

NAMSA LEUBA *CROSSED LOOKS*



 **HALSEY INSTITUTE**
OF CONTEMPORARY ART
at THE COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

AUGUST 27 – DECEMBER 11, 2021



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art is pleased to present *Crossed Looks*, the first solo exhibition of Swiss-Guinean artist Namsa Leuba in the United States. Opening in fall 2021, the show will feature over 90 works from the photographer'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. This project is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and from Pro Helvetia.

Leuba's photographic practice explores the representation of African identity and the cultural Other in the Western imagination. Inspired by statues, masquerades and the religious ceremonies of her West African heritage, as well as contemporary fashion and youth culture in Africa, Leuba offers a fictional proposition. Her photographs re-stage traditional artifacts and symbols, which she performs in collaboration with local participants. Leuba often uses models that she informally casts in the street, who become active collaborators as subjects of the portraits.

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 and engage fantasy. Leuba's work questions the politics of the gaze: Who is looking? Who is being looked at? And in what context does this looking occur? Blending diverse traditions, her works challenge notions of the authenticity of one blanket "African" identity.

About the Artist

Namsa Leuba (b. 1982) is a Swiss-Guinean photographer and art director. Leuba studied photography at ECAL, University of Art and Design in Lausanne, Switzerland, and obtained a Masters in Art Direction at ECAL.

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 Festival* 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, London 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 was included in the group exhibition *The New Black Vanguard* at Aperture in New York.

Leuba was commissioned by Nike to create the Nigerian campaign for the 2018 FIFA 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 fashion campaigns for Christian Lacroix, Edun and La Prairie. She also collaborated with Dior to create two Lady Dior art bags.



Her work has been published in numerous magazines, including *The New Yorker*, *I-D*, *Numéro*, *KALEIDOSCOPE*, *Foam*, *Interview*, *Vice Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *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 the Foam Talent Call.

Namsa Leuba lives and works between Switzerland and Tahiti.

About the Guest Curator

Joseph Gergel is an independent curator and art consultant with a focus on contemporary art in Africa. From the United States and currently based in Lagos, Nigeria, he serves as Director of *kó*, an art gallery specializing in modern and contemporary art, and Director of Arthouse Contemporary, an art auction house. He is also Director of the Arthouse Foundation's Artist Residency Program in Lagos, and is a co-founder of ARTOJA, the online marketplace for contemporary art in Africa. He also served as Senior Editor at *Moon Man*, an experimental publication based in London that profiles global art and culture.

Gergel served as co-curator for three editions of the *LagosPhoto Festival* and as a curator at Art Twenty One and African Artist's Foundation (AAF) in Lagos.

He has organized exhibitions with contemporary African artists in Lagos, London, Paris, New York, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Miami, Dubai, Marrakesh, and Odessa.

In Lagos, he developed public projects including YECA (Youth Empowerment Through Contemporary Art), a community outreach project supported by the Ford Foundation, and Art Base Africa, an online database for contemporary African art, supported by the Prince Claus Fund. He has contributed to international publications of contemporary art including *The New Yorker*, *Foam*, *Aperture*, *British Journal of Photography*, *DIS Magazine*, *Something We Africans Got*, *Omenka Magazine*, *Guernica*, *I AM*, and *Art Africa*.

Gergel received a Masters Degree in Modern Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies from Columbia University and a BA in Photography and the Philosophy of Images from New York University. He received a post-graduate diploma in photography from the Speos Photography Institute in Paris, France. He has participated in international curatorial training fellowships including the International Curator Course at the Gwangju Biennale (Gwangju, South Korea), Curatorial Program for Research Program in Eastern Europe (Kiev, Warsaw, Prague), and the ICI Curatorial Intensive in Accra (Ghana).



Catalogue

As part of *Crossed Looks*, the Halsey Institute plans to produce a comprehensive catalogue. The monograph will focus on Namsa Leuba's work, including series not included in the exhibition. It will feature over one hundred color images of the artist's work accompanied by essays by renowned writers. It will be the first major museum publication of Namsa Leuba's work.

Film

The Halsey Institute is also commissioning a short documentary film to investigate Leuba's practice. The film will feature interviews with the artist and guest curator.

About Us

The Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art at the College of Charleston School of the Arts 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. For more information, please visit us online at halsey.cofc.edu

JOIN THE TOUR

CROSSED LOOKS

EXHIBITION SPECS:

Number of works: 101 total

54 framed prints

25 unframed prints on Dibond

13 vinyl adhesive prints (will be reprinted for each partner)

6 textiles

2 prints on porcelain

1 publication

Space requirements: 3000 sq. feet

Exhibition fee: \$8,000 for 8 week bookings

Other costs, including incoming shipping, insurance, any honoraria or travel, etc. will be the responsibility of the venue.

Availability:

January 2022 - December 2023



