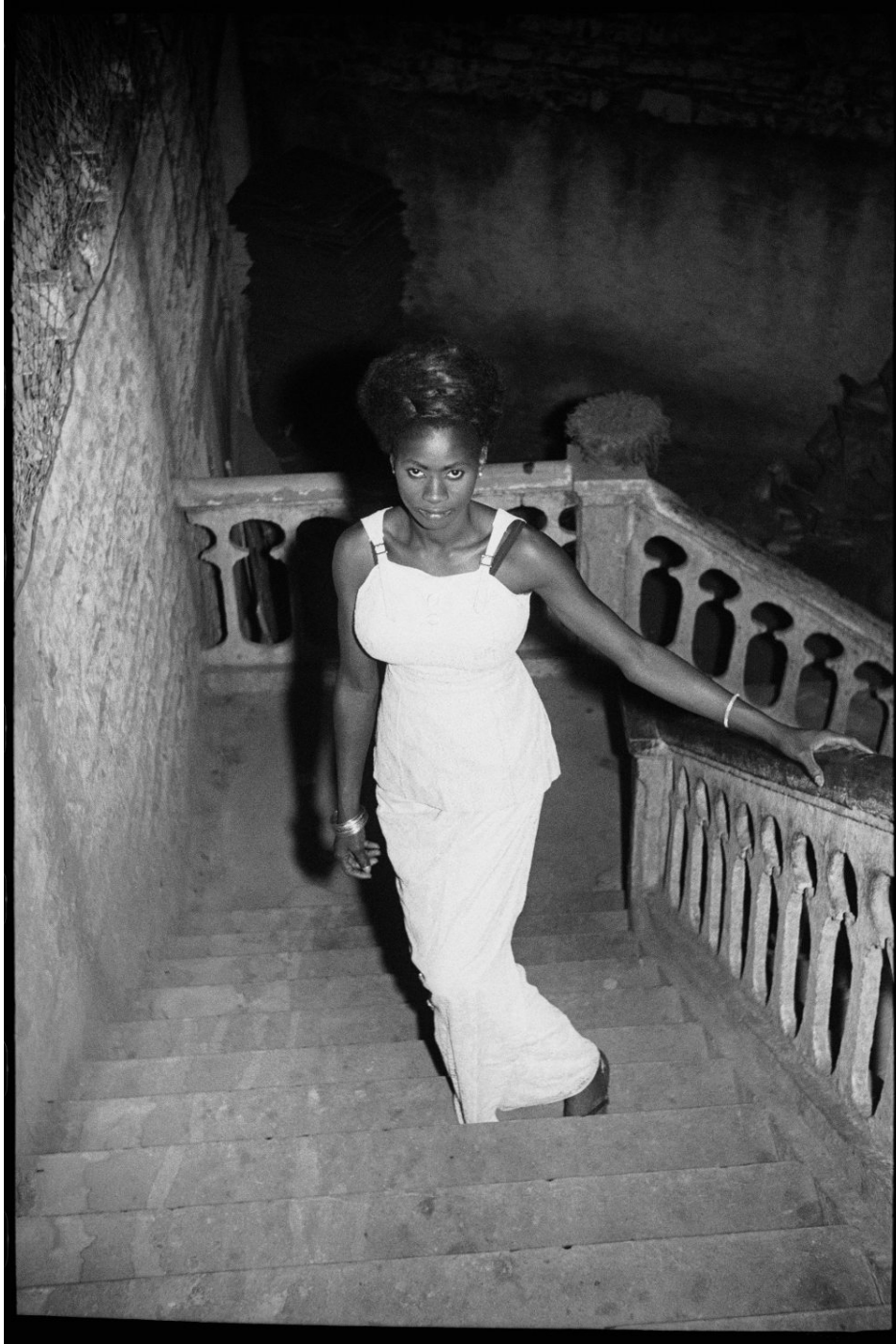


P O R T

The Eye of Modern Mali



Nuit du 31 Décembre, 1969, Malick Sidibé. Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A Paris

Gallerist and curator André Magnin reflects on the genius of Malick Sidibé, the photographer who captured the energy and optimism of 1960s Mali

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I have always been the closest collaborator of Malick Sidibé's until his death in April this year. I had organised many exhibitions of his work around the world since 1994 but there has never been a solo exhibition of his works in the UK. When Somerset House and 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair approached me to curate this exhibition during the fair this year, I gladly accepted.

The display includes 45 prints which are divided into three themes. Nightlife in Bamako was made between 1963 and 1965 – these photographs exude the energy and optimism of that euphoric moment in a country rejoicing in the wake of independence. The following series, Beside the Niger River taken in the 1970s, shows young Malians at their leisure enjoying outings by the beach, while the final section, The Studio, consists of more formal photographs taken at his studio between the 1960s until 2001.

The design of the gallery space replicates the look and feel of 'Studio Malick' with a distinctive black-and-white patterned vinyl flooring, which can be seen in many of his portrait photographs. In addition to this, a gallery soundtrack has been specially curated for this exhibition by DJ and African music expert, Rita Ray, to recreate the sound and spirit of the nightclubs where many of his photos were shot, and his own studio, which was described as often being "like a party". The soundtrack will feature an eclectic mix of music and urban sounds to which Sidibé's photographic subjects may have listened, from the rock 'n' roll, pop songs and fusions of the continent in the 60s and 70s to timeless Malian roots music.

Malick Sidibé was well known by 'le tout Bamako' (the people of Mali's capital city), as an excellent photographer and reporter. He was invited to every family meeting or surprise party, which enabled him to document these occasions at close hand.

He found international recognition in the 1990s when he received prestigious international awards, including the Golden Lion Award at the Venice Biennale and the World Press Photo award. Thanks to this recognition he became one of the most emblematic figures of photography in Mali, and in Africa.

All of the young people in his images lived through the period of growing independence and increasing cultural exchanges with the West through music and fashion. His images have inspired a lot of young artists who replicate and re-interpret the movements, the position of the characters in the studio, and the clothes worn in his pictures. His photographs are an exceptional testimony of the life of the young and vibrant generation of Bamakois in the '60s.

The exhibition, [Malick Sidibé: The Eye of Modern Mali](#), runs at [Somerset House](#) until 15 January 2017

<http://www.port-magazine.com/art-photography/the-eye-of-modern-mali-malick-sidibe/>