



Malick Sidibé

Omar Victor Diop

Studio
portrait(s)

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22 January → 19 March 2016

vernissage 21 January at 6 pm

To look at the other, to show yourself as you are or as you wish to be seen. The photographic portrait uses and amplifies one of the painting's issues. First, one has to remember that this practice was the first utility of this medium. Family portraits, new birth portraits, post-mortem portraits or formal portraits, the cameras take over the paint brushes. And photography becomes the witness of these different times and social practices.

This is what we can discover in the studio pictures of Malick Sidibé, Seydou Keïta's successor. Trained as a draftsman, he works as a decorator at Gérard Guillard's studio before opening his own studio in Bamako in the early sixties. He snaps pictures of the yé-yés, men on scooters, mischievous children... and shows us a society in motion and particularly its youth. Those are pictures intended for families, they are private photographs. Although the operating mode is different, Omar Victor Diop is also an observer of our society. For the last 10 years and with systematic studio practices, he has come out as a bridge between different times and different continents.

With his pop-style series entitled « The Studio of Vanities », he chooses to deal again with the introspection of the model and the questioning of the photographer. Who is looking at whom? What does he offer us to look at? ... The one who is portrayed is either supplanted by the photographer who tries to impose the predominance of his lust for power with a pure formal or aestheticizing gesture; or the one who is portrayed uses the photographer to obtain a narcissistic image, at the risk of becoming the falsifier of his or her own life. *

With almost 50 years between them, Malick Sidibé and Omar Victor Diop drive photography forward and educate the viewer about African photography. Whether it is the portrait of a stranger or a more famous personality, it opens a poetic window on this continent.

*Jean-Marie Schaeffer

Extract from the exhibition catalogue *Portraits, singulier pluriel* Edition Mazan/Bibliothèque nationale de France – 1997
Exhibition organized in collaboration with the gallery MAGNIN-A.

OMAR VICTOR DIOP

Born in 1980 in Dakar, Senegal. Lives and works in Dakar

Posed portraits of the African cultural scene. Here are the new faces of the urban cultures of this continent. They are Black, Arabic or White, all the same. They are creative and ambitious, but above all, they attempt to make their visions come true. I present a generation that strives to place the African urbanite at the heart of the contemporary creation, to make him the conveyor of exchanges and production. I want to go beyond the purely representative exercise that turns each portrait into an « immortalization » of an awkward and affected smile. My approach is collaborative, as the subject and I put together clothing and accessory indications that express identity assertions, social translations and sartorial statements. Welcome to this Studio of the Vanities. Here, to be visible is already a way to exist. The vanities that are revealed are playful, optimistic and belligerent. They give back to the world what it fed them with: a Creole soul.

Omar Victor Diop

MALICK SIDIBÉ

Born in 1935 in Soloba, Mali. Lives and works in Bamako, Mali

Malick Sidibé was born in 1935 in Soloba, a small Malian village into a Fula family. Thanks to his drawing skills, he is admitted at the Ecole des Artisans Soudanais in Bamako where he graduates in 1955. He starts photography with « Gégé la Pellicule » and opens the Studio Malick in 1958 in the district of Bagadadji, in the centre of Bamako. He is involved in the cultural and social life of the capital city, which has been booming since the Independence. An essential figure and very much appreciated by the youth, Malick Sidibé attends all the parties where young people learn the new dances from Europe and Cuba, adopt a European clothing style, where elegance prevails. In 1957, he is the only reporter in Bamako to cover all the events, all the parties. On Saturdays, these parties last until dawn and continue the following day on the Niger's banks. From his neighborhood-based reports, Sidibé brings back simple images that are full of truth and complicity. Carefree and spontaneous moments, a festive atmosphere filled with games, laughter and life emerge from his pictures.

André Magnin

en collaboration avec MAGNIN-A

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