

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

SEYDOU KEÏTA

November 6th – December 22nd 2017

3, rue du cloître Saint-Merri, 75004 - Paris



Seydou Keïta - *Untitled*, 1948-1954
Black and white posthumous silver print edition on 280g laminated cartoline paper on 1mm Aluminum, Plexiglas framed (large format) - 179 x 139 x 4,7 cm - Edition of 5
CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection & Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels. Copyright : ©Seydou Keïta/SKPEAC

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present Malian photographer Seydou Keïta's second solo show in Paris, after featuring him in Brussels in 2016, thanks to the support of the Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection).

From 1948 to 1962, self-taught Seydou Keïta (1921 - 2001) ran Bamako most famous photography studio: "The whole Bamako came to be photographed in my studio: civil servants, businessmen, politicians". He quickly gained fame in Mali as well as several West African countries thanks to the quality of his prints and the great sophistication of his portraits. Seydou Keïta's pictures distinguished themselves by their framing, their lighting, the models' look, the position of their arms and hands, along with the use of varied backgrounds.

Because of the high cost of photographic supply, the artist limited his clients to one single pose, but his great technical mastery would allow him to reveal the beauty of each of them. "Being taken in picture was a big deal. It was about giving the best image of oneself. Often people would take a serious look, but I also think they were intimidated by the camera. It was something new", he explained.

Posing with their family, their friends, their partner or alone, the models were enhanced on decorative-pattern cloths backgrounds, standing next to bikes or cars, wearing outfits and costumes lent by the studio for the occasion. They would even wear various accessories especially for the shooting (hats, jewels, watches, pens or even radio stations).

Besides, in Seydou Keïta's studio, people could dress in European fashion and emancipate from traditions: a prime opportunity for Malians in search of modernity during the decolonization. These various accessories

mostly symbolized the desire to reach a certain social status or enjoy privileges reserved to white people. These contrasted silver print portraits with elaborated compositions and intense gazes provide a unique testimony of the Malian society of the time.

Seydou Keïta closed his studio in 1962, to become an official photographer of the Malian government. The artist retired in 1977. It was only in 1991 that collector Jean Pigozzi and exhibition curator André Magnin discovered his unsigned pictures in an exhibition of the Center for African Art of New York. André Magnin then decided to look for the unknown author of these shots. Thanks to artist Malick Sibidé, he managed to find Seydou Keïta and meet him. In 1994, the artist enjoyed his first retrospective show in Europe at the Fondation Cartier.

Seydou Keïta is born in 1921 in Bamako (Mali) and died in 2001 in Paris (France).

Since 1991, the year he met André Magnin and Jean Pigozzi who both greatly contributed to the international recognition of African contemporary art, Seydou Keïta's works has been showcased all throughout the world and especially in great retrospective show held at the Grand Palais, in Paris (France).

Seydou Keïta's work was recently featured in solo shows at the Galerie Nathalie Obadia of Brussels (Belgium, 2016), the Tate Modern of London (United-Kingdom, 2008), Seydou Keita: Portraits from Mali (USA, 2007) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, the William Bennington Museum of Art, Mali Portraits by Seydou Keïta (USA, 2003) at The University of Connecticut in Storrs, the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome (Italy, 2001), the Saint Louis Museum of Art (USA, 1998), the Museum of Modern Art of San Francisco (USA, 1997), the Pinacoteca o Estado de Sao Paulo (Brazil, 1997), the Minneapolis Institute of Art (USA, 1996), Seydou Keïta, Photographer : Portraits from Bamako at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute in Washington (USA, 1996), the Espace Fernand Léger in Montreuil (France, 1995), the Centre National de la Photographie de Paris (France, 1995), Black Movie at the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire à La Chaux de fonds de Saint Gervais in Geneva (Switzerland, 1994), the Ginza Shiseido Art Space of Tokyo (Japan, 1994), the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Paris (France, 1994).

His work has been showcased in major exhibitions held in prestigious institutions like Autophoto at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris (France, 2017), AFRICA. Raccontare un mondo at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea Milano in Milan (Italy, 2017), Trésors de l'islam en Afrique, De Tombouctou à Zanzibar at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris (France, 2017), Art/Afrique, Le Nouvel atelier at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris (France, 2017), Making Africa, A continent of Contemporary Design at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona in Barcelona (Spain, 2017), In and Out of the Studio: Photographic Portraits from West Africa at the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York (USA, 2015), Après Eden, la Collection Walther at La Maison Rouge of Paris (France, 2015), Look at Me! at the Tropenmuseum of Amsterdam (Netherlands, 2014), Malian Portrait Photography at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art in New Paltz (USA, 2013), Who, What, Wear. Selections from the Permanent Collection at the Studio Museum Harlem in New York (USA, 2012), Africa/ Africa at the Centre d'art contemporain in Meymac (France, 2012), África: Objetos y Sujetos, Teatro Fernán Gómez at the Centro de Arte in Madrid (Spain, 2011), Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity at the Contemporary African Photography from the Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm (Germany, 2010), 100% Africa at the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao (Spain, 2006), African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (USA, 2005), Faces in the Crowd : Images of Modern Life from Manet to Today at the Whitechapel Art gallery in London (United Kingdom, 2004), Joy of Life – Two Photographers from Africa at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo (Japan, 2004).

Seydou Keïta's works are also featured in prestigious international public collections such as the Eileen Harris and Peter Norton Collection (Santa Monica), the MOMA (New York), the Metropolitan Museum Art (New York), the Bronx Museum of Art (New York), the LACMA (Los Angeles), the Detroit Institute of Arts Museum (Detroit), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (Philadelphia), the State Art Collection (Washington), the Akron Art Museum (Akron), the Fogg Art Museum - The Harvard University Art Museums (Cambridge), the Princeton University Art Museum (Princeton), The University of Chicago, the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art - University of Florida (Gainesville), the Michael C. Carlos Museum - Emory University (Atlanta), the Saint Louis Museum of Art, the 21C Museum (Louisville), the William Benton Museum of Art - University of Connecticut (Storrs) in the United States ; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain and the Agnès B. Collection (Paris) in France ; The Walther Collection (Neu-Ulm) in Germany; the Moderna Museet (Stockholm) in Sweden; the Douglas Hyde Gallery (Dublin) in Ireland; the Collection Nationale du Crédit Suisse (Geneva), the Contemporary African Art Collection – The Pigozzi Collection (Geneva) in Switzerland and the Musée National du Mali (Bamako) in Africa.

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