

ILUMINANDO VIDAS

participates in the 5th African photography Encounters
Bamako, October 20 to November 20, 2003

Project Summary (October, 2003)

«**Iluminando Vidas. Fotografia Moçambicana 1950–2001. Ricardo Rangel & the Next Generation**» is the name of the exhibition of contemporary Mozambican photography, curated by Bruno Z'Graggen (Switzerland) and Grant Lee Neuenburg (USA/Mozambique). Ten years after the end of the 16-year civil war, this is the first time that Mozambican photography has been presented on such a comprehensive scale. The exhibition is accompanied by an extensive catalogue with contributions by well-known authors, published by Christoph Merian Publishers (Basel) in two editions (G/F and E/P).

Content, Significance and Aims of «Iluminando Vidas»

The starting point of «Iluminando Vidas» is the work of the 79-year-old doyen of Mozambican photography, Ricardo Rangel, who is generally regarded as one of Africa's outstanding photographers in the reportage sector and whose 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 crucial influence on the younger generation of photographers through his work as a photographer, journalist and teacher.

In addition to 25 photographs by Rangel, the exhibition includes over 100 black-and-white pictures by 14 of his «pupils», who are among the leading representatives of contemporary Mozambican photography. The photographs are accompanied by statements, biographies and self-portraits by the photographers. Furthermore, a 7-minute colour video («Life Goes On») by co-curator Grant Lee Neuenburg is focused on a street market stand in Maputo. The project also runs a regularly up-dated website

Mozambican photography is a success story. The pictures, which were made under difficult conditions, 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 a 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 Itinerant Exhibition: Previous and Future Stations

«Iluminando Vidas» is a travelling exhibition. It has been shown successfully at three venues in Switzerland: from 13.4.–19.5.2002 in the PhotoforumPasquArt 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 shown 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 next station is the 5th African Photography Encounters in Bamako, Mali, from 20.10.–20.11.2003. It is hoped to present «Iluminando Vidas» in South Africa, Namibia and other cities in Mozambique in 2004.

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. There was also a panel discussion at which Joel Chiziane and Swiss professionals were the guests.

Organisation and Financial Support

«Iluminando Vidas» was realised by the two curators in collaboration with the CDFF, the AMF, the museums and the publisher. All the pictures were produced in Maputo in the CDFF. The project's main sponsor is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). In addition, support has been received from the Pro Helvetia Arts Council of Switzerland, the Stanley Thomas Johnson Foundation, the Lottery Fund of the Canton Berne and other partners. The project is patronised by the Club of Mozambique (Zurich).

The exhibition in Basel was realised in collaboration with the SfG Basel and was supported by the Lottery Funds of both Cantons Basel, the National Assurance, and Christoph Merian Publishers.

The exhibition in Bamako will be supported primarily by the SDC and realised in close collaboration with the organisers of the Biennial, the Association Française d'Action Artistique (AFAA).

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