

# RACHIDI BISSIRIOU

## GLOIRE IMMORTELLE



**Albert on his Honda with Two Friends, 1978**



CARRIE SCOTT

### DAVID HILL GALLERY

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In 1968, the West African photographer Rachidi Bissiriou set up his photographic studio, Studio Plaisir, in his hometown of Kétou in Benin, which he operated until its closure in 2004. The timing of this was pertinent – Bissiriou was only 18 and Benin had only declared its independence from French rule eight years earlier, in 1960. Armed with a Yashica twin-lens camera, Bissiriou documented these heady times, spending the next three decades shooting black and white photographs of the locals in a standard 6x6cm format.

Bissiriou's images are remarkable for their simplicity and a freshness that feels utterly contemporary. Shot against plain backdrops, or in the town where they lived, Bissiriou's subjects posed wearing their own clothing, which could range from traditional West African attire such as grand boubou, head wraps and Ankara agbadas, to more modern styles that nodded to the explosion in youth culture at the time. The image of two men – each wearing shirts unbuttoned to their sternum, paired with flared trousers – or a group of three women in sunglasses posing proudly with their handbags clearly demonstrate the post-independence verve. Bissiriou's skill was in forging a connection with his subjects, being able to put them at ease, and allowing their innate sense of self-expression to shine through. His camera often captured his subjects in a moment of quiet repose, by turns self-possessed, contemplative, and optimistic.

For Bissiriou, the desire to become a photographer was in his own words, 'because someone who is a photographer has the freedom to go anywhere and everywhere.' While the primary focus of his nearly three decades of photography were the residents and families of his hometown, the images are no less transportive, instantly painting a vivid picture of West African society during a ground-breaking moment of transformation. **Kin Woo, March 2022**

'One of West Africa's most important image-makers.' **AnOther Magazine**

RACHIDI BISSIRIOU

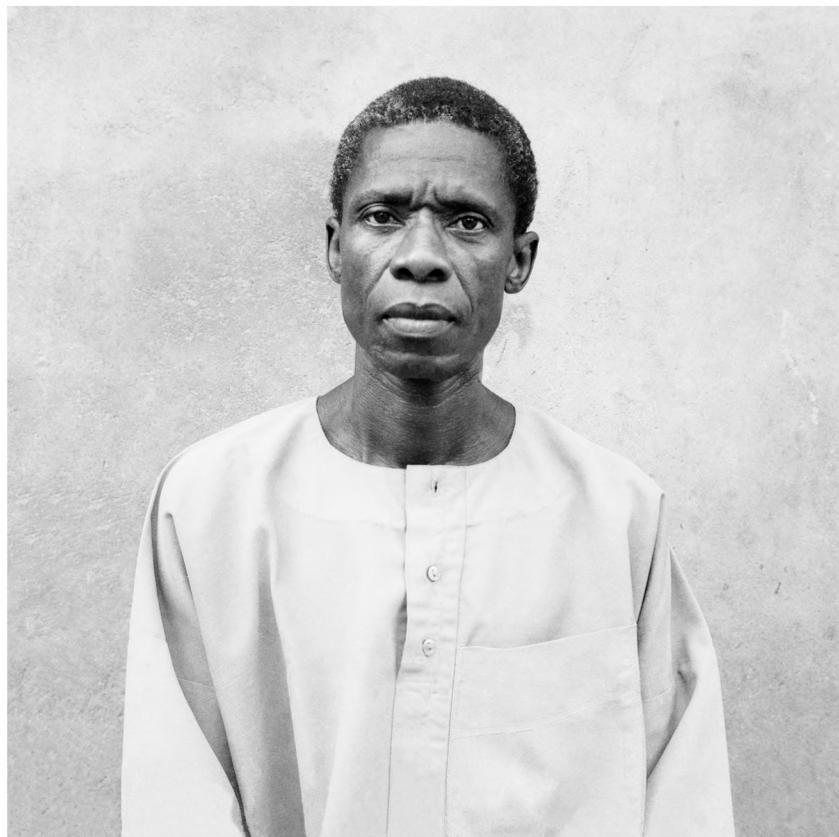
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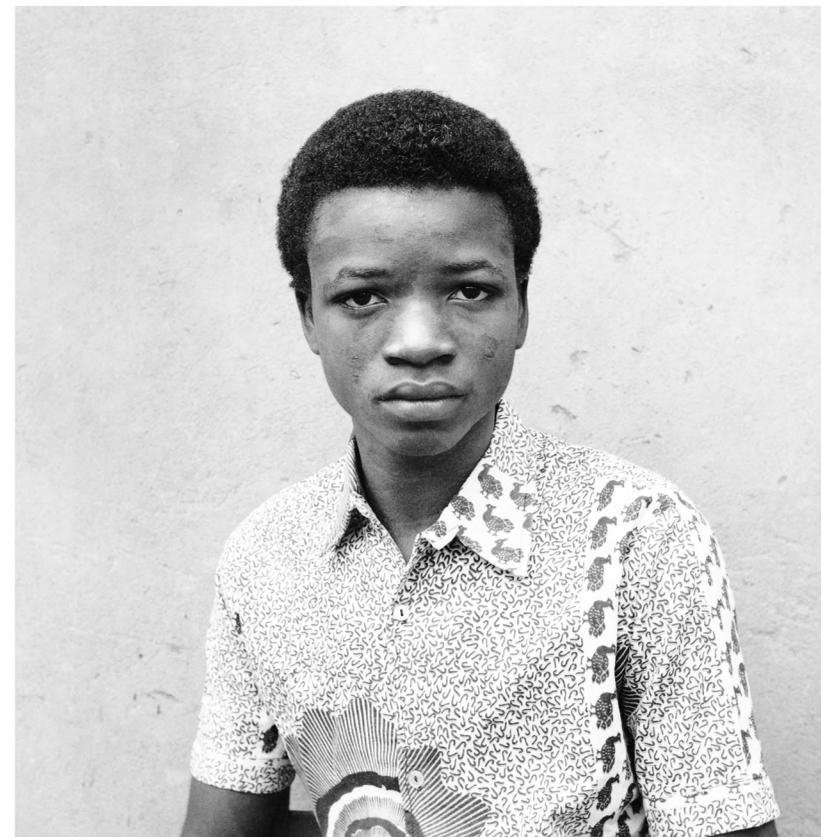
**Young Student in Kétou Side Street, 1968**



**Newlywed Wife, 1968**



**Camille Elegbede, Teacher, 1969**



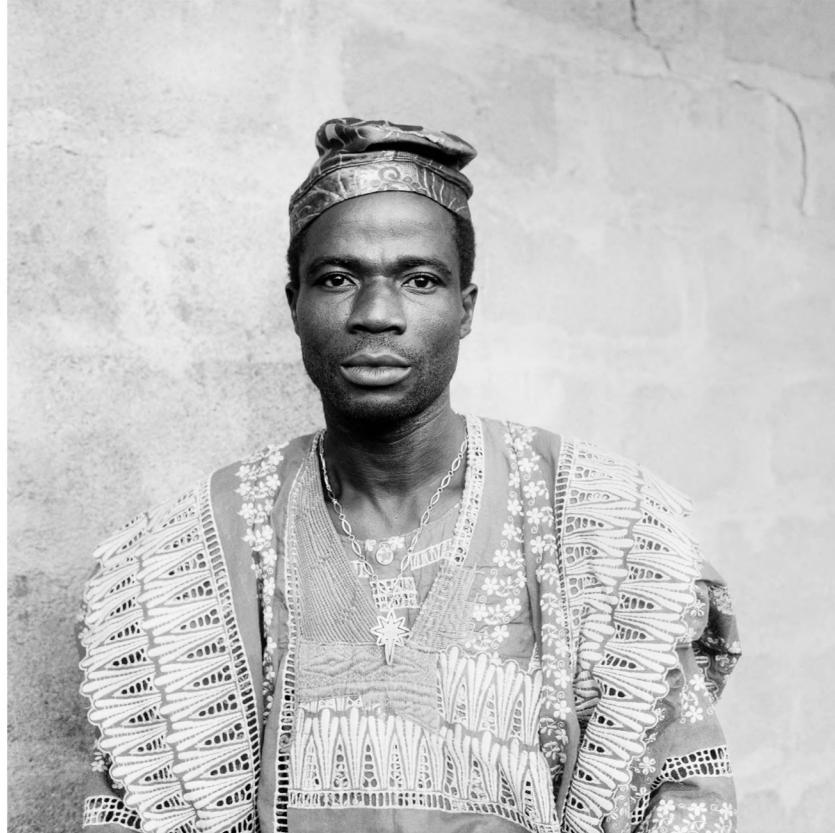
**Teenage Student, 1980**



**Nun with the Celestial Church of Christ, 1970**



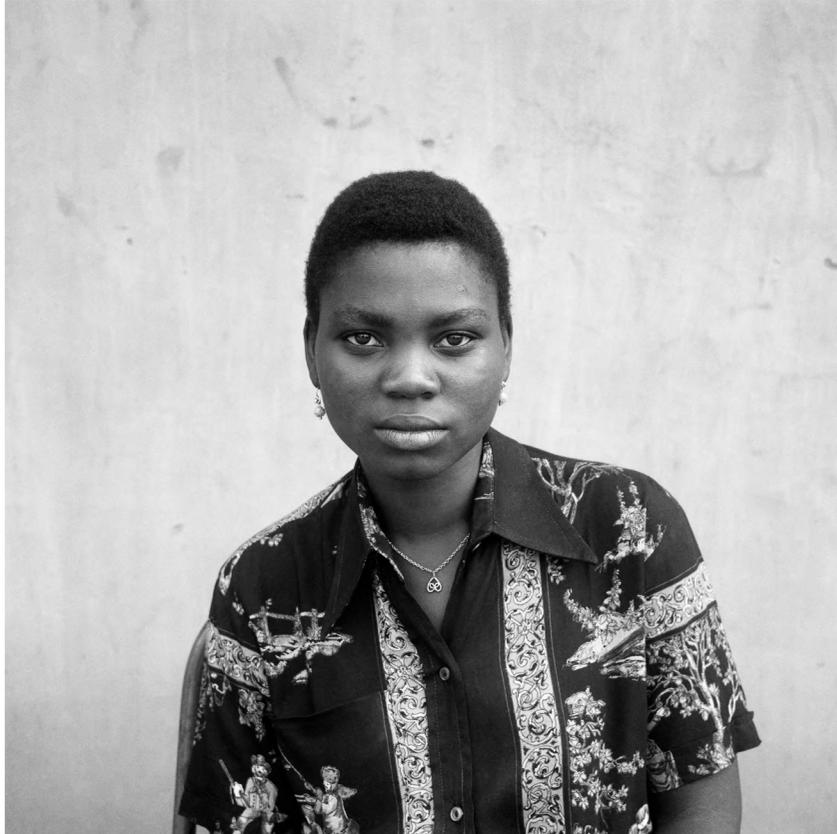
**Susane Adoun, Administrator of the then Sub-prefecture, 1973**



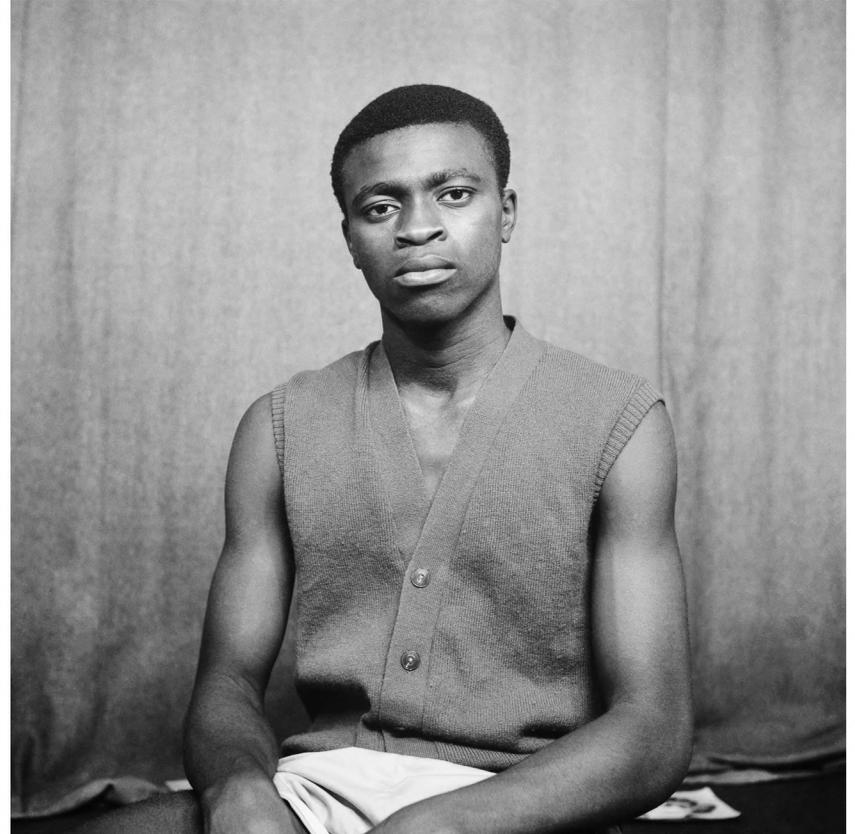
**Roger the Carpenter, 1980**



**Adrien the Joiner, 1975**



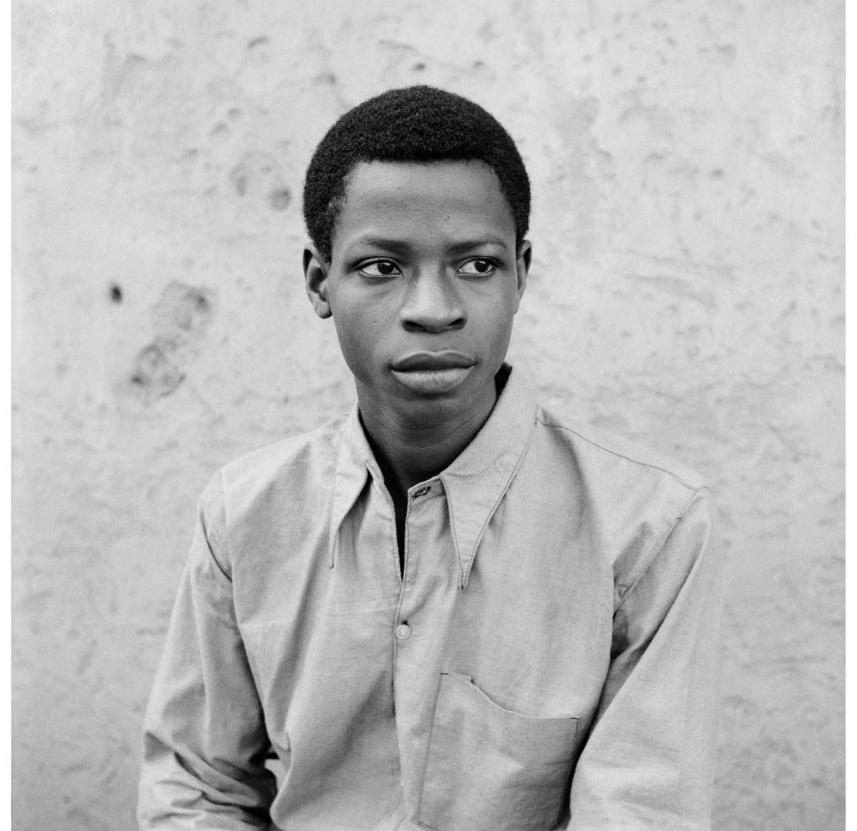
**Young Woman from the Village of Adjosoumè, 1982**



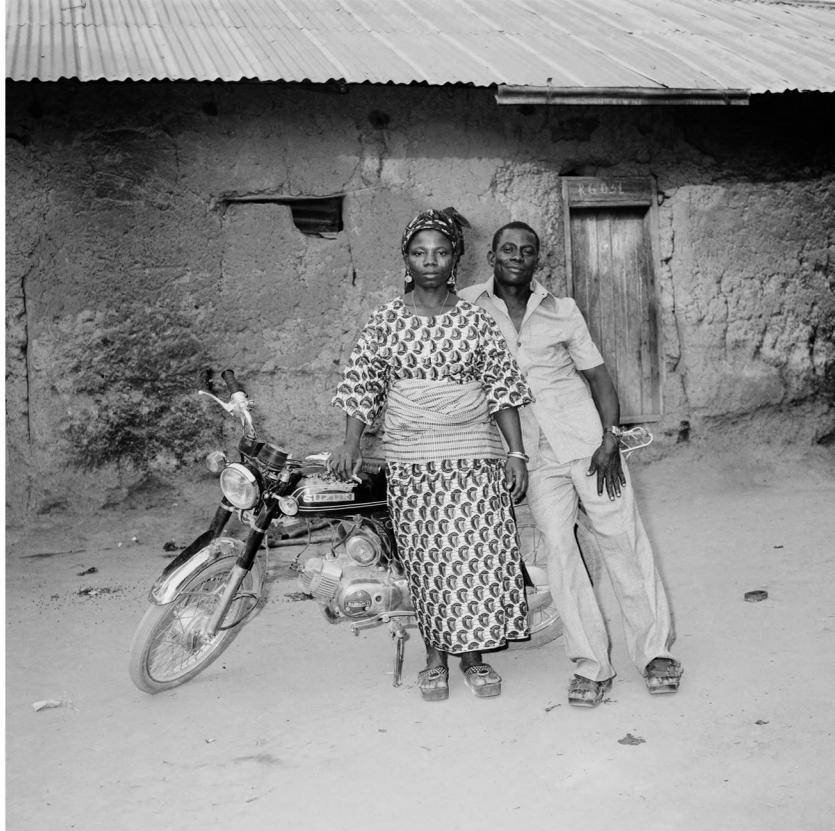
**College Student, 1984**



**Young Wife and Mother, 1983**



**Hospital Nurse, 1984**



**Two Friends with Suzuki Motorcycle, 1974**



**Albert on his Honda with Two Friends, 1978**



**Student, the Son of Christophe, 1975**



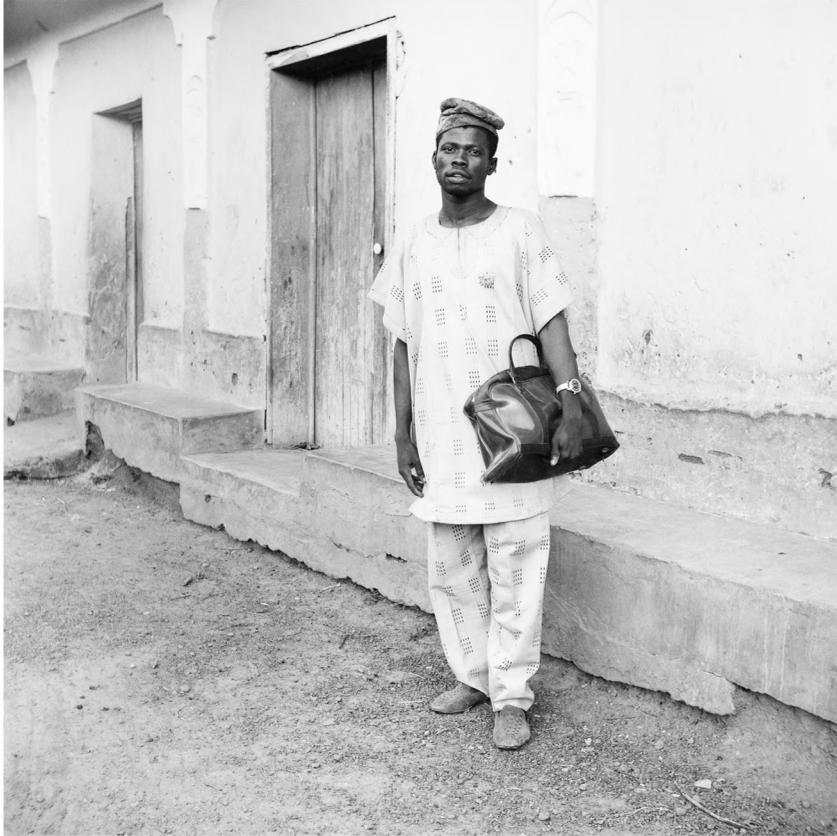
**Two Students at the College of Engineering (CEG), from the Village of Idigni, Kétou, 1974**



**Kétou Grandmother, 1984**



**Blind Man, 1985**



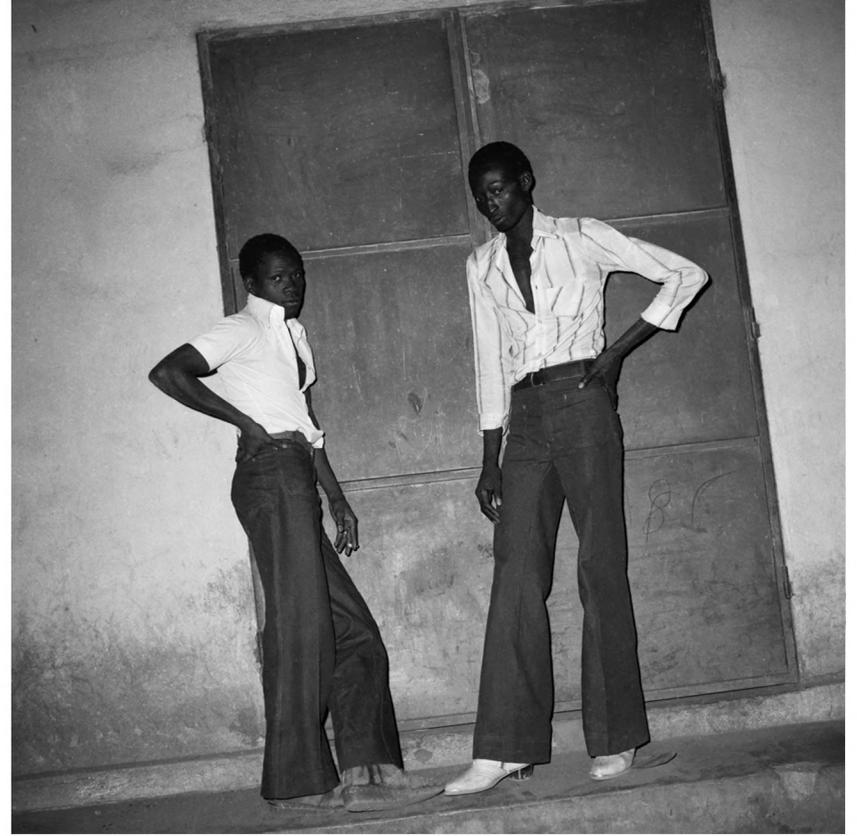
**Soumaila the Salesman, 1986**



**The Five Friends, 1985**



**Yéyé Student and Friend, 1973**



**Rachidi Bissiriou (left) with Bakary. 1975**



**Three Young Ladies at Studio Plaisir, 1983**

‘These beautiful black and white portraits, which exhibit a remarkably contemporary style, offer an insight into the emerging cultural trends of the time. The subjects themselves appear notably relaxed in front of the lens – a testament to Bissiriou’s connection with them. Intimately framed, they are given a rare chance for documented self-expression, presenting to Bissiriou subtle smiles and pensive expressions.’ **Creative Review**

‘An extraordinary series of portraits’ **The Guardian**

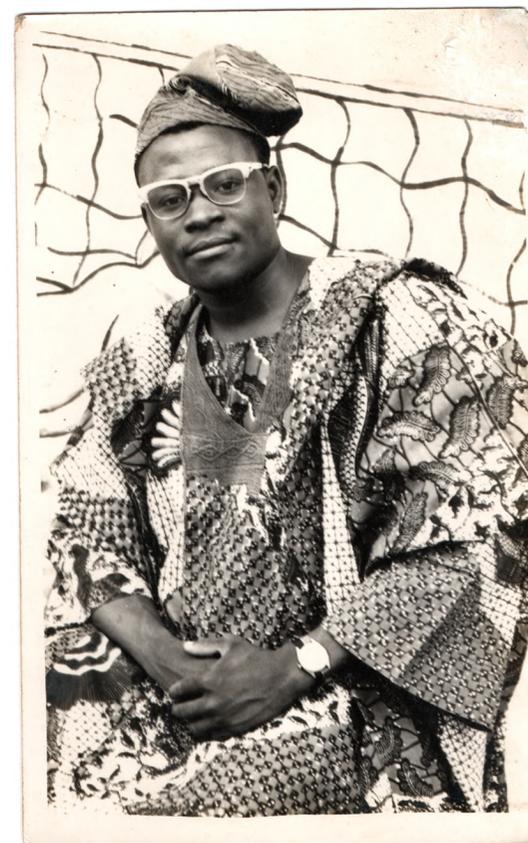


**Young Man with Yamaha, 1979**

14 x 14 in. (35.5 x 35.5 cm) image on 20 x 16 in. (50 x 40 cm) paper  
Contemporary silver gelatin fibre-based prints  
Edition of 8, plus 2 Artist Proofs  
Signed by the artist in pencil on gallery label

Edition numbers 1 to 4: £1,900  
Edition numbers 5 and 6: £2,500  
Edition numbers 7 and 8: £3,500

Prices include VAT, supplied unframed



**Rachidi Bissirou, Auto Portrait**

Vintage silver gelatin print  
5.5 x 3.5 in. (13.9 x 8.8 cm)

A short film of Rachidi Bissirou vintage prints can be seen [here](#)

Please contact either [david@davidhillgallery.net](mailto:david@davidhillgallery.net) or [carrie@carrie-scott.com](mailto:carrie@carrie-scott.com) for details of available vintage prints