



International Center of Photography

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news release



Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography

On view from
March 10 through
May 28, 2006

Media Preview
March 9, 2006
9:30 - 11am

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Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko
Cindy and Nkuli, from "Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder,"
Johannesburg, 2003-04
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International Center of Photography

Snap Judgments: New Positions in Contemporary African Photography is the first major U.S. exhibition in a decade to examine current photographic works from Africa. Organized for the International Center of Photography (ICP) by Okwui Enwezor, one of the world's foremost curators of contemporary art, the exhibition will present over 200 works by 35 artists from a dozen countries. Encompassing the African continent from the Muslim cultures of North Africa to the sub-Saharan nations of the south, *Snap Judgments* will feature a range of highly individual artistic responses to the enormous changes now taking place in economic, social, and cultural life throughout Africa. The exhibition will be on view at ICP (1133 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street), its only venue, from March 10 through May 28, 2006.

African photography has changed dramatically since 1996, when Mr. Enwezor organized *In/Sight: African Photographers 1940 to the Present* for the Guggenheim Museum. In that groundbreaking show, the studio portraiture of such now-acclaimed figures as Seidou Keïta, Malick Sidibé, and Samuel Fosso predominated. Today photography has come to play an expanded role within the spectrum of contemporary African art. Reflecting the increasingly close relation of photography with other forms of experimental art in Africa, *Snap Judgments* will include not only photographic works but also multimedia installations and documentation of performance art.

In addition to conveying the individual voices and views that inform African art today, *Snap Judgments* will examine the ways in which recent photographic art has moved beyond both African traditions and Western influences to explore new aesthetic territories. Four recurring themes in contemporary African photography will interweave throughout *Snap Judgments*:

Landscape and Environment: A number of African artists have sought to reinvest landscape with a sense of cultural specificity. In their work, landscape serves as a vehicle for understanding historic trauma or social alienation. For example, Zarina Bhimji (Uganda/UK) explores the erased landscape left behind after the expulsion of Ugandan Asians in 1972. Zwelethu Mthethwa (South Africa), in his magisterial environmental portraits of workers, traces the impact of global capitalism in post-apartheid South Africa.

Urban Formations: Many African photographers are now examining the rapidly changing modes of urban living in the continent's postcolonial cities. The work of Depth of Field, a loose collective of photographers residing in Lagos, Nigeria, charts that city's complexly layered system of formal and informal living arrangements. Randa Shaath (Egypt) brings to light the improvised domestic architecture that is now flourishing atop countless buildings in crowded central Cairo.

The Body and Identity: Some of the most provocative art being made in Africa today focuses on the body and identity as sites of contested social meaning. In her imaginative and elaborate photographic tableaux, Tracey Rose (South Africa) creates haunting allegories of sexual and racial difference. The innovative performative works of Oladélé Bamgboye (Nigeria/UK) explore the shifting boundaries of identity, gender, and sexuality.

History and Representation: The works of many younger African artists reconstruct history by challenging or reinventing the narrative of the colonial past. In his quasi-ethnographic film *Trip to Mount Ziqualla*, Theo Eshetu (Ethiopia) questions the social and religious issues raised by the rituals of the Ethiopian Coptic church. The starched, formal military uniforms photographed by Hentie van der Merwe (South Africa) in the Museum of Military History in Cape Town evoke the spectral shadow that overhangs the country's transition from colonial to postcolonial institutions.

EXHIBITION CURATOR OKWUI ENWEZOR

With *Snap Judgments*, Okwui Enwezor joins the International Center of Photography as an adjunct curator. "A gifted curator, critic, and teacher, Okwui will be an enormous asset to ICP," said ICP director Willis Hartshorn. "He will be curating exhibitions including *Snap Judgments* in 2006 and *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* in 2008. He will be presenting public lectures and consulting on acquisitions, publications, and education programs. We are pleased to have someone with his expertise on our staff."

During the past ten years, the Nigerian-born Mr. Enwezor has worked as an independent curator on a number of significant international exhibitions. These include *In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1996); *Mirror's Edge* at the Bild Museet, Umea, Sweden; Castello di Rivoli, Torino; Vancouver Art Gallery; and Tramway, Glasgow (1999-2001); and *Stan Douglas: Le Detroit* at the Art Institute of Chicago (2000). He was one of a group of international curators of *Global Conceptualism* at the Queens Museum, New York (1999) and *Century City* at the Tate Modern, London (2000). He has also co-organized, with Corinne Diserens, a major traveling exhibition of the work of South African photographer David Goldblatt, *David Goldblatt: 51 Years*. Mr. Enwezor curated *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*, which was shown at the Museum Villa Stuck, Munich; the Martin-Gropius Bau, Berlin; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and P.S.1, New York (2001-2002).

In 2002, Mr. Enwezor won international praise as the artistic director of Documenta 11 in Kassel, Germany, one of the most prestigious recurring exhibitions of contemporary art. For Documenta 11, he co-edited a series of four accompanying volumes: *Democracy Unrealized; Experiments with Truth: Transitional Justice and the Processes of Truth and Reconciliation; Creolité and Creolization; and Under Siege: Four African Cities, Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, and Lagos* (Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2002).

Enwezor has written extensively on contemporary African art and artists, as well as on American and international art. He is the founding publisher and co-editor of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, a critical art journal co-published with the Africana Studies Centre at Cornell University. He is the co-editor of *Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace* (InIVA and MIT Press, 1998).

Mr. Enwezor is currently Dean of Academic Affairs at the San Francisco Art Institute. In 2006 he will serve as artistic director of the second Biennial of Contemporary Art in Seville, Spain.

SYMPOSIUM

A symposium titled "Politics of Imaging Africa" will be held at ICP on March 11, 2006. It will feature Mr. Enwezor and approximately eight of the artists participating in the exhibition. The symposium will explore the split that now exists between the largely pessimistic view informing Western media accounts of today's Africa and the more nuanced approaches evident among artists who are actively engaged in the dynamics of African culture.

PUBLICATION

Snap Judgments will be accompanied by a full-color catalogue published by ICP and Steidl Verlag. It will include a substantial critical essay by curator Okwui Enwezor, commentaries on the individual works in the exhibition, and biographical entries on the participating artists. Because many of the artists and works will be presented to an American audience for the first time, the catalogue can be expected to serve as an important reference for art historians and students of contemporary African culture and photography.

ARTISTS

Doa Aly (EGYPT)	Moshekwa Langa (SOUTH AFRICA/NETHERLANDS)
Lara Baladi (EGYPT/LEBANON)	Maha Maamoun (EGYPT)
Oladélé Bamgboye (NIGERIA/UK)	Boubacar Touré Mandémory (SENEGAL)
Yto Barrada (MOROCCO)	Zwelethu Mthethwa (SOUTH AFRICA)
Luis Basto (MOZAMBIQUE)	James Muriuki (KENYA)
Zohra Bensemra (ALGERIA)	Lamia Naji (MOROCCO)
Zarina Bhimji (UGANDA/UK)	Otobong Nkanga (NIGERIA/NETHERLANDS)
Mohamed Camara (MALI)	Jo Ractliffe (SOUTH AFRICA)
Ali Chraïbi (MOROCCO)	Tracey Rose (SOUTH AFRICA)
Omar D. (Daoud) (ALGERIA)	Fatou Kandé Senghor (SENEGAL)
Depth of Field [Collective] (NIGERIA)	Randa Shaath (EGYPT/PALESTINE)
Allan deSouza (KENYA/UK/USA)	Mikhael Subotzky (SOUTH AFRICA)
Andrew Dosunmu (NIGERIA/USA)	Sada Tangara (MALI/SENEGAL)
Hala Elkoussy (EGYPT)	Guy Tillim (SOUTH AFRICA)
Theo Eshetu (ETHIOPIA/ITALY)	Michael Tsegaye (ETHIOPIA)
Mamadou Gomis (SENEGAL)	Hentie van der Merwe (SOUTH AFRICA/BELGIUM)
Kay Hassan (SOUTH AFRICA)	Nontsikelelo "Lolo" Veleko (SOUTH AFRICA)
Romuald Hazoumé (BENIN)	

SPONSORS

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