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A Paris exhibition sets hundreds of works by Malick Sidibé within their historical and cultural context



MORE THAN 20 years after it presented the first show by the Malian photographer Malick Sidibé (1936-2016) outside Africa, the Fondation Cartier in Paris returns to the artist with an even grander survey.

Malick Sidibé: Mali Twist includes 250 works, more than triple the number in the previous show. It also offers an expanded view, presenting not only the photographs of parties that Sidibé became famous for documenting, but also portraits shot in his Bamako studio, which he opened in 1962. Around 30 of these portraits will be shown for the first time.

André Magnin, the show's curator, first met Sidibé in 1991 when he was trying to track down the artist, whose photographs were first presented to him as the work of an anonymous Malian. "So I went to Bamako to find the author of these pictures, and my driver took me to a man at a camera repair studio," he says. "And it was Malick Sidibé."

Magnin, who also organised the 1995 show at the Cartier, looked at around 400,000 negatives with Sidibé over the course of their 25-year partnership. At the heart of the work, Magnin sees the artist's affinity. "He was a little older [when he shot parties in the 1960s], but young people loved him. They were happy to be with him and they trusted him."

Whereas parties in Bamako were group events, Sidibé's portrait photography offers a more intimate view. But Magnin stresses that Sidibé never directed his subjects. "He just made them feel at ease," he says.

To offer a sense of the context in which Sidibé, known as "the eye of Bamako", took his photographs, the foundation has organised a related programme series. It includes a performance by the Malian singer Rokia Traoré (22 January 2018) and a temporary photo studio that will be set up by the Malian photographer Fatoumata Diabaté, who invites visitors to sit for portraits (2-5 November).

The show is accompanied by an extensive publication that includes around 300 images plus essays by the art historian Robert Storr, the curator Brigitte Ollier (who co-organised the show), the Malian filmmaker Manthia Diawara and Magnin. It also includes a text by Sidibé.

Paris PopArt

• Malick Sidibé: Mali Twist, Fondation Cartier, Paris, until 25 February 2018

Energy and intimacy in the studio: Malick Sidibé's Boxers (1966)



From the nightclub to the artist's studio: Mon ami Alama Ballo (1977, top), Nuit de Noël (Happy-club) (1963, middle) and Untitled (1973)