

# TÊTE-À-TÊTES

West African Portraiture  
from Independence into the 21st Century



Sanlé Sory, Les Deux Villageoises au Pagne, 1974



CARRIE SCOTT

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It began in Ghana in 1957, then three years later, independence swept across Africa like a wave. The new freedom saw the people embracing fashion and music to forge strong, new cultural identities. Photography boomed as the locals were keen to show their hip, *Yé-yé* style.

The work of Mali's Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita was discovered in the mid 1990s, sending waves through the art world. In 2003, Sidibé was awarded the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography. In 2007, this was followed by the Venice Biennale's Golden Lion Award for Lifetime Achievement, the first time this had been given to either a photographer or an African.

Sanlé Sory's work was first shown at David Hill Gallery in 2017, then a year later he became the first African photographer to be awarded a solo show at an American museum (Art Institute of Chicago). The New York Times declared, 'Sanlé's work documenting the cultural scene is reminiscent of that by Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita.... and now it is his turn to be lionized.'

Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou's 2011 Egungun series shows Yoruba men of Porto-Novo, Benin, wearing ceremonial costumes. The Egungun are the invocation of the Yoruba's spiritual ancestors and at certain points in the year, emerge and gather for masquerades, sometimes attracting crowds of over a thousand. Agbodjélou is the founder and director of the first photographic school in Benin and was commissioned to shoot the Louis Vuitton 2020 advertising campaign.

Rachidi Bissiriou is from the village of Kétou in central Benin. He opened Studio Pleasure in 1968 and spent the next three decades using his Yashica twin-lens camera to photograph the locals. During this period, Bissiriou produced an extraordinary portrait series of local villagers, his lighting and composition giving the images a remarkably contemporary feel. Bissiriou's subjects are depicted in their everyday attire, the artist photographed them as he found them. Now in retirement, Rachidi Bissiriou's work can be seen for the first time in Tête-à-Têtes.

'A show bringing together the work of some of the region's most important photographers, including Sanlé Sory, Rachidi Bissiriou, Malick Sidibé and Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou.' **The Guardian**

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Rachidi Bissiriou  
Malick Sidibé  
Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou



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Viewing by appointment

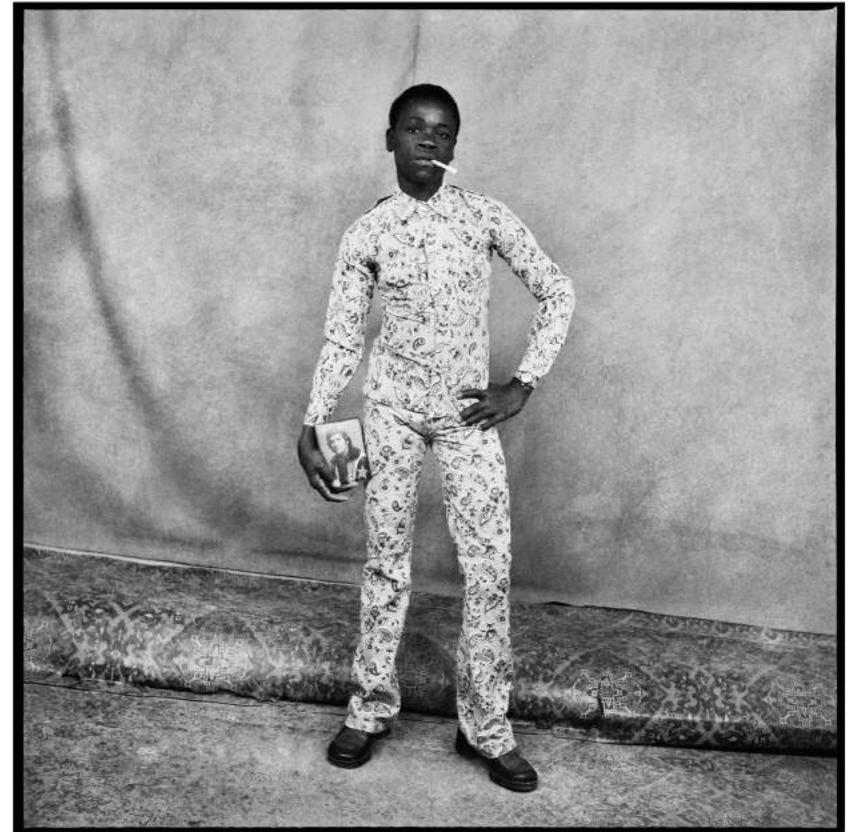
### Sanlé Sory (b. 1943)

In 2017 the David Hill Gallery became the first to present the work of Ibrahima Sanlé Sory outside of West Africa, and the gallery continues to represent the artist. Twelve Sanlé Sory works will be on display in *Tête à Têtes*, several of which are previously unseen.

Sanlé Sory founded his Volta Photo studio in Bobo-Dioulasso, Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, in 1960, the year that the country gained independence from France, Sory caught the exuberance of Burkinabe youth embracing new styles of music fashion. His photographs often depict the of melding of tradition and modernity that took place at the time.

Sanlé became the first African photographer to receive a solo show at an American museum (Art Institute of Chicago, 2018), and now has gallery representation in New York, Paris and Amsterdam, as well as London.

These people are metropolitan, worldly, and cool, and they vibrate with excitement for a new future. **The New Yorker**



Jeune Fan D'Eddy Mitchell, 1974



Je Vais Decoller, 1977



Les Deux Amies Au Pagine, 1972



Les Afro-Pop, 1973



Le Relève, 1982



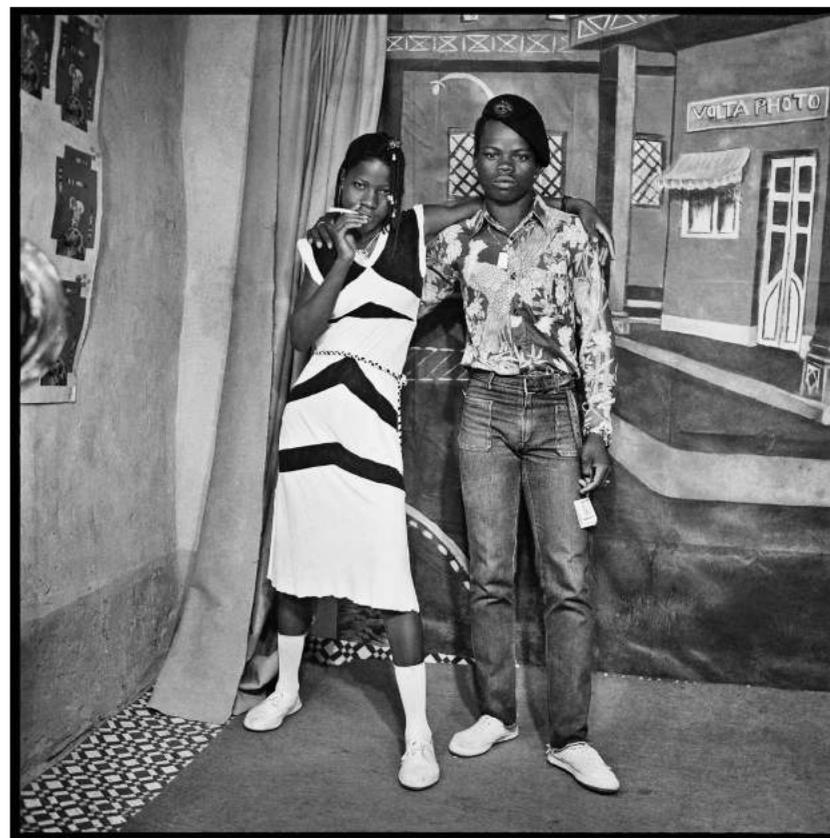
Surprise party en ville, 1974



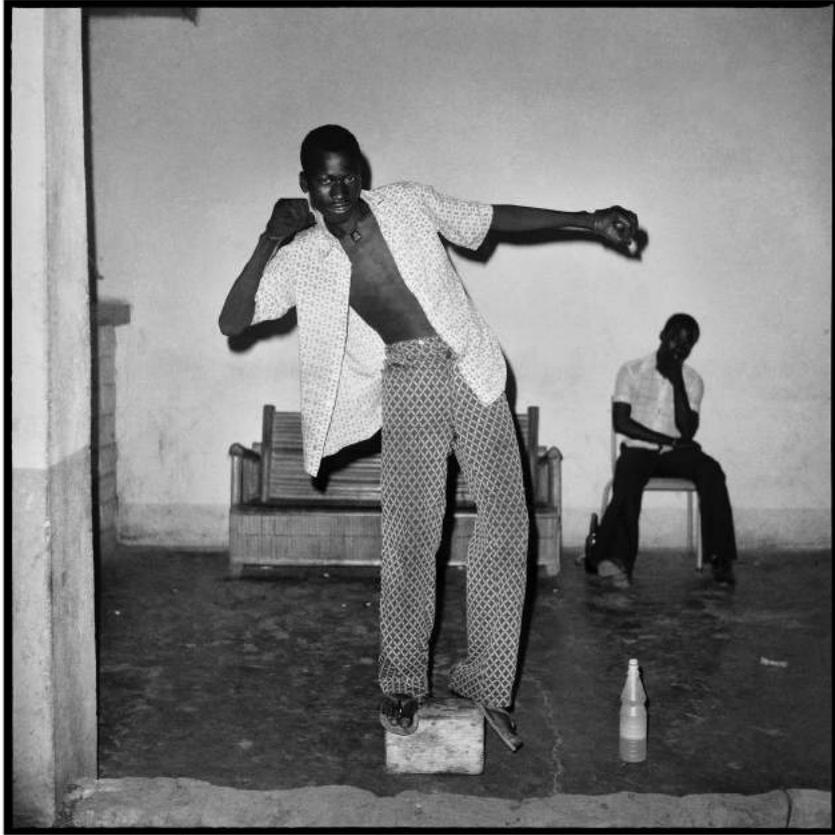
Le Pirate, 1974



Les Deux Amoureux de Dogona, 1972



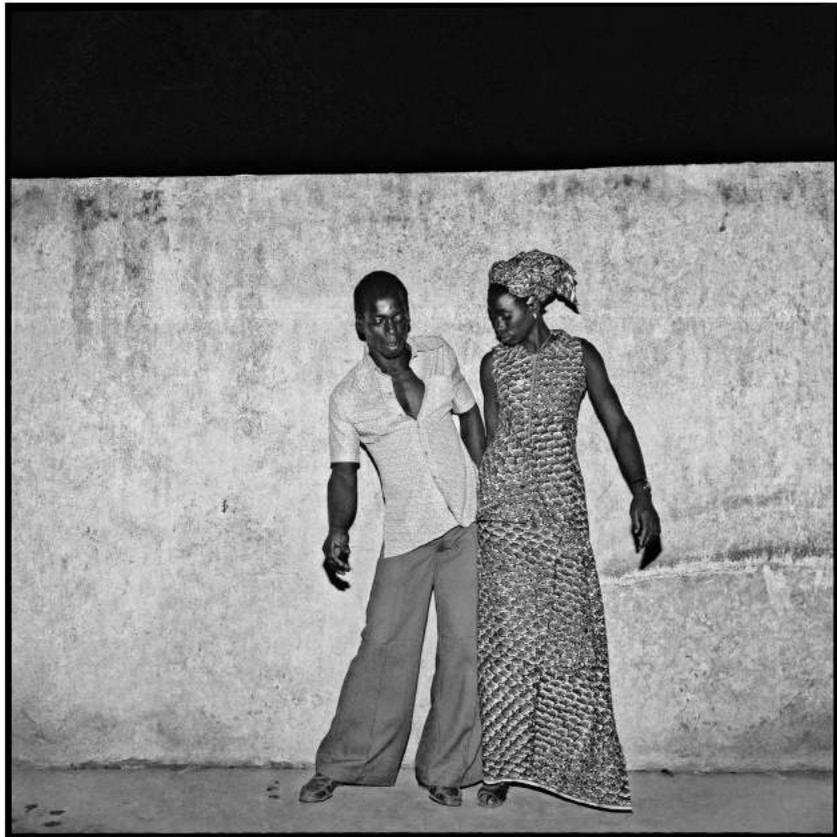
Les Amoureux Yougou Yougou, 1980



L'équilibriste, 1972



Les Deux Villageoises au Pagne, 1974



**Les Jeunes Danseurs de Sikasso Sira, 1972**

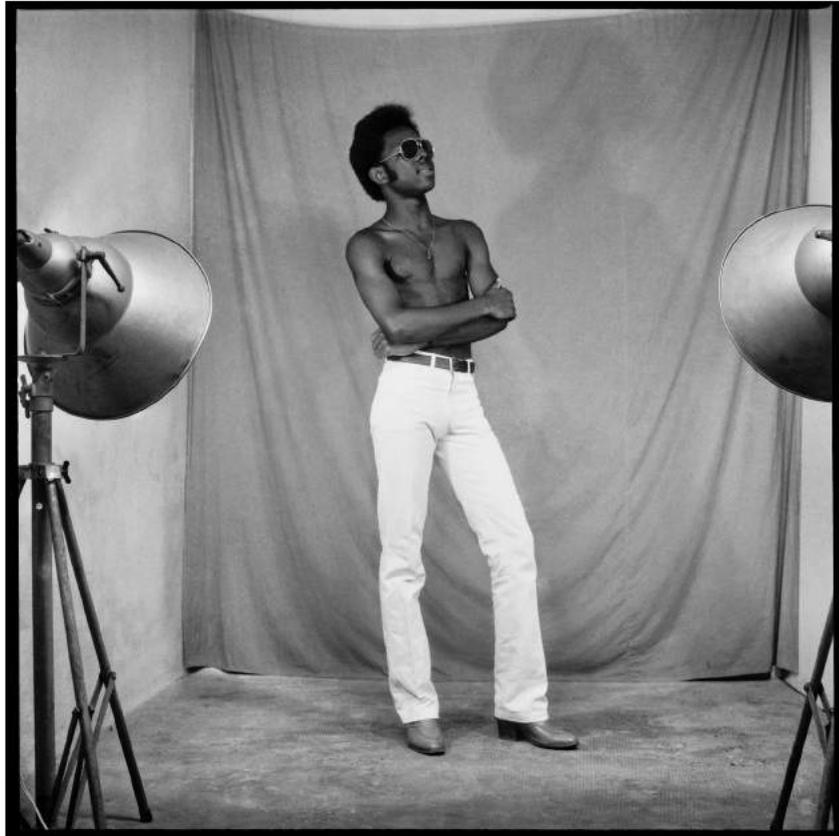
Sanlé's work documenting the cultural scene is reminiscent of that by Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita... and now it is his turn to be lionized.  
**The New York Times**



Mali Djeli, 1984



La Balade en Ville, 1972



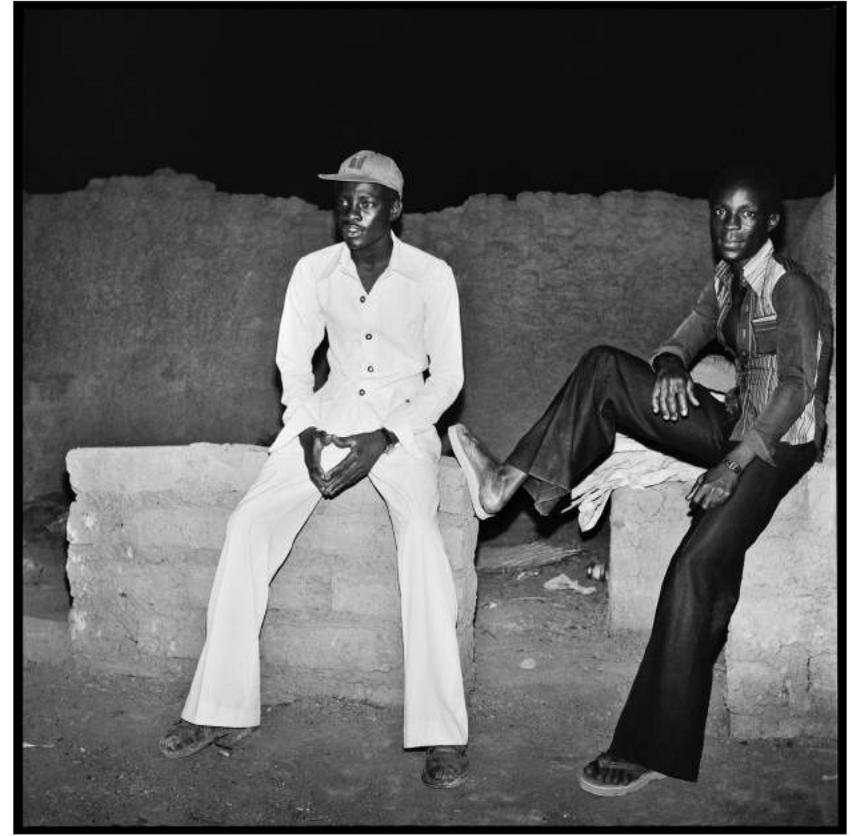
Elvis, 1974



Les Deux Fermiers Peuls, 1977



Yamaha De Nuit, 1972



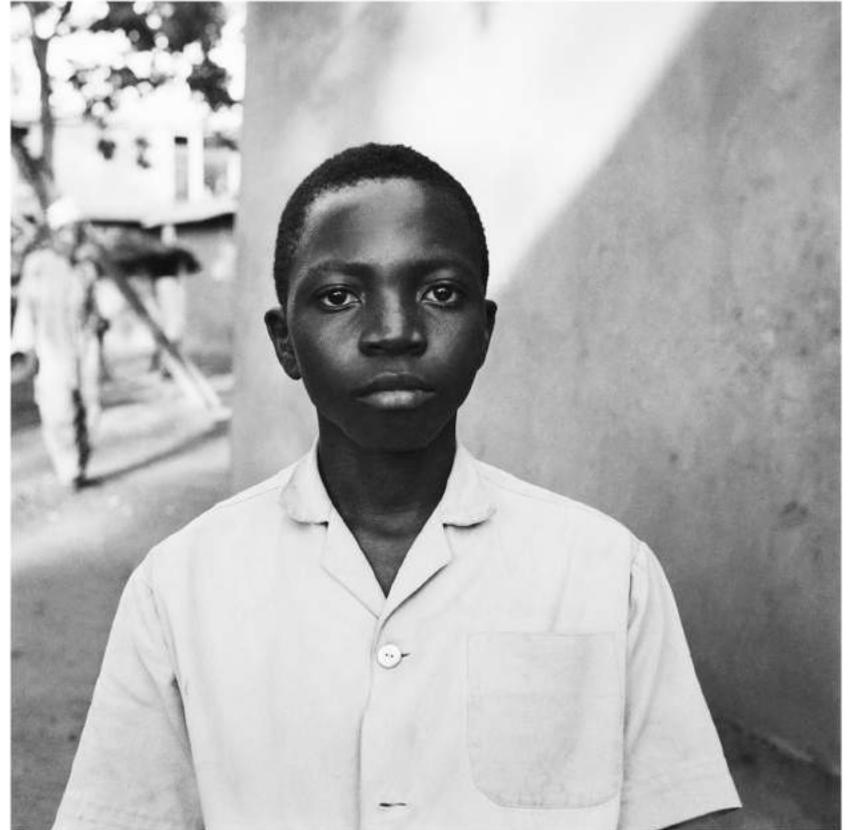
Le Repos des Danseurs, 1978

### **Rachidi Bissiriou (b. 1950)**

David Hill Gallery recently begun exclusive global representation of the archive of Beninese photographer Rachidi Bissiriou. Now retired, Bissiriou's work has never been seen outside of the village of Kétou, in central Benin, where he opened and ran his 'Studio Pleasure' from 1968 to 1985.

Working with a Yashica twin-lens medium format camera, he produced an extraordinary series of portraits of the local villagers. The lighting and composition are remarkably contemporary in feel, with the subjects depicted in their everyday clothing, for some traditional and some contemporary. The artist photographed them as he found them.

'An extraordinary series of portraits' **The Guardian**



**Untitled, 1968**



Untitled, 1984



Untitled, 1982



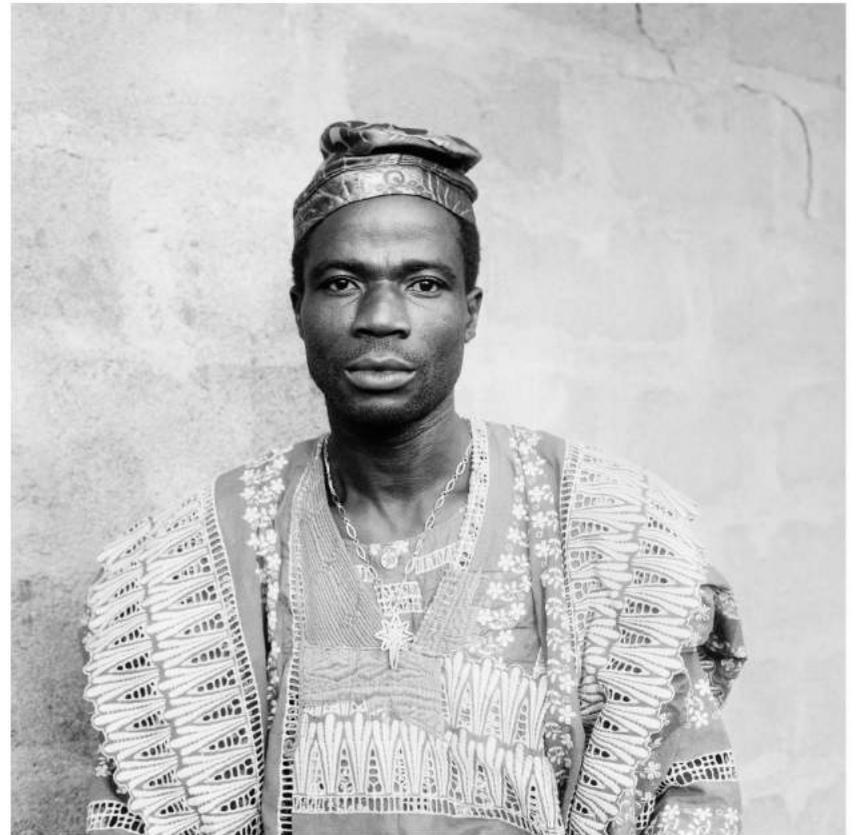
Untitled, 1983



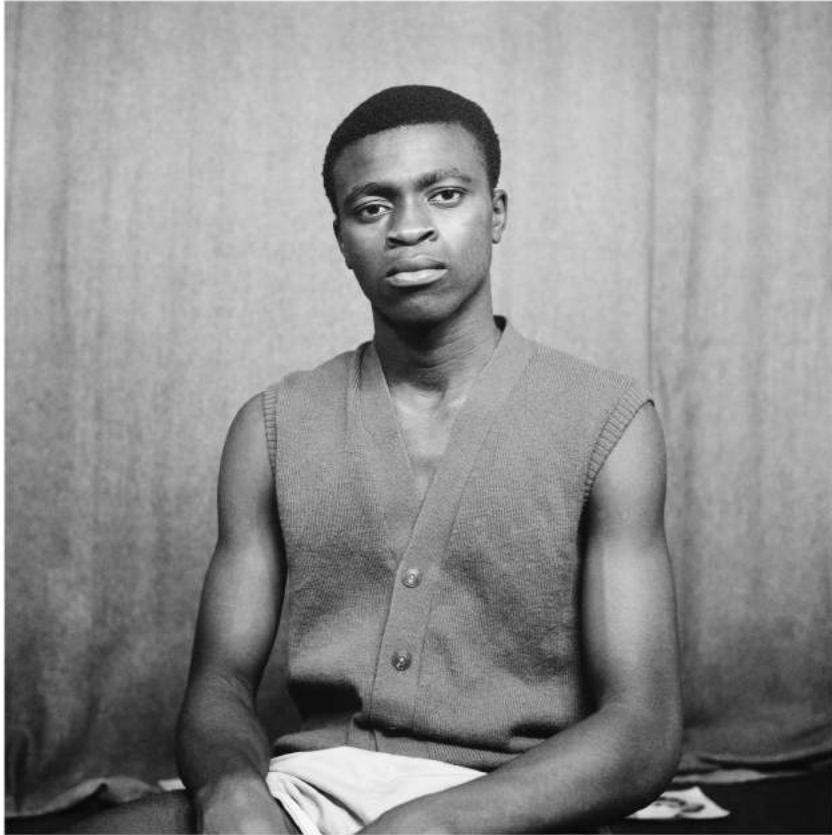
Untitled, 1975



Untitled, 1976



Untitled, 1980



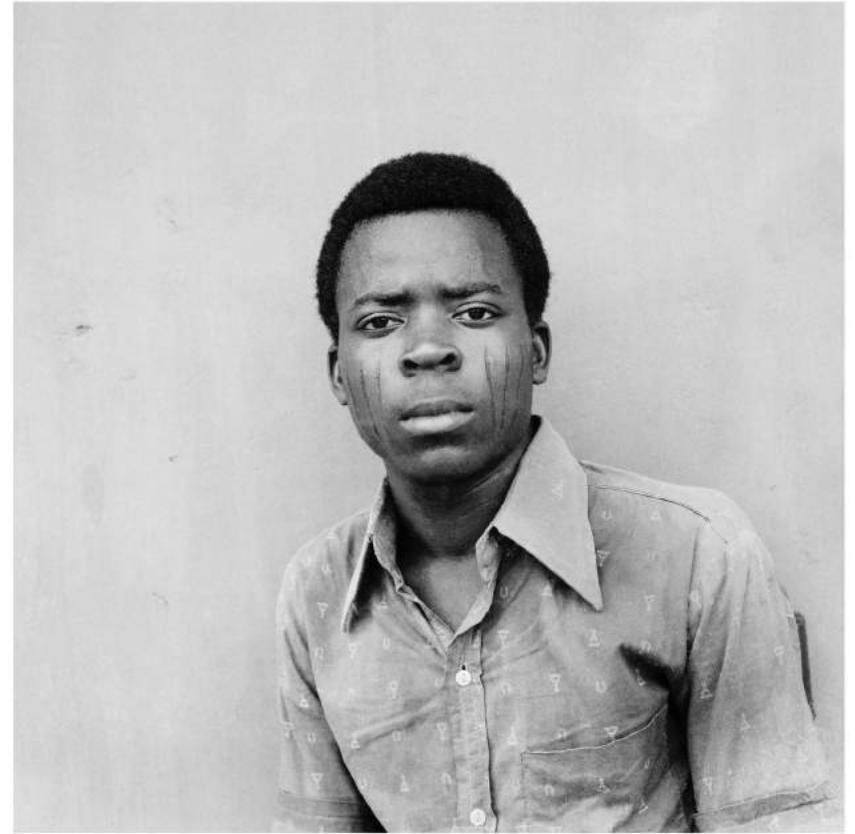
Untitled, 1984



Untitled, 1973



Untitled, 1985



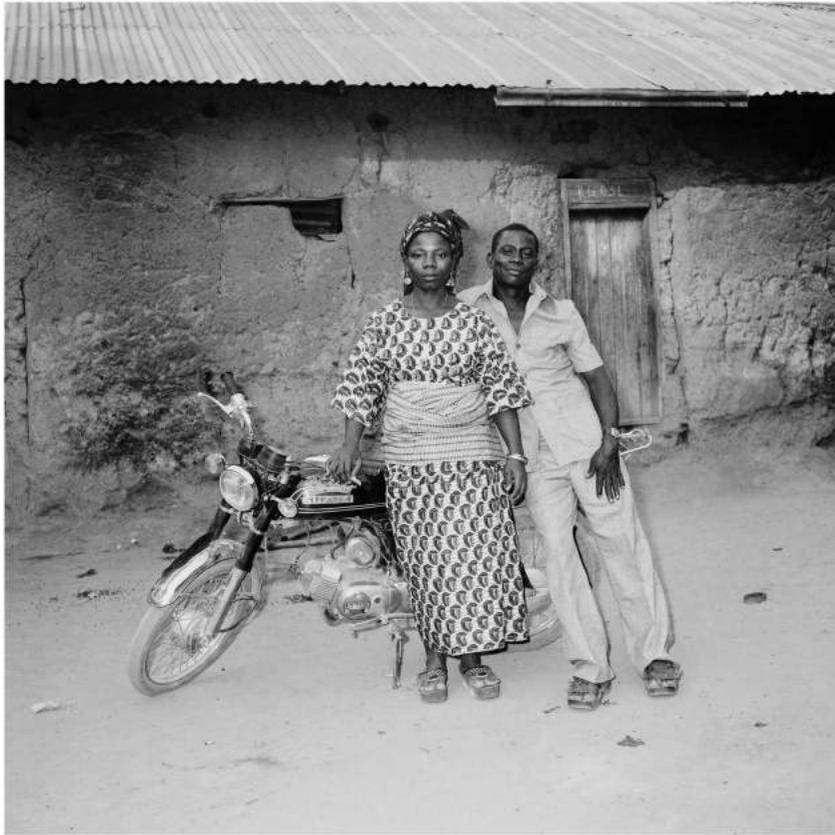
Untitled, 1977



Untitled, 1985



Untitled, 1979



Untitled, 1974



Untitled, 1975



Untitled, 1984



Untitled, 1974



Untitled, 1978



Untitled, 1967

## Malick Sidibé (1935-2016)

Malick Sidibé documented the people in and around the city of Bamako as Mali made its transition from colony to independent state. Sidibé's photographs depict a vibrant youth culture at dance clubs, parties and sporting events, with people enjoying their freedom and hungry for new hip styles in music and fashion. "For me, photography is all about youth", he would say.

Included in the exhibition are four of Sidibé's unique *Chemises*, small prints of his edit of photographs from events and social functions, each glued to cardboard sleeves. These chemises were then used by Sidibé as a reference system for people to order prints. Many of the original negatives for these images have not survived, and many were not printed outside of the chemises, which often leaves these artefacts as the sole record of a night in Bamako on a given date. As such, they provide unique depth of insight into the culture and society of the time.

Sidibé's work has been exhibited internationally from 1990. In 2003 he received the Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography, and in 2007 became the first African and the first photographer to receive the Venice Biennale art exhibition's Golden Lion Award for lifetime achievement. Sidibé's chemises are now held in the permanent collections of several major museums, including MoMA and Art Institute of Chicago.

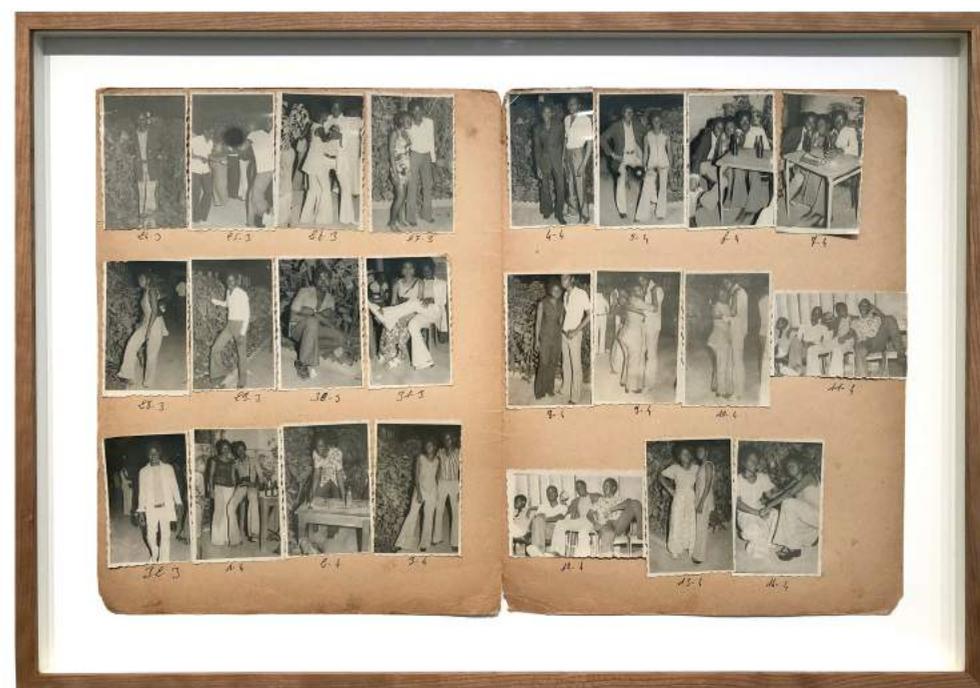


**Les J. S. Copains, 28.08.65**

35 x 50 cm.



**Charanga Club, 01.01.68**  
35 x 52 cm.



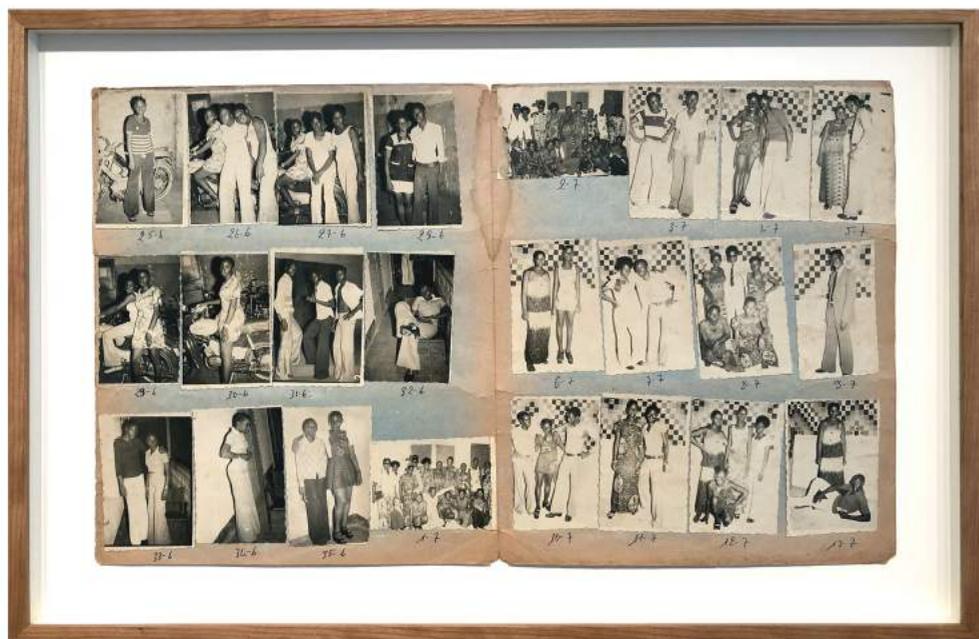
**Cours Pigier, 17.03.73**  
32 x 50 cm.



**Nuit de l'artiste, 24.05.69**  
35 x 51.5 cm



**L'arrivée des Cousines, 22.08.70**  
31.5 x 47.5 cm



**Nuit du, 06.07.74**  
30 x 50 cm.

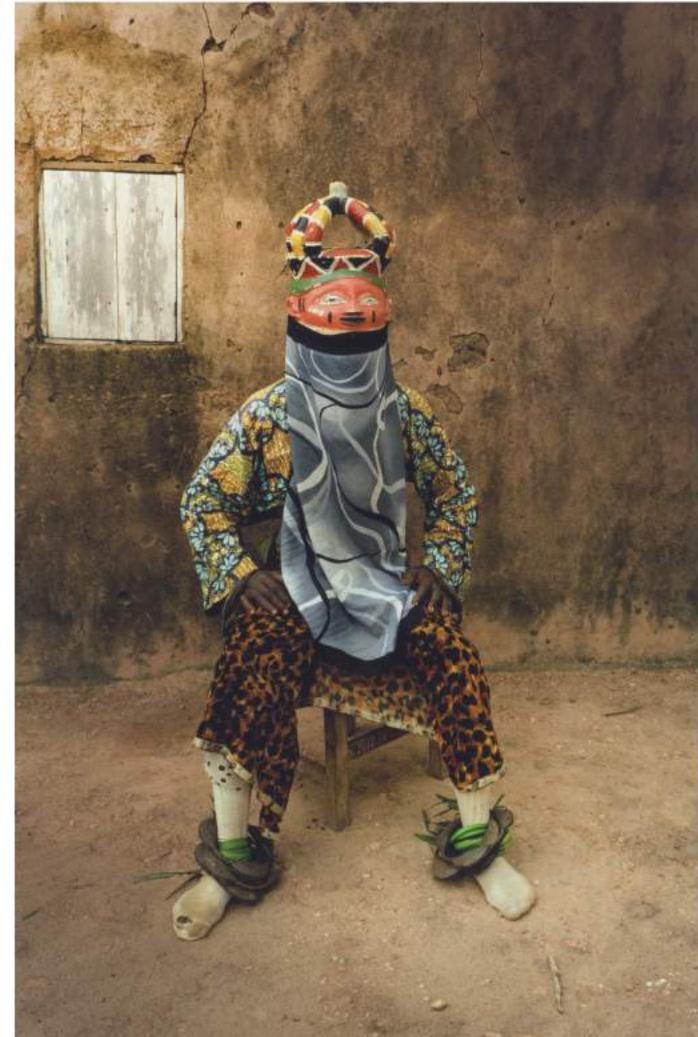
Sidibé's photographs capture your attention, and this generates myriad other dialogues around history, race, representation, technology and beyond.  
**New York Times**

## Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou (b. 1965)

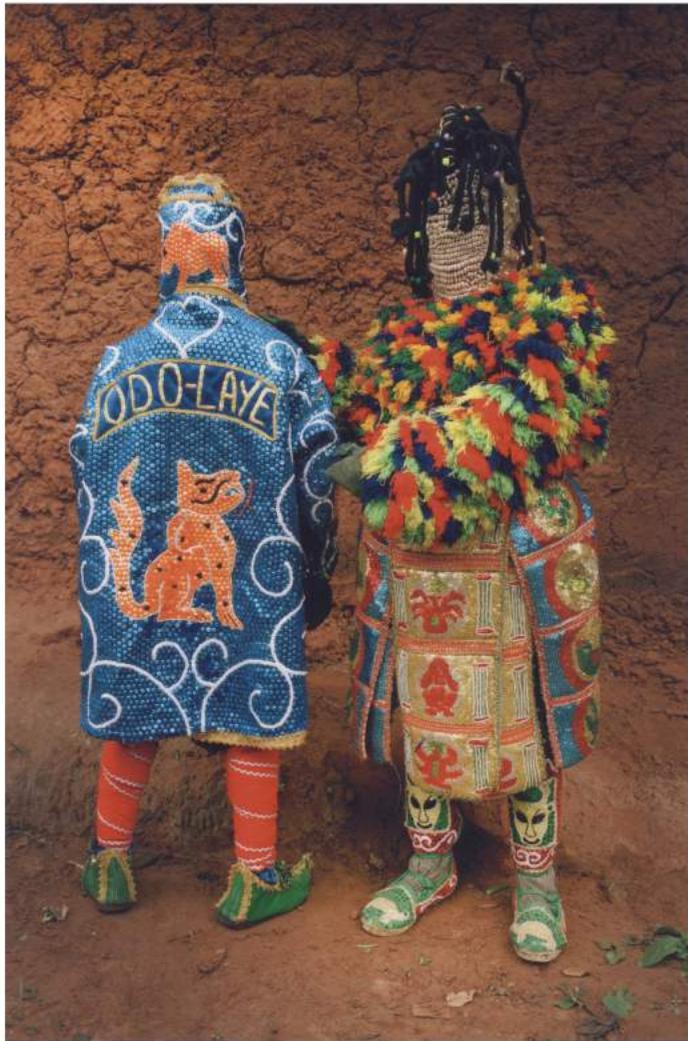
The photographs of Beninese photographer Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou document the energy of life in his hometown Porto-Novo. His subjects range from street life to portraits of friends, and family and studio customers. The artist focuses on how ancestry can shape counter-cultural narratives.

Included in the exhibition are two colour portraits of Yoruba men dressed in traditional Egungun costume, photographed against rich mud walls. The Egungun are the invocation of the Yoruba's spiritual ancestors, and at certain points emerge for masquerades, sometimes attracting crowds of over a thousand. A

Agbodjélou is the founder and director of the first photographic school in Benin. He was recently commissioned by Virgil Abloh to shoot the Louis Vuitton spring/summer 2020 advertising campaign.



Untitled #1 (Egungun series), 2011



Untitled #2 (Egunun series), 2011

One can imagine photographs looking like this 150 years ago, and had the medium existed, one thousand years ago, when masquerades began to appear at Yoruba funerals to guide the passage of the deceased to the spirit world. Much has changed for the Yoruba and their spiritual guides, who now find themselves in the Republic of Benin, and their costumes have probably absorbed a host of influences over the centuries, but Agbodjélou's clever strategy of placing his subjects against mud brick walls conveys this sense of an essentially unaltered time. **The Telegraph**

## Tête-à-Têtes pricing

### Sanlé Sory

12 x 12 in. (30 x 30 cm) image on 20 x 16 in. (50 x 40 cm) paper,  
Hahnemühle Baryta print  
Edition of 8, plus 2 Artist Proofs  
Signed by the artist, numbered and dated in pencil, all on verso

Edition numbers 1 to 4: £2,500  
Edition numbers 5 and 6: £3,500  
Edition numbers 7 and 8: £5,000  
AP #1: £6,500  
AP #2: £7,500  
Prices include VAT, supplied unframed

20 x 20 in. (50 x 50 cm) image on 25.5 x 23.5 in. (65 x 60 cm) paper  
Hahnemühle Baryta print  
Edition of 6, plus 2 Artist Proofs  
Signed by the artist, numbered and dated in pencil, all on verso

Edition numbers 1 to 3: £5,000  
Edition numbers 4 and 5: £7,500  
Edition number 6: £10,000  
AP #1: £11,500  
AP #2: £12,500  
Prices include VAT, supplied unframed

### Rachidi Bissiriou

14 x 14 in. (35.5 x 35.5 cm) image on 20 x 16 in. (50 x 40 cm) paper,  
Silver gelatin hand-processed print  
Edition of 8, plus 2 Artist Proofs  
Signed by the artist, numbered and dated in pencil, all on verso

Edition numbers 1 to 4: £1,900  
Edition numbers 5 and 6: £2,500  
Edition numbers 7 and 8: £3,500  
AP #1: £4,500  
AP #2: £5,500  
Prices include VAT, supplied unframed

### Malick Sidibé

#### Charanga Club, 01.01.68

13.25 x 20.5 in. (35 x 52 cm) chemise, 17 x 24.5 in. (43.6 x 60.3 cm) frame size  
Unique item with 24 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card

#### Cours Pigier, 17.03.73

12.5 x 19.75 in. (32 x 50 cm) chemise, 16 x 23 in. (41 x 58.6 cm) frame size  
Unique item with 23 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card

#### Les J. S. Copains, 28.08.65

13.25 x 19.75 in. (35 x 50 cm) chemise, 17 x 23.5 in. (43.3 x 59.5 cm) frame size  
Unique item with 25 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card

#### Nuit du, 06.07.74

11.75 x 19.75 in. (30 x 50 cm) chemise, 15 x 22.75 in. (38.5 x 57.8 cm) frame size  
Unique item 24 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card

#### Nuit de l'Artiste, 24.05.69

Unique item with 17 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card  
13.7 x 20.4 in. (34.8 x 51.8 cm) chemise, 17 x 23.6 in. (43.2 x 60 cm) frame size

#### L'arrivée des Cousines, 22.08.70

Unique item with 22 vintage silver gelatin prints fixed on card  
12.5 x 18.8 in. (32 x 47.8 cm) chemise, 15.9 x 22.1 in. (40.3 x 56.1 cm) frame size

Price of each chemise is £12,500 including VAT  
Supplied framed with low reflection, UV protective glass

### Leonce Raphael Agbodjélou

Image size 14.25 x 9.5 in. (36.2 x 24 cm) on 15.75 x 11 in. (40 x 28 cm)  
2011 C-type print, signed and stamped by artist on verso  
Open edition  
Both prints show minor handling marks

Price of each print is £3,500 including VAT  
Supplied framed with low reflection, UV protective glass