

ILUMINANDO VIDAS: South African Debut

23.01–20.02.2005: Bensusan Museum of Photography, MuseuMAfrica, Johannesburg

02.03–26.03.2005: João Ferreira Gallery, Month of Photography, Cape Town

Project Summary (03.01.2005)

«Illuminando 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/Mozamb.). The exhibition will be presented at the Bensusan Museum of Photography (MuseuMAfrica) in Johannesburg from 23.01.–20.02.2005, and from 02.03.–26.03.2005 at the João Ferreira Gallery in Cape Town where it will figure as part of the Month of Photography and will also include a workshop with Mozambican photographers.

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 in South Africa. The exhibition invites the South African public to discover the high-quality and largely unknown photographic tradition of one of their neighbouring countries. 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.

«Illuminando Vidas» is a moving testimonial to the search for identity by a group of 15 photographers from this young nation, which will celebrate its 30th year of independence on June 25, 2005.

In 2002, «Illuminando 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), and in 2004 in Nampula (Mozambique). The last venue before South Africa was Porto (Portugal), where «Illuminando Vidas» was presented at the Galeria da Culturgest from 9.10.–12.12.2004. The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, published by Christoph Merian Publishers (Basel), with contributions by recognised authors (in G/F and E/P). The project is the result of unique co-operation between various Mozambican and Swiss partners with the aim of promoting a cultural North-South dialogue and is supported principally by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The two exhibitions and the workshop in South Africa are organised in collaboration with, and with the financial support of, the Pro Helvetia Arts Council of Switzerland branch in Cape Town.

Content, Significance and Aims of «Illuminando 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 photojournalism, 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 popular, regularly up-dated website (www.iluminandovidas.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

«Illuminando Vidas» is a travelling exhibition. It has been shown successfully at three venues in Switzerland: from 13.4.–19.5.2002 in the Photoforum PasquArt in Biel/Bienne, from 8.6.–21.7.2002 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). «Iluminando Vidas» was presented equally successfully from 26.4.–25.5.2003 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 2.5.–1.6.2004, the show was presented at the National Museum of Ethnology in Nampula in Mozambique. Before the two exhibitions in South Africa, «Iluminando Vidas» was shown at the Galeria da Culturgest in Porto from 9.10.–12.12.2004. It will probably be presented in Windhoek (Namibia) and Luanda (Angola) after its appearance in South Africa.

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 itself. 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 (the current president of AMF) and a group of local photography enthusiasts and students.

A three-day workshop will be held in connection with the Month of Photography in the Guga S'Thebe Centre in Cape Town with the participation of Mozambican photographers.

Organisational and Financial Support

«Iluminando Vidas» was realised by the two curators in direct collaboration with the photographers, the CDFF, AMF, the museums and Christoph Merian publishers. All the prints were produced at the CDFF 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 exhibition in Bamako was supported primarily by the SDC and realised in close collaboration with the organisers of the bien-nial, the Association Française d'Action Artistique (AFAA). Culturgest financed «Iluminando Vidas» in its own gallery in Porto.

The two exhibitions and the workshop in South Africa are organised in collaboration with, and with the financial support of, the Pro Helvetia branch in Cape Town.

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