1958. Sékou Touré, after uttering his famous "no" to French president Charles de Gaulle, became president of the Popular Republic of Guinea and served until his death in March 1984.

Beginning in 1965, and especially after 1970, Camp Boiro (a military camp in Conakry,

Guinea's capital) became the deadly symbol of the Touré regime. In the camp's jails, Touré imprisoned and tortured thousands of his opponents and those merely suspected of so being. Some of them remained for more than twenty years; a great many others died in those cells.

After Touré's death, Camp Boiro opened to the public for one day in April 1984. On this occasion, Diallo took a series of photographs of graffiti that prisoners had written on the walls.

—Guy Hersant

**Work in the Exhibition**

**Camp Boiro, 1994**

Cibachrome prints, triptych, each 122 x 82 cm

Courtesy of the artist

(pp. 125–27)



Mohammed Dib was born in Tlemcen, Algeria. Dib started painting when he was twelve years old, and a few years later he also began to write. He had several exhibitions of his paintings while still very young, but he gradually gave up painting in order to devote himself to the poems, novels, and short stories that he has been writing ever since. Dib discovered his interest in photography by chance: some time during the 1940s, a friend lent him a Rolleiflex camera. His photographs from 1946, after which his photographic activity ceased, have been shown in France and in Bamako, Mali. However, Dib has never seen any of the exhibitions in which his works have been shown and has never considered himself a photographer. —O. Z.

**Statement**

The photograph captures a moment and fixes it for eternity. Herein lies its drama: it dries up time, which is the expression of life. It dessicates everything that is in flux, everything that ebbs and flows. Captured by the lens and thus stolen from time, this world—with its changing, fluctuating, uncertain course that is our own—becomes inaccessible, frozen in objectivity. The taking (appropriating) of a photograph casts it into the black hole of the immutable. . . . A photograph can never re-create for me the image my memory preserves of a person or place. The image I see reproduced before me remains foreign to me;

there is no communication between us. This image mimicking an entity closed in upon itself does not exist. *The image is autistic.* However, if there is communication, it arises from a misunderstanding between what it is understood I should recognize and what is supposed to be taken for granted. In such cases, I play the unconscious and hypocritical role of someone who sees not what is, but what he projects onto what is. . . .

Even if I am in it, a photograph attests to reality without me. But what kind of reality is this ectoplasmic reality, which gives one the ridiculous and disturbing impression of being inhabited by phantoms, which empties people and things of all life, freezing them for eternity?

What looks back at me when I look at a photograph is the void *envisaging* itself, creating a face with which to face me. . . . A photograph does not show us the world: like a mirror, it only reproduces the way things look, creates but a virtual sphere of reflections around man. . . .

In posing before the lens, we expose ourselves. To what? Who can say? To the void. To something like the vision of our own death. We look at the impression our portrait gives once taken: even if the eyes are closed, shut tight, the gaze they mask always filters through, continuing to look at us. Moreover, there is no difference between a photograph of us taken when we are alive or after we are dead. Photographs taken in a morgue prove this point, even while bearing witness to a state beyond which we cannot go. . . . And in this way the photograph reveals its true nature as fetish. What is a fetish? It is an object that, with its specific properties, acquires the ability to enter into contact with a universe of occult powers and death, of which it becomes the material stand-in. . . . Photography awakens the fetishistic instinct in man. . . . One has only to think of the care and the respect with which we handle our photographs; or the use some of us put them to in either black magic or white; or the current trend of placing photographs over graves, as if they will watch over the deceased loved one in the next life and also serve as a means with which to communicate with him or her.

The shameless, sacrilegious voyeur sleeping inside man could never forgo the image.

#### Works in the Exhibition

**Cemetery of the City of Tlemcen (Algeria)**  
(*Cimetière de la ville de Tlemcen [Algérie]*), 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 20.3 x 24.4 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 89)

**Family Seated on a Patio (Tlemcen, Algeria)**  
(*Famille attablée dans un patio [Tlemcen, Algérie]*), 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, © Revue Noire, reproduced in Mohammed Dib and Philippe Bordas, *Tlemcen ou les lieux de l'écriture* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994) (p. 85)

**Holiday Procession near Tlemcen (Algeria)**  
(*Procession de fête aux environs de Tlemcen [Algérie]*), 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, © Revue Noire, reproduced in Mohammed Dib and Philippe Bordas, *Tlemcen ou les lieux de l'écriture* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994) (p. 88)

**Marabout Mausoleum in El Eubad (Mausolée de Marabout à El Eubad)**, 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, © Revue Noire, reproduced in Mohammed Dib and Philippe Bordas, *Tlemcen ou les lieux de l'écriture* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994) (p. 83)

**Medieval Road in Tlemcen (Algeria)**  
(*Rue médiévale à Tlemcen [Algérie]*), 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, © Revue Noire, reproduced in Mohammed Dib and Philippe Bordas, *Tlemcen ou les lieux de l'écriture* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994) (p. 87)

**Untitled (Sans titre)**, 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist, © Revue Noire, reproduced in Mohammed Dib and Philippe Bordas, *Tlemcen ou les lieux de l'écriture* (Paris: Revue Noire, 1994) (p. 86)

**A Village Fountain (Une Fontaine de village)**, 1946

Gelatin-silver print; image: 17.8 x 17.8 cm, sheet: 25.4 x 20.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 84)



Born in 1951 in Tunis, Tunisia, Kamel Dridi studied law in Paris in the beginning of the 1970s. By the end of the decade, he was devoting most of his time to photo-reportage for different French magazines and newspapers. During the 1980s, he completed various photographic series including a group of portraits of foreign artists and writers living in Paris, and several of studies of the body and interiors (such as the *Hammam* series), which feature a high-contrast, chiaroscuro approach.

By the end of the 1980s, Dridi had started to contribute to the newspaper *Le Monde*; had become a member of *Création Photographique de France* (an association of French photographers); and had fulfilled commissions from the Coimbra festival of photography, to make a series of photographs exploring the cultural and religious conventions of that Portuguese town, and from the city of Almería, Spain, to make another series on four Andalusian cities. Later, in his *Mediterranean* series, Dridi focused on the disparities and similarities between the Islamic-Hispanic world of Córdoba, Spain and the Arab world of Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Tunisia, with particular attention to those nation's villages, women's experiences, and cultural identities. Dridi has exhibited his work throughout France (Arles, Montpellier, Paris, and Toulouse) and in Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States. In 1990, he became seriously ill and since then has been bedridden.  
—O. Z.

#### Statement

As children, we used to watch our mothers pray. We would observe their gestures and movements discreetly and wait for this daily ritual to end before speaking to them. One had



## Touhami Ennadre

to take special care not to walk in front of them—not to come physically between them and the heavens—for that would nullify their prayers. This is why Kamel Dridi has always photographed his mother from the side, never head-on.

Kamel has brought such moments back to life for all grown-up Maghreb children, moments when one's relationship with one's mother is momentarily interrupted while she is speaking to God. The child must respect this brief interruption.

More than a memory, it is an image that infinitely repeats itself and lives on in us in modesty and nostalgia. In photographing women praying, Kamel was right to record only the movements of the veiled body prostrating itself in the direction of Mecca. These movements express a private experience of intense concentration that excludes us until the moment when the mother, remaining seated after having finished her prayers, joins her hands together and raises them to ask God to protect her children and lead them on the path toward Goodness, Kindness, and Truth.

Our mothers prayed for us all their lives. Where would we be without their blessings? Where would they be without God's mercy? Kamel has captured the abstract quality of these spiritual values through these images, in which the world passes by at full speed, the light becomes secondary, and the violence of the outside world is thrust aside.

Kamel Dridi sees with the eyes of an astonished child for whom real life is inward, a turning in on himself, a reflection and action focused on being worthy of another's gaze—the mother's. These photographs are moving because they are based not on seduction but on the simple desire to re-create timeless, everyday gestures.

—Tahar Ben Jelloun

### Works in the Exhibition

#### My Mother's Prayer (*La Prière de ma mère*), 1978

Eight gelatin-silver prints; each image: 24.9 x 36 cm; each sheet: 30.5 x 40.4 cm

Courtesy of the artist

(pp. 128–35)



Touhami Ennadre was born in 1953 in Casablanca, Morocco and moved in 1961 with his family to Paris, where he still lives. In 1975, he learned that his mother was seriously ill, and he began to document the last year of her life as a way of preserving her memory. Ennadre had his first solo exhibition, in Pisa, Italy, in 1977. Since then, he has exhibited his works in galleries and museums throughout the world.

From the late 1970s, his travels and what he calls “the experience of photography” have become more and more interconnected. In the late 1970s, he visited Burma, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Scandinavia, Singapore, Spain, and Thailand, producing a body of work that tends to frame a dramatic photographic encounter with the subject within the paradigms of birth and death experiences. Ennadre's subsequent travels in the 1980s and 1990s, to Canada, Germany, the United States, Italy, Morocco, Austria, Benin, Japan, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain, and Haiti, have been the source and the inspiration for his highly charged and idiosyncratic images. —O. Z.

### Statement

My approach is that of a plastic-arts photographer, which makes me difficult to classify: for photographers, I'm most often a plastic artist; for plastic artists, I'm merely a lens manipulator.

My technique is shaped by my vision: I try most often to record forms in tension, and once I have some good prints I work the image like a draftsman. I believe the camera's viewfinder acts like a screen between my eye and the subject; it is therefore an obstacle. I have removed it from my camera. I rely on a

constant focal length that my eye retains, and I always make photographs with a hand-held camera from the same distance, very close to the subject. This allows me to capture the image directly, unmediated, through a fixed system of settings that is the same in all my photographs. I work in 6 x 6 cm. I develop my own film and make trial prints of everything. Then I select about one photograph from every thirty or forty taken, and establish the series I am going to work on. This is the start of a very long working process. Each of my enlargements—usually about 1.2 x 1.6 m in size—is one of a kind, not because I am unwilling to duplicate, but because the nature of my work demands it. Indeed, for each photograph I draw a series of overlays and vary the exposure time: as a result, one photograph may be similar to another, but will never be identical to it. In this sense, the uniqueness of each piece makes my work as much like plastic art as like photography. For example, printing a large-format work, with all the trials and drawings and cutting of overlays that this entails, requires a minimum of twelve hours of work. Thus, I am a long way from those photographers who, once they have a satisfactory negative, can print it, or have it printed, in as large a number as they wish and in the format of their choice!

After these technical considerations, some brief descriptions of already finished series: the first, which won me the Critics' Prize of the City of Arles in 1976, was a photo-reportage project on a cemetery, in which I attempted, from very close up, to capture the attitudes of people visiting that place of death. A face in front of an open grave, an eye here or there, living bodies in pain in this space of cold, lifeless stone. Each time I begin a series, I must find the body in a state of paroxysm.

For another series, I visited a maternity ward every day for three months, where I witnessed women giving birth. This was not medical photography, but an interpretation of and variation on the tension of childbirth. My work transformed placentas into imaginary worlds.

I also made a series on the subject of meat: I went to the slaughterhouses of Munich and saw carved-up carcasses that were as beautiful as a universe of pain. I am still working on the process of enlargement and transformation for this series of photographs.

I believe that the photographer must confront the body pushed to the limit, confront it head-on. Without reproducing it, but rather by breaking it down and rearranging it, he must make it express what lies beyond its representation, beyond its inner cry.

**Works in the Exhibition**

**L'Hôtel Dieu—A corps-cris—Moira**, 1982

Framed gelatin-silver prints, triptych;

*L'Hôtel Dieu*: 130 x 160 x 10 cm;

*A corps-cris*: 160 x 130 x 10 cm;

*Moira*: 130 x 160 x 10 cm

Courtesy of the artist

(pp. 146–51)

**Works in the Exhibition**

"The Effect of Islam. Is It Good—or Bad—for West Africa?," **Drum** (Nigeria), November 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,

sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 199)

"The Effect of Islam. Is It Good—or Bad—for West Africa?," **Drum** (Nigeria), November 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,

sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 200)

"A Village Samson," **Drum** (Nigeria), December 1959

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,

sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

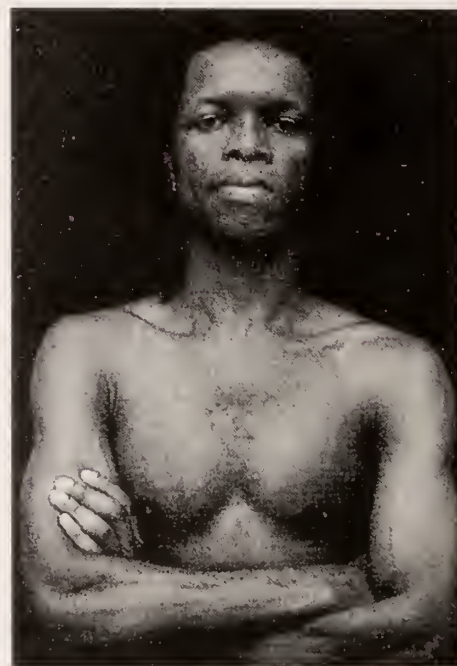
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 216)

"The Case that Rocked Nigeria," **Drum** (Nigeria), February 1962

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,

sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 222)



Born in 1955 in Lagos, Nigeria, Rotimi Fani-Kayode fled to England with his parents immediately after the 1966 military coup. By then, his father had become the Bagolun of Ife (a high priest in this ancestral city important in Yoruba culture) and his family had been given the traditional title of Akire, keepers of the shrine of Ifa, the Yoruba oracle. Fani-Kayode studied in Somerset and Gloucestershire before attending Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., where he received a B.A. in art in 1980, and then Pratt Institute, New York, where he earned an M.F.A in 1983. He moved back to England that same year. During the rest of the decade, he exhibited photographs in numerous British galleries. His first solo exhibition was held in Nigeria in 1985.

Fani-Kayode was a founding member and the first chairperson of Autograph, a London-based association comprised of and committed to black photographers, which was established in 1987. In 1988, his book *Black Male/White Male* was published. Fani-Kayode died in December 1989 from complications associated with AIDS. Alex Hirst (a British photographer and Fani-Kayode's partner, who died in 1994) signed his name, along with that of Fani-Kayode, to many of the works by the Nigerian photographer. Today, the nature of the collaboration continues to ignite debate concerning the authorship, representation, appropriation, and meaning of Fani-Kayode's work.

—O. Z.

**Statement**

On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality; in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for. Such a position gives me a feeling of having very little to lose. It produces a sense of personal freedom from the hegemony of convention. For one who has managed to hang on to his own creativity through the crises of adolescence and in spite of the pressures to conform, it has a liberating effect. It opens up areas of creative enquiry which might otherwise have remained forbidden. At the same time, traces of the former values remain, making it possible to take new readings on to them from an unusual vantage point. The results are bound to be disorientating. . . .

An awareness of history has been of fundamental importance in the development of my creativity. The history of Africa and of the Black race has been constantly distorted. Even in Africa, my education was given in English in Christian schools, as though the language and culture of my own people, the Yoruba, were inadequate or in some way unsuitable for the healthy development of young minds. In exploring Yoruba history and civilisation, I have rediscovered and revalidated areas of my experience and understanding of the world. I see parallels now between my own work and that of the Osogbo artists in Yorubaland who themselves have resisted the cultural subversions of neo-colonialism and who celebrate the rich, secret world of our ancestors.

It remains true, however, that the great Yoruba civilisations of the past, like so many other non-European cultures, are still consigned by the West to the museums of primitive art and culture.

The Yoruba cosmology, comparable in its complexities and subtleties to Greek and Oriental philosophical myth, is treated as no more than a bizarre superstition which, as if by miracle, happened to inspire the creation of some of the most sensitive and delicate artefacts in the history of art. . . .

In my case, my identity has been constructed from my own sense of otherness, whether cultural, racial or sexual. The three aspects are not separate within me. Photography is the tool by which I feel most confident in expressing myself. It is photography, therefore—Black, African, homosexual photography—which I must use not just as an instrument, but as a weapon if I am to resist attacks on my integrity and indeed, my existence on my own terms.

—Excerpted from Rotimi Fani-Kayode, "Traces of Ecstasy," in David A. Bailey et al.,

ed., *Ten•8: Critical Decade: Black British Photography in the 80s* (Birmingham, England) 2, no. 3 (spring 1992), pp. 64, 68–70.

**Works in the Exhibition**

**Adebiyi**, ca. 1989 (in collaboration with Alex Hirst)

Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 155)

**Every Moment Counts**, ca. 1989

(in collaboration with Alex Hirst)  
Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 157)

From the series **Tulip Boy**, ca. 1989

(in collaboration with Alex Hirst)  
Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 153)

**Untitled**, ca. 1989 (in collaboration with Alex Hirst)

Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 152)

**Untitled**, ca. 1989 (in collaboration with Alex Hirst)

Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 154)

**Untitled**, ca. 1989 (in collaboration with Alex Hirst)

Cibachrome print; image: 60 x 60 cm, sheet: 76.2 x 101.6 cm

© Autograph (p. 156)



Samuel Fosso was born in 1962 in a small village in Cameroon, near the Nigerian border. By the time he was ten years old, he had moved to Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, which he adopted as his country and where he has been living ever since. For the first five months of 1975, he worked as a photographer's apprentice, and by the end of the year, at the age of thirteen, he had opened his first photography studio, the Studio National, followed a year later by his current studio, which he named Studio Con fiance and later renamed Studio Gentil, Studio Hobereau, and Studio Con venance.

In 1976, he began the large series of self-portraits that have made him one of the most admired African photographers of his generation. Since 1994, when he gained international attention at the exhibition *Premières Rencontres de la photographie africaine*, Bamako, Mali, he has participated in important shows in Paris and London, was awarded the Afrique en Créations Prize (1995), and has had a retrospective at the Centre National de la Photographie, Paris (1995). —O. Z.

**Statement**

Bangui, November 1993: I am in the Central African Republic for a story on pygmies and for the preparation of the exhibition *Premières Rencontres de la photographie africaine*. I enter the Studio Con venance. Portraits tacked to the wall surround a small counter. Behind

## Jellel Gasteli

the door, at the back of the shop, there is in fact a studio. Six large reflectors are affixed to a wall adorned with faded tapestries.

Samuel Fosso, the owner, shows me the portraits he takes here. I ask him if he has more personal photographs, and he takes out some albums for me. I notice some self-portraits in black and white among the portraits of his family and friends. The next morning, before flying to Paris, Samuel entrusts me with fifty or so negatives. Looking at the contact sheets, I realize how astonishing some of these images are.

A year later, I return to see Samuel, and he shows me other self-portraits. To make them, he chose certain backgrounds, sometimes painted by his friends, as well as costumes, accessories, and poses. Sometimes in the darkroom, he will superimpose images or inscribe maxims in Letraset relating to his own life.

Fosso became a professional photographer by the age of thirteen. Since that time, his work has been a true search for identity, but it also traces, without his knowing it, an artistic itinerary that falls naturally into the current trends in photography today.

—Bernard Descamps

### Works in the Exhibition

Untitled, ca. 1977

Gelatin-silver print; image: 40 x 40 cm,  
sheet: 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 108)

Untitled, ca. 1977

Gelatin-silver print; image: 40 x 40 cm,  
sheet: 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 109)

Untitled, ca. 1977

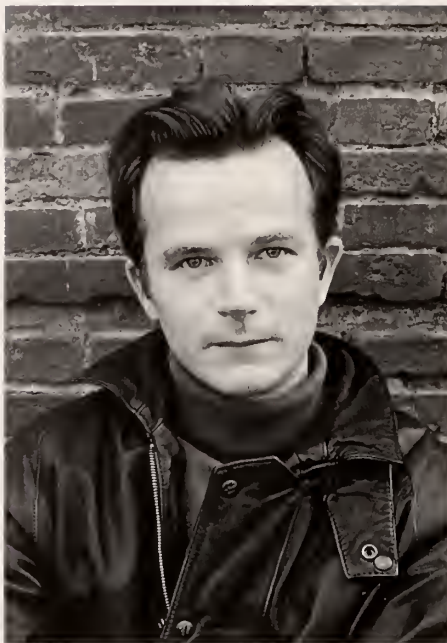
Gelatin-silver print; image: 40 x 40 cm,  
sheet: 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 110)

Untitled, ca. 1977

Gelatin-silver print; image: 40 x 40 cm,  
sheet: 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 111)

Untitled, ca. 1977

Gelatin-silver print; image: 40 x 40 cm,  
sheet: 50 x 60 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 112)



Born in 1958 in Tunis, Tunisia, Jellel Gasteli graduated in 1985 from the Ecole Nationale de la Photographie in Paris, where he currently resides with his family. In 1984, he traveled back to Tunisia and began his *White Series* (*Série blanche*). In 1990, he traveled to Alexandria, Egypt as French Cultural Center artist-in-residence. That same year, Gasteli received grants from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from Kodak-Pathé, which allowed him to produce a photographic series on the city of Tangier, Morocco. As a result, in 1991, he published the book *Tanger Vues choisies*, with a text by American writer Paul Bowles.

In 1993, after participating in a group exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris and at *Images of Africa* in Copenhagen, he received the Villa Médicis prize (from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and the National Prize for Photography (from the Tunisian Ministry of Culture). Also in 1993, Gasteli's photographs were published in the book *Moroccans*, with writings by Bowles, James Brown, William Burroughs, and Allen Ginsberg. Works from the *White Series* were exhibited at the Institut du Monde Arabe in 1995.

—O. Z.

### Statement

From time to time, ever since 1984, I have photographed the medina of Hammamet and the architecture of Djerba island's mosques. I seek to capture the purity of the walls, covered with several coats of whitewash, and to reduce

buildings to their underlying cubic shapes. I inscribe in these images the sensations provoked by the tension between lines and surfaces saturated with light. Their multiple geometric combinations imperceptibly make their way toward abstraction. I play at replacing static perspective with dynamic flat surfaces. Although I was not aware of it when I began them, I realize now that in these very large prints, making up what I call the *White Series* (*Série blanche*), I endeavored to capture the intense, pure spirit of place that I associate with my Tunisian childhood.

### Works in the Exhibition

Untitled from *White Series* (*Série blanche*),  
1994  
Gelatin-silver print mounted on aluminum,  
120 x 120 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 143)

Untitled from *White Series* (*Série blanche*),  
1994  
Gelatin-silver print mounted on aluminum,  
120 x 120 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 144)



Meïssa Gaye was born in 1892 in Coyah, Guinea and moved with his parents to Saint-Louis, then Senegal's capital. Gaye, who was interested in painting, sculpture, and music, ended up excelling in photography. In 1910, he moved to the Congo to apprentice as a carpenter with his uncle. After arriving, he learned basic photography and bought his first materials from a French photographer. In 1914, he went to Conakry, where he worked as a customs official and then in the administration of Governor Ballay. In 1923, while working for the Delegation of Dakar, he continued to pursue photography, even constructing his own camera.

He took a leave from his post from 1929 to 1932 and moved to Kaolack, where he took up photography full-time, making his own enlarger and coloring some of his prints by hand. In 1933, he returned to Dakar to the position he had vacated, and later he was given a post in Ziguinchor, which he held until 1939. After fighting with the French army in World War II and returning to Africa, he started taking photographs of other West African soldiers. In 1945 in Saint-Louis, he opened his Tropical Photo studio, which became very popular. Gaye died in June 1982.

—O. Z.

**Statement**

"He was the first African photographer in the western part of the continent," asserts one of Meïssa Gaye's daughters, Mrs. Awa Cheikh

Gaye, now sixty-six years old. She adds, "If there were army recruits, he was the one to photograph them. When he came back from the war of 1939–45, he took photographs of Senegalese riflemen (Central Africans, Congolese, Senegalese, people from Côte d'Ivoire), who in turn mailed them to their families to let them know they were alive and well. The women, too, would line up to be photographed."

Gaye had been initiated into this art by a Frenchman in the Congo, and he did not fail, in turn, to teach photography to his sons and daughters. Unfortunately, one day one of his sons threw a few thousand of his father's negatives into the river. But others survived. —Alassane Cisse

**Works in the Exhibition**

Untitled, 1935–36  
Gelatin-silver print, 23.9 x 18 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 54)

Untitled, 1941  
Gelatin-silver print, 18 x 13.1 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 49)

Untitled, 1941  
Gelatin-silver print, 14 x 9 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 51)

Untitled, 1942  
Gelatin-silver print, 9 x 14 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 53)

Untitled, 1943  
Gelatin-silver print, 14 x 9 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 50)

Untitled, 1948  
Gelatin-silver print, 8.6 x 13.5 cm  
Collection of Awa Diarra Gaye  
(p. 52)



**Works in the Exhibition**

"A Partnership Begins," *Drum* (Ghana), February 1959  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 203)

"All Africa Met Here," *Drum* (Ghana), March 1959  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 202)

"When Hi-Life Invaded the Congo," *Drum* (Ghana), October 1961  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 226)

"A Flashback to the Royal Tour," *Drum* (Ghana), March 1962  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 213)

"A Flashback to the Royal Tour," *Drum* (Ghana), March 1962  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 214)

"The Birth of the Giant," *Drum* (Ghana), August 1962  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 210)



Born in 1930 in Randfontein, a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa, David Goldblatt started his career in 1963 and has exhibited extensively in his country and in Australia and Germany. He is one of the most internationally recognized African photographers and, for many, the great master of photography in South Africa. His professional work has involved a broad variety of assignments and commissions for magazines and businesses in South Africa and abroad.

Goldblatt's noncommercial work, spanning almost fifty years, consists of a series of critical explorations of South African society, many examples of which are in important public collections, including the National Gallery, Cape Town; Johannesburg Art Gallery; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. He has had many books of his work published, two of which—*On the Mines* (1973) and *Lifetimes under Apartheid* (1986)—he worked on jointly with Nadine Gordimer, winner of the 1991 Nobel Prize for literature. One of his best-known books is *The Transported of KwaNdebele* (1989). Goldblatt lives in Johannesburg.

—O. Z.

#### Statement

After the manner of this country, I had grown up among yet largely apart from Afrikaners. However I began to have more contact with them when, as a young man, I worked in my father's business. And I came gradually to feel a need to know more closely something of the life and values of people whose influence so pervaded the place of my birth and who, I realised, had long been a powerful presence in my own life.

Those Afrikaners whom, at that time I came to know a little, were of our town and district. Miners, artisans, farmers from the Western Transvaal, plotheolders from outside the town, small businessmen, minor officials, railwaymen and the families of these men: I was strangely affected by some of them, for they seemed to be imbued in great concentration with potent and often contradictory qualities that both

moved and disturbed me. I know well the dangers of generalising and do so only to sketch most briefly: among these people there was austerity of spirit and lifestyle, and there was directness and uprightness; there was narrowness and there was floridity and lustiness; there was confidence and a sense of belonging, of knowing exactly who one is and of where one stands in the world; there was a tenacious conviction of rightness, of absolute unarguable rightness; there was an almost visceral bond with the soil and the bush, and in some, at the same time, a lack of regard for these; and withal, there was fear, and at times a terrible need to debase the feared. I was witness to acts of remarkable generosity of spirit—so much more than kindness—and to others of ungoverned meanness. Sometimes it seemed that all was there simultaneously in moments of impossible contradiction.

So I came to photograph Afrikaners, moving slowly beyond the district and the people I knew. For a while, I thought of photographing *the Afrikaner People*. It took time to understand that for me such a project would be grossly pretentious and probably impossible to achieve in any meaningful sense—in any case it is not what I wanted. I did not have the encyclopedic vision that might enable me to achieve an acceptably "balanced" picture of a people. I was concerned with a few minutiae of Afrikaner life, with a few people.

I needed to grasp something of what a man is and is becoming in all the particularity of himself and his bricks and bit of earth and of this place and to contain all this in a photograph. To do this, and to discover the shapes and shades of his loves and fears and of my own, would be enough.

—From David Goldblatt, *Some Afrikaners Photographed* (Sandhurst, Sandton: Murray Crawford, 1975), p. 7.

#### Works in the Exhibition

**A plot-holder, his wife and their eldest son at lunch**, September 1962

Gelatin-silver print; image: 16.9 x 25.6 cm, sheet: 30.4 x 37.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 105)

**A farmer's son with his nursemaid in the Marico Bushveld**, 1964

Gelatin-silver print; image: 23 x 34.2 cm, sheet: 30.3 x 40.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 106)

**The commando of National Party supporters which escorted the late Dr Hendrick Verwoerd to the party's 50th Anniversary celebrations**,

de Wildt, Transvaal, October 1964  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 23.3 x 34.4 cm, sheet: 30.8 x 40.4 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 102)

**Wedding on a farm near Barkly East**,

December 1966  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 22.5 x 33.3 cm, sheet: 30.3 x 40.3 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 104)

**On an ostrich farm near Oudtshoorn. The man who founded this farm was 94 years old and lay dying in another room. His home had been furnished in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the best that ostrich feathers could then buy. Virtually nothing had been changed or added in 45 years. The wife (his second) still used a cool-room for storing the meat she had salted, for she had heard that refrigerators sometimes 'ontplof'. Hester, the widowed daughter by the first marriage was 59 years old. She called her stepmother, aged 49, 'Ma'. While the old man muttered in his dying and the wife tiptoed, Tant Hester, playing richly on the organ, sang psalms flatly in High Dutch**, 1967

Gelatin-silver print; image: 28.8 x 27.8 cm, sheet: 37.7 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 107)

**Policeman in a squad car on Church Square, Pretoria**, 1967

Gelatin-silver print; image: 23.3 x 34.4 cm, sheet: 30.8 x 40.4 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 103)



Born in 1934, Bob Gosani began his career in photojournalism as a darkroom assistant for *Drum* magazine in 1952. He continued to work for *Drum* throughout his career, and his work became widely recognized within South Africa. In 1957, he was in a serious car accident and lost a lung, after which he took on freelance photographic work. He died in August 1972.  
—C. B.

**Works in the Exhibition**

“‘Bishop’ Limba Comes to the Reef! Cape’s Richest Priest Tours Union with Faithful Group and Fabulous Mobile Fleet,” *Drum* (South Africa), December 1953  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 198)

“At Home with £50 Winner! *Drum* Takes the Good News to Dyke Sento!,” *Drum* (South Africa), April 1954  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 207)

“*Drum*’s Secret Camera at the Pretoria Bare-Fist Fights!,” *Drum* (South Africa), November 1955  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 215)

*Drum* (South Africa) cover, May 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 225)

“A ‘Native’ by Mistake,” *Drum* (South Africa), July 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 223)



“Township Jazz Brings Black Music to the Limelight and It Was Such Fun Having Shantytown in City Hall!,” *Drum* (South Africa), August 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 30 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 224)

“Two Years of Thoko Shukuma,” *Drum* (South Africa), October 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey’s African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 227)

Ranjith Kally was born in 1925 into a working-class family in Isipingo, Natal province, South Africa. He worked in a shoe factory for fifteen years before embarking on his lifelong career as a photojournalist. At the age of twenty-one, he discovered his first camera, a secondhand Kodak Postcard. Kally joined the Durban International Camera Club in 1946 and became a regular contributor to his local newspaper, *The Leader*. In 1952, he won third prize in an international photography competition held in Japan.

He stopped work at the shoe factory in 1956, when he was hired by the *Golden City Post* as a staff photographer, and was a regular contributor to *Drum* magazine, covering the Durban area until 1965. In 1967, Kally was selected for membership in the Royal Photographic Society, London. From 1968 to 1985, he again worked for *Drum*. Kally currently works as a freelance photojournalist for local newspapers and as a commercial photographer recording local social events. Kally’s work has been included in several exhibitions, most recently the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, South Africa in 1994 and *Margins to Mainstream: Lost South African Photographers* at the Midlands Art Center in Birmingham, England in 1995.  
—C. B.

**Statement**

I was twenty-one at the time and while rummaging through the wares at a garage sale in Isipingo I happened upon a small Kodak Postcard camera which I bought for six pence. . . . I was consumed by my newly found interest in photography and spent almost all

## Seydou Keita

my free time pursuing the art form. . . . I remember doing my first enlargement in a makeshift darkroom in Plowright Lane, not from *The Leader* offices in Pine Street. We got under way at 8 pm and at 4 am we were cursing as the sun began rising, jeopardising our print. . . . In the earlier days, we had to envisage a whole host of diverse criterion before pressing the shutter. But modern equipment has taken the "sting" out of photography. It's a sorry state, for the future of press photographers, as we know them, is in jeopardy with the coming advances in technology.

—Excerpted from *Panorama*, February 1996.

### Work in the Exhibition

"Whites in Cato Manor Shebeens," *Drum*  
(South Africa), July 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 209)



Seydou Keita was born in 1923 in Bamako, French Sudan (now Mali). He began taking pictures of his family and relatives in 1945, when his father brought him a camera from Senegal. Like most local photographers of his generation, Keita learned his medium's techniques from Mountaga Kouyaté, an anticolonial intellectual who fought for the independence of French Sudan. In 1948, in Kouyaté's Bamako studio, Keita started developing the pictures that eventually made him the most celebrated photographer from Mali. From 1949, the year he set up his own studio, until he retired in 1977, Keita created, and meticulously preserved, several thousand photographs, which represent an exceptional source of information about life in Bamako throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Since the end of the 1980s, Keita's photographs have been exhibited in Arles, Birmingham, Copenhagen, London, Paris, Rouen, and other European cities. Many of his works are in important European collections. In 1994, the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris published the monograph *Seydou Keita*, devoted to his oeuvre; and in 1995, the Editions Lux Modernis, Paris released a CD-ROM that comprehensively reviews Keita's studio work from 1949 to 1970. In 1996, the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. presented the first United States retrospective of his career. Keita lives in Bamako.

—O. Z.

### Statement

People will long be talking about the photographs of Seydou Keita, now seventy-three years old, whose rise to fame spans the 1940s to the present.

How did he come to this stage of African photography? "All my shots," he says, "were taken in the studio. On a few rare occasions my clients wanted to be photographed next to my car. Photography has always been my passion. I live for and through my photographs. This is why I have jealously preserved my negatives. In spite of everything, time has got the better of some of them. To fight the dust, I sometimes used to wash negatives during the night, so that they'd dry before morning; then I would file them away in paper boxes. I love all my photos, because I took them with love, and that is why in each photograph you will find at least one detail that pleases me: the decor, the look in the eyes, the subject's position, and so on. My wish is that my negatives will live on for a very long time." He smiles and then continues, "It is true, my negatives breathe like you and me."

—Alioune Bâ

### Works in the Exhibition

Untitled, 1949

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95137  
(p. 66)

Untitled, 1949

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.5 x 35.5 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95139  
(p. 74)

Untitled, 1952–55

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.5 x 35.5 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95142  
(p. 67)

Untitled, 1952–55

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95143  
(p. 72)

Untitled, 1952–55

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95147  
(p. 73)



## Peter Magubane

Untitled, 1956–57

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.5 x 35.5 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95151  
(p. 68)

Untitled, 1956–57

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.5 x 35.5 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95140  
(p. 69)

Untitled, 1956–57

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95152  
(p. 75)

Untitled, 1956–57

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.5 x 35.5 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95138  
(p. 77)

Untitled, 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95149  
(p. 70)

Untitled, 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95141  
(p. 71)

Untitled, 1959

Gelatin-silver print; image: 35.5 x 25.5 cm,  
sheet: 40 x 30 cm

Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Ministère  
de la Culture, Paris Inv.: 95148  
(p. 76)



Peter Magubane was born in 1932 in Vrededorp (now Pageview), a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa, but grew up in Sophiatown. He started his career at *Drum* magazine in 1954, working as a driver for three months, then as a darkroom assistant for three months. Soon after that, Magubane went on assignment as a photographer, and in 1958 he received both first and third prizes for South Africa's Best Press pictures of the year. From 1967 to 1980, he worked for the *Rand Daily Mail*. In June 1969, Magubane was arrested for alleged crimes against the state and was detained in Pretoria Central Prison. He was released in September 1971, but was banned from taking photographs for five years.

Magubane has been especially committed to exposing the exploitation of children, and has spent much time covering social and political events in South Africa, in the course of which he has endured a number of serious hardships. From 1978 to 1980, Magubane worked for *Time* magazine as a foreign correspondent. After also leaving the *Rand Daily Mail* in 1980, he came to New York, and he continues to maintain a residence there as well as one in Johannesburg. From 1980 to 1984, Magubane worked for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Somalia and Ethiopia. In 1985, he resumed work for *Time* magazine. Throughout his career, he has published ten books of photographs and has received numerous awards, including the Robert Capa Award in 1986. In 1992, the Missouri School of Journalism presented Magubane with the Missouri Honorary Medal for Distinguished Service in Photojournalism for his lifelong coverage of apartheid.  
—C. B.

### Statement

In my work, and in the kind of pictures I chose to produce, I wanted to liberate myself, liberate my people, liberate the oppressor and let the world understand through my images what we were going through, what apartheid meant. . . . to capture the images that would make the world understand why black people are so

angry in this country of South Africa. I said to myself, "I don't care. If I die for the cause, so be it." If I see a picture. . . . at all costs, I will try to get that picture. For example, in 1956 there was a trial, and the press was banned from covering it—the whole trial was about the Bahurutse who had demonstrated against apartheid, all of whom had been arrested. *Drum* magazine was the only publication that covered the trial. Can Themba and I went into Zeerust. I was dressed like an ordinary rural person. . . . I got there. . . . and went into the nearest store and bought myself a half a loaf of bread, put my camera into the bread, and went back and photographed the scene of the people arriving, while I pretended to be eating my bread. When I thought I had overdone this, and that they might discover me, I went back to the store, bought a pint of milk in a carton, drank the milk, and dried the carton and cut holes in it. I put my camera into the carton and went back and finished photographing the trial. . . .

In those days you had to think fast. The authorities were really brutal. At one point, I asked myself if it was worth it to be so brutalized. But I knew how important it was that this work get done, how much it needed to be seen. In 1969, I was detained in solitary confinement for 586 days and then banned from taking pictures for five years after I was released. So I lost seven years of my photographic career. But that did not make me change; in fact, it made me more aggressive. In 1976, while I was covering the Soweto uprising, my nose was fractured. Getting my nose broken was painful, but when I was asked to open my camera and take out the roll of film. . . . that was more painful. My broken nose could be repaired and the pain alleviated, but the images in my camera would be lost forever. I was detained with other journalists and spent another 123 days in prison. In 1985, I was shot below my waist with seventeen rounds of buckshot. Before this, I had been arrested numerous other times in the 1950s, and in 1960 I received a six-month suspended sentence for "trespassing," and I was banned from entering any South African farm for three years because of a story I did on child labor.

I had always read about the power of pictures and that the government had been made to succumb because of the image. I said to myself, I am going to use this instrument to the fullest. I will help liberate my country. I will help liberate my people—even those that are oppressing us I will help to liberate. It is a pity that over all these years the work of most South African photographers has not been seen because of apartheid and because of fear. It is only those photographers who did not fear that had their work seen around the world;

## Santu Mofokeng

I am one of those photographers. People have said that I am a good photographer. It is very difficult for me to say how good a photographer I am. I shall leave that judgment to the eyes of other people, who may say how they see my work, what my work portrays.

—From an interview with Okwui Enwezor in Johannesburg, January 21, 1996.

### Works in the Exhibition

"Emily Motsieloa," **Drum** (South Africa), May 1956

Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 25.9 cm, sheet: 40.3 x 30.3 cm

Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 228)

"The Flame-Throwers!," **Drum** (South Africa), January 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm; sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 221)

"Death in the Dark City," **Drum** (South Africa), September 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 208)

"End of Round One/Women," **Drum** (South Africa), September 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 201)

"Death Rider," **Drum** (South Africa), October 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 218)

"Rand's Dustbin Babies," **Drum** (South Africa), November 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25.9 x 35.8, sheet: 30.3 x 40.4 cm

Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 220)

**Drum** (South Africa) cover, December 1957

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 193)

"A Day at the Races," **Drum** (South Africa), July 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 36 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 217)



Santu Mofokeng was born in 1956 in Johannesburg, South Africa, where he still lives. His first series of works spans the years 1982 to 1994. He began working freelance in 1982 as a member of the Afrapix Collective, and then as a documentary photographer for the Institute for Advanced Social Research (formerly the African Studies Institute) at University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The photographs he made during those twelve years, which show various aspects of life in South Africa's black townships, as effected by such significant events as the recent democratic elections, are mostly concerned with issues of how blacks are depicted by others, how they see and photograph themselves, and how they are represented by the media. Mofokeng's photographs have been exhibited in several cities in Africa and Europe, including Lille, London, New York, and Paris. Currently, Mofokeng is reconsidering his practice as a black photographer in postapartheid South Africa.

—O. Z.

### Statement

Some of the pictures in this show have been exhibited and published in the United States before. They were chosen from various projects loosely linked under the rubric of biography. These works were made in the years when I was a freelance photographer, a member of the Afrapix Collective, and a photographer for the Institute for Advanced Social Research, where I am now based. While they were abstracted with no particular theme in mind, a feeling of unease permeates them all.

When I began it, this project was conceived as a metaphoric autobiography. I saw my work then to be both a political imperative and an avenue for self-expression. Allow me to confess that in those days I was possessed of a compulsion, a pious zeal that gave me a kind of moral sanction, to explore our predicament. This I did in order to confirm and reassure

myself of my own humanism, which I perceived to be *the* contested site in a historically polarized society. In choosing to highlight those aspects of our collective experience that emphasized our shared humanity, I hoped to show the ignominy of the rulers in those odious apartheid years.

*Lampposts* was the title initially attached to this body of work. The image of the lamppost is drawn from the aphorism "lampposts like the masses are there to lean on or to piss on . . ." Many people, friends mostly, criticized the title as being at best cryptic or misleading, and at worst cynical. And although it is my belief that, in all fairness, it is not the fault of the lamppost that dogs pee on it, I changed the title to *Rumours*. I find the latter title to be particularly apt because of the collective amnesia that was previously a catalyst for, and has now become the product of, the peaceful transition to democracy in our country. It is my belief that the "miracle" of our nascent democracy was achieved out of a desire to forget.

The "us and them" paradigm that informed my photography practice in the past has given way to an awkward "we," a fetus of doubtful pedigree. These images are glimpses of a rumored past. What do they mean?

### Works in the Exhibition

**Near Maponya's Discount Store**, 1987

Gelatin-silver print; image: 37.2 x 25 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (p. 124)

**Shebeen, White City Jabavu, Soweto**, 1987

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25 x 37.2 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (p. 119)

**Afoor Family Bedroom**, December 1988

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25 x 37.2 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (p. 122)

**Winter in Tembisa**, 1989

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25 x 37.2 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (p. 123)

## G. R. Naidoo

**Koelie Duiker**, October 1989

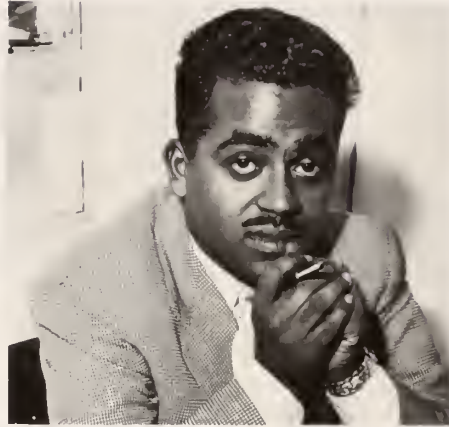
Gelatin-silver print; image: 37.2 x 25 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced  
Social Research, University of the  
Witwatersrand, Johannesburg  
(p. 120)

**Tavern, Boitumelong**, April 26, 1994

Gelatin-silver print; image: 25 x 37.2 cm,  
sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Institute for Advanced  
Social Research, University of the  
Witwatersrand, Johannesburg  
(p. 121)



### Work in the Exhibition

"This Is a Hospital," *Drum* (South Africa),  
February 1958

Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm,  
sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm

Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 219)

G. R. Naidoo was born in 1928 in Natal province, South Africa and started working as a typist shortly after graduating from Springfield Methodist School. He studied part-time at M. L. Sultan Technical College, where he gained qualifications in accounting, bookkeeping, and secretarial practice. Before turning to writing and photography, Naidoo worked in trade-union administration, in the felt and leather industry, and subsequently in the hairdressing union. He became interested in photography after meeting Alfred Harper, a photographer and magician.

Beginning in 1950, Naidoo worked as a photojournalist for such South African publications as *Flick* (covering the Indian community), *Africa* (where he was also a feature writer), and *Graphic* (an Indian family-oriented magazine). From 1955 to 1969, he worked at *Drum* as a writer, photographer, and editor. He spearheaded the launch of *Drum's* East Africa edition and in 1969 became *Drum's* editor-in-chief, the first black editor to occupy such a position in the magazine.

Naidoo contributed enormously to the South African liberation struggle in his work as an investigative photojournalist in the 1950s and 1960s, covering the infamous treason trials, the Rivonia trials, the Cato Manor uprising, the Defiance Campaign, and the Passive Resistance Campaign. In 1965, after he published a series of his photographs implicitly critiquing the government by focusing on the plight of South African blacks under apartheid, he was arrested by the South African security police and detained for ninety-seven days—the first journalist jailed there for his work. Naidoo's activities against apartheid earned him accolades from colleagues throughout South Africa. From 1971, he worked for the *Rand Daily Mail*, until it closed its Durban office in 1977, when he joined the *Sunday Times*. Naidoo died in 1982.

—O. E.



**Milan, Italy, 1994**  
Gelatin-silver print, 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 140)

**Palermo, Italy, 1994**  
Gelatin-silver print, 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 137)

**Turin, Italy, 1994**  
Gelatin-silver print, 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 142)

Born in 1966 in Casablanca, Morocco, Lamia Naji was introduced to photography during a stay in Paris in 1984. From 1988 to 1992, she spent most of her time in the United States. In 1992, she began a two-year project of photographing medinas and casbahs of Morocco. She exhibited a group of these photographs for the first time in 1993 at several galleries and exhibition spaces in Casablanca. Funded by a grant from UNESCO-Aschberg, she spent the fall and winter of 1994–95 taking photographs in Italy. In 1995, she was invited by the Nederlands Foto Instituut Hollande to work in Rotterdam, where she remained until spring 1996. In the meantime, she has exhibited at the Musée Lillim in Carcassonne, France, again in Casablanca, and most recently in the Netherlands.

—O. Z.

#### Statement

The photographs presented here were taken during different trips through Morocco (1992–94) and Italy (1994–95). The works are primarily studies of light in the depths of darkness and reflect a profound desire for spirituality in a somber world or a flight from a harsh reality. People, when they appear, are but compositional objects, thereby becoming phantoms or spirits. This quest for light began in Morocco's medinas and casbahs, places that preserve a way of life, traditions, and the memory of a long-vanished past and that project their visitors beyond daily reality. However, the same approach is taken in so-called civilized countries such as Italy, where modernity has usurped the place of the dream.

#### Works in the Exhibition

**Fez, Morocco, 1992**  
Gelatin-silver print, 30 x 40 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(pp. 138–39)

**Catania, Italy, 1994**  
Gelatin-silver print, 40 x 30 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 141)

Gopal Naransamy was born in 1927 in Vrededorp (now Pageview), a suburb of Johannesburg, South Africa. He received his formal education at the Eurafican Training Center in Johannesburg and at Sastri College in Durban. Naransamy had no formal training in photography; his interest in the medium began after he received a Brownie box camera as a present for his eleventh birthday from his father, a prominent sports administrator. On December 16, 1938, he took his first photographs, of Voorstreckers on horseback and in ox wagons as they commemorated their defeat of the Zulus at the Dingaans Day Parade on the streets of Vrededorp. Unable to afford studying for a medical career due to his family's limited finances, Naransamy turned to photography full-time, while working as a clothing salesman and a bookkeeper. In 1953, he received his first break, when he was hired by *Drum* magazine as a darkroom technician. He was later promoted to chief photographer and picture editor of the *Golden City Post*, *Drum's* sister publication.

Because of the Group Areas Act he was forced to move to Lenasia, where he was a pioneering photographer in the community. Through the years, Naransamy had several run-ins with South African authorities, particularly for his coverage of the treason trials from 1955 to 1962 and the Sharpeville massacre in 1960. Today, Naransamy continues to contribute to the *South African Globe*, *Lenasia Times*, *Indicator*, and other South African periodicals. His book *Gems*, showing black history in the making, represents the highlight of his photographic career. He lives and works in Johannesburg.

—O. E.

#### Works in the Exhibition

"Manhattan Brothers Mellow: Dambuza Mdledle, Joseph Mogotsi, Rufus Koza, Ronnie Sehume," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 211)

"Manhattan Brothers Mellow: Miriam Makeba," *Drum* (South Africa), January 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 36 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg  
(p. 212)

**Works in the Exhibition**

"Cape Town's Eoan Group Hits the Sky with *La Traviata*. A Number of Violetta's High Society Friends Have Their Fortunes Told by a Gipsy," **Drum** (South Africa), May 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 197)

"Cape Town's Eoan Group Hits the Sky with *La Traviata*. In the Banqueting Room of Her Sumptuous Home, Beautiful Violetta Valery Gives a Supper to Her Friends. Here They Listen to a Drinking Song by Alfred Germont, Her New Love," **Drum** (South Africa), May 1956  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 196)

"Cape's Hide-and-Seek Wedding! Carriage and Four Took Bride to and from Reception after Groom Had Been Smuggled Out of the Way for a While," **Drum** (South Africa), April 1957  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 204)

"Cape's Hide-and-Seek Wedding! Groom Even Got Married in Bride's Absence. Before All-Male Audience and Immam, a Deputy Said 'I Do' on Bride's Behalf," **Drum** (South Africa), April 1957  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 205)

"In Vain Three Boys Waited for News of Their Friend," **Drum** (South Africa), January 1958  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Bailey's African History Archives, Johannesburg (p. 206)



Ricardo Rangel was born in 1924 in Lorenço Marques (now Maputo), Mozambique. While still in his teens, he started working in a photography lab as a darkroom assistant and later as a printer. In 1952, he joined the staff of Maputo's newspaper *Noticias da tarde* as its first nonwhite photojournalist, but he felt constricted by the paper's conservative political agenda. Rangel left and began working for the newspaper *Tribuna* in 1960, which he quit in 1964. From 1964 to the end of 1969, he worked for various newspapers in Maputo and in Beira.

In 1970, along with four other journalists, he founded the magazine *Tempo*, an illustrated weekly publication that was the first color magazine produced in Mozambique. Seven years later—two years after the independence of Mozambique—he was hired back by *Noticias da tarde* to instruct and direct a new generation of photojournalists. In 1981, he became the director of the weekly *Domingo*, and three years later he was invited to create the Centro de Formação Fotográfica in Maputo, which he directs today. Since 1983, Rangel has exhibited in European galleries and museums in Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, and in Africa in Mali, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere.  
—O. Z.

**Statement**

Ricardo Rangel, who was born of African, Greek, and Chinese heritage, spent most of his youth either in his black grandmother's house in Maputo or accompanying his parents to various provinces of Mozambique. The multifaceted cultures of his country marked him and created in him an unusual sensitivity to the feelings of others, which would always preoccupy him.

Making up stories with images fascinated him in his childhood, when he spent hours playing shadow games, trying to visually evoke the essence of an experience. As a teenager, Rangel had a rebellious yet sensible character and a strength of will that bordered on obstinacy. While working in a

photography lab, he had to print photographs that offended his aesthetic and human sensibility.

In 1952, under extremely difficult circumstances, he began to work for the newspaper *Noticias da tarde*. He had to play by the rules at this newspaper, which meant depicting only positive images of colonialism. It was only after 1960, when Rangel began to work for the newspaper *Tribuna* as chief of photographic reporting that he developed his understanding of photojournalism as the active expression of dissent, a revelation that profoundly changed the visual content of the daily newspapers of his generation. This freedom lasted only four years. In 1964, because of ideological differences, he left *Tribuna* with a group of other progressive journalists.

Rangel's pictures express compassion for all human beings and outrage at injustice. The publication of many of his photographs was prohibited by colonial censorship, and a great number of his negatives were destroyed by the servants of colonial fascism.

**Works in the Exhibition**

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 94)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 95)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 96)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 97)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm, sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 98)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 30 x 24 cm, sheet: 40.6 x 30.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 99)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm,  
sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 100)

From **Our Nightly Bread** series, 1960–70  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 30 cm,  
sheet: 30.5 x 40.6 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 101)



Born in 1936 in Soloba, French Sudan (now Mali), Malick Sidibé was trained in handcrafted jewelry-making. After graduating in 1952 from the National School of Arts in Bamako, he went to work as an apprentice to Gege, a well-known photographer in the capital, and in 1956 he bought his first camera. Sidibé opened his Studio Malick in 1962. At first, he concentrated on photographing industrial subjects such as road construction and railroads. Later, he turned to the activities and social gatherings of young people, unlike his most popular colleagues in Bamako, who specialized in photographing the banquets, receptions, and ceremonies of the upper class. Sidibé spent a decade recording young Malians' weddings, parties, sporting events, and leisure activities. His photographs have been featured in several national and international exhibitions devoted to the most celebrated African photographers. In 1995, the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Paris, presented an exhibition of Sidibé's work from 1962 to 1976. Sidibé lives in Bamako.  
—O. Z.

#### Statement

There are some photographers who have done only studio work. For years, they captured the gazes and costumes of their subjects in the studio. Today, their gaze bears compelling witness to the history of their country. Malick Sidibé's studio portraits do just that. Sometimes, in addition to the studio work, he

would go out to record the atmosphere of dance parties, ceremonies, weddings, and, occasionally, he made excursions to the beach. This activity left the photographer with vivid mementos of the young people of the 1970s.

In youth, he discovered spontaneity and health, warmth and sociability. Today, we again find in his photos these same qualities that Malick forever captured for the delight of our eyes.

—Alioune Bâ

#### Works in the Exhibition

Untitled, April 1970  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 36 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 90)

Untitled, April 1970  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 24 x 36 cm,  
sheet: 30 x 40 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 91)

Untitled, April 1970  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 47 x 46 cm,  
sheet: 61 x 51 cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
(p. 92)

Untitled, April 1970  
Gelatin-silver print; image: 30 x 32 cm,  
sheet: 50.7 x 40.3 cm  
Collection of Pro Africa  
(p. 93)



Born around 1964 in the Igbo region of Makurdi, Nigeria, Iké Udé has lived and worked in New York City since 1981. After studying at Hunter College, City University of New York, Udé started his artistic career in the late 1980s, using photography to explore and deconstruct issues of representation, culture, race, gender, and sexual identity. His ongoing research has broadened the scope of his inquiry beyond the conventional parameters of photography to engage forms of mass communication, including magazines, videos, films, and television. Udé's work usually consists of elaborate installations that he links to related projects presented at the same time, such as collaborative works, publications, lectures, and performances. Udé has participated in solo and group exhibitions in many galleries and museums in the United States. He is also the publisher and editorial director of the magazine *aRUDE*, which focuses on urban culture and alternative lifestyles.

—O. Z.

**Statement**

Contemporary aesthetics are frequently sympathetic to exigent cultural, social, and political issues. Such sympathy has always been at the core of my artistic practice. The photographic medium—whether as an archival material derived from a wide range of sources, or as an instrument to denaturalize certain fixed notions of representation—is malleable and can suggest a whole range of views and ideas about individuals, communities, identities, etc. My photographic work embraces all these variables, whether I am using the more conventional approach of camera and light or the more technical approach of digitized images via computers.

As an artist, I constantly traffic across varying boundaries. I have found that, irrespective of ideological rhetoric, any strict adherence to a single cultural approach is flawed and practically impossible. Moving from one place to another not only provides me with new sensations, backgrounds, and frameworks through which to view things,

but also challenges my predisposition toward the familiar.

Multiculturalism cannot be something that is, from time to time, an intellectual fashion. My country of birth, Nigeria, is only thirty-five years old as a nation. In so becoming, there were enormous costs. Nigeria is arguably a fictive nation created by the British colonial hegemony and populated by Nigerians. Consider that the two major religions in Nigeria, Islam and Christianity, are both imported. Consider the linguistic imperialism that progressively vitiated my first language, Igbo, and consequently necessitated my use of English in speech and writing. Consider this morass of international influences on me and what is left of my culture. Now consider me and my work.

Looking beyond colonial impediments, I see the circumstances of my artistic practice and identity as inextricably informed by the multiplicity of conflicting cultural influences I have inherited and delineated to serve myself. It is little wonder that I am nobody's artist but my own.

I dedicate *Uses of Evidence* to the memory of my beloved mother, Nnebemchi UdeAgu, and my brother Ndu UdeAgu, who recently passed away.

**Work in the Exhibition**

**Uses of Evidence, 1996**

Mixed-media installation with C-prints and Cibachrome prints  
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift of the artist, 1996

Interior Photos

**The Woman in Egyptian Art**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 171, top)

**Authors & Performing Artists, Nigeria**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 171, bottom)

**UdeAgu Family**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 172, upper left)

**Chika**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 172, upper right)

**Unidentified Friend, Mr. Osuagwu,**

**Mr. S. Obinna UdeAgu** (from left to right)  
C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 172, bottom)

**Self-Portrait**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 173, top)

**Diabel Faye**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 173, bottom)

**Nnebemchi UdeAgu**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 174)

**Gacera Faye**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Chinyelu UdeAgu**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Egyptian Boy Studying the Koran**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Tunisian Couple**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Portrait of the Artist as a Young Boy**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Chi-chi UdeAgu**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(p. 175)

**Lagos Polo Club, Nigeria**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**The Mahdi's Mosque, Sudan**

C-print, 20.3 x 25.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

Exterior Murals

**Untitled, 1**

Cibachrome print, 182.9 x 213.4 cm  
(p. 176, top)

**Untitled, 2**

Cibachrome print, 182.9 x 213.4 cm  
(p. 176, bottom)

**Untitled, 3**

Cibachrome print, 182.9 x 213.4 cm  
(not illustrated)

**Untitled, 4**

Cibachrome print, 182.9 x 213.4 cm  
(not illustrated)





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- p. 275: Self-portrait, courtesy of the artist



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**Correction**

Please note that the first sentence on page 275 should read:

Born around 1965 in Lagos, Nigeria, Iké Udé has lived and worked in New York City since 1981.





