

# 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair: the eye of modern Mali and more

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*A la plage*, by Malick Sidibé, 1974. © Malick Sidibé. Courtesy of Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair marked its fourth year with the first UK solo retrospective of the late Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, who died earlier this year. With rarely seen photographs such as *A la plage* (1974) and *Les Retrouvailles au bord de fleuve Niger* (1974) exhibited, **the show was curated by André Magnin and Philippe Boutté, who focussed on themes that 1:54 founding director Touria El Glaoui believes best characterises Sidibé's black and white photography: life on the Niger river, nightlife in Bamako and studio portraits.**



*A moi seul*, by Malick Sidibé, 1978. © Malick Sidibé. Courtesy of Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

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With 40 international contemporary African art galleries exhibiting at the fair – including ARTLabAfrica from Nairobi, Galerie Cécile Fakhoury from Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, and newly launched Gallery 1957 from Accra, Ghana – the work at this year’s edition of 1:54 possessed a similar crossover impact to Sidibé, with galleries and artists teetering on the cutting edge of African contemporary art. ‘We’re thrilled to have 16 Africa-based galleries this year,’ said El Glaoui preceding the show. ‘New among these are Village Unhu from Harare, Zimbabwe, Mashrabia Gallery of Contemporary Art from Cairo, and L’Atelier 21 from Casablanca, Morocco.’

El Glaoui’s rare knowledge of the contemporary African art scene, garnered from a lifetime of travel across the continent, was evident in the wide range of practices on display. ‘This year’s site-specific installations are a highlight,’ she explained. Therein, Vigo Gallery’s Zak Ové took over Somerset House’s historic Edmond J Safra Fountain Court, and El Glaoui also highlights ‘Ifeyi Oganwu’s collaborative lounge design, and Bandjoun Station’s mobile cafeteria, in which Barthélémy Togo, a nominee for the 2016 French Prix Marcel Duchamp, will be serving West Cameroonian coffee’. As contemporary African art gains traction in the west, 1:54 was an ideal chance to see an accurate representation of the scene, away from sales and market hyperbole.

### Information

'Malick Sidibé: The Eye of Modern Mali' runs until 15 January 2017. The 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair ran from 6–9 October. For more information, visit the [website](#)

<http://www.wallpaper.com/art/154-contemporary-african-art-fair-highlights-london-edition>