



Seydou Keita - *Untitled*, 1959 - Gelatin Silver Print - Signed and dated-
Image : 38 x 57 cm - Paper: 50 x 60 cm
© Seydou Keita/SKPEAC - Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

HERITAGE

Carte Blanche to Omar Victor Diop

06.03 > 08.05.21

From March 6th to May 8th 2021 André Magnin hands Omar Victor Diop the reins of the gallery for an exhibition dedicated to the great African portraitists.

Heir from the African photography studio - whose codes are sometimes reinvested in his self-portrait - Omar Victor Diop selected for this Carte Blanche about fifty pictures from the photographers who influenced him. Mama Casset, Seydou Keita, Malick Sidibé, J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere, Jean Depara and Ambroise Ngaimoko (Studio 3Z/3C) encounter Omar Victor Diop's dreamlike and colorful images. Through this journey made with historical pictures, the exhibition "HERITAGE" weaves the links between Omar Victor Diop's work and his artistic legacy.

The artist retains Jean Depara's buzzing night outside Leopoldville during the independence years of the former country known as Belgian Congo. He also retains Ojeikere's hairstyles whose memory work leaves him admiring.

Thereby Omar Victor Diop belongs to an African continent aware of its elders' savoir-faire. He is also attached to an Africa in motion, full of hope and energy.

Among these reference photographers, it's probably Malick Sidibé's work that echoes the most Diop's approach. The fifty years between them are reduced by a shared impetus to continue the African photography studio's tradition, and to show modern life's trends, vitalities and evolutions. "Malick Sidibé shoots moments of truth, solemnity and dreams. He builds a mosaic made of little stories that tangle together and melt into a single one - the story of his people. One day, I would like to hear those words about my work. To that extent, Malick Sidibé is a model" comments Omar Victor Diop.

Sidibé's masters are also those of Diop. He admires Keita's observations on Malian society, and Mama Casset at whose place Diop's grandfather made his portrait. Omar Victor Diop grew up in this atmosphere of the studio that has constantly nurtures his research. According to the photographer's style, portraits and staging differ. Sidibé's refined style is in contradiction with Diop's more prolific portraits, but from the yéyé to the pop culture, each generation leaves to the next a precise and smart look on African beauty

Omar Victor Diop's choices honor this portrait's art that glorifies a dynamical continent: from Mali in the sixties to contemporary Senegal, from black and white to colors. The photographers become the ambassadors of a vibrant Africa: ancestral and modern fabrics, emancipated and optimistic youth, male and female's gentry... With this Carte Blanche, André Magnin wants to "give the floor to the artists" and considers that "to promote contemporary African art means recognizing and valorizing talented artists". Key moment of this early year 2021, "HERITAGE" highlights collections which are rarely under the spotlight. Historical works of art are reunited for the first time in order to show African photography's vitality and beauty, whose great figures have been revealed by André Magnin since 1991. 30 years!

OMAR VICTOR DIOP

Born in 1980, Dakar, Senegal

Lives and works in Dakar



Omar Victor Diop - *Art Comes First*, 2016 -Le studio des vanités
Impression jet d'encre pigmentaire sur papier
Image : 60 x 60 cm - Edition de 5 ex + 2 AP
Signé, titré et numéroté sur vignette - © Omar Victor Diop
Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

Since his early days, Omar Victor Diop developed an interest for Photography and Design, essentially as a means to capture the diversity of modern African societies and lifestyles. The quick success of his first conceptual project fashion 2112 "Le Futur du beau", which was featured at the Pan African Exhibition of the African Biennale of Photography of 2011 in Bamako (Rencontres de Bamako), encouraged him to end his career in Corporate Communications to dedicate to photography in 2012. Omar Victor lives in Dakar, his body of work includes Fine Arts and Fashion Photography as well as Advertising Photography. He enjoys mixing his photography with other forms of art, such as costume design, styling and creative writing. This is particularly visible in his series "Studio des Vanités" (2013), in which he follows his research between photography and design, with a strong influence of the historical African portraitists. His series entitled "Diaspora" (2014) is a time travel. A journey that takes its starting point in the present with the issue of immigration of African in Europe and their place in European society. Diop forces us to reconsider our perception of history by highlighting notable Africans living in Europe between the fifteenth and nineteenth century.

The integration of elements of football, weaves the links between past and present and question the position of African today. His latest series "Liberty" (2017) recalls, interprets and juxtaposes moments of this Black protest differentiated by time, geography or size, placing them in the same chronology, that of a frantic quest for freedom.

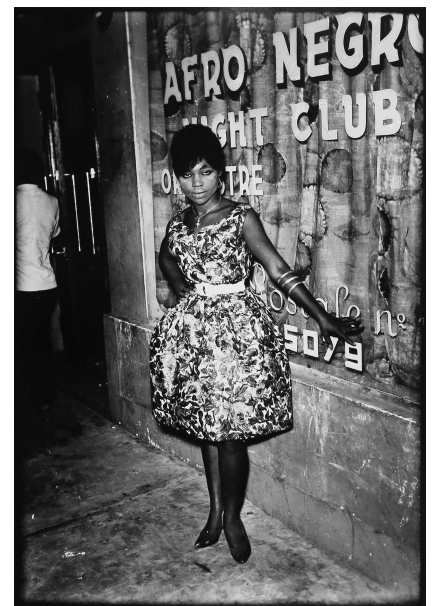
Omar Victor Diop is exclusively represented by the gallery MAGNIN-A, Paris.

JEAN DEPARA

Born in 1928, Kboklolo, Angola

Died in 1997, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, where he lived and worked

Depara came to photography almost by accident. To record his wedding in 1950 he bought himself a small Adox camera—after which he never ceased to seek out new subjects for his lens. Settling in Kinshasa in 1951, Depara first combined his photography with various small jobs: repairing bicycles and cameras, dealing in scrap metal. In 1954 the celebrated Zairian singer Franco invited him to become his official photographer, launching Depara's career as a chronicler of Kinshasa social life in the era when the Rumba and the Cha Cha defined the city's rhythm. He set up a studio under the name Jean Whisky Depara and spent his days in bars like the Kwist, the OK Bar, or the Sarma Congo. At night he hung out at such clubs as the Afro Mogenbo, the Champs-Élysées, the DjamboDjambu, the Oui, the Fifi, the Show Boat. Night owls particularly fascinated him and with his flash Depara captured an Africa stripped of conventional social codes. Interracial couples, hipsters, and those who in imitation of James Dean chose to "Live fast, die young" became both his subjects and his clients. Depara died leaving his archive of hundreds negatives untitled; with the permission of the artist's family, his close friend Oscar Mbemba has titled the works in the spirit of this era.



Jean Depara - *Femme devant l'Afro Negro Club*, 1955 - Archival fine art free acid cotton

Paper: 50 x 60 cm

© Droits réservés - Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

SEYDOU KEITA

Born c. 1921, Bamako, Mali

Worked and lived in Bamako. Died in 2001, Paris, France

Initially trained by his father to be a carpenter, Keïta's career as a photographer was launched in 1935 by an uncle who gave him his first camera, a Kodak Brownie Flash, he had purchased during a trip to Senegal. In 1948 he opened his own studio in Bamako and he quickly built up a successful business. Whether photographing single individuals, families, or professional associations, Keïta balanced a strict sense of formality with a remarkable level of intimacy with his subjects. Like many professional photographers, he furnished his studio with numerous props, from backdrops and costumes, to Vespas and luxury cars. He would renew these props every few years, which later allowed him to establish a chronology for his work.



Seydou Keïta- Sans titre. "L'odalisque", 1956-1957- tirage argentique baryté- Papier: 120 x 180 cm - Signed and dated -© Seydou Keïta / SKPEAC- Courtesy Magnin-A, Paris

Keïta commented on his studio practice, "It's easy to take a photo, but what really made a difference was that I always knew how to find the right position, and I was never wrong. Their head slightly turned, a serious face, the position of the hands... I was capable of making someone look really good." In 1962 the newly installed Socialist government made Keïta its official photographer; shortly thereafter he closed down his studio, although he remained active until his retirement in 1977. His archive of over 10,000 negatives was gradually brought to light in the early 1990s; Keïta has since achieved international recognition.

J.D. 'OKHAI OJEIKERE

Born in 1930, Ovbiomu, Nigeria

Died in 2014, Lagos, Nigeria, where he lived and worked



J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere - Abebe, 1975 Hairstyles

Tirage argentique baryté - Image : 50 x 60 cm - Signé et daté

© J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere - Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

In 1950, he bought a modest Brownie D camera, and a neighbor taught him the rudiments of photography. In 1963 he moved to Lagos to work for West Africa Publicity. In 1967 he joined the Nigerian Arts Council, and during their festival of the following year he began to take series of photographs dedicated to Nigerian culture. This body of work, now consisting of thousands of images, has become a unique anthropological, ethnographic, and documentary national treasure. Most African photographers of his generation only worked on commission; this project, unique of its kind, flourished without any commercial support. The Hairstyle series, which consists of close to a thousand photographs, is the largest and the most thorough segment of Ojeikere's archive. "To watch a 'hair artist' going through his precise gestures, like an artist making a sculpture, is fascinating. Hairstyle are an art form," Ojeikere has commented. He photographs hairstyles every day in the street, in offices, at parties. He records each subject systematically: from the rear, sometimes in profile, and occasionally head on. Those from the rear are almost abstract and best reveal the sculptural aspect of the hairstyles.

MAMA CASSET

Born in 1908 in Saint-Louis of Senegal, Senegal

Died in 1992 in Dakar, Senegal, where he lived and worked from 1941 to 1980.

From the age of 12, Mama Casset learned photography with Oscar Lataque in Dakar. After his studies he was hired by Tennequin at the Photography Counter of the AOF before joining the French Air Force, for which he made several air photographs. At the end of World War II he opened his private studio « African Photo, in the Médina, Dakar. Mama Casset does not limit himself to being the trendy Studio in Dakar, he also produces a work that he considers himself as art, whose his second wife is the muse and the main model. The very personal aesthetic of the artist will find a following: a refined scenery, structured staging of the model, frequent use of straight lines, showcasing body 'expression, hands' position, tight framework. Becoming blind in 1980, he ceased his activity. A few years later his studio is completely destroyed by a fire.



Mama Casset - *Sans titre (femme à la coiffe)*, Circa 1950 Tirage unique d'époque - Image : 13 x 18,2 cm - © Droits réservés - Courtesy MAGNIN-A, Paris.

AMBROISE NGAIMOKO

Born in 1949, Angola.

Lives in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.



Ambroise Ngaimoko - *Kinois top mode*, 1970-1971 Tirage argentique baryté - Image : 36 x 36cm - Papier : 40 x 50 cm - Signé et daté - © Studio 3Z/3C Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

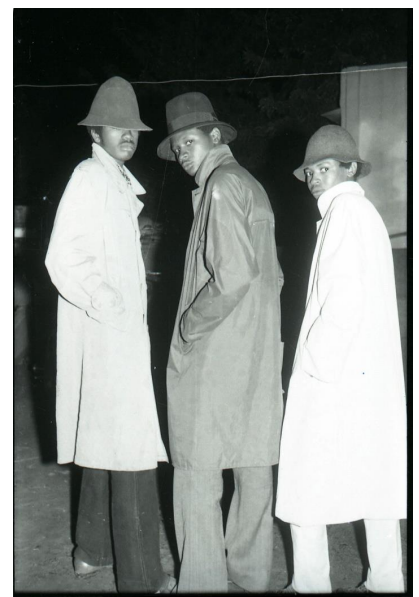
In 1961, Ngaimoko moved with his family to Kinshasa. There he worked as a mechanic, then as a technician for an open-air cinema, before he became an assistant to his uncle Marques Ndodão in 1968, who ran two photo studios, and who gave him a Yashica 6x6 camera. It was in Kitambo in 1971 that he opened the Studio 3Z, a named picked to symbolise the three Zaïres: the country, the currency and the river. Young people who came to the studio remember it because of the constantly changing backdrops. He gained recognition in the course of the 1970s due to an unprecedented technique, in which he developed two portraits on the same sheet, using the same negative twice. This cult of cloning is reminiscent of the rites performed for a lost twin. In the full swing of "Zaïrization" there was a shortage of 6x6 black & white film and, with the eventual arrival of color film, Ngaimoko lost his clientele. He resigned himself to using the format 24x36 to make his identity-based work. In 1997, he renamed his studio 3C (for the three Congos).

MALICK SIDIBÉ

Born in 1935 in Soloba, Mali

Died in April 14th, 2016 in Bamako, Mali, where he lived and worked

Malick Sidibé was born in a Peul family in a small village of Mali. He was noticed for his talent as a draftsman and was admitted to the School of Sudanese Craftsmen in Bamako from which he graduated in 1955. He decorated the "Photo Service" store of Gerard Guillaat, also known as "Gégé la Pellicule", who offered him a job as his apprentice. Two years later, he opened the "Studio Malick" in the centre of Bamako in Bagadadji. The wildness of the 1950's and the upcoming of Independence gave birth to a new generation of photographers who were totally involved in the cultural and social life that they recorded. Malick Sidibé, a pivotal character in this scene, was highly appreciated by young people and was invited to all the parties the youth organized in clubs, where they learned the new dances coming from Europe and Cuba, and dressed elegantly in Western clothes. In 1957 he was the only reporter in Bamako who covered all the events, festivities and surprise-parties. On Saturdays, these parties lasted until dawn and continued on Sunday on the banks of the river Niger. This on-the-spot coverage provided simple pictures, full of truth and complicity. Spontaneity emerges from his photos: he captured the playful partying, full of laughter and life.



Malick Sidibé - *Les trois agents du FBI*, 1976 Tirage argentique baryté - Papier : 50 x 60 cm Signé et daté © Malick Sidibé Estate Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

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HERITAGE
Exposition du 6 mars au 8 mai 2021
Entrée libre
Du mardi au samedi, de 14h à 18h.
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