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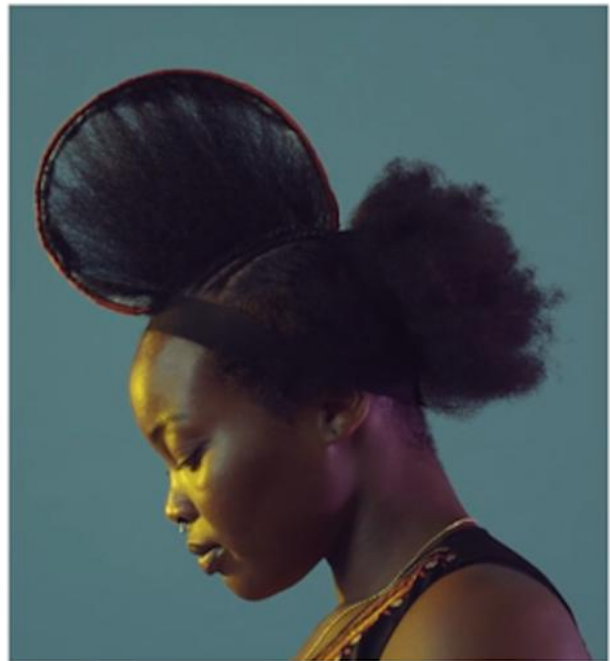
PHOTOGRAPHY

9 Contemporary African Photographers You Need to Know Now



ANTWAUN SARGENT

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Cyndia Harvey, "This Hair of Mine," video still, 2016.

'New African Photography II' provides a glimpse of contemporary Africa through the camera lens.

Artists of the African continent have a long-established history of using the camera lens to capture images of contemporary living. Through the 70s, the late Malian artist Malick Sidibé's Bamako studio became a hotbed of stylish portraiture, as locals

sat for sessions in traditional boubous, dresses, bellbottoms, and tee shirts that spoke to the self representation of a generation. A collection of Sidibé's photographs, *The Eye of Modern Mali*, are situated in a gallery across from [nine emerging African photographers](#) whose ranks include Girma Berta, Kadara Enyeasi, Cyndia Harvey, Nadine Ijewere, Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, Nobukho Nqaba, Wura-Natasha Ogunji, William Ukoh, and Kyle Weeks. The exhibition, *New African Photography II*, offers [a glimpse into the concerns of younger photographers](#) working across the continent today.

The exhibit is curated by the London-based, African art-focused media platform, [Nataal](#), at Red Hook Labs. Helen Jennings of Nataal says, "We are not trying to tell one narrative. All of these artists have their own voices and experiences." One thing they all share is that they are from a younger generation telling personal stories in an effort to own their own representation.

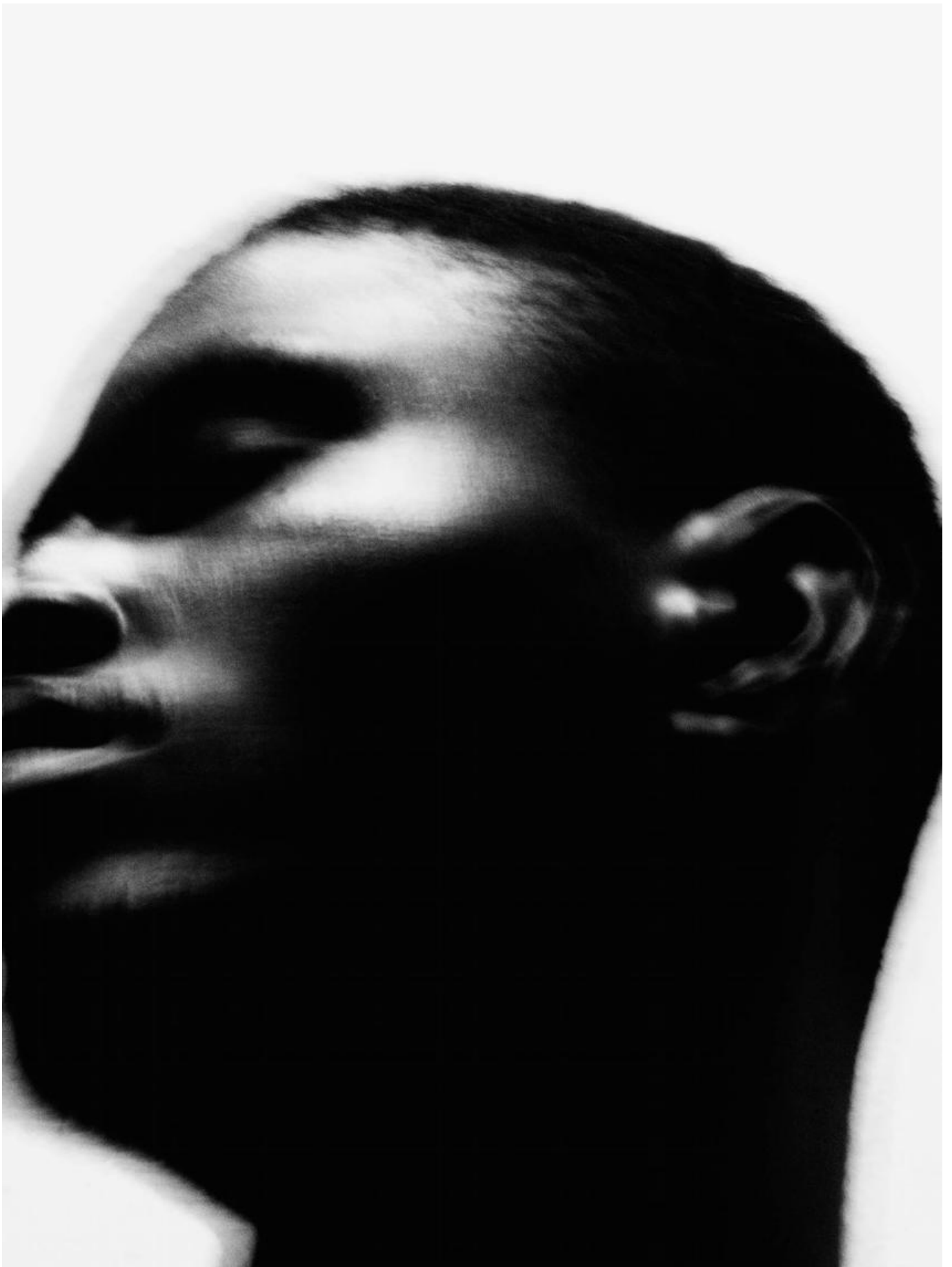
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Girma Birta, "Moving Shadows II," 2017. All images courtesy of Nataal, Red Hook Labs and the artists.

On display, the pictures by self-taught Ethiopia photographer, Girma Birta, capture street scenes of the country's capital, Addis Ababa, with a painterly effect. In "Moving Shadows II," Birta captures a mother and her daughter walking through the street holding a yellow umbrella protecting their skin from the sun. The would-be cityscape is replaced by the artist with a cool green backdrop, which focuses the viewer's gaze on the figures. The expressionistic effect makes the everyday figures and objects stand out against the monochrome back drops and forces attention on

the universal mother-daughter relationship.





Kadara Enyeasi, "Head" (Human Encounters Series), 2014

The black-and-white self-portraits of the Lagos, Nigeria-based Kadara Enyeasi, from his 2014 *Human Encounters Series*, are, according to Jennings, "all about using the body as a landscape. When I interviewed him about the images he said they were about trying to use them to work out how he presents himself to the world." The theme of representation is also found in Kenyan photographer Mimi Cheron Ng'ok's sensitive scenes of people, animals, and landscapes from across the continent. "Untitled III," a photograph of a man lying in a bed with an arm covering his face, and "Untitled VII," of a white horse with blond hair standing alone on a beach, evoke a strong sense of home and deal with issues of displacement and loss. They open up the continent beyond its stereotypes, asking the viewer, What does look like Africa in moments of stillness?



Nadine Ijewere, "Olasunkanmi Bumblebee Portrait," 2017.

New African Photography II also features fashion photography that speak to an increasing sense of self across the vast continent. In a series of photographs on

display, the British portrait and fashion photographer Nadine Ijewere returns to her grandmother's homeland of Nigeria to capture a number of local models. The chicly clad subjects provide a snapshot of Lagos's youthful, fashionable energy. Avant-garde images like "Joseph's Floral Halo," "Olasunkanmi Bumblebee Portrait," and "Tolani's green Jacket Portrait," shot in the streets of Lagos and styled by Ib Karmara, mix Western dress with local appliances, shopping bags, and yellow and black caution tape, to create a statement about beauty and the politics of place.



Mimi Cheron Ng'ok, "Untitled VII," 2015-2017.

"Globally, the African art scene is exploding right now," says Jennings, who co-curated the show alongside colleagues Sara Hemming and Red Hook Labs founder Jimmy Moffat. "We are interested in promoting younger, emerging artists, that might not be in an art fair, by giving them an opportunity to reach a new audience."

"We feel these are artists who express a new, fresh energy and deserve to be seen," she adds.

New African Photography II continues through May 14 at Red Hook Labs. [Click here](#) for more information.

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