

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Lizz Biswell, Halsey Institute

BiswellL@cofc.edu

843.953.5659 [w]

843.412.0576 [c]

High-res images available [here](#).

THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT COFC PRESENTS *CROSSED LOOKS*, THE FIRST SOLO U.S. EXHIBITION BY NAMSA LEUBA

On view: August 27 – December 11, 2021

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 27 to December 11, 2021 at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art's galleries. The Halsey Institute's gallery hours are Monday – Saturday, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and 11:00 AM to 7:00 PM on Thursdays, closed on Sundays. The Halsey Institute's galleries are open to the public and admission is free.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Crossed Looks is the first solo exhibition of Swiss-Guinean artist Namsa Leuba in the United States. The show will feature over 90 works from the photographer's projects in Guinea, South Africa, Nigeria, and Benin, and it will premiere new work created in Tahiti. As a photographer working across documentary, fashion, and performance, Namsa Leuba's images explore the fluid visual identity of the African diaspora. With a dual heritage between Guinea and Switzerland, Leuba draws inspiration from her own experience growing up between two different cultural traditions.

Leuba's images are influenced the Animist traditions of her mother's family in Guinea Conakry, and the visual codes of statues, masquerades, and religious ceremonies in West Africa. They are also inspired by contemporary fashion and design. The result is a unique perspective that straddles reality and fantasy. She re-stages and constructs narrative scenes in collaboration with her sitters, incorporating bold colors, striking patterns, and intricate clothing and props. Leuba often uses models that she informally meets in the street, who become active collaborators in the portraits. Leuba's photographs pose fundamental questions about the medium of photography and its role in forming our understanding of the cultural "Other." Leuba states: "I have always been characterized as the Other, whether I am too 'African' to be

European or too ‘European’ to be African. In this unique positioning, I am interested in the politics of the gaze—who is looking, who is being looked at, and the medium of which this looking occurs.”

Leuba has continued her focus in challenging the visual representation of the cultural other in her newest series, *Illusions*, created in Tahiti. After living in Tahiti for over two years, Leuba collaborated with a group of transgender youths to re-stage imagery reminiscent of the “Primitivist” paintings of Paul Gauguin and “tropical” images in modern art. The series poses an ideological assault to the symbolism of Gauguin’s paintings in Tahiti, which fetishized the indigenous female body and its myths of exoticism. Through her photographs, Leuba ultimately searches for a visual sense of belonging, of finding a vocabulary that speaks to the experiences and perspectives of not fitting in one ready-made mold. The title of this exhibition, *Crossed Looks*, references this diverse perspective, creating an alternative visual proposition that transcends fixed modes of representation.

The exhibition is organized by guest curator Joseph Gergel, currently based in Lagos, Nigeria. *Namsa Leuba: Crossed Looks* is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Pro Helvetia, and *Garden & Gun Magazine*.

The Halsey Institute looks forward to announcing public programming in summer 2021.

ABOUT NAMSA LEUBA

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 master’s 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 will be 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*, *ID*, *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’s website is NamsaLeuba.com

ABOUT JOSEPH GERGEL

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 master's 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).

Learn more about Gergel at JosephGergel.com

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.



GARDEN@GUN

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the ARTS
arts.gov

swiss arts council

prohelvetia

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](#).

###