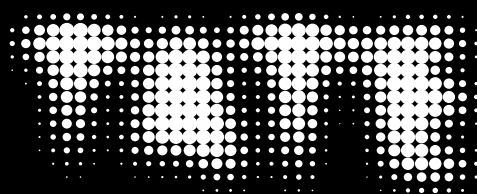


A WORLD IN COMMON

6 JULY 2023 – 14 JANUARY 2024

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



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CONTENTS

Concourse	5
Room 1	12
Room 2	23
Room 3	35
Room 4 and 5	49
Room 6 and 7	85
Imagined Futures – Epilogue	112
Final room	118

All information is correct at the time of publication

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CONCOURSE

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Concourse

A WORLD IN COMMON: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY 6 JULY 2023 – 14 JAN 2024

Supported by the A World in Common Exhibition
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Exhibition curated by Osei Bonsu, Curator, International Art,
with Jess Baxter and Genevieve Barton, Assistant Curators,
International Art and Katy Wan, former Assistant Curator,
International Art.

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Concourse image: Dawit L. Petros **Untitled (Prologue III), Nouakchott, Mauritania** 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary.

Let us know your thoughts
#AWorldInCommon

Introduction

A WORLD IN COMMON: CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY

A World in Common: Contemporary African Photography brings together 36 artists who use photography to reimagine Africa's place in the world. It is inspired by the continent's rich cultural traditions, as well as present-day social and political realities. Drawing on the theories of Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe (born 1957), the exhibition invites us to imagine 'a world in common'. To do this, Mbembe claims, we must 'think the world from Africa'. A World in Common explores Africa's past, present and future to create a more expansive and inclusive narrative of humanity. It suggests that to conceive 'a world in common' is to imagine a future of possibility.

There is no single, definitive history of Africa. It is a continent of multiple, interconnected realities. Pushing the boundaries of photography and film, the artists in A World in Common confront reductive representations of African peoples and cultures. They address photography's past and embrace its potential to reframe the present and shape tomorrow.

The exhibition 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. 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 globalisation 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.

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ROOM 1

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Clockwise from room 1 entrance

IDENTITY AND TRADITION KINGS, QUEENS, GODS

The first chapter of the exhibition explores the relationship between identity and tradition. In the following three rooms, artists preserve and reinvent cultures, religions and art forms that have survived violent erasure.

People from Europe and Asia have settled in regions of Africa since ancient times, controlling land, natural resources and peoples. From the 16th century, Europeans enslaved more than 10 million Africans, abducting them from their homes and their cultural heritage. This history of enslavement, violence and colonialism reached its height in the 19th century. During this period, Britain, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and Italy invaded, divided and colonised most of Africa. The Asante, Fula, Ndebele, Opobo, Shona, Tuareg and other Indigenous peoples fought these invasions. However, through a combination of nationalistic competition, extreme racism and automatic weaponry, European powers conquered 90% of Africa by 1914. Britain alone assumed control of nearly a third of the continent.

The artists in this room pay tribute to the monarchs and matriarchs who resisted this violence. Colonial governments defined territories without consideration of Indigenous populations and denied rulers their authority. Despite this, kings, queens and chiefs continue to play an essential role in many African societies. These photographers address the rich heritage of kingdoms such as the Asante of Ghana and the Yoruba of Nigeria, who are descended from the goddesses and gods of the ancient spiritual capital, Ilé-Ifè. Their images draw attention to issues of sovereignty and independence that have permeated postcolonial Africa. More than visions of a lost past, they demonstrate how African identity continues to be shaped by powerful ancestral legacies and traditions.

George Osodi born 1974
Born and works Nigeria

Nigerian Monarchs series
2012–22, printed 2023

**HRM Benjamin Ikenchucku Keagborekuzi I, the Dein of
Abgor Kingdom 2012**

Photograph, digital C-print on paper

Courtesy of George Osodi and TAFETA
X87847

George Osodi born 1974
Born and works Nigeria

Nigerian Monarchs series
2012–22, printed 2023

Left to right:

**Pere of Gbaramatu. His Imperial Majesty, Oboro Gbaraun II,
Aketekpe, Agadagba 2022**

**HRM Agbogidi Obi James Ikechukwu Anyasi II,
Obi of Idumuje Unor 2012**

HM Ogiame Atuwatse III, the Olu of Warri Kingdom 2022

**HRH Queen Hajiya Hadizatu Ahmedu Magajiya of
Knubwada 2012**

**His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi
(Ojaja II), the Ooni of Ife 2020**

5 photographs, digital C-print on paper

Courtesy of George Osodi and TAFETA
X87146, X87145, X87147, X87149, X87148

Nigerian Monarchs is a series of regal portraits of Nigerian kings and queens. In the late 19th century, British colonial forces merged hundreds of kingdoms to form the artificial boundaries of modern-day Nigeria. Once the rulers of diverse regions and ethnic groups, these monarchs saw their constitutional powers gradually eroded through colonial occupation and national independence. Despite this, they continue to play an important role as custodians of cultural heritage and intermediaries 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 born 1981
Born and works Zimbabwe

We Live in Silence series
2017, printed 2023

Left to right:

We Live in Silence II

We Live in Silence IV

We Live in Silence XVII

We Live in Silence XVIII

We Live in Silence XIV

5 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Images courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery
X87155, X87151, X87152, X87153, X88265

We Live in Silence explores how colonialism continues to impact people across Africa. The artist creates alternative histories and futures which reject colonial mindsets. The series is inspired by **Soleil Ô**, the 1967 film by Mauritanian-born French filmmaker Med Hondo. The film follows a Black immigrant in Paris searching for a better life only to encounter new forms of oppression. Chiurai's theatrical staging of scenes from the film references biblical narratives, history painting and Christian iconography. The series highlights how Christianity has been used to support and expand European colonialism in Africa and the impact this has had on Indigenous belief systems. Chiurai's photographs cast women at the centre of Black liberation narratives which historically position men as both victims and liberators in anti-colonial struggles.

Zohra Opoku born 1976
Born Germany, works Ghana

Queens and Kings 2017

Screenprint on cotton

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa
Acquisitions Committee 2021
T15831

Queens and Kings continues Opoku's series **WHO IS WEARING MY T-SHIRT**, exploring the impact of textile waste in Ghana. Screenprinted onto a patchwork of used fabrics, the composition includes the artist and her siblings standing around piles of garments. With leaves and branches disguising their faces, the figures wear second-hand T-shirts and kente cloth passed down by their father, Asante Chief Nana Opoku Guyabaah II of Asato, Volta Region. Kente cloth is a handwoven fabric made from silk and cotton. It was originally produced to dress kings and their courts and is often worn on special occasions. Opoku's work explores 'how various types of dress culture are inspired by different social influences'. Through her fabric combinations, she invites us to consider the ways tradition and globalisation intersect in contemporary Ghana.

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ROOM 2

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Clockwise from room 2 entrance

IDENTITY AND TRADITION SPIRITUAL WORLDS

Spirituality in Africa is as complex and diverse as the continent itself. A syncretic approach, combining different religious practices, is common. 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.

While some countries have practised Christianity for centuries, during the colonial period, European 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. 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 room 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.

Khadija Saye 1992–2017

Born and worked UK

in this space we breathe series 2017

Left row:

Sothiou

Limonj

Kurus

Middle row:

Tééré

Nak Bejjen

Peitaw

Right row:

Andichurai

Ragal

Toor-Toor

9 screenprints on paper

Images courtesy of the Estate of Khadija Saye.

In memory: Khadija Saye Arts at IntoUniversity. X88241–49

These self-portraits explore spiritual practices as a way of connecting to ancestral homelands. Saye performs a series of rituals using sacred objects that combine her African, Christian and Islamic heritage. In **Nak Bejjen**, Wolof for cow horn, Saye's head is bowed in prayer while a figure outside the frame holds a horn-like object to the back of her neck. The 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 labour-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'.

Khadija Saye 1992–2017

Born and worked UK

Dwelling: in the space we breathe series

Nak Bejjen 2017

Tintype on metal

Tate. Presented by Tate Patrons 2019

T15140

Em'kal Eyongakpa born 1981

Born Cameroon, works the Netherlands

Ketoya speaks #1, (cluster ii) 2016

11 photographs, C-print on paper and vinyl wallpaper

Courtesy the artist, E.E. intermedia studios, Бѡѡ Бѣѡѡ
X87971

The shadowy figures and blurred landscapes in **Ketoya speaks** capture Eyongakpa's belief in spiritual spheres and ancestral energies. He explains that his work 'questions the obvious in a bid to attempt to understand the beautiful chaos I was born into as well as the unknown'. In this work, the artist documents his journey through the sacred lands of Nsanakang and Ketoya in Manyu, Cameroon. Through photography and field recordings, Eyongakpa documents the invisible traces of the Mpawmanku wars (1904–6), a period of anti-colonial resistance when German colonial authorities inflicted violence on Indigenous communities. Oral accounts by chiefs and townspeople forge a fragmentary narrative that questions official historical accounts. The artist's body appears as a ghost-like figure moving through the landscape, embodying the memories and spirits of his ancestors.

Maimouna Guerresi born 1951

Born Italy, works Senegal

M-eating – Students and Teacher 2012

5 photographs, digital C-print on paper,
mounted on aluminium

Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim

X87099

This work explores the relationship between isolation and togetherness that can be experienced when practising religion. Four girls and an older man gather around a long table draped in a yellow cloth. The wall behind the table is inscribed with the Basmala, a Muslim prayer recited to elicit God's blessings. Rather than engaging in the ritual of eating, the young women appear absorbed in deep reflection as their teacher reads to them. Guerresi explains, 'On the table there's no food, only a few objects ... a plate, a pitcher of water, a tyre – or other objects, like old remnants of war, which, in this context, lose their original meaning of menace and acquire an everyday, decorative aspect. The meeting at the table becomes an occasion to reflect on the contemporary human and his/her relationship with society.'

Rotimi Fani-Kayode 1955–1989

Born Nigeria, worked UK

Bodies of Experience series

1989, printed 2023

Left to right:

Nothing to Lose I (Bodies of Experience)

Nothing to Lose VII (Bodies of Experience)

Nothing to Lose VIII (Bodies of Experience)

Nothing to Lose IX (Bodies of Experience)

Adebiyi

5 photographs, digital C-print on paper

Autograph, London

X87100–4

In this series, Fani-Kayode depicts Black male bodies in floral headpieces and fetish wear, illuminated against dark backdrops. His subjects perform Yoruba rituals and acts of devotion inspired by the 'technique of ecstasy' practised 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.'

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ROOM 3

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Clockwise from room 3 entrance

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. For centuries, they have been used to form relationships between individuals, communities, the environment and the cosmos. By putting on a mask, performers enter a sacred realm between the living and ancestral worlds.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, masks were removed from these spaces of ritual and taken to Europe where they became museum objects. European artists also collected and appropriated these masks, further divorcing them from their history. Here, contemporary artists engage with their heritage while challenging these histories of dispossession. They explore the enduring power of the mask and the moral and philosophical challenges that arise from their multiple meanings. Their work speaks to the writings of Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne (born 1955) and his question, 'What do African masks mean? What do these objects, labelled fetishes, say once the gods have departed?'

In **Worrying the Mask** (2020) Zina Saro-Wiwa (born 1976) interrogates the use of masks to represent communities and cultures. Her performance-lecture demands we think differently about these objects, questioning how they are displayed and contextualised. Combining photography with performance, the artists in this room use masks to explore the politics of identity, gender and power. Through play and provocation, they ask us to consider their meaning as living objects.

Zina Saro-Wiwa born 1976

Born Nigeria, works USA

Invisible Man: The Weight of Absence 2015

Video

5 min 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary

X88428

Saro-Wiwa made this film in her ancestral homeland, Ogoniland, in the Niger Delta. The oil-rich area is one of the most polluted places on earth; about 40 million litres of oil are 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.'

Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou born 1965

Born and works Benin

Egungun series

2011–2, printed 2023

5 photographs, C-print on paper

Jack Bell Gallery

X87109, X87106, X87108, X87105, X87107

This series of portraits is dedicated to Egungun, a Yoruba masquerade practice which calls upon the spirits of departed ancestors. Through ceremonial drumming and dance, ancestral spirits inhabit the bodies of Egungun practitioners to pass on blessings and guide the passage of the dead to the spirit world. Clothing plays an important role in Egungun masquerade – elaborate masks and fabrics must completely seal the performer's body. Agbodjélou's performers wear costumes which layer expensive foreign materials and traditional Yoruba cloth. This combination of the traditional and the contemporary parallels the Egungun's complex role as mediators between the world of the living and the dead.

Wura-Natasha Ogunji born 1970

Born USA, works Nigeria

Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman? 2013

Single-channel digital video

12 min 7 sec

Ema Edosio

X85181

Filmed on the busy streets of Yaba, Lagos, **Will I still carry water when I am a dead woman?** features Ogunji and six other women dragging kegs of water, strapped to their ankles. The performers wear matching jumpsuits and masks, catching the attention of passers-by as they leave trails of water behind them. Their costumes evoke images of Egungun masquerade, a Yoruba practice that visually manifests ancestors' spirits and is traditionally reserved for men. Ogunji explains her intention: 'While the piece poses questions about the work of women, it is also about labour 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 born 1977

Born Angola, works Angola and Portugal

Tipo Passe series

2014, printed 2023

Top row:

Cheick F. Ouattara

Fernando L. Makélélé

Diogo K. Puenha

Emmanuel C. Bofala

Patrice J. Ndong

Thierry D. Bomboko

Bottom row:

Marcel D. Traoré

Leroy M. Futa

Salvador D. Kimbangu

Pablo P. Mbela

Diana S. Sakulombo

Jean P. Mbayo

12 photographs, C-print on paper

Edson Chagas, Apalazzo Gallery Brescia, Stevenson Gallery
Johannesburg, Cape Town, Amsterdam.

X86308, X86320, X86309–12, X86315–6, X86318, X86317,
X86314, X86319

In this series, Chagas photographs sitters wearing masks and contemporary clothing against a stark white background. The title, **Tipo Passe**, is Portuguese for passport and the artist's frontal composition references passport 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.'

Zina Saro-Wiwa born 1976

Born Nigeria, works USA

The Invisible Man series 2015

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary

X88424-6

Through her series of masked self-portraits, Saro-Wiwa uses masquerade to 'go within and open-up emotional terrains'. The title recalls Ralph Ellison's 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 honouring 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.'

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ROOM 4 AND 5

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Clockwise from room 4 entrance

COUNTER HISTORIES FAMILY PORTRAITS

The second chapter of the exhibition looks at counter histories. Here, our focus turns to 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. They 'othered' subjects and created racist stereotypes that legitimised the mission of empire.

The works in the following rooms confront these fictions. They honour a long history of studio portraiture that gives agency to African photographers and their sitters, interrogate colonial archives and uncover hidden histories.

'Family Portraits' explores Africa's rich studio culture, which began in the 1840s in many coastal cities. Photography studios gave communities greater agency over their appearance and during the period of independence, they became joyous spaces for the projection and performance

of new identities. These photographs range from formal 19th-century portraits engaging with Victorian respectability politics, to intimate snapshots that expand the concept of the family photo album. Together, these photographers celebrate the family portrait as a site of co-production and self-representation.

Lebohang Kganye born 1990
Born and works South Africa

Ke Lefa Laka series 2013

Top row, left to right:

3-phisi yaka ya letlalo II

Ka 2-phisi yaka e pinky I

Ka 2-phisi yaka e pinky II

Lenyalong la Thobi II

Re shapa setepe sa lenyalo II

Bottom row, left to right:

Re shapa setepe sa lenyalo I

Ke le motle ka bulumase le bodisi II

Tshimong ka hara toropo II

Kwana Germiston bosiu I

9 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of Lebohang Kganye

X87972, X87974–5, X87980, X87977, X87976, X87978–9,
X87973

In this series of photomontages, Kganye inserts herself into scenes from her mother's life. The series title is Sesotho and translates to 'it's my legacy'. 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'.

Sabelo Mlangeni born 1980
Born and works South Africa

Left to right:

Palisa 2009

**Human hair, Nkululeko's Salon,
Piet Retief 2009**

**Izimbali, Cyprian "Sonolia"
Mbokane's funeral 2009**

**Miss Gay Ten Years of Democracy, Bheki Mndebele at
Wesselton community hall 2003**

Rings, Arthur and Thando 2003

Talent and his girlfriends 2009

Innocentia aka Sakhile 2009

Couple Bheki and Sipho 2009

8 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa Acquisitions Committee 2023. P82721

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by Mercedes Vilardell, Harry and Lana David, Emile Stipp, Peter Warwick, and Diane Frankel 2023. P82727, P82729–30, P82725

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by Mercedes Vilardell, Harry and Lana David, Emile Stipp, Peter Warwick, and Diane Frankel 2023. P82728

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa Acquisitions Committee 2023. P82722

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by Mercedes Vilardell, Harry and Lana David, Emile Stipp, Peter Warwick, and Diane Frankel 2023. P82726

Taken over a period of six years in small towns in the Mpumalanga province, **Country Girls** is an intimate portrait of gay life 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 hairstylists, 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 born 1979
Born and works Nigeria

Casing History 26 2017

Casing History 21 2017

Casing History 1 2016

Letterpress type cases and digital prints on paper

Courtesy of the artist and 31 PROJECT, Paris
X87857, X87856, X87855

In his **Casing History** series, Abass uses printing cabinet trays from his family's printing press to display digital copies of photographs and handwritten documents. 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 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.'

James Barnor born 1929
Born Ghana, works UK

Far left:

Ever Young Studio Jamestown, Accra 1953

Top row:

Baby on All Fours, Nii Addoquaye Ankrah, Ever Young Studio, Accra c.1952

The First Photograph Taken at the Ever Young Studio, Accra 1953

Four Nurses (Graduates of KorleBu Teaching Hospital), Ever Young Studio, Accra 1957

Bottom row:

J. Peter Dodoo Jnr., Yoga Student of 'Mr Strong', Ever Young Studio, Accra 1955

Beatrice with trademark figurine, Ever Young Studio, Accra c.1955

Olas Comedians, Ever Young studio, Accra c.1953–4

7 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

Tate. Purchased from the artist through Autograph ABP, London with funds provided by the African Acquisition Committee 2021. X83672

Tate. Purchased from the artist through Galerie Clémentine de la Feronnière, Paris with funds provided by the African Acquisition Committee 2021. X83674-5

Tate. Purchased from the artist through Autograph ABP, London with funds provided by the African Acquisition Committee 2021. X83679

Tate. Purchased from the artist through Galerie Clémentine de la Feronnière, Paris with funds provided by the African Acquisition Committee 2021. X83685

Tate. Purchased from the artist through Autograph ABP, London with funds provided by the African Acquisition Committee 2021. X83676-7

In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African nation to gain political independence. Barnor documented this period of transition as a photojournalist and through his studio photography. Serving his apprenticeship when Ghana was still a British colony known as the Gold Coast, he opened the 'Ever Young' portrait studio in 1953. It became a centre for local families and young professionals drawn to the studio to mark special occasions and capture life-changing events.

Barnor's practice is characterised by his celebration of youth, elegance, and beauty. These joyful and empowering photographs, co-produced by photographer and subject, capture the hopes and dreams of a nation.

Ruth Ginika Ossai
Born Nigeria, works UK

Top row:

**Adeniké, Bolatito and Folasade. Ebute Metta, Lagos,
Nigeria 2018**

**Ogechi Ugwueze and Faith Ifebuche, Nsukka, Enugu state,
Nigeria 2016**

Bottom row:

**Emezie Ezugwu Hillary, Ekene Ugwunangwu, Sopolu Onah
Peters and Chima Ugwunangwu. Nsukka, Enugu state,
Nigeria 2020**

**Student nurses Alfraah, Adabesi, Odah, Uzoma, Abor and
Aniagolum. Onitsha, Anambra state, Nigeria 2018**

4 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Ruth Ginika Ossai
X88270, X88273, X88272, X88271

Working closely with her local community in Nsukka, Nigeria, Ossai's carefully constructed portraits are staged on floormats made of Astroturf and parquet-style laminate flooring. Her backdrops are inspired by the special effects featured in Igbo gospel music videos and Nollywood films. Ossai says, 'I want the people I photograph (family and friends) to have total control over how they portray themselves – whether it be through choices in backdrops, poses, or their own personal style. I wish my images to fill the people I photograph with power and agency, so they can be free and allow their true selves to shine through.'

Hassan Hajjaj born 1961

Born Morocco, works Morocco and UK

Ha Hna 2000/1421

Photograph, digital C-print on paper, mounted on aluminium, and tomato tins 133.5 x 94 x 6.3

Rider in Pink 2000/1421

Photograph, digital C-print on paper, mounted on aluminium, and halal meat tins 140.6 x 98 x 8.5

White Dotted Stance 2002/1423

Photograph, digital C-print on paper, mounted on aluminium, and tea boxes 142 x 97 x 8.2

Ha Hna, framed photography by ©Hassan Hajjaj, 2000/1421,
Courtesy of the Artist.

X88440

Rider In Pink, framed photography by ©Hassan Hajjaj,
2000/1421,
Courtesy of the Artist.

X88441

White Dotted Stance, framed photography by ©Hassan
Hajjaj, 2002/1423, Courtesy of the Artist.

X88439

In this series, Hajjaj photographs a community of women he calls the Kesh Angels (named after the Hells Angels and the city's motorbike culture). In their vivid djellabas and veils, his portraits portray proud and independent Muslim 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 born 1994
Born South Sudan, works Australia

Top row:

Paanda 2015, printed 2023

Zack and Adella 2015, printed 2023

Bottom row:

Adut and Bigoa 2015, printed 2023

Dit 2015, printed 2023

4 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy of MARS Gallery and Atong Atem
X87158, X87156, X87157, X87159

The sitters in these images are Atem's friends who, like the artist herself, are part of Australia's African diaspora. 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. This body of work honours the South Sudanese Dinka tradition of record-keeping and archiving as an intimate cultural practice.

Lazhar Mansouri 1932–85

Born and worked Algeria

Untitled c.1960s

6 photographs, gelatin silver print on paper

© Lazhar Mansouri, courtesy Westwood Gallery NYC

X88306–X88311

While accompanying his grandmother to the local market as a child, Mansouri met a photographer who ran a studio at the back of a barbershop. Mansouri became his apprentice, later opening his own studio in Aïn Beïda, Algeria. From the 1950s to 1980s, Mansouri photographed his local community, capturing portraits for identity cards and commemorating special occasions. His studio practice spanned Algeria's War of Independence (1954–62). His images capture a growing local middle-class as well as the military and political atmosphere of the time. His work has become an important historical record, particularly his photographs of Indigenous Bedouin and Imazighen (Berber) communities. While the names of many of these sitters have been lost, the importance of these portraits as personal heirlooms and social record remains.

Santu Mofokeng 1956–2020
Born and worked South Africa

The Black Photo Album / Look at Me 1997

80 35 mm slides, projection, black and white

Tate. Purchased 2010
T13173

This slide show 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 (1948–94). 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 colonisation or did they serve to challenge prevailing images of "The African" in the Western world?'

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Clockwise from room 5 entrance

COUNTER HISTORIES THE LIVING ARCHIVE

Following the end of the Second World War, African nations demanded their independence from European powers. In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from Europe. 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. Documents, photographs and maps created to define boundaries and claim authority took on new meanings. Beyond repositories of historical documents, archives came to be understood as active systems of knowledge, connecting the past to the present.

These artists engage with the archive as a site of reimagining. They address the accumulation of official documents and images and bring new stories to light, creating counter histories. Using photo albums, passports and postcards, they privilege personal perspectives and challenge the official accounts of colonial administrations and nation-states. 'The Living Archive' introduces a new order of events in which suppressed narratives gain new currency.

Délio Jasse born 1980
Born Angola, works Italy

The Lost Chapter: Nampula, 1963 2016

12 photographs, gelatin silver print and screenprint
on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary
X87920–23, X875926–27, X87929–35

This series is based on a collection of photographs Jasse found at a flea market in Portugal. The images feature a Portuguese family in Nampula, Mozambique in the 1960s. Jasse overlays the photographs with screenprinted passport and visa stamps, exploring personal and governmental uses of photography in the colonial era. 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 born 1975
Born Malawi, works UK

Contingent 3 2021

Photographs, inkjet print on paper,
mounted on cardboard

Elephant Quilt I 2021

Sewn polyester and cotton on wood

Courtesy of the artist
X87333, X87332

Kambalu's cardboard cut-outs of African soldiers use photographs sourced from the Weston Library in Oxford, UK. The unnamed infantry fought for the British Empire during the First and Second World Wars and were 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. His multi-national designs become symbols of a global diasporic community. 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.'

Malala Andrialavidrazana born 1971
Born Madagascar, works France

Left to right:

Figures 1898, Les Grandes Communications 2021

Figures 1861, Natural History of Mankind 2016

Figures 1838, Atlas Élémentaire 2015

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper, mounted on aluminium

Courtesy of the artist

X88386, X88275, X88274

In **Figures**, Andrialavidrazana assembles maps, fragments of bank notes, record sleeves and other archival documents to produce complex, layered digital collages. Her works include figures such as ancient Egyptian queen Nefertiti and Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko shown alongside the faces of unnamed men and women, from warriors to nomadic shepherds.

Andrialavidrazana combines imagery from different times and places, considering identity from a syncretic perspective. On her use of maps, she notes that '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 and also acknowledges their ongoing impact. Andrialavidrazana invites us 'to look back in order to move forward'.

Sammy Baloji born 1978

Born Democratic Republic of the Congo, works Democratic Republic of the Congo and Belgium

Mémoire series,

2006, printed 2020

Top to bottom:

Untitled 6

Untitled 17

Untitled 12

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper, mounted on aluminium

Tate. Presented by Tate Members 2020

P82566, P82568, P82567

In **Mémoire**, Baloji superimposes colonial-era images onto contemporary photographs of mining infrastructure in ruin. Baloji was born in Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo's Haut-Katanga province. The region is rich in minerals such as copper, cobalt and uranium, and was exploited by Belgian colonial powers, authoritarian governments and private companies for more than a century. Following a decline in the 1990s, the mining industry has returned to meet the global demand for coltan used in electronics manufacturing.

Baloji's photomontages highlight an ongoing history of exploitation, prosperity and decline. In each image Baloji joins two views of the same landscape, a visual metaphor for the spaces and peoples scarred by colonialism and the impact of globalisation. A group of women and children, prisoners in chains, and a labourer hold centre frame. Contemporary figures amid the ruins appear hidden in the landscape.

Ndidi Dike

Born UK, works Nigeria

A History of a City in a Box 2019

503 paper-covered wood box files, 10 inkjet prints on paper,
9 bound documents, and sand

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa Acquisition
committee 2021

X81362

Dike's installation brings together hundreds of discarded file boxes designed to protect and conceal information. She fills them with archival documents, including colonial-era postcards and photographs, and surrounds them with sand and soil. Dike produced the work after discovering a series of documents at Independence House in Lagos – commissioned in 1960 by the British government to commemorate Nigerian independence. Once the tallest building in the city, it has been largely empty since the 1990s.

'Information is one of the greatest currencies in Lagos', Dike explains. 'Information is hidden and buried: it is inaccessible to the people, and only permitted to those in power.

You know this is really a holdover from the colonial era ...

I think information is the foundation on which cities are built; it's the way they operate, how power is generated, how inequality prevails.'

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ROOM 6 AND 7

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Clockwise from room 6 entrance

IMAGINED FUTURES

SHARED DREAMS

In the exhibition's final chapter, artists contemplate futures shaped by globalisation and the climate emergency.

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 urbanisation 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, Lagos and Cairo are now considered megacities, with populations over 10 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 self-destruction and explore alternative ways of being.

Kiluanji Kia Henda born 1979

Born Angola, works Angola and Portugal

Rusty Mirage (The City Skyline) 2013

8 photographs, inkjet print on paper

The Fortress 2014, rebuilt 2023

Powder-coated aluminium, mirrored glass

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa
Acquisitions

Committee 2016.

P81608

The project **A City Called Mirage** was conceived at a time when the city of Luanda (Angola) was experiencing a boom in construction', Henda explains. 'People looked at these impressive new buildings appearing in the city as a symbol of development, but the truth is that the vast majority would never have the opportunity to enter such spaces.'

Rusty Mirage documents the construction of large sculptures based on the outlines of an imagined city in the Al-Araz desert, Jordan. Henda draws on the Tchokwe peoples' tradition of sona, geometric designs marked in the sand by storytellers. His sculpture, **The Fortress**, tells the story of unfinished and derelict areas of cities across the globe. Henda reflects on practices that see buildings left vacant while so many experience homelessness.

Kiripi Katembo 1979–2015

Born and worked the Democratic Republic
of the Congo

Un Regard series

2008–13, printed 2023

Left to right:

Avancer

Subir

Evolution

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy Kiripi Katembo Siku Foundation and MAGNIN-A
Gallery, Paris

X87917–9

Un Regard is a series depicting the city of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the 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 colour, 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 born 1972

Born Eritrea, works USA and Canada

The Stranger's Notebook series 2016

Left to right:

Untitled (Prologue III), Nouakchott, Mauritania

Untitled (Epilogue II), Catania, Italy

Untitled (Epilogue III), Catania, Italy

Untitled (Prologue II), Nouakchott, Mauritania

4 photographs, digital C-print on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary

X87848, X87851, X87850, X87849

The Stranger's Notebook explores geographical, historical, and cultural boundaries. In the series, Petros documents his travels from Africa to Western Europe, reflecting on a long history of 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 comments, 'For me, each of these journeys complicated Europe's status as an immutable historically and politically bounded space. I negotiated these journeys conscious that I came from elsewhere.'

Cristina de Middel born 1975
Born Spain, works Mexico and Brazil

Afronauts series 2012

Top row:

Umfundi

Butungakuna

Gwendalu

Yinqaba

Bottom row:

Mbulumbublu

Amanzi

Inyoni

7 photographs, inkjet print on paper

First and Last:

QUESTION

ANSWER

2 facsimilies

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by Hyundai Card 2018 Z88785, P82249, P82241, P82237–8, P82235, P82261, P82259, Z88786

Based on historical documents, **Afronauts** explores Zambia's unsuccessful space program. In 1964, shortly after gaining independence, a science teacher named Edward Makuka Nkoloso decided to train the first African crew to travel to the moon. With little funding, his visionary project failed, becoming a marginal story in Africa's postcolonial era of nation-building. Reimagining these events, De Middel draws on Western stereotypes of Africa. Trained as a photojournalist, her practice explores the ambiguous relationship between photography and truth. In **Afronauts** De Middel combines history and fantasy to 'break the rules of veracity', and 'push the audience into analysing the patterns of the stories we consume'.

Mário Macilau born 1984
Born and works Mozambique

The Profit Corner series 2015

Top row:

Frying Electronic Parts

Breaking News

Smoke from Pollution

Burning Small Pieces

Middle row:

A Boy Standing at the Dumpsite

Lamp on Hands

Untitled (2)

Untitled (1)

Bottom row:

Profit in Maps

Hulene Dumpsite (2)

Tyres on Fire

Untitled (3)

12 photographs, inkjet print on paper

© Mário Macilau, Courtesy Ed Cross Fine Art

X88280, X887110, X87112, X88283-4, X87111, X88281,
X88286, X88282, X88278, X88279, X88285

Profit Corner documents the workers of the Hulene landfill site in Maputo, Mozambique. In the series, 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 born 1972
Born Belgium, works Senegal

The Prophecy series 2013–15

Untitled #1 2013

Untitled #8 2015

Untitled #6 2014

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy the artist and MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris
X87853, X87854, X87852

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.'

Aida Muluneh born 1974

Born and works Ethiopia

Water Life series 2018

Top row:

The Shackles of Limitation

Steps

Bottom row:

Star Shine Moon Glow

The Sorrows We Bear

4 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Commissioned by WaterAid and supported by the H&M
Foundation

X87964–5, X87963, X87966

In this series, Muluneh explores rural water access and its impact on women's rights, well-being, and education. 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.'

Andrew Esiebo born 1978
Born and works Nigeria

Mutations series 2015–22

4 photographs, digital C-print on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary
X87337, X87335, X87334, X87336

Mutations is an ongoing series examining the ever-changing architecture and landscape of Lagos, Nigeria. As the city evolves, new structures are layered onto older ones, creating a hybrid visual landscape. **Mutations** celebrates the informal systems communities develop: from pedestrians making their own walkways, to highways becoming parking spaces, and demolished housing structures being moved and rebuilt. Esiebo says, 'This body of work reflects the endless juxtapositions that exist in the city, between past and present, modernity and tradition. I am struck by the fortitude and inventiveness of Lagosians in the face of rapid urban renewal – their endlessly creative ways of surviving.'

François-Xavier Gbré born 1978

Born France, works France and Côte d'Ivoire

Tracks series

Untitled 2013

65 photographs, digital C-print on paper

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Acquisitions
Fund for African Art supported by Guaranty Trust Bank Plc

2015

P81288

Untitled traces Gbré's journeys through a range of cityscapes. Photographs depict scenes of Dakar, Senegal; Ségou, Mali; Surgères, France; Lomé, Togo; Tel-Aviv, Israel, and Porto-Novo, Benin. Across these cities, Gbré explores the ways architecture reflects historical, social and political changes. Buildings that were once centres of colonial power are shown in ruin, like the former Porto-Novo National Press offices, and the Palais de Lomé, a residence of colonial governors. The works contain 'clues, stories, and traces of some forgotten lives, abandoned, now in the dark', Gbré says. By documenting his travels, he explains, 'the camera becomes a weapon for raising awareness', pointing us towards forgotten histories that might otherwise remain hidden in plain sight.

Kiluanji Kia Henda born 1979

Born Angola, works Angola and Portugal

Rusty Mirage (The City Skyline) 2013

8 photographs, inkjet print on paper

The Fortress 2014, rebuilt 2023

Powder-coated aluminium, mirrored glass

Tate. Purchased with funds provided by the Africa Acquisitions Committee 2016.

P81608

Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery, London.

X87113

The project **A City Called Mirage** was conceived at a time when the city of Luanda (Angola) was experiencing a boom in construction', Henda explains. 'People looked at these impressive new buildings appearing in the city as a symbol of development, but the truth is that the vast majority would never have the opportunity to enter such spaces.'

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Léonard Pongo born 1988

Born Belgium, works the Democratic Republic
of Congo and Belgium

Primordial Earth series

2020–ongoing

6 photographs, giclée print on paper

Opposite:

Inhabiting the Landscape 2021

Single-channel video projection 8 min 18 sec

Courtesy of the artist & Kristof De Clercq gallery

X88480, X88477, X88479, X88481, X88476, X88478, X88710

Pongo describes **Primordial Earth** as 'a loose tale of creation/ apocalypse and what's in between'. This ongoing multimedia project is inspired by the traditions and cosmologies of the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pongo uses a full spectrum camera to 'render visible what is invisible'. Nature is presented as a living force or 'a character with its own will and power, like an open book that tells the story of humanity and the planet, with Congo at its centre'. Humanity's role becomes one of witness, rather than protagonist.

Pongo has worked as a photojournalist and is conscious of the 'debate about miserablism' when photographing Africa. Through his work, he hopes to alter representations of the Kasai region and offer new ways of imagining the Congo.

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IMAGINED FUTURES – EPILOGUE

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Clockwise from room 7 entrance

IMAGINED FUTURES EPILOGUE

In the final room of the exhibition, two artists take us on journeys through forests, across oceans and along migratory paths. They consider how the natural environment fosters conditions for growth and rebirth. These artists address nature as a dynamic and generative force, inviting us to imagine new ways of inhabiting the earth.

Throughout the exhibition, artists have pursued a shared humanity through the concept of 'a world in common'. Their expansive and inclusive approach to storytelling makes space for different ways of thinking and being in the world. By acknowledging there is no single site for the production of knowledge, these artists imagine multiple futures.

In his 2016 book *Afrotopia*, Senegalese academic, musician and writer Felwine Sarr (born 1972) calls for 'Africans to think and formulate their own future'. He says: 'Africa has always been the object of discourse by others. Now is the time to dream this utopia in Africa itself, to design Africa ourselves, to think, and to act for ourselves.'

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FINAL ROOM

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Julianknxx born 1988

Born Sierra Leone, works UK

In Praise Of Still Boys 2021

Video, projection, colour and sound (surround) 19 min 30 sec

Courtesy of the artist © Studioknxx

X87345

In Praise of Still Boys explores connections between the African diaspora, the Middle Passage, and Freetown, Sierra Leone, Knxx's birthplace. 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). The film opens with his mother speaking Krio, telling the story of his birth. 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.'

