

# PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, Dec 12, 2024

## **A WORLD IN COMMON**

Contemporary African Photography

**C/O Berlin** presents the exhibition **A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography** from **Feb 1 to May 7, 2025**. The **opening** takes place on **Friday, Jan 31, 2025**, at **20:00** at C/O Berlin, Amerika Haus, Hardenbergstrasse 22–24, 10623 Berlin.

*A World in Common* presents twenty-three African and African diaspora artists from different generations and geographical contexts. Inspired by Africa's rich cultures and its current sociopolitical landscape, the exhibition refers to the philosophy of Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe, who calls for us to imagine "a world in common" by "thinking the world from Africa." Over one hundred works challenge the western-oriented conception of the world, exploring alternative historical narratives that are deeply rooted in the diverse experiences, philosophies, and knowledge systems of the African continent.

Consisting of three chapters, the exhibition presents contemporary perspectives on cultural heritage, spirituality, self-representation, and climate justice. The show aims to highlight common artistic visions that reimagine Africa's stories and redefine its place in the world.

*A World in Common* examines how traditional forms of expression and spiritual practices have been maintained for years. The artists use photography and video to link aspects of history with the present. Their works demonstrate the central role that self-representation continues to play in the production of images as an expression of cultural resilience.

The nineteenth-century invention of photography, which served as a tool for constructing Eurocentric depictions of African societies in the colonial period, decisively shaped how these societies presented themselves both visually and verbally. This practice had a lasting influence on the representation and construction of identity. Studio photographs taken in the 1950s and 1960s while many African nations were struggling to gain independence play a central role in the exhibition. Taking up this rich history of self-representation, African artists explore the contemporary significance of family portraits as a space of common bonds and connections, illustrating how identity and tradition are passed on, reinterpreted, and maintained for generations and over geographic distances, both on the African continent and in the diaspora.

The exhibition also addresses the profound consequences of the global climate crisis and globalization, which transforms both landscapes and communities. The topics of migration and climate activism are assessed in bold and imaginative ways, with artists inspiring us to visualize a future in which social justice and ecological responsibility are interlinked. Viewers are invited to imagine a world that exists beyond the limits of colonial control and imperialistic exploitation. *A World in Common* creates a space for cultural and intellectual exchange that focuses on the perception of Africa and its role in the world.

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With works by Kelani Abass, Atong Atem, Malala Andrialavidrazana, Edson Chagas, Kudzanai Chiurai, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Māimouna Guerresi, Hassan Hajjaj, Délio Jasse, Julianknxx, Samson Kambalu, Kiripi Katembo, Lebohang Kganye, Mário Macilau, Sabelo Mlangeni, Santu Mofokeng, Fabrice Monteiro, Aïda Muluneh, Wura-Natasha Ogunji, George Osodi, Dawit L. Petros, Zina Saro-Wiwa, and Khadija Saye.

The exhibition was organized by Tate Modern, London, in collaboration with C/O Berlin. Curated by Osei Bonsu, curator of international art at Tate Modern, and Cale Garrido, guest curator at the C/O Berlin Foundation.

## **C& Book Residency**

As part of the exhibitions *A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography* and *Silvia Rosi . Protektorat . C/O Berlin Talent Award 2024*, which are presented in parallel at C/O Berlin, the C& Book Residency is being created in the foyer in collaboration with Contemporary And (C&). Designed as a reading room, this central space offers a carefully curated selection of books from the C& library. The publications respond to the themes of the exhibitions and offer visitors a stimulating opportunity to engage more intensively with the content of the works in both exhibitions.

# **PRESS RELEASE**

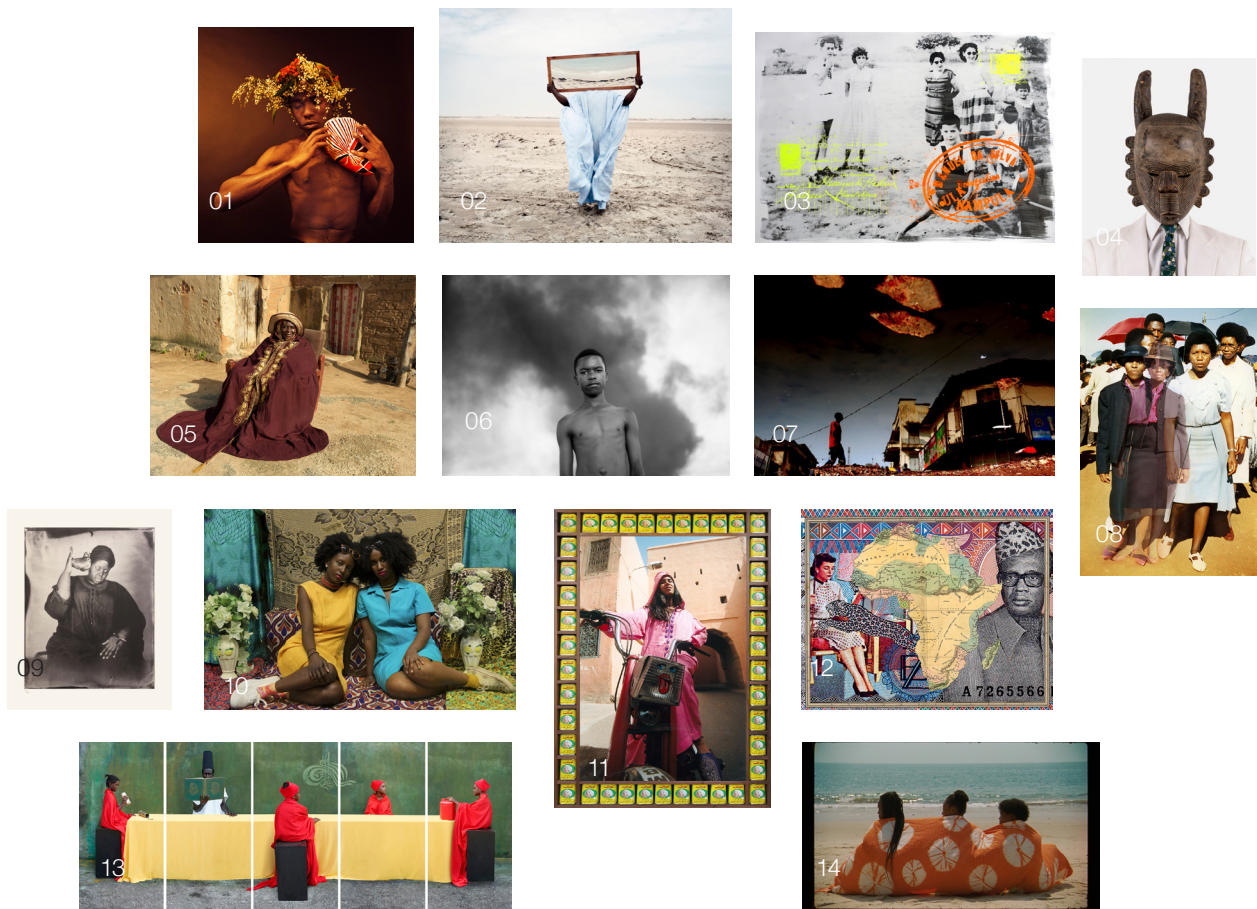
Berlin, Dec 12, 2024

## **A World in Common**

Contemporary African Photography

<b>Exhibition</b>	Feb 1 – May 7, 2025
<b>Press tour</b>	Jan 31, 2025 . 11:00
<b>Opening</b>	Jan 31, 2025 . 20:00
<b>Opening hours</b>	Daily . 11:00–20:00
<b>Admission</b>	12/6 euro
<b>Organizer</b>	C/O Berlin Foundation Amerika Haus . Hardenbergstraße 22–24 . 10623 Berlin Tel +49.30.284 44 16-0 . <a href="http://www.co-berlin.org">www.co-berlin.org</a> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/coberlinphoto">www.facebook.com/coberlinphoto</a> <a href="http://www.instagram.com/coberlin">www.instagram.com/coberlin</a> #coberlin #aworldincommoncoberlin
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<b>Organized by</b>	Tate Modern, London
<b>In collaboration with</b>	C/O Berlin
<b>Supported by</b>	Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne Karin und Uwe Hollweg Stiftung Siemens AG / Siemens Arts Program Wolfgang Tillmans
<b>As part of</b>	EMOP 2025
<b>Book Residency</b>	
<b>In cooperation with</b>	Contemporary And (C&)

# PRESS IMAGES



**01** Rotimi Fani-Kayode, *Adebiyi*, 1989 © Rotimi Fani-Kayode. Courtesy of Autograph, London **02** Dawit L. Petros, *Untitled (Prologue III)*, Nouakchott, Mauritania, 2016 © Dawit L. Petros. Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary **03** Délio Jasse, *The Lost Chapter: Nampula*, 1963, 2015 © Délio Jasse and Tiwani Contemporary **04** Edson Chagas, *Cheick F. Ouattara, Tipo Passe*, 2014 © Edson Chagas. Courtesy of the artist and APALAZZOGALLERY **05** George Osodi, *HRH Queen Hajiya Hadizatu Ahmedu Magajija Of Knubwada*, 2012 © George Osodi **06** Mário Macilau, *A Boy Standing at the Dumpsite*, from *The Profit Corner* series, 2015 © Mário Macilau, Courtesy of Ed Cross Fine Art **07** Kiripi Katembo, *Evolution*, 2008–2013, from the series *Un regard* © Fondation Kiripi Katembo Siku. Courtesy MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris **08** Lebohang Kganye, *Re shapa setepe sa lenyalo II*, 2013 © Lebohang Kganye. Courtesy of the artist **09** Khadija Saye, *Andichurai*, 2017, from the series *in this space we breathe* © Khadija Saye. Courtesy of Estate of Khadija Saye. In memory: Khadija Saye Arts at IntoUniversity **10** Atong Atem, *Dit*, 2015 © Atong Atem. Courtesy of MARS and the artist **11** Hassan Hajjaj, *Rider in Pink*, 2000/1421, framed photography © Hassan Hajjaj. Courtesy of Hassan Hajjaj Studio **12** Malala Andrialavidrazana, *Figures 1838, Atlas Élémentaire*, 2015 © Malala Andrialavidrazana. Courtesy of the artist **13** Maïmouna Guerresi, *Students and Teacher*, 2012 © Maïmouna Guerresi. Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim **14** Julianknxx, *Still of On Freedom of Movement (wi de mov)*, 2022 © Studioknxx

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## INTRODUCTION

*A World in Common* brings together 23 artists who use photography to reimagine Africa's place in the world. They invite us to consider a broader and more inclusive history of humanity. Inspired by the ideas of philosopher Achille Mbembe (b. 1957, Cameroon), the exhibition considers a future of shared possibilities, one that acknowledges what we have in common. Exploring a wide range of themes, each work affirms the interconnectedness of a world shaped by Africa's past, present and future.

The exhibition does not present a single, definitive history of the African continent. On the contrary, it highlights a multitude of shared stories and histories, including those shaped by the African diaspora. The artists in the exhibition draw on the continent's rich and varied traditions as well as its contemporary social and political realities. Challenging colonial representations of African peoples and cultures, they push the boundaries of photography and embrace its potential to redefine the past and shape the future.

*A World in Common* is divided into three chapters: Identity and Tradition, Counter Histories and Imagined Futures. The first chapter is rooted in ancient African cultures and traditions which have survived periods of struggle and resistance imposed upon them. Inspired by Pan-African liberation movements, the second chapter looks at photography's ability to produce counter histories – archival practices and the agency of photographer and subject are brought into focus. The third chapter explores the impact of globalization and the climate emergency. Here, artists imagine a shared future informed by common realities. *A World in Common* creates space for exchange and discovery, inviting us to imagine new ways of inhabiting the Earth.

*A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography* was organized by Tate Modern, London, in collaboration with C/O Berlin Foundation. Curated by Osei Bonsu, curator of international art at Tate Modern, and Cale Garrido, guest curator at the C/O Berlin Foundation.

### **IDENTITY AND TRADITION QUEENS, KINGS AND GODS**

From the 16th century until well into the 19th century, more than 10 million Africans were enslaved, and their cultural heritage destroyed. This history of slavery, violence, and colonialism culminated in the 19th century. During the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, European industrial powers like Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium divided Africa and established colonial boundaries.

Although several African peoples fought against colonial occupation, by 1914 European powers had conquered ninety percent of African territory through aggressive diplomacy, extreme racism, and the use of automatic weapons. Britain alone gained control of nearly a third of the continent.

The artists in this first room honour the traditional leaders who resisted this colonial violence. European rulers divided territory without regard to indigenous populations, depriving local rulers of their authority. Nevertheless, many kings and queens continue to play an important role in many African societies. The work here reveals the rich heritage of kingdoms such as the Yoruba (Nigeria), which can be traced back to the ancient Yoruba capital and mythical birthplace of humanity, Ilé-Ife. The images draw attention to issues of sovereignty and independence that have permeated postcolonial Africa. The works do not show a nostalgic longing for the past. Rather they consider how ancestral knowledge, heritage and traditions continue to shape the present.

### **IDENTITY AND TRADITION SPIRITUAL WORLDS**

Spirituality in Africa reflects the continent's diversity and complexity, with syncretism – the blending of different religious traditions – deeply interwoven into the daily lives and spiritual practices of many people. Traditional religions often revolve around philosophical questions of existence and being, explored through sacred myths and rituals. They have been carried from one generation to the next through oral traditions and taken across the world by the African diaspora.

During the colonial period, European Christian missionaries sought to “convert” communities, suggesting their religions were rooted in anti-Christian values. Figures like the Kenyan philosopher and Anglican Priest John Mbiti (1931–2019) challenged these stereotypes. He argued that African religions deserve the same respect as Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Ultimately, these spiritual traditions survive, preserving the ability to connect the living and spirit worlds.

Drawing from Indigenous African, Christian and Islamic iconography, the artists in this section look at the body, ceremony and devotion. They examine ritual as a source of healing and a way to connect with communities near and far, real and imagined. Through their practices, these artists consider spirituality as a personal journey towards a shared humanity beyond cultural, religious and political borders.

### **IDENTITY AND TRADITION WORRYING THE MASK**

Masks are a significant part of African cultural heritage, playing an important role in ritual and ceremonial performances across many regions. By putting on a mask, performers enter a sacred realm between the living and ancestral worlds.

For centuries, they have been used to form relationships between individuals, communities, the environment and the cosmos. This changed in the 19th and 20th centuries when masks were brought to Europe, stripped of their original ritual function and reduced to museum objects. European artists also collected these masks and drew inspiration from them, further removing them from their original ritual context. Here, contemporary artists engage with their heritage while challenging these histories of dispossession. They explore the cultural, symbolic and ritual significance of the mask and challenge us to acknowledge their living force. Their work speaks to the writings of Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne (\*1955) and his question, "What do African masks mean? What do these objects, labelled fetishes, say once the gods have departed?". Combining photography with performance, the artists in this space use masks to explore shared experiences of injustice and inequality.

The title of the room refers to artist Zina Saro-Wiwa's film *Worrying the Mask* (2020) which explores how masks are used both within communities and cultures to shape identity, as well as how they are viewed from the outside – for example, in ethnological museums—shaping a particular perspective on these cultures. Her lecture performance demands we think differently about these objects, questioning how they are displayed and contextualized.



### **COUNTER HISTORIES FAMILY PORTRAITS**

The second chapter of the exhibition focuses on the camera's ability to challenge the colonial gaze and produce alternative images of the past.

In the 19th century, photography became a valuable tool for colonial powers. Ethnographic images of African peoples and landscapes were distributed through postcards and magazines. These groups were often portrayed and marked as "different" and "inferior" from Europeans, leading to the creation of racist stereotypes that validated colonialism.

The artists in this section confront this history through the theme of "Family Portraits", a subsection that explores Africa's rich studio culture, which began in the 1840s in many coastal cities. Taken by travelling photographers of African and European descent, the practice spread to inland capitals where the growing clientele sought to portray itself whilst conforming to a Victorian style. During the 1950s and 1960s, when many African countries gained independence, studios played an important role in shaping a new postcolonial identities. They allowed those portrayed to play with their appearance and to show the version of themselves they aspired to. The photographers in this room celebrate family portraits as a visual tradition, a form of self-representation, connection and coming together.

### **IDENTITY AND TRADITION THE LIVING ARCHIVE**

Following the end of World War II, African nations demanded their independence from European powers. In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from a European colonial power. Pan-Africanist leader and Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972) declared: "We believe in the rights of all peoples to govern themselves. We affirm the right of all colonial peoples to control their own destiny. All colonies must be free from foreign imperialist control."

During this period of independence, colonial archives were abandoned, hidden and destroyed. However, over time, the documents, photographs and maps that were originally created to define boundaries and claim authority began to take on new meanings. As the role of archives evolved, they came to be understood not merely as repositories of historical documents but as active systems of knowledge, connecting the past to the present.

The artists Délio Jasse, Samson Kambalu and Malala Andrialavidrazana engage with the archive as a place of re-experience. They address the accumulation of official documents and images and bring new stories to light, creating alternative histories. Using photo albums, passports and postcards, they highlight personal perspectives and challenge the official records of colonial governments and nation-states. This living archive introduces a new order of events in which suppressed narratives gain new currency.

## IMAGINED FUTURES

In the exhibition's final chapter, artists contemplate how globalization and climate emergency are shaping our common futures. In times of crisis, they find inspiration in the promise of new worlds and shared dreams for a new society. Dispensing with colonial visions of Africa, they turn to the "planetary", where humans, technology and the natural world come together to form interconnected ecosystems.

Artists explore how urbanization has transformed the continent and its ways of life. Foreign and domestic investment and higher-paying jobs have encouraged Africa's young population to move to cities. Kinshasa and Lagos are now considered megacities, with populations over 15 million. For these artists, the city becomes a site of collective histories and a dynamic stage for the production of global networks and relations.

Shifting geopolitics and plentiful resources mean Africa's economic growth is now predicted to outpace the rest of the world. However, the exploitation of natural and human resources has left the continent caught between the promise of a brilliant future and an uncertain present. In recent years natural disasters, extreme weather and mass migration have put the future of our planet into focus. While global in reach, these issues disproportionately affect citizens of the Global South. Here, artists address this uncertainty by turning to their environment. They face the consequences of humanity's selfdestruction and explore alternative ways of being.

## **C& BOOK RESIDENCY**

The C& Book Residency offers a reading area with a curated selection of books by Contemporary And (C&). Here, you can delve deeper into the themes of the exhibitions *A World in Common* and *Silvia Rosi . Protektorat*. The literature from the C& Library invites you to reflect on central societal issues and themes relating to identity, language, spirituality, and the politics of representation in a postcolonial context. The selected publications approach these topics from historical, philosophical, and artistic perspectives. You are invited to pick up the books, browse through them and read them. Stay here as long as you like. Please put the books back afterwards so that others can access them.

Contemporary And (C&) was founded in 2013 and is a dynamic platform for reflecting and connecting ideas and discourses on contemporary visual arts. This includes the online magazines, *C& Magazine* and *C& América Latina Magazine*, which are published in multiple languages. In addition, the C& Print Issues are published several times throughout the year. Other online and offline projects include *C& Commissions*, *C& Artists' Editions*, the *C& Center of Unfinished Business*, the *C& Critical Writing Workshops* and the *C& Mentoring Program* for young journalists.

### **Concept by**

Julia Grosse, Yvette Mutumba, Mearg Negusse, Contemporary And (C&)  
together with Veronika Epple . Junior Curator and  
Cale Garrido . Guest Curator, C/O Berlin Foundation

### **Commissioned by**

C/O Berlin Foundation

## **GEORGE OSODI**

\*1974

Born and works in Nigeria

*Nigerian Monarchs* is a series of regal portraits of Nigerian kings and queens. These rulers, who are associated with various ethnic groups in the region, saw their power gradually disappear with the British occupation. Challenging the history of official portraits taken during colonial control, Osodi portrays Nigerian rulers in their palaces with their monarchic regalia such as ceremonial robes, beaded headdresses and necklaces, fly swatters, footstools, ceremonial rods and thrones. Through the series of portraits, Osodi highlights the role these monarchs play in the present as guardians of cultural heritage and mediators for their communities.

“Nigeria is not only rich in natural resources but also in its religious and cultural diversity,” Osodi explains. “I believe this should be a source of strength and unity among the country’s various ethnic groups, rather than something that creates division and instability. Documenting and archiving culture is a key to understanding cultural origins, and thus developing a sense of identity.”

## **KUDZANAI CHIURAI**

\*1981

Born and works in Zimbabwe

*We Live in Silence* explores the impact colonialism continues to have on people across Africa. Staged in a theatrical setting, the series explores how Christianity was used to support, promote, and expand European colonialism, and its impact on Indigenous belief systems. In these images, Kudzanai Chiurai blurs the boundaries between past, present and future by portraying biblical and historical references in a contemporary way. *We Live in Silence* features women as protagonists, attempting to address historical representations that typically focus on men as both liberators and victims in anti-colonial resistance.

The series is inspired by the film *Soleil Ô* (1967) by Mauritanian-born French filmmaker Med Hondo (1936–2019). The film follows an African immigrant seeking a better life in Paris only to encounter old forms of colonial oppression in his new life.

## **KHADIJA SAYE**

\*1992–†2017

Born and worked in UK

These self-portraits from the *in this space we breathe* series explore spirituality as a means of connecting with ancestors. Saye performs a series of rituals using sacred objects from Gambia, her parents' country of origin. Her rituals incorporate African, Christian and Islamic referents. In the image titled *Nak Bejjen*, Saye bows her head as in prayer, while an anonymous figure holds a horn-like object to the back of her neck. This image evokes a technique used by Gambian healers to draw impurities from a person's body.

Saye commented that "whilst exploring the notions of spirituality and rituals, the process of image making became a ritual in itself". She used a labor-intensive wet collodion process, which is easily affected by elements outside the artist's control. Saye explained, "within this process, you surrender yourself to the unknown, similar to what is required by all spiritual higher powers: surrendering and sacrifice". In June 2017, Saye and her mother died in the Grenfell Tower fire that occurred in North Kensington, London. Only six tintypes remained, the rest were destroyed in the fire. Raw scans have been recovered and used to make the silkscreen prints seen here.

## **MAÏMOUNA GUERRESI**

\*1951

Born in Italy, works in Italy and Senegal

Maïmouna Guerresi's work is characterized by a search for a shared humanity that goes beyond religion and culture, a fundamental aspect of her Sufi faith. The *M-eating – Students and Teacher* series explores the mystery of spiritual encounters. It considers the table as a starting point to reflect on contemporary humanity and its relationship with others in the face of warfare and upheaval. A religious leader in a tall black hat reads the Sufi scriptures to four girls wearing bright red clothing as they sit around a long dinner table. Instead of food, there are objects suggestive of war – a petrol can and a shell casing. Stripped of their original use, the objects become power tools to reflect on the human nature and spiritual resilience. The girls' figures reference the feminine archetype and its healing power, highlighting the strength and value that women bring to societies.

### **ROTIMI FANI-KAYODE**

\*1955–†1989

Born in Nigeria, worked in UK

In this series, Fani-Kayode depicts Black men in floral headpieces and fetish wear, posing in the light against dark backdrops. His subjects perform Yoruba rituals and acts of devotion inspired by the “technique of ecstasy” practiced by Yoruba priests to transcend their physical realities. Fani-Kayode was a descendant of Yoruba priests of Ifè.

The series intertwines sexuality and spirituality, exploring the relationship “between erotic fantasy and ancestral spiritual values”. Fani-Kayode explains, “My reality is not the same as that which is often presented to us in Western photographs. 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.”

### **ZINA SARO-WIWA**

\*1976

Born and works in Nigeria

Zina Saro-Wiwa made the film *Worrying the Mask* in her ancestral homeland of Ogoniland, located in the Niger Delta. The oil-rich area is today one of the most polluted places on Earth, with approximately 40 million liters of oil spilled across the region each year. Ogoni farmers and fisherfolk, including Saro-Wiwa’s father, writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, have spent decades protesting against oil companies causing this pollution. In 1995, Saro-Wiwa’s father was one of nine Ogoni activists subjected to a secret military trial, accused of murder and executed. The executions led to international condemnation and Nigeria’s suspension from the Commonwealth. In 2013, the artist returned to Ogoniland. She began to explore local masquerade practices, traditionally performed by men, eventually commissioning her own mask. Saro-Wiwa notes, “Women are culturally required to carry huge burdens, physically and emotionally, and are therefore more than capable of wearing the mask and representing their own culture.”

The title, *Invisible Man. The Weight of Absence*, recalls Ralph Ellison’s (1914–1994) 1952 novel about African American life before the US Civil Rights Movement. It also references the men who have disappeared from the artist’s life. “Whenever you ask people why masquerade exists,” she comments, “they say it is about social cohesion, about honoring the land and healing. I as an Ogoni, albeit one that grew up in the UK and lived in America, wanted to see if this practice could heal me too... I feel that through this mask I have re-inscribed myself into the landscape and asked the invisible to dance for me. Death is not silence and it is not an end. Spirit remains active through living culture.”

## **WURA-NATASHA OGUNJI**

\*1970

Born in USA, works in Nigeria

*Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman?* is filmed on the busy streets of Yaba, Lagos. In it, Wura-Natasha Ogunji and six other women drag barrels of water by their ankles. The performers wear matching jumpsuits and masks as water trails behind them as they move. Their costumes are reminiscent of the Egungun masquerade, a tradition from the Yoruba religion in which ancestors and spirits take physical form through the use of costumes. In the video, this male-dominated tradition is performed by a group of women trying to raise awareness about the female body and labor. In Ogunji's words: "While the piece poses questions about the work of women, it is also about labor and the politics of change. How much is enough? What is the tipping point in a society where people struggle to meet basic needs? When do people have an opportunity to rest, reflect, envision, imagine, and enact another way of being?"

## **EDSON CHAGAS**

\*1977

Born in Angola, works in Angola and Portugal

In this series, Chagas photographs sitters wearing masks and contemporary clothing against a stark white background. The title, *Tipo Passe*, is derived from the Portuguese term for passport photos (fotografias tipo passe), referencing the frontal style typical of such photography. Chagas photographs a variety of traditional Bantu masks used to represent the spirits of ancestors. Questioning the collection and display of these masks as cultural artefacts divorced from their intention, Chagas explores the connection between their intended use as performative objects and the global circulation of traditional African art. The artist gives each of his subjects invented European-African names, highlighting the role of migration and colonialism in the development of identity. He explains that, "the real or assumed identities of the people hidden beneath the masks are given, whose European-derived names associated with local surnames, recall Angola's long past as a colony."



### **LEBOHANG KGANYE**

\*1990

Born and works in South Africa

In this series of photomontages, Lebohang Kganye inserts herself into scenes from her mother's life. Dressed in similar clothes and performing the same gestures, Kganye reconnects with her mother three years after her death. Like apparitions, these images of mother and daughter tell new stories, suggesting inherited commonalities, shared memories and imagined conversations. The artist bridges the past and present, locating herself within a wider ancestral past.

For Kganye, family photographs allow us "to 'perform' ideals of 'family-ness' and become visual constructions of who we think we are and hope to be". She explains that family photo albums include "what shall be remembered and forgotten, therefore our histories become orchestrated fictions, imagined histories".

The series title *Ke Lefa Laka* is Sesotho, one of South Africa's eleven official languages, and translates to "it's my legacy".

### **SABELO MLANGENI**

\*1980

Born and works in South Africa

Taken over a period of six years in small towns in the Mpumalanga province, *Country Girls* is an intimate portrait of queer communities in the South African countryside. Mlangeni's series draws attention to the ways these communities have fashioned their own identities outside of the city. In these images, local hair-stylists, drag queens and beauty pageant contestants come together at family gatherings and social occasions. Despite the equality promised in South Africa's 1996 constitution, these daily acts of love, intimacy and friendship take place in the face of continued violence and discrimination. Mlangeni's images reveal how people carve out spaces to work, love, and find community. Capturing their visibility and vulnerability, the series celebrates the resilience of these individuals.

## **KELANI ABASS**

\*1979

Born and works in Nigeria

In *Casing History*, Kelani Abass uses cabinet trays from his family's printing press to display photographs and handwritten documents from his family's archive, which date back to the 1960s. As a child, Abass remembers customers coming into the family business with photographs of loved ones to be made into calendars that told the stories of their communities. The artist uses these personal and historical images to consider "how an archive contributes to the practice of memory and historical recall". Abass explains, "*Casing History* is responding to the question of how a moment can be paused. I work towards fixing a particular period in time, as well as reclaiming histories by re-appropriating the use of the letterpress type case, switching the letters in each box with images, to help us experience the past and further imagine history more vividly."

## **HASSAN HAJJAJ**

\*1961

Born in Morocco, works in Morocco and UK

For years, Hassan Hajjaj has followed a community of women he calls the Kesh Angels, a humorous reference to both Hell's Angels and Marrakech. Hajjaj photographs them in their vivid djellabas and veils as proud and independent women. Drawing inspiration from the patterns of Islamic decorative arts, Hajjaj places his pictures inside custom frames inset with tin cans and bottles. Hajjaj explains, "I wanted to show the world what I saw of the country and its people – the energy, the attitude; the inventiveness and glamour of street fashion; the fantastic graphics on everyday objects and products; people's happy outlook and strength of character."

## **ATONG ATEM**

\*1994

Born in South Sudan, works in Australia

Atong Atem photographs friends and acquaintances who, like the artist herself, are part of Australia's African diaspora. They wear clothing with printed garments, adorned with beads alongside Australian ornaments, referring to the place where the photographs were made. Atem says, "I wanted to see what happens when we turn the lens on ourselves and subvert that ethnographic gaze. To me, it's a moment of power and reclamation, and an opportunity for us to celebrate our personal and cultural identities."

The artist pays homage to studio photography and family photographs as an extension of oral traditions. "We sing songs to tell history and we dress up and sit for photographs to mythologise our histories," Atem explains. Her work honours the South Sudanese Dinka tradition of record-keeping and archiving as an intimate cultural practice.

## **SANTU MOFOKENG**

\*1956–†2020

Born and worked in South Africa

This projection includes 80 photographic portraits from 9 different families, all taken in South Africa at the turn of the 20th century. They reveal the richness of Black family life in the face of racist and discriminatory acts that eventually led to apartheid (1948–1994). In contrast to widely disseminated colonial ethnographic photographs, these portraits were commissioned by the sitters themselves. They conform to a specific style of Victorian photography, with imagined settings, clothing and props reflecting the sitters' self-image. Some of the subjects were integrationists who received their education at Christian mission schools, owned property, and held similar aspirations to European immigrants. In the captions accompanying the images Mofokeng asks, "Are these images evidence of mental colonization or did they serve to challenge prevailing images of 'The African' in the Western world?"

## **DÉLIO JASSE**

\*1980

Born in Angola, works in Italy

*Lost Chapter* is based on a collection of photographs Délio Jasse found at a flea market in Portugal. The photographs feature a Portuguese family in Nampula, Mozambique, in the 1960s. Jasse overlays the photographs with screen-printed passport and visa stamps, exploring personal and governmental uses of photography in the colonial era. The family snapshots of daily life highlight the privileges that were part of the colonial system. The absence of black Mozambicans in the photographs underscores the segregation under which locals lived during Portuguese rule. Jasse explains, "The contrast between the image and the place in which it was taken was what interested me... They are in Africa, but there is nothing that indicates the location... There are also very few Black people. And the few Black people – clearly servants – are all almost hidden; it is not easy to see them. That is the contrast I was talking about: how their lives looked (totally European) versus where they were (in Mozambique)."

## **SAMSON KAMBALU**

\*1975

Born in Malawi, works in UK

Samson Kambalu's cardboard cut-outs of African soldiers use photographs sourced from the Weston Library in Oxford, UK. These images include depictions of the unnamed infantry who fought for the British Empire during World War I and World War II known as the King's African Rifles. Kambalu uses cardboard to reference their expendable status to colonial powers. Kambalu's fabric "quilt" is inspired by his childhood memories of collecting bubblegum cards of world flags. The artist combines national flags to produce graphic images that recall abstract geometric patterns and Kuba textiles – a traditional form of textile art from the Kuba people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. These new self-created flags become symbols of a global diasporic community. Samson Kambalu says, "I believe in people, I'm not too sure about countries. I think there should be a thousand countries every day. I like the idea that every moment is a country of its own." Both of these works show how, through play and irony, Kambalu contests the symbols and icons that have been handed down to us.

## **MALALA ANDRIALAVIDRAZANA**

\*1971

Born in Madagascar, works in France

In *Figures*, Malala Andrialavidrazana assembles maps, fragments of bank notes, record sleeves and other archival documents to produce complex, layered digital collages. She juxtaposes historical figures such as Egyptian Queen Nefertiti (c. 1370–c. 1330 B.C.) and Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (1930–1997) with unnamed men and women, from warriors to nomadic shepherds. Andrialavidrazana combines imagery from different times and places. The fusion of these elements helps her create an imaginary world in which diverse narratives, identities and ecosystems allow for a broader reading of our histories. Cartography was among the most powerful political and ideological tools during the 19th century. By deconstructing these documents of pre-colonial and colonial land use, the artist questions their authority while acknowledging the influence these documents continue to have on our representation of the world. She invites us “to look back in order to move forward”.

## **KIRIPI KATEMBO**

\*1979–†2015

Born and worked in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

*Un Regard* is a series about the city of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Katembo attempted to document local Kinois people but found they did not want to be photographed. Instead, he turned his camera to the street, capturing reflections of the city and its inhabitants in pools of water. In contrast to its typical depiction as a chaotic and busy capital, here Kinshasa appears as a dream-like landscape populated by shadows and unidentified objects. This is heightened by Katembo presenting his photographs upside down. “Even though the picture looks surreal, I wanted it to reflect the reality of life in Kinshasa – these big contrasts of color, bright oranges and yellows, the taxis and the billboards,” he says. “For me, these reflections are like windows into another, more beautiful reality. It’s a doorway into a dream.”

### **DAWIT L. PETROS**

\*1972

Born in Eritrea, works in USA and Canada

*The Stranger's Notebook* explores geographical, historical, and cultural boundaries. Dawit L. Petros documented his travels from Africa to Western Europe, reflecting on a long history of global migration. Passing through cities including Nouakchott in Mauritania and Catania in Sicily, Italy, the artist considers the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who make treacherous journeys between the two continents. Petros photographs his companions and local people holding mirrors to the landscape, revealing reflections of coastlines, train tracks and power lines. Conscious of his own position as an outsider in these spaces, the artist positions himself as a "stranger", photographing his staged compositions from a distance. Petros explores historical and political borders that originated in colonialism, and the influence they still have on contemporary migration.

### **MÁRIO MACILAU**

\*1984

Born and works in Mozambique

*Profit Corner* documents the workers of the Hulene landfill site in Maputo, Mozambique. In the series, Mário Macilau captures the informal community who rely on the site for their income, as well as the environmental harm it causes. Workers, without other opportunities, extract valuable materials from electronic waste, often using unsafe methods such as burning. These processes release toxic substances into the air and soil which leads to illness and the contamination of crops and water supplies. Macilau uses photography to raise social awareness, focusing on the dignity and resilience of these young workers. He gives agency to his subjects, presenting a community with hopes and dreams for a better future.

### **FABRICE MONTEIRO**

\*1972

Born in Belgium, works in Senegal

Monteiro's series *The Prophecy* captures environmental issues facing communities in Dakar, Senegal, from forest fires to coastal erosion. Spiritual figures emerge from rubbish dumps, discarded fishing nets and burning landscapes. They are inspired by West African masquerade and animism, the belief that objects and the natural world are imbued with spirits. Their elaborate costumes, made of rubbish and natural materials, evoke the environmental consequences of excessive consumption. Monteiro's figures appear to deliver a message of warning. "My work is about unity, about revealing the ways in which we are all connected, to each other and to nature," the artist explains. "I seek to build bridges between all for a more comprehensive approach to this unprecedented challenge in the history of humanity."

### **AÏDA MULUNEH**

\*1974

Born and works in Ethiopia

In the *Water Life* series, Aïda Muluneh explores access to water and its impact on the lives of many women around the world. While living in Ethiopia, she encountered women travelling for hours by foot while carrying heavy vessels of water. With the rise of extreme weather events caused by climate change, access to clean water is becoming a widespread issue. Droughts make its availability unpredictable, while flooding threatens the contamination of supplies. Using a striking palette of bright blue and red, Muluneh incorporates traditional African body painting and dress as a celebration of the beauty and culture of the continent. "The world is continually bombarded with the social plight of Africa, therefore my focus in this project was to address these topics without the cliché that we see in mainstream media. In a sense, to advocate through art."

## **JULIANKNXX**

\*1988

Born in Sierra Leone, works in the UK

Bringing together poetry, film and music, Julianknxx's practice challenges dominant historical narratives with a personal approach to storytelling. Shot in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, *On Freedom of Movement (wi de muv)* considers the necessity of movement. It also explores how the environments we live in can create the space we need, with a particular focus on cities. This work is part of the *After the Ocean* series, which also includes Julianknxx's earlier work *In Praise of Still Boys* (2021). In this series, he explores the ocean as both a point of departure and meeting, of movement and multiplicities, with water becoming a symbol of life and loss, death and rapture, tragedy and transformation, while continuing to operate as a conduit for shared experiences. What does it mean to carry the water with us, when our history left us an ocean? Freetown was founded in 1792 as a "haven" for formerly enslaved Africans living in England, Canada and Jamaica. It became home to a community of people looking to reclaim agency and identity. Knxx and his family are descendants of these freedom seekers, known as Krios (Sierra Leonean Creoles). Aged 9, Knxx and his family were forced to flee Freetown due to the civil war. They settled in London, where he is still based. "People ask why I'm so fixated on Freetown," he says. "But I'm not telling a West African story, I'm telling a global story – it's a global history."



# EVENTS

## FEB

Sat, Feb 1, 2025 . 18:00–19:00

### Artist Tour

A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography

**With** Malala Andrialavidrazana, Edson Chagas, Maimouna Guerresi,

Délio Jasse and Mário Macilau . Artists /

Osei Bonsu . Curator, Tate Modern /

Cale Garrido . Guest Curator

**Ticket** 12/6 euro (incl. exhibitions)

Thu, Feb 20, 2025 . 19:00–21:00

### After-Work Tour + Drink

A World in Common . Sam Youkilis . Silvia Rosi

**Ticket** 20 euro (inkl. exhibition)

Wed, Feb 26, 2025 . 18:00–19:00

### LOOKING AT A World in Common

**With** Eric Otieno Sumba . Writer, Editor and independent Researcher /

Cale Garrido . Guest Curator

**Ticket** 12/6 euro (incl. exhibitions)

## MAR

Wed, Mar 5, 2025 . 18:00–19:00

### Curator's Tour

A World in Common . Contemporary African Photography

**With** Cale Garrido . Guest Curator

**Ticket** 12/6 euro (incl. exhibitions)

Thu, Mar 6, 2025 . 19:00–21:00

### Talking Books

Shining Lights: Black Women Photographers in 1980s-'90s Britain

**With** Joy Gregory . Artist, Editor and Writer

**Moderation** Cale Garrido . Guest Curator

**Admission** free

Sun, Mar 9, 2025 . 14:00–16:00

Special Tour

### Black & Queer Feminism in Berlin

With Dekoloniale Stadtführung

**Ticket** 25 euro (incl. reduced admission to the exhibitions)

Thu, Mar 13, 2025 . 19:00–21:00

### After-Work Tour + Drink

A World in Common . Sam Youkilis . Silvia Rosi

**Ticket** 20 euro (incl. exhibition)

# EVENTS

## APR

Thu, Apr 17, 2025 . 19:00–21:00

**After-Work Tour + Drink**

**Ticket** 12/6 euro (incl. exhibitions)

Sun, Apr 27, 2025 . 11:00–13:00

**Discover the African Quarter**

With Dekoloniale Stadtführung

**Ticket** 25 euro (incl. reduced admission to the exhibitions)

More to come