

## See this: Mali's pop culture immortalised by Malick Sidibé

- Jill Macnair
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Art photographer Malick Sidibé died aged 80 in April this year, having been known as “the eye of Bamako” in homage to a career spent capturing the people and culture of his home city in Mali. A celebration of his work is open now at Somerset House. Sidibé’s photographs are vibrant, vital, almost colourful even though he shot in black and white, and he documented the joyous mood in Mali’s capital city in the 1960s as the country emerged from French colonial rule. Shooting Bamako’s most stylish, Sidibé went – mostly by bike – to graduation celebrations, dances, beach parties and the city’s many nightclubs and whether the subjects were dancers caught up in solitary movement or courtships in motion, their energy and intimacy was transferred onto film as though the artist hadn’t been noticed at all. “Music freed us,” Sidibé said of this era and his images echo the sentiment.

By the 1970s, the photographer had moved away from observational documentary to focus on studio work. He draped his tiny workspace with fabrics and filled two large boxes with hats and ties so that his sitters could accessorise their brilliant outfits at whim.



Nuit de Noël (Happy Club), 1963 Tirage argentique baryté © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



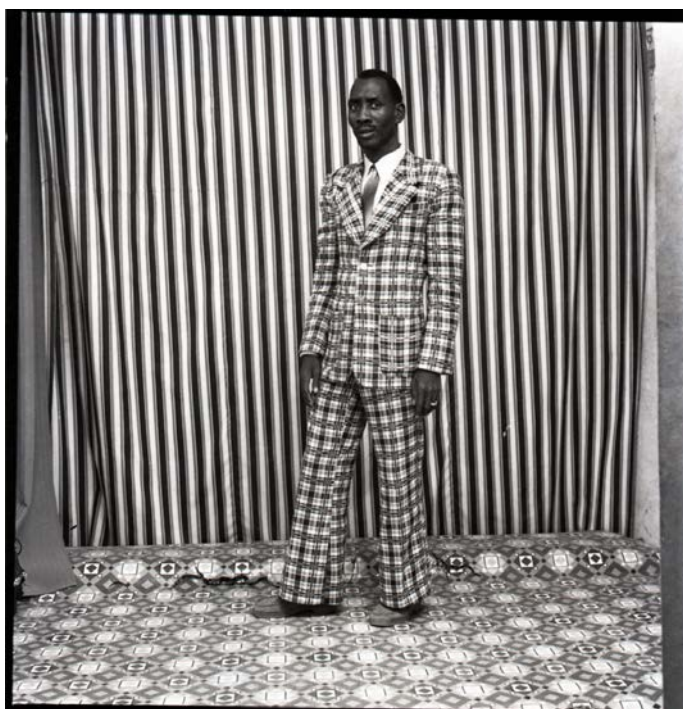
Dansez le Twist, 1965 Édition illimitée courtesy Magnin-A, Paris © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



Combat des amis avec pierres, 1976 Tirage argentique baryté © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN Magnin-A, Paris



A la plage, 1974 Tirage argentique baryté © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



A moi seul, 1978 Tirage argentique baryté © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris



Les jeunes bergers peulhs, 1972 Tirage argentique baryté © Malick Sidibé Courtesy Galerie MAGNIN-A, Paris.

*[Malick Sidibé: The Eye of Modern Mali](#) presented by Somerset house in collaboration with MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris, opens the Contemporary African Art Fair and is on until 15 January 2017.*

<http://thechromologist.com/see-malis-pop-culture-immortalised-malick-sidibe/>