



# New African Narratives











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## Introduction

This photography exhibition entitled “New African Narratives,” showcasing 12 works by six African photographers, is being staged in conjunction with the third edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, held in Cairo, Egypt, (21-22 June 2022) under the theme: “Africa in an Era of Cascading Risks and Climate Vulnerability: Pathways for a Peaceful, Resilient, and Sustainable Continent.”

The works selected for “New African Narratives” seek to reflect the themes of the Forum, which address a range of African priorities in the post-Covid era, including sustaining peace, tackling climate change and more generally strengthening resilience in the face of multiple and interconnected crises. The works highlight the role of African women and youth as key pillars of resilience and change.

The forum marks one in a series of events building up to the Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP27) that Egypt will host next November. This year’s edition of the Aswan Forum aims to advance a green transformative recovery agenda that strengthens Africa’s ability to address overlapping risks as it navigates the post-COVID19 world with the goal of achieving sustainable peace and development and a climate-safe future.

“New African Narratives” also underlines the importance of initiatives that promote art, culture and heritage as a contribution to sustainable peace and development in Africa. This topic, which featured in





the Forum's second edition last year, continues to be present in this year's edition with the session "The Culture of Peace in Africa" organized in partnership with the Biennale of Luanda: The Pan African Forum for the Culture of Peace.

The exhibition was spearheaded by Ahmed Abdel-Latif, Executive Director of the Aswan Forum Secretariat and is curated by Rebecca Anne Proctor, journalist, author and art consultant, with the support of TINTERA photographic art consultancy, the only private gallery in Egypt dedicated to photography, co-founded by Heba Farid and Zein Khalifa.

## Africa through African Eyes

Men, women and children move before the camera with enthusiasm, defiance, curiosity, and pain as if trying to make sense of a period of change on the great continent of Africa. Their eyes, gestures, and stances, captured by photographers from across Africa, portray an urgency not just to understand themselves, but to communicate to their world their stories—ones where the myriad changing effects of the environment, society and state structures are rapidly transforming their daily lives. Photography has that power. It encapsulates a moment, a fleeting gesture, an expression, and an historical scene, locking it forever in time, with the hope that one day some will see it and probe it for its meaning, for what it was meant to document.

The six African photographers showing their work in “New African Narratives” depict the African continent during a moment of socio-economic and political change, impacted further by the effects of climate change and continual conflict. As the genre of Art from Africa continues to be one of the most sought-after in the world of contemporary art, these photographers, just like their visual art colleagues, exhibit an urgency to tell their stories and those of the communities they occupy and the ones that they witness each day through a mix of documentary, street, and fine art photography. Their work portrays Africa today through African eyes with a desire to reach a local, regional, and international gaze.

The images displayed exude an urgency to present the reality of daily life in Africa. These photographers do so by revealing both the joy and pain around them. For example, in one of the street photographs of Nigerian Grace Ekpu, a passionate storyteller dedicated to creating work that addresses social issues in her homeland, a man carries long colorful sponges in Balogun market in Lagos over one arm. While his face looks away with a fatigued air, the vibrant hues of sponges give life and hope to an otherwise bleak scene. In other images she shoots young boys on a beach in Lagos looking curiously at their smart phones and men gathering pieces of wood in the river under Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos, Africa’s second largest bridge. Meanwhile, Senegalese photographer Djibril Drame, known for his evocative and imaginative shots that look to resurrect forgotten cultural, heritage and religious aspects of African identity, has shot “Sabodala Riders,” a series of staged photographs depicting motorcycle riders in the Sabodala-Massawa Mine, the largest producing gold mine in Senegal. The riders are a metaphor for the Senegalese dream of becoming rich through gold, and they are shot amidst an alluring Sahelian setting where life is filled with misery, hope and resistance.



Mozambican photographer Mário Macilau similarly strives to portray the joy and pain while paying tribute to the dignity of his subjects. His black and white images show individuals from communities who are marginalized, and often overlooked locally and internationally. His poignant subjects, usually the recipients of violence and destitution, cling on to hope as if it were a magical garment. While one young boy holds a toy doll with his eyes closed as if reciting a prayer, in another photograph “Untitled (Charcoal)”, a child is found amidst drapery with his face covered in charcoal. His eyes stare defiantly out at the viewer in a mix of longing and resistance. The photograph tells the sad tale of the production of charcoal from deforestation in Mozambique that has led in recent years to manual mining being carried out by many children.

A more joyful scene is found in Egyptian Roger Anis’s “A one day trip, Ras el Bar Beach” from his series “Shaabi Beaches.” It shows a happy family on wooden chairs enjoying a nonchalant afternoon at the beach, smiling as they gather together in the water. Anis’s documentary style photography captures life in Egypt by exploring issues of social change within various communities.

Congolese female photographer Pamela Tulizo, winner of the third edition of the Dior Photography and Visual Arts Award for Young Talents in 2020. She has created a startling series of works that question the perception of women from her native country. On show are two works from her recent series “Enfer Paradisiaque” for which she shot images of models dressed in beautiful gowns and dresses amid essential products, like food, coal, and light bulbs. In one particularly poignant shot, a woman in the water is encircled by orange water gallons, which are ubiquitous throughout Africa and tell of the

continent's continual issues with water. The women stare out at the viewer with courage and defiance as if to say they will continue living and fighting with beauty even during times of hardship.

Nigerian Ifebughosa Shotunde's black and white image of boys at a beach in the Delta State, named after the Niger Delta, a large part of which is in the state, show children playing in one of the West African country's most destitute regions, where oil exploitation and environmental conflict affect the everyday lives of the region's inhabitants, causing a range of challenges, including increasing mental health problems. Still Shotunde's children go on to play in the water as if they had no cares in the world.

It is only within the last two decades that the richness of African photography has made it into the mainstream international art market. The 1990s marked a turning point in the genre of contemporary African photography, notably due to the founding of Bamako Encounters in 1995, the biennial photography festival in the capital of Mali. There was also the 1996 exhibition "In/Sight: African Photographers 1940 to the Present" at the Guggenheim Museum in New York by the late Okwui Enwezor. In 2017 in *Aperture* magazine Enwezor stated: "What I believe is that in the 1990s, a generation of curators, writers, and thinkers who were Africans—and I want to underscore this—made a bid to shift completely away from this ethnographic lens, and its spotlight. We found that the way that this lens thought of Africa was completely at odds with the content." He thus argued that what changed during the 1990s, which Emmanuel Iduma underlines in his 2021 essay *Post-Continental: Contemporary African Photography in Art in America*, was a new awareness that "the global photographic history had failed to pay tribute to the older generations of African photographers, many who came of age during the twilight of colonialism."

In the three decades that have followed to where we are today, writers, curators, and artists, have worked hard to fill in these missing gaps and correct history, thus forging a new and more accurate post-colonial narrative of the African story. The photographers that make up “New African Narratives” are part of this story—part of the continent’s new storytellers dedicated and passionate to telling themselves the tales of their homelands—tales that are often not heard, seen nor reported to the rest of the world. It is through their lens that such African contemporary tales are documented.

Additionally, this exhibition marks one of only a handful of recent shows staged in Egypt on photography from across the Africa, and in so doing, marks a turning point, like the Aswan Forum, of Egypt’s increasingly active involvement in the African continent, politically, economically and culturally. In line with the aims of the Aswan Forum, the images on display seek to raise awareness and connect narratives about the interconnected challenges facing Africa. Some of the photographs are harder than others, some more joyful and some more violent, but what they capture so eloquently is the reality of their subjects. It is through an understanding of the stories behind each image as well as the emotional depth they impart, that we, the viewers, hopefully might better be able to understand the realities they portray and thus be better informed to engage, culturally and socially to build together a more peaceful present and sustainable future.





# Djibril Drame (Senegal, b. 1988)

Djibril Drame is a Senegalese visual artist, filmmaker, curator, and independent scholar from Senegal. His work strives to shed light on socially relevant and potentially controversial issues affecting our world today, reflecting the many aspects of Africa's multifaceted history and variously intertwined cultures to offer an alternative African narrative. Over the past several years, Drame has also worked in film and has released two short movies which have been featured alongside his photography in festivals and exhibitions in Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Spain, and Togo. He is represented by London and Lagos-based Dada Gallery.

Preceding page: Djibril Drame, *Yeezy*, 2021.

Following page: Djibril Drame, *Sabodala Riders*, 2022.











# Grace Ekpu (Nigeria, b. 1991)

Grace is a published documentary photographer and videographer living in Lagos, Nigeria. She holds a Master of Science in Media Management from the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication from Babcock University, Nigeria. Ekpu works as an investigative reporter with the Associated Press and previously worked as a senior journalist with the BBC. She has won numerous awards for her photography, including the winner of the Fashola Photography Competition in 2018 and a nominee in 2019 for the annual Canon Storytelling Master Class in Nigeria. That same year she won a scholarship to attend the annual Foundry Photojournalism workshop in Kigali, Rwanda. As a passionate visual storyteller, she is interested in covering everyday life in Africa, addressing social issues, and seeking various avenues to tell the African story from the African perspective. In 2020 she covered the End SARS Protests in Lagos, Nigeria.

Preceding page: Grace Ekpu, *A man carrying colorful sponges in Balogun market in Lagos, 2020.*

Following Left page: Grace Ekpu, *Men gathering pieces of wood in the river under Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos, 2020.*

Following Right page: Grace Ekpu, *Boys holding smart phones at beach in Lagos, 2020.*













# Ifebusola Shotunde (Nigeria, b. 1995)

Ifebusola is a photographer and filmmaker working and living in Nigeria. Shotunde's works illustrate his keen interest in the human mind and ways of fortifying communal and interpersonal relationships. He studied business administration at Yaba College of Technology and criminology and security studies at National Open University, both in Lagos, Nigeria. He began his photography practice in 2012 working on experimental projects in the fashion industry, as an apprentice turned collaborator to Nigerian artist Kadara Enyeasi. Shotunde eventually pivoted into documentary work where he developed an inquisitive approach to capturing vigor and beauty in the mundane. Shotunde's works have been showcased in two solo exhibitions and seven group exhibitions in Lagos, Nigeria. Shotunde was recently nominated for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award.

Preceding page: Ifebusola Shotunde, *Pursuit of Happiness*, 2020.





# Mário Macilau (Mozambique, b. 1984)

A multi-disciplinary artist best known for his photography, Macilau specializes in long-term photography projects and series that address the complex realities of human labor and environmental conditions predominantly in Africa. Macilau started his journey as a photographer in 2003 from the streets of the Mozambican capital of Maputo, becoming professional when he traded his mother's cell phone for his first camera in 2007. Macilau's work has won several awards including the European Union Award for Environment (2015), the UNESCO-Aschberg Bursary for Visual Arts (2014), and he is a laureate of the Africa Centre's Artist in Residency (AIR) Fountainhead Residency Award (2014). He is currently represented by ED CROSS gallery in London, United Kingdom.

Preceding page: Mário Macilau, *Untitled (Charcoal)*, 2020. [boy with charcoal face]

Following Left page: Mário Macilau, From the series *Things Fall Apart*, 2021. [woman with child in landscape]

Following Left page: Mário Macilau, *A Boy with a Toy*, from the series *Faith*, 2018.











# Pamela Tulizo (Democratic Republic of Congo, b. 1993)

Born in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pamela Tulizo grew up in Goma in the war-torn North Kivu province, where armed conflicts have led to alarming levels of violence against women. Working with the theme Face to Face, Pamela Tulizo opposes the negative, victimized image of Congolese women depicted in the international press with a hopeful representation that highlights their vitality and resilience. She started her career as a broadcast journalist in television and radio for Radio France International in Goma before becoming a photographer. Despite the strong objections of her father, who was convinced that photography was an exclusively “male” occupation, she began her training and was awarded a scholarship at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa, graduating in 2019. She was also mentored by Congolese photographer Martin Lukongo. Although trained as a journalist, in her recent work Tulizo distances herself from documentary photography, using the codes of fashion photography, clothes, accessories, makeup, color to create a narrative that aims to dispose of the narrative found on television and magazines for women. Often seen as victims, particularly of sexual violence, the women from Goma she portrays in her photographs are instead powerful individuals in the fight for social justice. Tulizo wants to reflect the inner beauty and power of the women around her, particularly from her home region of Goma and greater Congo. In 2020 she won the Dior Photography and Visual Arts Award for Young Talents for her series “Double Identity.”

Preceding page: Pamela Tulizo, *Enfer Paradisiaque, Mahindi*, 2021.

Following Left page: Pamela Tulizo, *Enfer Paradisiaque, Maji*, 2021.











# Roger Anis (Egypt, b. 1986)

Roger Anis began his career as a photojournalist with Shorouk newspaper in 2010 before going on to work on personal photo essays exploring issues of social change within different communities in Egypt. In 2014, Roger was named the winner for the first Reuters Microsoft mobile photo award and his work was exhibited in Egypt and internationally. He received a degree in photojournalism from the Danish School of Media & Journalism in Denmark in 2015. Anis has also been working as an Art Director and Photographer for UNICEF Egypt with a particular focus on a children's street project to produce books and exhibitions about street kids in Egypt. He was also one of the few Arab photographers selected by WPP World Press to participate in the Reporting Change Project about the Arab Spring for which he produced a story about the crisis in tourism that afflicted Egypt post the 2011 Revolution. Through his work he captures daily life in Egypt, has covered the Arab Spring in 2011, Egyptian women as well as various aspirations and challenges that characterize his homeland. His work has been widely published and exhibited in international and local festivals and biennales.

Preceding page: Roger Anis, *A one-day trip, Ras el Bar Beach*, 2017, from the series *Shaabi Beaches*.

# Acknowledgements

The organizers would like to thank the six participating photographers for their outstanding and thought-provoking works from around the continent, without which the exhibition “New African Narratives” would not be possible. This exhibition and catalogue could not have been produced without the incredible support and work of TINTERA alongside the various gallerists and specialists who have helped us to procure these works in record time, including Ed Cross, Gabriele Salmi and Oyinkansola Dada.

This exhibition catalogue is published on the occasion of the third edition of the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development, entitled “Africa in an Era of Cascading Risks and Climate Vulnerability: Pathways for a Peaceful, Resilient, and Sustainable Continent”, held in Cairo, Egypt, from 21-22 June 2022.

[www.aswanforum.org](http://www.aswanforum.org)

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Exhibition and brochure design and production: TINTERA photographic art consultancy







## ASWAN FORUM

Africa in an Era of Cascading Risks and Climate Vulnerability:  
Pathways for a Peaceful, Resilient, and Sustainable Continent

21 - 22 June, 2022, Cairo, Egypt