

Five Artworks to See at Fondation Louis Vuitton's Art/Africa

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By Hannah Tindle

We visited the Frank Gehry-designed building in Paris to view a new exhibition of work from some of the most significant African artists of our time



Rashid Johnson, *Plateaus* (2014)© Rashid Johnson, Courtesy Fondation Louis Vuitton, Photography by Marc Damage

Are white curators able to fully represent the cultural messages in art that mediate black experiences? This was the question that loomed over Fondation Louis Vuitton's latest exhibition, *Art/Africa*, which opened at the colossal Gehry-designed gallery in Paris this week. It was heartening to see, when we visited the exhibit on Tuesday to preview the show, the Fondation had approached this question with the urgent dose of self-awareness required when producing an exhibition of this kind. As the Fondation's artistic director Suzanne Pagé explained: "representing the continent of Africa and the artists who produce work in response to their lived experiences was one of the most important things for us to achieve when we worked alongside them to assemble the exhibition."

The result is a comprehensive exhibit which celebrates the wide-ranging practices of artists making work in response to colonialism, black identity under apartheid, gender politics and activism. It was a relief to see that the oft-misused homogenous umbrella of 'African art' had been taken down; instead visitors are presented with a show which invites them to ask a second question: "why has the work on display never been celebrated in such a way before now?" The exhibition is split into three parts: *The Insiders*, a selection of works ranging between 1989 – 2009 from Jean Pigozzi's private collection; *Being There*, a contemporary scene examining the work of South African artists, and *Africa in the Collection of Fondation Louis Vuitton*. Here, we present the five artworks that you need to see when you visit (although, it must be said that it was a difficult edit to make).

AnOther



Rashid Johnson, *Plateaus* (2014)© Rashid Johnson, Courtesy Fondation Louis Vuitton, Photography by Marc Damage

1. Rashid Johnson, *Plateaus* (2014)

Chicago-born artist Rashid Johnson produces work within the movement of post-black art, a category of contemporary work exploring the black experience whilst arguing that art shouldn't be defined by race. For *Art/Africa*, Johnson presented his installation work *Plateaus*, a steel structure filled with botanical ephemera and objects invoking ideas about 'primitive' and 'civilised' societies seen through the lens of colonialism.

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J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, *Mkpuk Eba* (1974)© J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, Courtesy CAAC The Pigozzi Collection, Photography by Maurice Aeschimann

2. J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, *Mkpuk Eba* (1974)

J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere was one of Nigeria's most prominent photographers; up until his death in 2014 at the age of 83, he travelled across the country producing work which meticulously documented Nigerian culture. A selection from one of his most famous series, comprising 1,000 images of unique hairstyles taken in Lagos, was on display at Fondation Louis Vuitton as an important reminder of the anthropological significance of his practice.

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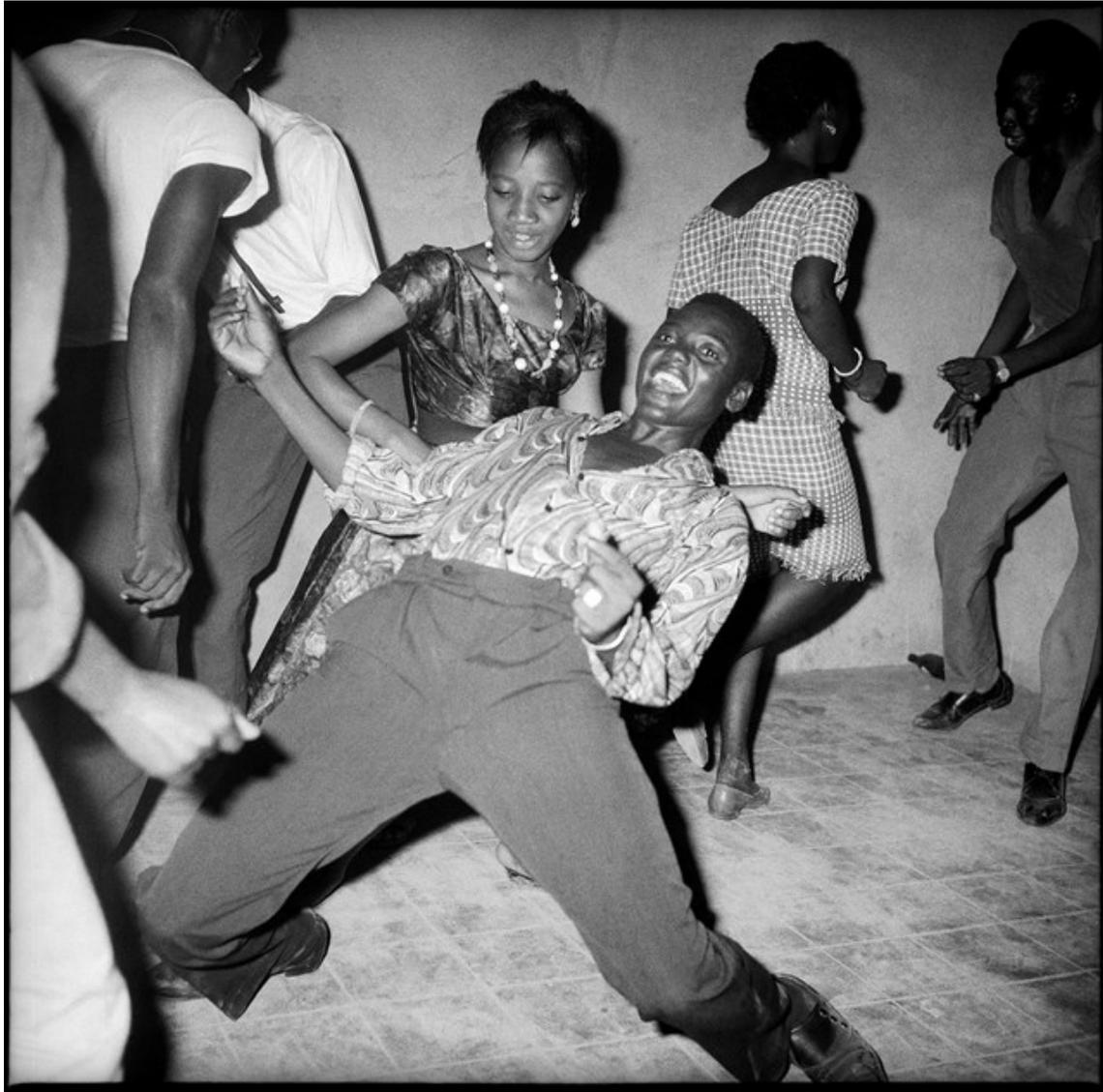


Nicholas Hlobo, *Ndize: Tail* (2010) © Nicholas Hlobo, Courtesy of Stevenson Capetown and Johannesburg, Photography by Mario Todeschini

3. Nicholas Hlobo, *Ndize: Tail* (2010)

South African artist Nicholas Hlobo's work explores issues of masculinity and gender, sexual identity and societal conflict. Using natural and manmade found materials such as leather, lace, satin, and the rubber inner tubes of car tires to form large-scale sculptural works referencing his Xhosa heritage, Hlobo's *Ndize: Tail* on show at *Art/Africa* not only alludes to the significance of cattle farming in Xhosa communities, but also fetishwear.

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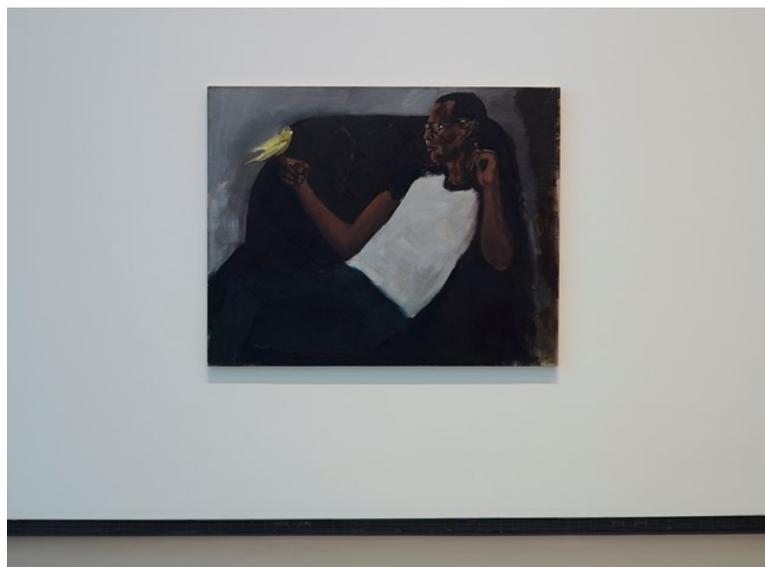


Malick Sidibé, *Regardez-Moi* (1962)© Malick Sidibé, Courtesy of CAAC The Pigozzi Collection, Photography by Maurice Aeschmann

4. Malick Sidibé, *Regardez-Moi* (1962)

Malick Sidibé is known for his black and white photographs chronicling the popular culture of Mali post-1960, after the country gained its independence. He came to be known as “the eye of Bamako”, documenting the vibrant energy of the city’s youth through frequenting nightclubs and bars. His iconic images of couples dancing are on show at Fondation Louis Vuitton, including *Regardez-Moi*, a snapshot encapsulating the heart, soul and spirit of a generation of young Africans.

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Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *All Manner of Comforts* (2016)© Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Courtesy of Fondation Louis Vuitton, Photography by Marc Damage

5. Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *All Manner of Comforts* (2016)

Nominated for the 2013 Turner Prize, painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye creates oil-on-canvas works that focus on fictional figures drawn from the artist's memory and imagination, often completed in the time frame of a single day. The works address black representation in art and culture at large, with most of the mysterious 'post-portraits' subverting the style of European painting.

[Art/Africa](#) is showing at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris until August 28, 2017.

<http://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/9780/five-artworks-to-see-at-fondation-louis-vuittons-artafrika>