

Britain's First Major African Photography Prize Launches



AFRICAN ART IN FOCUS: Soulful Venture by Alun Be

AFRICA MEDIAWORKS has announced the inaugural Africa MediaWorks Photography Prize, an unprecedented new platform for artists from across the African continent and diaspora.

Portfolios from 15 African photographers have been nominated by a judging panel, and selected works from a shortlist of six photographers will go on display for seven days at the gallery of HKS Architects, in London's Fitzrovia, this week.

One overall winner will be awarded with a £5,000 prize towards a further body of work. The prize will showcase artists who have not as yet been extensively recognised in the west, but are creating high-quality and varied work in countries as diverse as Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Benin and Senegal.

The shortlisted photographers are: Rahima Gambo (Nigeria), Michael Tsegaye (Ethiopia), Adeola Olagunju (Nigeria), Alun Be (Senegal), Laeila Adjovi (Benin) and Sabelo Mlangeni (South Africa). The nominated photographers are: Logor Olumuyiwa (Nigeria), Stephen Tayo (Nigeria), Adama Jalloh (UK/Sierra Leone), Campbell Addy (UK), Kristen-Lee

Moolman (South Africa), Lakin Ogunbanwo (Nigeria), Sarah Waiswa (Kenya), James Muriuki (Nigeria) and Etinosa Yvonne (Nigeria).



A NEW PLATFORM: Malaika Dotou Sankofa #3 by Laela Adjovi

SOLUTION

Adenrele Sonariwo, founder of Rele Gallery and curator of the Nigerian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2017, said of judging the award: “I’m very excited to be involved with such a great competition and platform. Opportunities like the Africa MediaWorks Photography Prize are so important for artists working in this medium. This is a great way to celebrate and encourage African artists in the Western sphere.

“Sometimes, African photography is too associated with photojournalism, and that has led to an often-negative portrayal of African culture. But photography has the ability to tell balanced and broad stories from any region and nation. Through photography, we can encourage an understanding of the complexities of our culture, identity and history. It’s a medium that allows us to connect.”

Billed as a major new addition to London's annual photography scene, the prize attracted praise from Martin Barnes, senior curator of photographs at the V&A Museum, who said: "This award looks at an underrepresented area in photography which has traditionally been overly focused on Western Europe, North America and Japan.

"There is so much else out there to appreciate, and this should allow us to open our horizons in appreciating and evaluating work beyond what we are used to seeing.

"I hope the award will broaden how we evaluate and understand photography when it comes from a culture that operates outside of accepted western commercial or art world structures. It should provide a platform for exciting new talents to be recognised and celebrated."

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