

ILUMINANDO VIDAS: Exhibition Tour in Southern Africa 03.05–28.05.2005: National Art Gallery of Namibia, Windhoek

Project Summary (18.04.2005)

«**Iluminando Vidas. Fotografia Moçambicana 1950–2001. Ricardo Rangel & the Next Generation**» is the title of the travelling exhibition of contemporary Mozambican photography curated by Bruno Z'Graggen (Switzerland) and Grant Lee Neuenburg (USA/Mozambique). On its tour through Southern Africa to Mozambique and South Africa, the exhibition will also be shown in the National Art Gallery of Namibia in Windhoek from 03.05.–28.05.2005. In addition, it is hoped that the exhibition will also be on view in Luanda (Angola) on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the independence of Mozambique on 25 June 2005, although it is not yet certain whether sufficient financial means will be available.

Over 12 years after the end of the 16-year civil war (1992), this marks the first time that Mozambican photography has been presented on such a comprehensive scale. The exhibition now invites the public in Windhoek to discover the high-quality and largely unknown photographic tradition of Mozambique. It contains remarkable photographs from colonial times up to the present, images that capture the everyday lives of people in Mozambique in all their aspects. «**Iluminando Vidas**» is a moving testimonial to the search for identity by a group of 15 photographers from this young nation.

In 2002, «**Iluminando Vidas**» was first presented in three venues in Switzerland. In 2003 it was shown in Maputo (Mozambique) and at the biennial of photography in Bamako (Mali), in 2004 in Nampula (Mozambique), and at the end of 2004 in Porto (Portugal). The tour of Southern Africa led from Mozambique to South Africa, where «**Iluminando Vidas**» was presented at the Bensusan Museum of Photography (MuseuMAfricA) in Johannesburg from 23.01.–20.02.2005, and at the Month of Photography in Cape Town from 02.03.–26.03.2005. Christoph Merian Publishers (Basel, Switzerland) have produced a comprehensive catalogue of the exhibition with contributions by renowned experts (G/F; E/P). The project is the result of unprecedented collaboration between numerous partners in Mozambique and Switzerland with the aim of instigating a north-south dialogue. It is supported above all by the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC). The exhibitions in South Africa and Namibia are presented in co-operation with the Pro Helvetia Arts Council of Switzerland, and they are also supported by the SDC.

Content, Significance and Aims of «Iluminando Vidas»

The point of departure of the exhibition is the work of the doyen of Mozambican photography, Ricardo Rangel, who was born in 1924. He is widely regarded as one of Africa's outstanding photographers in the area of photoreportage, and his socially critical work is in the tradition of the Magnum photographers. Since 1983, Rangel has directed the Centro de Documentação e Formação Fotográfica (CDFF), an educational and documentary centre that is unique in Africa, in Mozambique's capital of Maputo. He has had a seminal influence on the younger generation of photographers through his life and work as a photographer, journalist and teacher.

In addition to 25 photographs by Rangel, the show includes over 100 black-and-white pictures by 14 of his «disciples», who are among the leading representatives of contemporary Mozambican photography. The photographers' personal statements, biographies and self-portraits accompany the photographs. A 7-minute colour video («**Life Goes On**»), which was especially produced for the exhibition by co-curator Grant Lee Neuenburg, comprises a slice of life at an informal market stand in the streets of Maputo. The project also runs a regularly up-dated website (www.iluminandovidias.org).

Mozambican photography is a success story. The pictures, which were taken under difficult circumstances, are conspicuous for their high formal quality, and there can be no doubt that they rank among the best that African photography has to offer. The aim of the exhibition is to pay tribute to this hitherto unknown photographic tradition as an outstanding cultural achievement, as well as to cast light on the way the photographers see themselves and their work. At the same time, it should correct the cliché, so prevalent in the north, of Africa as a continent determined largely by disasters. The African perspective provides a subtle and poetic insight into everyday life and the post-colonial search for identity.

The Itinerant Exhibition: Previous and Future Venues

«**Iluminando Vidas**» is a travelling exhibition. It has been shown successfully at three venues in Switzerland: from 13.04.–19.05.2002 in the Photoforum PasquArt in Biel/Bienne, from 08.06.–21.07.2002

in the Museo Cantonale d'Arte in Lugano, and from 29.11.–15.12.2002 at the School of Art and Design in Basel (SfG Basel). «Illuminando Vidas» was presented equally successfully from 26.04.–25.05.2003 for the first time in Mozambique in Maputo at the gallery of the Associação Moçambicana de Fotografia (AMF), the Mozambican photography association. The following station was the prestigious 5th African Photography Encounters in Bamako (Mali) from 20.10.–20.11.2003. From 02.05.–01.06.2004, the show was presented at the National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula in Mozambique. Before the two exhibitions in South Africa, «Illuminando Vidas» was shown at the Galeria da Culturgest in Porto from 09.10.–12.12.2004. The tour in Southern Africa started in South Africa at the Bensusan Museum of Photography (MuseuMAfrica) in Johannesburg from 23.01.–20.02.2005 and continued at the João Ferreira Gallery in Cape Town, where it attracted great attention among the media. The next venue is the National Art Gallery of Namibia in Windhoek. Subject to the availability of sufficient financial means, «Illuminando Vidas» will subsequently be shown in Luanda (Angola) in the SIEXPO (Salão Internacional de Exposições in the Museo Nacional de História Natural. Finally, the exhibition will return to Maputo.

North-South Cultural Dialogue

Within the framework of a north-south cultural dialogue, the opening of the exhibition in Biel/Bienne was accompanied by a ten-day photoreportage workshop on the theme of «From Day to Day – Observations from Everyday Life» with the three photographers Ricardo Rangel, Joel Chiziane and Sérgio Santimano in collaboration with the SfG Basel and Ecole Cantonale d'Art du Valais Sierre. The workshop was part of further encounters between the photographers and students of the School of Art and Design Berne/Bienne and the Swiss Centre for Media Studies (MAZ) in Lucerne.

At the exhibition in Basel, eleven pupils of the SfG Basel presented 80 of their photographs as a complement to the work of the Mozambican photographers. It also featured a panel discussion at which Joel Chiziane was one of the guests.

The Nampula exhibition offered the opportunity for another type of North-South cultural dialogue in Mozambique. The AMF branch in Nampula, which is responsible for the north of the country and was opened shortly before the exhibition, organised a series of talks between Ricardo Rangel, João Costa and Alfredo Mueche and a group of local photography enthusiasts and students.

A three-day workshop was held in connection with the Month of Photography in the Guga S'Thebe Centre in Langa (Township) in Cape Town at which Ricardo Rangel, Rui Assubuji and co-curator Lee Grant Neuenburg instructed young photographers.

Organisation and Financial Support

«Illuminando Vidas» was realised by the two curators in direct collaboration with the photographers, the CDFP, AMF, the Photoforum PasquArt and Christoph Merian Publishers. All the prints were produced at the CDFP in Maputo. The project's main sponsor is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Additional support has been received from the Pro Helvetica Arts Council of Switzerland, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, the Lottery Fund of Canton Berne and other partners. The project is patronised by the Club of Mozambique (Zurich).

The exhibition in Basel was realised in co-operation with the School of Artistic Design (SfG) Basel and assisted by the Lottery Fund of the Cantons Basel-Landschaft and Basel-Stadt, the Schweizerischen National-Versicherungs-Gesellschaft and the Christoph Merian Publishers. The two exhibitions in Mozambique were supported primarily by the SDC. The exhibition in Bamako was also financed by the SDC and realised in collaboration with the Association Française d'Action Artistique (AFAA). Culturgest financed «Illuminando Vidas» in its own gallery in Porto.

The exhibitions in South Africa and Namibia are organised in collaboration with the Pro Helvetia branch in Cape Town and are part of a new SDC cultural promotion programme. The two presentations in South Africa were financed by Pro Helvetia, and the exhibitions in Namibia were supported by SDC programme funds.

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