

Studio Clelia Belgrado



VisionQuest
contemporary photography

Press Release

Patrick Willocq
I am Walé respect me / Forever Walé

Curator Clelia Belgrado
Artist's Opening Reception: Thursday October 1st, 2015 from 6pm to midnight
Duration : October 2nd – November 29th , 2015
Location: Studio Clelia Belgrado - VisionQuest contemporary photography
Piazza Invrea 4r, 16123 Genova, Italy +39 010 2476642
Studio Hrs. Wednesday to Saturday 3.30 pm to 7.30 pm and by appointment
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Visonquest contemporary photography is pleased to begin the 2015/2016 season during **START** - the collective opening of all the galleries in Genova – with Patrick Willocq and the project *I am Walé respect me / Forever Walé*.

This series of photographs are the representation of Willocq's total immersion in a initiation ritual. A project that is both a reportage and an artistic testament; images that want to be as close as possible to the experience of the Ekonda Pigmies of the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Ekondas believe that the most important moment in the life of a woman is the birth of her first child. The young mother called Walé (primiparous nursing moher) returns to her parents where she remains secluded for a period of 2 to 3 years. By stricly respecting several taboos, during this period, including the taboo of sex, she is given a status similar to that of a patriarch. The end of her reclusion is marked by a dancing and singing ritual. The choreography and songs have a very codified structure but are unique creations specific to each Walé.

"I have always been fascinated by native tribes because I feel they have a wealth that we have somehow lost. To document this beautiful tribute to motherhood, fertility and femininity, I proposed to some Walés, whom I've known for over a year, to participate in staged photographs that would bear witness to a part of their personal history. Each set-up worked as a visual representation of one of the subjects that the Walé would sing about on the day of her release from seclusion." – Patrick Willocq

The Walé ritual is highly competitive as it's about having more prestige and power than your rivals. When a young mother becomes a Walé, she takes a nickname that differentiates her from rivals and positions her in the eyes of the community. Every day the young woman engages in an elaborate toilette designed to focus everyone's attention on her. She spreads a red preparation, a mixture of powder of ngola wood with palm oil, over her own body. The sophisticated hairstyles, made of a mud like paste, a mixture of ashes from bopokoloko leaves and palm oil, are yet another way for Walés to flaunt their uniqueness.



"Bosala, Walé Leopard"

«*Ensansa: Walé lângóyàlé nkòì ng'áòpòsa lûmólá ngwá la ntábà. Bàsómì bâkinú lobétámá ndé bitánda. Walé là ngóyàlé nkòì ndé bitánda lûmólá ngwá* ».

Song : Walé became like leopard when she hunts, you hide dogs and goats. My assistants lie on branches. Walé it looks like she became leopard on branch, remove dogs.

By comparing herself to a leopard, Walé Bosala (17 years old, married, 1 year in seclusion, mother of Pauline) expresses her singularity and displays her superiority. She also warns other Walés: she has the willpower to defend against them if necessary



"Ntembe, sparrowhawk Walé"

«*Ensansa: Njalé nkombé éné yélúá nd'ókili, ntsíbatá íbáko nd'ólògo biàlé*».

Song : I became sparrowhawk wandering the world. I did not find sitting at court, you understand Walés

Walé Ntembe (18 years old, without a husband, 2 years in seclusion, the mother of Beane), self-praises her attitude and discredits other Walés that spend too much time walking about in the village (which is dishonourable) while she remains in her hut to care for her child

The time spent in these villages and the complicity resulting from this, are at the root of these artistic "mise en scene" and basically reflect the social problems and development needs of these peoples. But in a harmony of multiple, different elements, forms and colors, they give us back the beauty, simplicity, dignity and conflicts of everyday life, inspite all the difficulties that each of these people face.

And it is nice to think that all of this, while appearing remarkably intimate and personal where Willocq focuses on the ritual of the Walé women, it is first and foremost the result of a unique collaboration with young pygmy women, their respective clans, the artisans of the forest who helped with the sets, an ethnomusicologist and a photographer. As if everyone was trying to become the symbol for an entire people but without any homologation or cultural integration, while maintaining the pride, respect and dignity of the individual.

Technical Info:

- [Archival Fine Art Prints on MOAB entrada© rag bright 300 paper, mounted on dibond and oak frame. cm 110 x 145 edition of
- [Archival Fine Art Prints on MOAB entrada© rag bright 300 pape. cm 60 x 80 edition of 6

Bio:

Patrick Willocq was born in 1969 in Strasbourg, France. He lives and works in Hong Kong, Kinshasa and Paris. A self-taught photographer for 25 years, he has lived 34 years outside France, including 7 years in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In 2012, and following a trip back to the Congo, Patrick decides to devote himself entirely to photography (he was working for multinationals in Asia Pacific for over 20 years). Through his work he wants to offer a different image of the Congo and Africa in general, and go beyond images of war which media tend to focus on.

www.patrickwillocq.com

Exhibitions:

2015

"I am walé respect me / forever wale", VisionQuest contemporary photography , Genova, Italy

"I am walé respect me / forever wale", galerie baudoin lebon, Paris, France

GRID, Cape Town, Afrique du Sud

Format International Photography Festival, Derby, Royaume-Unis

Festival des Peuples Autochtones, Kinshasa, Republique Democratique du Congo

2014

Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France Lagos Photo, Nigeria

Encontros da Imagen, Braga, Portugal

Les Rencontres d'Arles, France

Schau Dortmund (sélectionné par Martin Parr), Dortmund, Allemagne Kolga Tbilisi Photo, Tbilisi, Géorgie

Flash Forward, Boston, États-Unis

MAC, Créteil, France

2013

Photo OFF, Paris, France

Angkor Wat Photo, Angkor, Cambodge

Lagos Photo, Nigeria

Agence Française de Développement, Paris, France

Institut Français de Kinshasa, République Démocratique du Congo International Photography Festival,

Belo Horizonte, Brésil

Les Photographes Voyageurs, Bordeaux, France

Circulation(s), Paris, France

Awards

Finaliste Lens Culture New Talent Award Finaliste Renaissance Photography Prize Finaliste Leica Oskar
Barnack Award Nomine au Prix Decouverte d'Arles Laure at de La Bourse du Talent Portrait Lauréat du
Prix POPCAP

2013

Finaliste Lens Culture Exposure Award

2012

Finaliste Concours SFR Jeunes Talents Paris Photo 1er prix du meilleur reportage photo de l'AFD

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