

Seydou Keïta

Born c. 1921, Bamako, Mali

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

Seydou Keïta's photographs eloquently portray Bamako society during its era of transition from a cosmopolitan French colony to an independent capital. 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, which he had purchased during a trip to Senegal. During his adolescence Keïta mastered the technical challenges of shooting and printing; he later purchased a large-format camera. The larger format not only offered an exceptional degree of resolution, it also made it possible for Keïta to make high quality contact prints without the aid of an enlarger. 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. 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."

Keïta went to exceptional lengths to bring out the beauty of his subjects and the brilliant patterns of his backdrops proved a particularly effective foil. He worked intuitively, reinventing portrait photography through his search for extreme precision. 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. Inventive and highly modern, his emphasis on the essential components of portrait photography—light, subject, and framing—firmly establishes Keïta among the twentieth-century masters of the genre.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018

Seydou Keïta, Bamako Portrait, Foam Fotografiemuseum, Amsterdam, Holland

2016

Seydou Keïta, Grand-Palais, Paris, France

Seydou Keïta, Galerie Leila Heller, Dubaï, UAE

Seydou Keïta, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Brussels, Belgium

2013

Seydou Keïta, Photographs from The Jean Pigozzi Collection, The Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, Russia

2008

Seydou Keïta, Tate Modern, Londres, Royaume-Uni

1998

Seydou Keïta,

Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis, Missouri, Etats-Unis

Institut Français de Thessalonie, Thessalonique, Grèce

Institut Français D'Athènes, Athènes, Grèce

1997

Seydou Keïta, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, Etats-Unis

Pinacoteca o Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brésil

Galerie DV, San Sebastian, Espagne

Gagosian Gallery, New York, Etats-Unis

1996

Seydou Keïta, Photographer: Portraits from Bamako, Mali., National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., Etats-Unis

Seydou Keïta., Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Etats-Unis

1994

Seydou Keïta: 1949 à 1962, Fondation Cartier, Paris, France

Seydou Keïta, Ginza Art Space, Tokyo, Japon

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017

Art/Afrique : le nouvel atelier _ The Insiders : a selection of works (1989 to 2009) from the Jean Pigozzi collection of contemporary African Art, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France

Studio Africa!, Tristan Hoare Gallery, London, England

On aime l'art...!! Un choix d'Éric Mézil parmi les oeuvres de la Collection agnès b., Collection Lambert en Avignon, France

Photo Festival La Gacilly, Morbihan, Bretagne, France

Autophoto, Cartier Foundation, Paris, France

AFRICA. Raccontare un mondo, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milano, Italy

2016

African Portraits: Omar Victor Diop, Seydou Keïta, Aida Muluneh, Malick Sidibé & J.D. 'Okhaï Ojeikere, HackelBury Gallery, London, England

2015

In and Out of the Studio : Photographic Portraits from West Africa, Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA
Après Eden - collection Artur Walther, Maison Rouge, Paris, France

2013

Bamako Photo in Paris, Pavillon carré de Baudouin, Paris, France
Keïta, Ojeikere, Sidibé, 11 Columbia, Monaco
Focus sur la collection, Musée de la Fondation Zinsou, Ouidah, Bénin

2012

Who, What, Wear. Selections from the Permanent Collection, Studio Museum Harlem, New York, Etats-Unis
Africa / Africa, Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac, France

2011

August Sander and Seydou Keïta , Walther Collection Project Space, New York, Etats-Unis

2010

Africa Rising, 1 rue du Pont Neuf Louis Vuitton - Edun, Paris, France

2007

Why Africa ? Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin, Italie

2006

100% Africa, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Espagne
Vive l'Afrique, galerie du jour – agnès b., Paris, France
galerie du jour – agnès b., Tokyo, Japon
About Africa, part one, Fifty One Fine Art Photography, Anvers, Belgique

2005

African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection
National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, Etats-Unis
Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, Etats-Unis
Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, Etats-Unis
Arts of Africa, The Contemporary collection of Jean Pigozzi, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco, Principauté de Monaco
Vive l'Afrique, galerie du jour – agnès b., Paris, France
A hundred years of children
The Bunkamura Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japon
Granship, Shizuoka, Japon
The Niigata Bandajimia Art Museum, Niigata, Japon

2004

Ritos sagrados, Ritos profanes – Bamako 03, (African Photography Encounters in Bamako – Sacred and profane rites), Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City, Mexique

2003

Go Johnny Go ! The Electric Guitar – Art and Myth, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche
Rencontres de la photographie africaine à Bamako (5), Bamako, Mali
Samuel Fosso, Malick Sidibé, Seydou Keïta, Vestafrikansk portrettfotografi, Norsk Museum for Fotografi, Horten, Norvège

2001

The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994
Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, Allemagne
House of World Cultures, Berlin, Allemagne
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Etats-Unis
P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, Etats-Unis
"I ka nyi tan," Seydou Keïta e Malick Sidibé fotografi a Bamako, Museo Hendrik C.Andersen, Rome, Italie
You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé
Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Etats-Unis
UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, Etats-Unis
National Portrait Gallery, Londres, Grande-Bretagne
Flash Afrique!
Kunsthalle, Vienne, Autriche
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Allemagne
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italie
You look beautiful like that, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Etats-Unis

2000

Voilà. Le Monde dans la tête, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France

1999

Kunst Welten im Dialog, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Allemagne
PhotoEspaña 99 (2): Seydou Keïta y Malick Sidibé: Retrospectiva, Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, Espagne

1998

L'Afrique par elle-même, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, France
Snap Me One! Studiofotografen in Afrika,
Stadtmuseum , Munich, Allemagne
City Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Allemagne
Iwalewa-Haus, Bayreuth, Allemagne
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Pays-Bas
Les 50 ans de Tati, Musées des arts Décoratifs, Paris, France

1996

In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Etats-Unis
Houston Fotofest 1996: The 6th International Festival of Photography, Houston, Texas, Etats-Unis

1995

Big City: Artists from Africa, Serpentine Gallery, Londres, Grande-Bretagne

1994

Rencontres Photographiques de Bamako (1), Bamako, Mali
Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art, Espace lyonnais d'art contemporain, Lyon, France

1993

Troisièmes Rencontres Photographiques de Normandie, Rouen, France

1991

Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art, The Center for African Art and the New Museum for Contemporary Art, New York

FAIRS

2017

Paris Photo, Grand Palais, Paris, France

2016

Paris Photo, Grand Palais, Paris, France

2015

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, New-York, USA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2016

Seydou Keïta (catalogue d'exposition), Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, RMN, Paris

Collections

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
21C Museum Fondation, Louisville, USA
Akron Art Museum, Akron, USA
Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, New-Yor, USA
Credit Suisse Trust Collection, Swisserland
Detroit Institute of Arts Detroit, MI
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, England
Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, USA
Los Angeles County Art Museum, Los Angeles, USA
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Arts of Africa/Oceania, New York, USA
Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, USA
Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden
Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Norton Family Collection, Santa Monica, USA
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA
Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, USA
Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis, USA
Trinity College, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland
University of Chicago, Chicago, USA
US Department of State Collection, Washington D.C., USA
William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, USA
Fondation Alliances, Casablanca, Maroc
Fond de dotation agnès.b, Paris, France