

DOCUMENTARY, EXHIBITIONS, FINE ART, NEW TALENT, NEWS, PORTRAIT, PROJECTS

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A new wave of photographers in Africa State of Mind

written by Diane Smyth



Night of the Long Knives I, 2013 © Hayden Phipps

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“This is a unique time for African photography,” says curator Ekow Eshun. “There’s a wave of thrilling, artistically ambitious talent emerging across the continent.”

He’s gathered some of the best of it for a new show called *Africa State of Mind*, opening this week in New Art Exchange – the UK’s largest space devoted to culturally diverse contemporary visual arts. Including artists such as Emmanuele Andrianjafy, Sammy Baloji, and Musa N Nxumalo, the exhibition shows off talent from a new generation of African artists, exploring how they interrogate the idea of ‘Africanness’ in their work, and ‘Africa’ as a psychological as much as a physical space.

The exhibition is organised around three main themes – *Inner Landscapes*, *Zones of Freedom*, and *Hybrid Cities*. *Inner Landscapes* focuses on photographers such as Mimi Cherono Ng’ok, whose work gives a personal interpretation of place, in contrast to the apparently objective lens of documentary photography. *Hybrid Cities* documents rapidly-transforming African metropolises, such as Emmanuelle Andrianjafy’s Dakar. *Zones of Freedom*, meanwhile, gathers photographers whose work explores gender, sexuality and cultural identity – a radical act in a continent in which homosexuality is still outlawed in 34 of 55 nations.



Untitled, 2015. From the series *Nothing's in Vain* © Emmanuelle Andrianjafy, published by Mack Books in 2017

“Africa State of Mind isn’t trying to be a wholesale survey of that work so much as an attempt to offer insight into some of the key tendencies and themes informing the practice of those photographers. It’s about opening up new ways of looking at and understanding what it means to live in Africa, and be African, today,” says Eshun, who is creative director of Calvert 22 Foundation, and who was director of London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts from 2005-2010.

“Africa State of Mind takes place at a time in which popular Western views of the continent still remain limited. On one hand, there is the boosterism of an ‘Africa rising’ narrative, that celebrates the development of an emergent middle class and the growth of a tech sector driven by a young aspirational population, while glossing over the inequalities of income and opportunity that still stymie social progress in many countries. On the other hand, the reductive stereotype of Africa as a land of would-be migrants and corrupt rulers. A vision given ugly validation by President Trump’s description of its nations as ‘shithole countries’.”

“In an era of untruths and reductive narratives, this exhibition highlights the importance of reflecting on Africa through the eyes of Africans,” says Skinder Hundal, CEO of New Art Exchange. “It resists and challenges our typically Western gaze of the continent through powerful and poetic works that are refreshingly understated. We are proud to be representing this new generation of dynamic photographers as New Art Exchange celebrates 10 years of championing the voices and perspectives of BAME artists and communities.”

Africa State of Mind is on show from 29 September – 16 December at New Art Exchange, 39 – 41 Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham, UK NG7 6BE The exhibition will then go on tour, with dates and places TBC www.nae.org.uk



Night of the Long Knives II, 2013 © Hayden Phipps



Untitled, 2015. From the series Nothing's in Vain © Emmanuelle Andrianjafy, published by Mack Books in 2017





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Moving Shadows II, IV, 2017 © Girma Berta, courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



Moving Shadows II, VI, 2017 © Girma Berta, courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



Moving Shadows II, VIII, 2017 © Girma Berta, courtesy of the Artist & Addis Fine Art



The Last Journey of the Dictator Mussunda N'zombo Before the Great Extinction: Act I, 2017 © Kiluanji Kia Henda







Cielux OCPT building exterior, municipality of Masina, 2013 © Sammy Baloji



Dilapidated pedestrian bridge along the Boulevard Lumumba, municipality of Masina, Kinshasa, 2015 © Sammy Baloji



Street view, municipalities of Masina and Kimbanseke, 2013 © Sammy Baloji

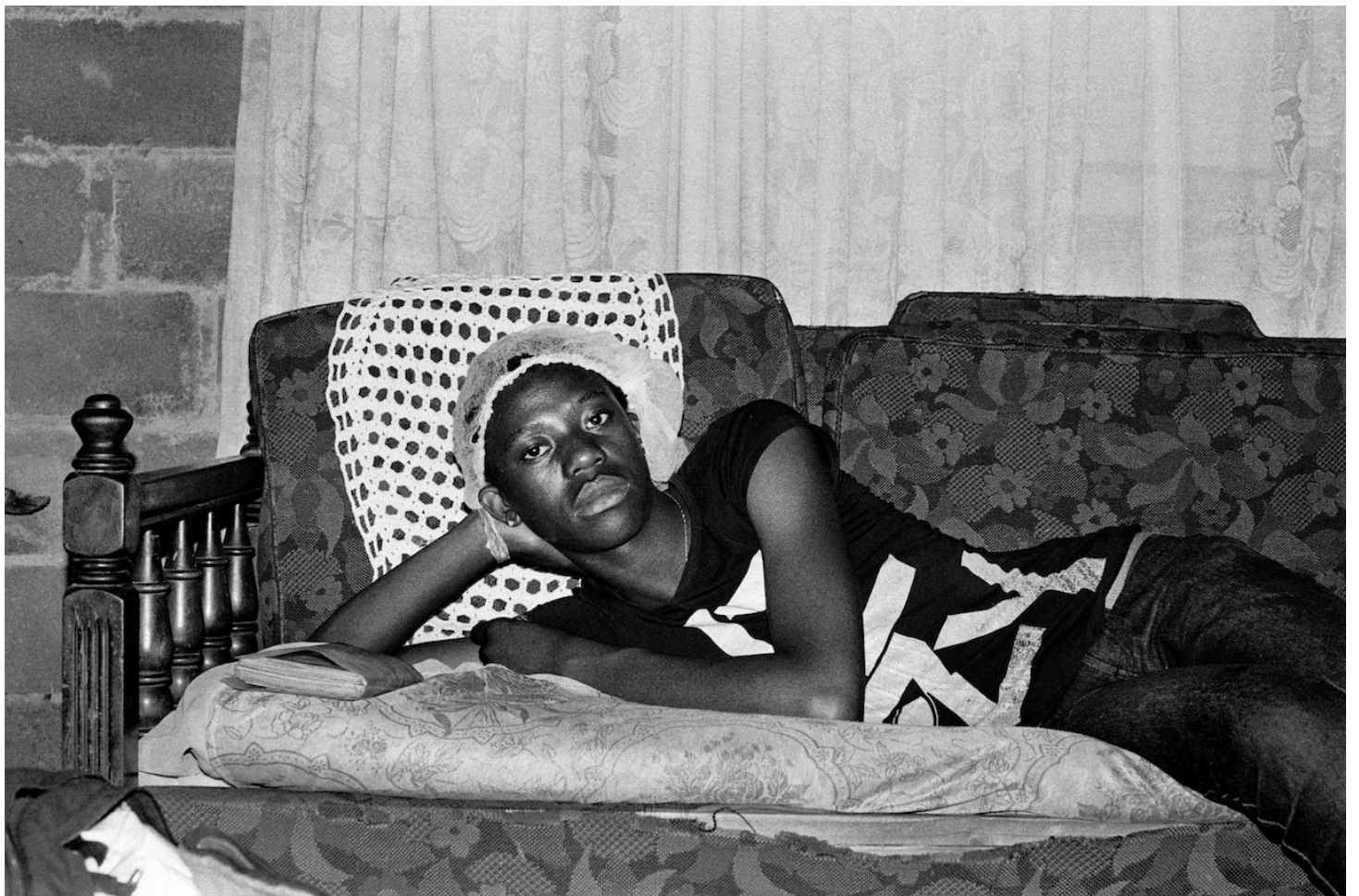




Emmanuel Emenike, Onitsha, Anambra state, Nigeria, 2017 © Ruth Ossai



Kingsley Ossai, Nsukka, Enugu state, Nigeria. February, 2017 © Ruth Ossai



Oupa Kuhlale, Wesselton Township, 2009 © Sabelo Mlangeni



Untitled (2014) © Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, courtesy the artist



Untitled (2014) © Mimi Cheron Ng'ok, courtesy the artist



Untitled (2014) © Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, courtesy the artist



Re shapa setepe sa lenyalo II, 2013 © Lebohang Kganye



Ke le motle ka bulumase le bodisi II, 2013 © Lebohang Kganye



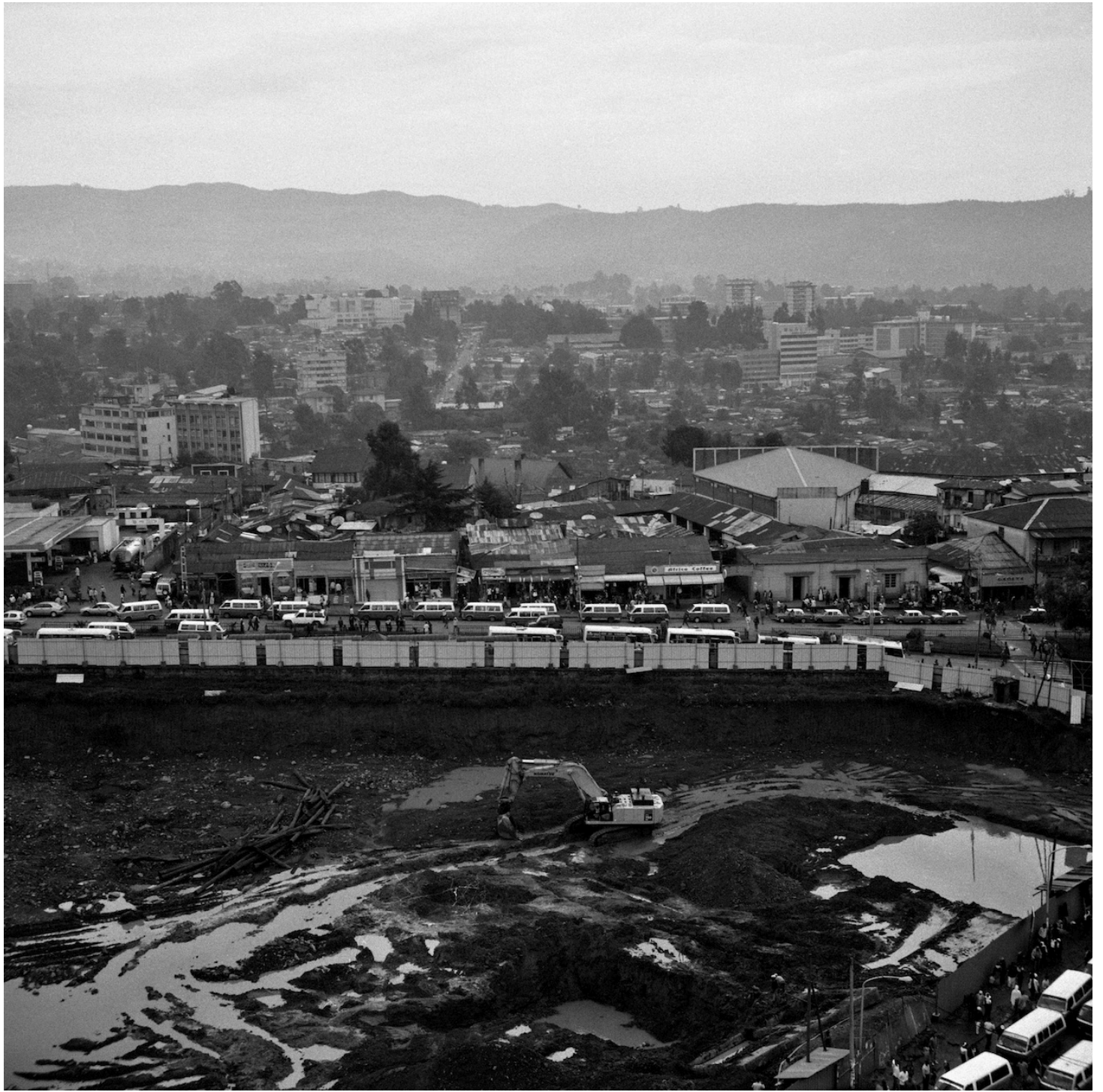
Ka 2-phisi yaka e pinky II, 2013 © Lebohang Kganye



This is how you start a party © Musa N Nxumalo



FM 1 © Michael Tsegaye



FM V © Michael Tsegaye



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Installation © Raphael Barontini, image courtesy The Pill Gallery, Istanbul, 2018



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