

Press release

AFRICAN BEAUTY

J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere (*1930 – † 2 February 2014), Nigeria

Seydou Keïta (*1921 – † 2001), Bamako, Mali

Malick Sidibé (*1936), Soloba, Mali

With the *AFRICAN BEAUTY* exhibition we are honoring the Nigerian photographer, J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere (1930-2014), who died just last month. This exhibition is accompanied by two African photographers from Mali, Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé.

Ever since the early 20th century portrait photography has flourished in urban central Africa. Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé made names for themselves with their famous photo studio well before the greater central African region became independent.

Thanks to the first African photography biennial in Bamako in 1994, Mali, African photography began to attract international attention with Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keïta in the center.

The photographs of Seydou Keïta (1921-2001) reveal valuable and subtle details and show not only the *modus operandi* of the photographer, but also the desires of the customers: their dreams and their wishes, in carefully arranged portraits for eternity. Originally his photographs were created on order of his customers. "Art is beauty" said Seydou Keïta about his portraits that are meanwhile world renowned.

Malick Sidibé (*1936) shows Mali in the 60s and 70s. At that time Bamako was in the midst of demographic and economic bloom. The youth dressed in the fashion of the west and discovered music and dance from Europe and America. Sidibé's pictures show the euphoria in clubs and are unique remembrances and witness to an era of hope.

The *Hairstyles* series by J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere documents and makes the hairstyles of Nigerian women very aesthetic. Ojeikere has not been able to elude the charm of these hairstyles for over 40 years. Hairstyles were an art form for him. He was convinced that "hair art is passed along from woman to woman, hairstyles are ephemeral. I would like to have my photographs leave a trace of memory. I always had the urge to preserve moments of beauty and their manifestation. Art is life. Without art, life would be stark and senseless."

The weighty presentation of Ojeikere's pictures at the 55th Biennial in Venice last year clearly helped the artist to break through into the international art world.

All the photographs of Keïta, Sidibé and Ojeikere thrive from their simplicity and beauty. All three artists have captured moments that unite fiction and reality: beauty of Africa.

The exhibited photographs are on loan from the Fine Art Invest Fund (www.FAIF.ch).



Seydou Keïta, Untitled, 1952 – 1956
© Seydou Keïta



J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere, Suku Sineru / Kiko, 1974
© J.D.'Okhai Ojeikere



Malick Sidibé, Soirréé mariage Drissa Balo, 1967
© Malick Sidibé

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