

## ‘Mad ambience’ of 1960s Mali depicted in Malick Sidibé’s first major UK solo show

Somerset House exhibition is among slew of projects coming to London during 1:54 contemporary African art fair

by [Anny Shaw](#) | 27 July 2016



Malick Sidibé, *A la plage*, 1974. Photo: © Malick Sidibé, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris

The celebrated Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, who died in April aged 80, is to have his first major solo show in the UK this autumn. Sidibé rose to fame with his black-and-white images chronicling Mali’s pop culture in the decades after the country gained independence in 1960. He went on to become the first photographer and the first African artist to receive a Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2007.

**A selection of 45 photographs—some of them depicting nightlife in the Malian capital of Bamako, some shot in the studio—are to go on show at Somerset House on 6 October (until 15 January 2017) to coincide with 1:54 contemporary African art fair (until 9 October). The exhibition is being organised in collaboration with Sidibé’s Paris dealer, André Magnin.**

Magnin says Sidibé was “very popular” with young people in Bamako and received invitations to “all the family celebrations” as well as dances in nightclubs. “The music, the Western and South American dances allowed the young people to get together, to touch each other,” Magnin says. “As a photographer Sidibé was able to show this mad ambience. His photographs reflect a joie de vivre, we can see the pleasure taken in these gentle and joyful evenings.”



• Malick Sidibé, Nuit du 31 Décembre, 1969. Photo: © Malick Sidibé, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



• Malick Sidibé, *Combat des amis avec pierres*, 1976. Photo: © Malick Sidibé, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



• Malick Sidibé, *Dansez le Twist*, 1965. Photo: © Malick Sidibé, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



• Malick Sidibé, Les Retrouvailles au bord du fleuve Niger, 1974. Photo: © Malick Sidibé, Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



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A number of other exhibitions and projects are spilling out beyond the usual confines of the art fair this year. An army of resin and jesmonite figures by Zac Ové, who lives between London and Trinidad and Tobago, will be installed among the fountains in the courtyard at Somerset House. Titled *Masque of Blackness*, the new installation is inspired by the history of Somerset House and early Jacobean court masques—an elaborate form of theatre.

The London-based DJ, radio host and curator Gilles Peterson is due to broadcast live from the fair for three days, featuring DJs and musicians from the African diaspora and artist interviews.

Meanwhile, the *Arab Spring Notebook*, a series of 46 ink sketches created by the Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi in response to the 2011 uprisings, gets its own mini exhibition. The notebook was exhibited in a case in the artist's retrospective at Tate Modern in 2013, but the drawings were separated and framed for an exhibition at Galerist's project space in Istanbul last September, organised in conjunction with London's Vigo Gallery. The series was available for the first time, for £90,000. 1:54's main sponsor, Modern Forms and Floreat Group, is presenting the project at the fair.

Touria El Glaoui, the director of 1:54, says she is “thrilled” to be hosting such a strong programme of special projects for the fourth edition, in particular the collaboration with Somerset House on the exhibition of photographs by Sidibé, “who was such a pivotal figure in African art in the 1960s and an enduring influence on young photographers today”.

<http://theartnewspaper.com/news/news/malick-sidibe-somerset-house/>