



Seydou Keita, *Untitled (Fleur De Paris)*, 1959. Gelatin Silver Print, 24 x 18 cm.

Seydou Keita (1921-2001) was a Malian studio photographer whose photographs eloquently portray Bamako society during its era of transition from a cosmopolitan French colony to an independent capital. Initially trained by his father to be a carpenter, Keita's career as a photographer was launched in 1935 by an uncle who gave him his first camera, a Kodak Brownie Flash, which he had purchased during a trip to Senegal. During his adolescence, Keita mastered the technical challenges of shooting and printing; he later purchased a large-format camera. The larger format not only offered an exceptional degree of resolution, it also made it possible for Keita to make high quality contact prints without the aid of an enlarger. In 1948, he opened his own studio in Bamako and quickly built up a successful business.



Seydou Keita, *Untitled (Portrait)*, 1949. Gelatin Silver Print, 50 x 60 cm.

Whether photographing single individuals, families or professional associations, Keita balanced a strict sense of formality with a remarkable level of intimacy with his subjects. Like many professional photographers, he furnished his studio with numerous props, from backdrops and costumes, to Vespas and luxury cars. He would renew these props every few years, which later allowed him to establish a chronology for his work. Keita commented on his studio practice, "It's easy to take a photo, but what really made a difference was that I always knew how to find the right position, and I was never wrong. Their head slightly turned, a serious face, the position of the hands . . . I was capable of making someone look really good."

Keita went to exceptional lengths to bring out the beauty of his subjects and the brilliant patterns of his backdrops proved a particularly effective foil. He worked intuitively, reinventing portrait photography through his search for extreme precision. In 1962, the newly installed Socialist government made Keita its official photographer; shortly thereafter, he closed down his studio, although he remained active until his retirement in 1977. His archive of over 10,000 negatives was gradually brought to light in the early 1990s; Keita has since achieved international recognition. Inventive and highly modern, his emphasis on the essential components of portrait photography – light, subject, framing – firmly establishes Keita among the 20th century masters of the genre.

- 
- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Solo Exhibitions | <p>2018 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Bamako Portraits, FOAM, Amsterdam, Netherlands</p> <p>2016 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Grand-Palais, Paris, France<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Galerie Leila Heller, Dubaï, UAE<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Bruxelles, Belgium</p> <p>2013 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Photographs from The Jean Pigozzi Collection, The Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, Russia</p> <p>2008 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Tate Modern, London, UK</p> <p>1998 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis, Missouri, USA<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Institut Français de Thessalonie, Thessaloniki, Greece<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Institut Français D'Athènes, Athens, Greece</p> <p>1997 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, USA<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Pinacoteca o Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brasil<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Galerie DV, San Sebastian, Spain<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Gagosian Gallery, New York, USA</p> <p>1996 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Photographer: Portraits from Bamako, Mali, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C., USA<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, USA</p> <p>1994 <i>Seydou Keïta</i>: 1949 à 1962, Fondation Cartier, Paris, France<br/><i>Seydou Keïta</i>, Ginza Art Space, Tokyo, Japan</p> |
|------------------|---|
- 
- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Group Exhibitions | <p>2017 <i>Studio Africa !</i>, Tristan Hoare Gallery, London, UK<br/><i>On aime l'art...!! Un choix d'Éric Mézil parmi les oeuvres de la Collection agnès b.</i>, Collection Lambert en Avignon, France<br/><i>Festival Photo La Gacilly</i>, Morbihan, Bretagne, France<br/><i>Autophoto</i>, Fondation Cartier, Paris, France</p> <p>2016 <i>Paris Photo</i>, Grand Palais, Paris, France<br/><i>African Portraits: Omar Victor Diop, Seydou Keïta, Aida Muluneh, Malick Sidibé &amp; J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere</i>, HackelBury Gallery, London, UK</p> <p>2015 <i>In and Out of the Studio : Photographic Portraits from West Africa</i>, Metropolitan Museum, New York, USA<br/><i>Après Eden - collection Artur Walther</i>, Maison Rouge, Paris, France<br/><i>1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair</i>, New-York, USA<br/><i>Bamako Photo in Paris</i>, Pavillon carré de Baudouin, Paris, France<br/><i>Keïta, Ojeikere, Sidibé</i>, 11 Columbia, Monaco<br/><i>Focus sur la collection</i>, Musée de la Fondation Zinsou, Ouidah, Bénin</p> |
|-------------------|--|

- 2012 *Who, What, Wear. Selections from the Permanent Collection*, Studio Museum Harlem, New York, USA  
*Africa / Africa*, Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac, France
- 2011 *August Sander and Seydou Keïta*, Walther Collection Project Space, New York, USA
- 2010 *Africa Rising*, 1 rue du Pont Neuf Louis Vuitton - Edun, Paris, France
- 2007 *Why Africa?*, Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin, Italy
- 2006 *100% Africa*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain  
*Vive l'Afrique, galerie du jour – agnès b.*, Paris, France  
*Vive l'Afrique, galerie du jour – agnès b.*, Tokyo, Japon  
*About Africa, part one*, Fifty One Fine Art Photography, Anvers, Belgium
- 2005 *African Art Now: Masterpieces from the Jean Pigozzi Collection*, National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA  
 \_\_\_ Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA  
 \_\_\_ Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, USA  
*Arts of Africa, The Contemporary collection of Jean Pigozzi*, Grimaldi Forum, Monaco, Principality of Monaco  
*Vive l'Afrique, galerie du jour – agnès b.*, Paris, France  
*A hundred years of children*, The Bunkamura Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan  
*Granship*, Shizuoka, Japan  
 The Niigata Bandajimia Art Museum, Niigata, Japan
- 2004 *Ritos sagrados, Ritos profanes – Bamako 03, (African Photography Encounters in Bamako – Sacred and profane rites)*, Centro de la Imagen, Mexico City, Mexico
- 2003 *Go Johnny Go ! The Electric Guitar – Art and Myth*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienne, Autriche  
*Rencontres de la photographie africaine à Bamako*, Bamako, Mali  
*Samuel Fosso, Malick Sidibé, Seydou Keïta*, Vestafrikansk portrettfotografi, Norsk Museum for Fotografi, Horten, Norway
- 2001 *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1994*  
 \_\_\_ Museum Villa Stuck, Munich, Germany  
 \_\_\_ House of World Cultures, Berlin, Germany  
 \_\_\_ Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, USA  
 P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, USA  
*"I ka nyi tan," Seydou Keïta e Malick Sidibé fotografi a Bamako*, Museo Hendrik C. Andersen, Rome, Italy  
*You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé*, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA  
 \_\_\_ UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA  
 \_\_\_ National Portrait Gallery, Londres, UK  
 \_\_\_ Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, USA  
*Flash Afrique!* Kunsthalle, Vienne, Austria  
 \_\_\_ Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Allemagne  
 \_\_\_ Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy

- 2000 *Voilà. Le Monde dans la tête*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France
- 1999 *Kunst Welten im Dialog*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany  
*PhotoEspaña 99 (2): Seydou Keïta y Malick Sidibé: Retrospectiva*, Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid, Spain
- 1998 *L'Afrique par elle-même*, Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris, France  
*Snap Me One! Studiofotografen in Afrika*  
 — Stadtmuseum , Munich, Germany  
 — City Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany  
 — Iwalewa-Haus, Bayreuth, Germany  
 — Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands  
*Les 50 ans de Tati*, Musées des arts Décoratifs, Paris, France
- 1996 *In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA  
*Houston Fotofest 1996: The 6th International Festival of Photography*, Houston, Texas, USA
- 1995 *Big City: Artists from Africa*, Serpentine Gallery, London, UK
- 1994 *Rencontres Photographiques de Bamako (1)*, Bamako, Mali  
*Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*, Espace lyonnais d'art contemporain, Lyon, France
- 1993 *Troisièmes Rencontres Photographiques de Normandie*, Rouen, France
- 1991 *Africa Explores: 20th Century African Art*, The Center for African Art and the New Museum for Contemporary Art, New York, USA

---

Public Collections Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France  
 21C Museum Fondation, Louisville, USA  
 Akron Art Museum, Akron, USA  
 Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, New York, USA  
 Credit Suisse Trust Collection, Switzerland  
 Detroit Institute of Arts Detroit, MI  
 Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, England  
 Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, Gainesville, USA  
 Los Angeles County Art Museum, Los Angeles, USA  
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Arts of Africa/Oceania, New York, USA  
 Michael C. Carlos Museum, Emory University, Atlanta, USA  
 Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden  
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA  
 Norton Family Collection, Santa Monica, USA  
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA  
 Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, USA

Saint Louis Museum of Art, Saint Louis, USA  
Trinity College, Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, Ireland  
University of Chicago, Chicago, USA  
US Department of State Collection, Washington D.C., USA  
William Benton Museum of Art, University of Connecticut, Storrs, USA

---

Selected  
Publications

- 2011 2011 *Seydou Keita: Photographs, Bamako, Mali 1948-1963*. Göttingen: Steidl
- 2001 2001 Lamunière, Michelle, Seydou Keita, and Malick Sidibé. *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photographs of Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé*. Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums
- 1997 1997 Keita, Seydou, André Magnin, and Youssouf Cissé. *Seydou Keita*. Zurich: Scalo