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**THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
PRESENTS *CROSSED LOOKS*, THE FIRST SOLO US EXHIBITION
BY NAMSA LEUBA**

On view: August 28 – December 12, 2020

CHARLESTON, SC – The [Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art](#) at the College of Charleston presents an exhibition of work by Swiss-Guinean photographer and art director Namsa Leuba entitled *Crossed Looks*. The exhibition is on view from August 28 to December 12, 2020 at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art. There will be an opening reception on Friday, August 28 from 6:30PM – 8:00PM. Halsey Institute members and College of Charleston students, faculty, and staff receive free admission to the opening reception. All non-members will be charged \$5 admission for the event. The Halsey Institute’s gallery hours are Monday – Saturday, 11:00AM to 4:00PM, and 11:00AM to 7:00PM on Thursdays, closed on Sundays. The Halsey Institute’s galleries are open to the public and admission is free.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Crossed Looks will feature over 90 works from Namsa Leuba’s projects from Guinea, South Africa, Nigeria, and Benin, and it will premiere new work from Tahiti. The exhibition is organized by Nigeria-based curator Joseph Gergel.

Namsa Leuba’s photographic projects encounter critical questions about the representation of the cultural Other, offering an alternative visual vocabulary that is inherently global. Inspired by statues, masquerades, and the religious ceremonies of her West African heritage, as well as contemporary fashion and youth culture in Africa, Leuba’s photographs are fictive in scope. She often uses models that she informally casts in the street, who become active collaborators as subjects of the portraits. With a background in art direction, Leuba constructs costumes for her sitters from locally sourced markets, using materials including blankets, fur, wood, masks, and lace. In re-enacting these cultural symbols for the camera, she examines the deconstruction and reconstruction of the body, as well as the shift in cultural meanings when symbols are alienated from their source.

Leuba's images are at once informed by the local traditions of the community and also imagined. Borrowing from her experience in fashion and design, they create a speculative dimension by adding a contemporary sartorial twist. Leuba is influenced by the energy of cosmopolitan urban centers in Africa, translating this spirit into a unique visual language. At times this visual language veers into abstraction, an amalgamation of overlapping patterns, textures, and colors, each with their own cultural significance.

Leuba's work mirrors the visual codes of documentary photography and the photojournalistic lens on Africa, which so often reflects the process of exoticizing the Other. Yet, in prioritizing fictions, her images subvert the notion of photographic truth. Leuba's work questions the politics of the gaze—who is looking, who is being looked at, and the medium in which this looking occurs. Blending diverse traditions, the photographs challenge notions of authenticity of one blanket "African" identity.

Influenced by her dual Guinean-Swiss heritage, Leuba examines her simultaneous place as an insider and outsider. The title of this exhibition, *Crossed Looks*, references this diverse perspective. Through the adaptation of myths, Leuba's photographs acknowledge this double act of looking, a cross-dialogue of global cultures.

This exhibition is organized according to Namsa Leuba's five major bodies of work produced over the past nine years, in Guinea, Benin, Nigeria, South Africa, and Tahiti, respectively. Each body of work will be presented in the form of wall installations, with image groupings hung in clusters. The exhibition will also feature new experimentations with printing on nontraditional materials including porcelain, woven tapestry, and translucent silk. Exploring Leuba's work in fashion photography, *Crossed Looks* will show how her diverse practices inform one another as they cross disciplines.

This exhibition will also debut Leuba's most recent series, *Illusions*. Produced in Tahiti, *Illusions* is inspired by the paintings of Paul Gauguin and "tropical" images in Modern Art. This imagery, imbued with cultural stereotypes, casts the Polynesian woman as desirable, subservient, and connected to the natural environment. Leuba recasts these roles using transgender models, posing an ideological challenge to the visual codes initiated by Gauguin.

The Halsey Institute looks forward to announcing public programming in summer 2020.

ABOUT NAMSA LEUBA

Namsa Leuba is a Guinean-Swiss photographer and art director. Born in Saint-Aubin-Sauges, Switzerland in 1982, Leuba studied photography at École cantonale d'art de Lausanne, and also obtained a master's degree in Art Direction at ECAL.

Namsa Leuba has participated in international exhibitions including *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design* at the Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain; *Africa Reframed* at Øksnehallen in Copenhagen, Denmark; Daegu Photo Biennale in Daegu, Korea; the Athens Photo Festival in Athens, Greece; Photoquai in Paris, France; LagosPhoto in Lagos, Nigeria; and a performance in Off Print at the Tate Modern, London. In 2018, Leuba was

featured in the group exhibition *African State of Mind* at New Art Exchange, Nottingham; and held a solo exhibition at the Hangar Art Center, Brussels. In 2019, Leuba was featured in the special project *Focus in the Eyes* at Art Basel's VIP Lounge. In fall 2019, her work will be included in the group exhibition *The New Black Vanguard* at Aperture in New York.

Leuba has an extensive commercial background in addition to her fine art practice. She was commissioned by Nike to create the Nigerian campaign for the World Cup, and she was commissioned by *The New Yorker* to create a photographic series with emerging Afrobeats musicians in Lagos in 2018. She has produced a fashion campaign for Christian Lacroix and produced fashion photographic series for Edun and Dior. She also collaborated with Dior to create two Lady Dior art bags. In 2019, she is producing art billboards and photographs for an upcoming Netflix series.

Her work has been published in numerous magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *I-D*, *Numéro*, *KALEIDOSCOPE*, *Foam*, *Interview*, *Vice Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *Wallpaper*, *Libération*, *British Journal of Photography*, and *European Photography*.

Leuba won First Prize at the Planches Contact Festival in Deauville, France in 2010. In 2012, she was awarded the PhotoGlobal Prize at the Photography Festival in Hyères, France. She was the winner of the Magenta Foundation Flash Forward Festival in 2013. In 2018, she was nominated for *Foam* Talent.

Namsa Leuba's website is <http://www.namsaleuba.com/>

ABOUT JOSEPH GERGEL

Joseph Gergel is an independent curator and art consultant with a focus on contemporary art in Africa. Based in Lagos, Nigeria, he serves as Director of the Arthouse Foundation's Artist Residency Program, and is a curator at Arthouse Contemporary, an international auction house. He is also a founder of ARTOJA, an online marketplace for contemporary art in Africa. Gergel served as co-curator of three editions of the LagosPhoto Festival and as a curator at Art Twenty One and African Artist's Foundation in Lagos. He has organized exhibitions in Lagos, London, Paris, New York, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Miami, Dubai, Marrakesh, and Odessa. Gergel received a master's degree in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies from Columbia University, a bachelor's degree in Photography from New York University, and a postgraduate diploma in Photography at Speos in Paris, France. He has contributed to international publications of contemporary art including *The New Yorker*, *Foam*, *Aperture*, *DIS Magazine*, and *Art Africa*.

Gergel and Leuba have collaborated on multiple international projects over the past six years. Leuba was featured in two editions of the LagosPhoto Festival, co-curated by Gergel in 2013 and 2014. Gergel also curated solo exhibitions of Leuba's work at THAT ART FAIR in Cape Town and Art Twenty One in Lagos. He has organized presentations of Leuba's work at the Armory Show (New York), Art Paris Art Fair (Paris), 1:54 Contemporary Art Fairs (London and Marrakech) and the Joburg Art Fair (Johannesburg). Gergel has also served as producer of her



project *NGL*, created in Lagos during an artist residency, and as a producer for *The New Yorker* commission of Leuba's work in 2018. Gergel's writings on Leuba have been published by multiple publications, including *Foam Magazine*.

ABOUT THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston provides a multidisciplinary laboratory for the production, presentation, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas by innovative visual artists from around the world. As a non-collecting museum, we create meaningful interactions between adventurous artists and diverse communities within a context that emphasizes the historical, social, and cultural importance of the art of our time.

Location: The Marion and Wayland H. Cato Jr. Center for the Arts, College of Charleston
161 Calhoun Street, 1st Floor (corner of St. Philip & Calhoun Streets), Charleston, SC 29401

Parking: Available at metered spaces on surrounding streets and in the St. Philip and George Street Garages

Gallery hours: Monday – Saturday, 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM, open until 7:00 PM on Thursdays during exhibitions, or by appointment. Closed on Sundays. FREE ADMISSION and OPEN to the public.

Tours: Free guided group tours are offered through the Halsey Institute's Looking to See program.

Email HalseyTours@cofc.edu for inquiries. Free, staff-led guided tours are available at 2:00 PM every Saturday during exhibitions unless superseded by a program.

For more information, call 843.953.4422, visit halsey.cofc.edu, or e-mail halsey@cofc.edu

Social media accounts: [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

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