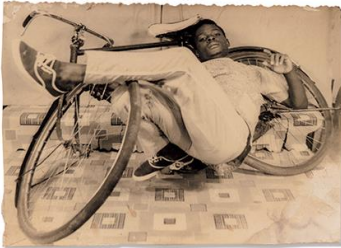


PHOTOS: 'African Spirits,' From A Guy On A Bike To Cardi B

Diane Cole and Ben de la Cruz, August 17, 2019



Among the earliest photos on display as part of "African Spirits," this triptych comes from the Roka photo studio in Mali and dates to the 1960s or '70s. *Roka Studio/Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery, New York*

A young man clowns around with a bicycle or two. Cardi B strikes a pose. A man in a camouflage uniform blends into camouflage wallpaper but the flowers he holds are an explosion of color.

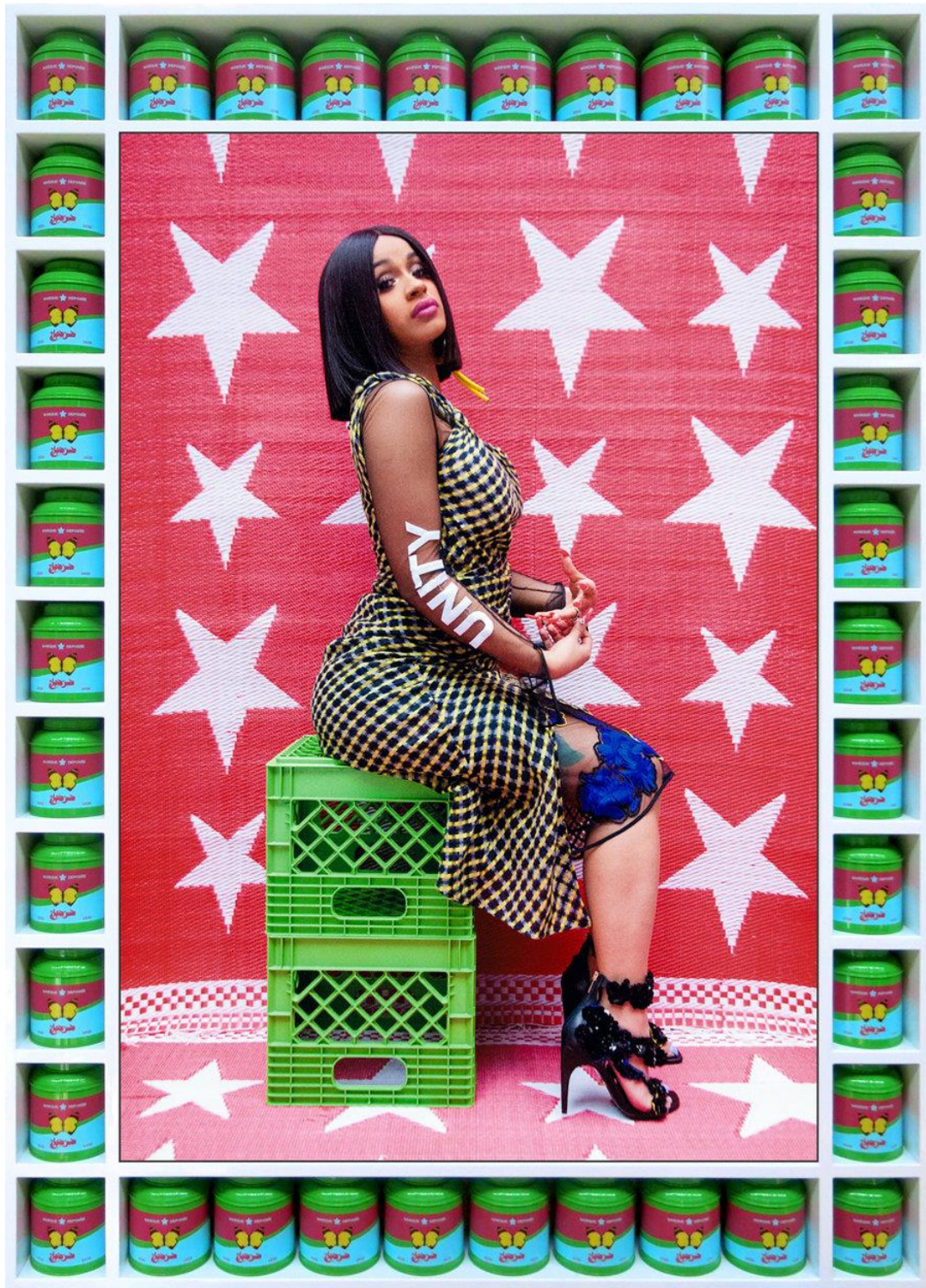
These are some of the images in the exhibit "African Spirits" at the Yossi Milo Gallery in New York through August 23. Almost all of the photographers themselves are African spirits, hailing from such countries as Algeria, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria and Senegal. Those who aren't from the continent either base their work in Africa or pay homage in their art to African photographers.

The images in the exhibit are infused with the spirit of African identity. Hanging on the gallery walls, the photos seem to speak to each other across time and space — and making statements about African society and culture.

The artists range from the pioneering African portrait photographers Seydou Keita (1921-2001) and Malick Sidibé (1935-2016) to photographers at work today like Samuel Fosso, Sanle Sory, Hassan Hajjaj and Leonce Raphael Agbodjelelou.

Among the earliest photos on display, the trio of candid black and white snapshots from the Roka photo studio in Mali dates to the 1960s or 1970s and captures a young man and his bicycle (see above).

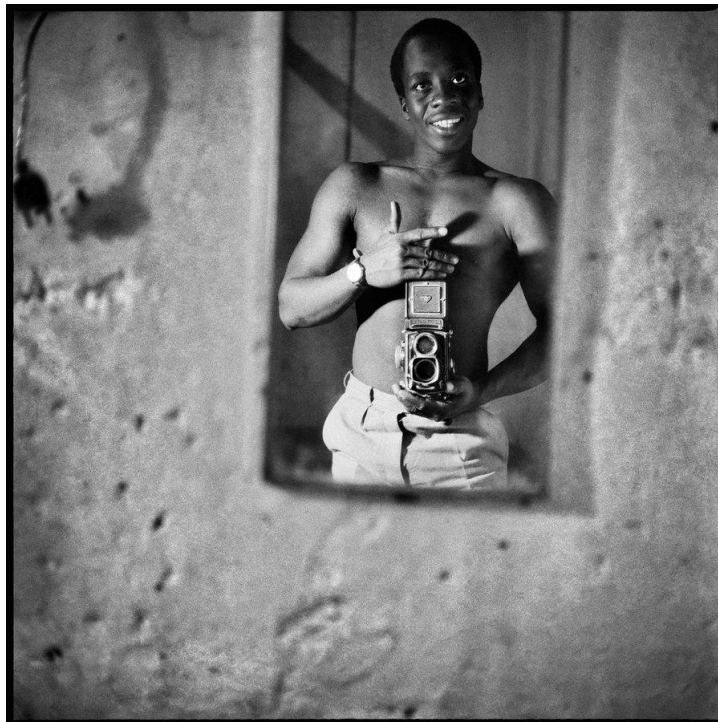
Many of the photos provide glimpses of everyday life amid the transition from colonial rule to independence, showing informally dressed party-goers as well as solemn-faced portrait-sitters in traditional outfits.



Hassan Hajjaj, born in Morocco in 1961, is often called the Andy Warhol of Marrakesh for his fusion of glamour and everyday life. Both are evident in his 2017 portrait *Cardi B Unity*. The rap star, dressed in a high-fashion outfit, sits on utilitarian green plastic cartons against a textured fabric backdrop. The frame consists of tins of green tea, each decorated with a butterfly. *Hassan Hajjaj/Courtesy of Third Line Gallery, Dubai, and Yossi Milo Gallery, New York*



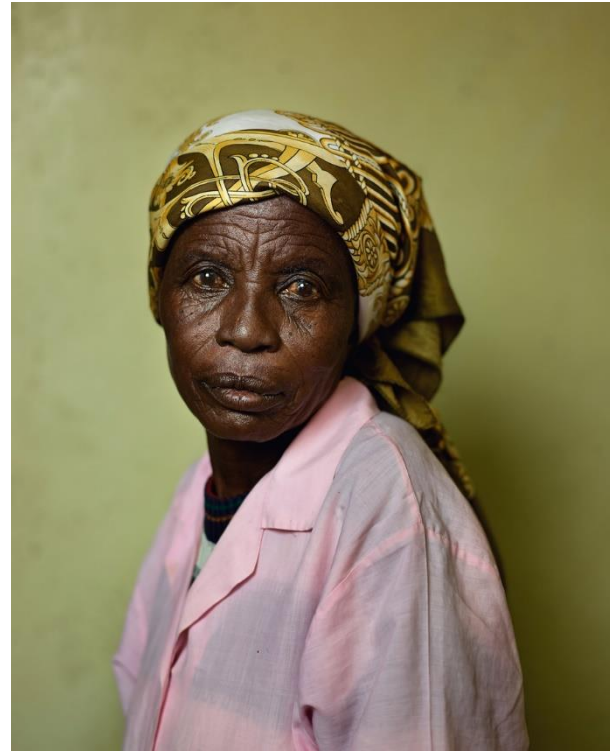
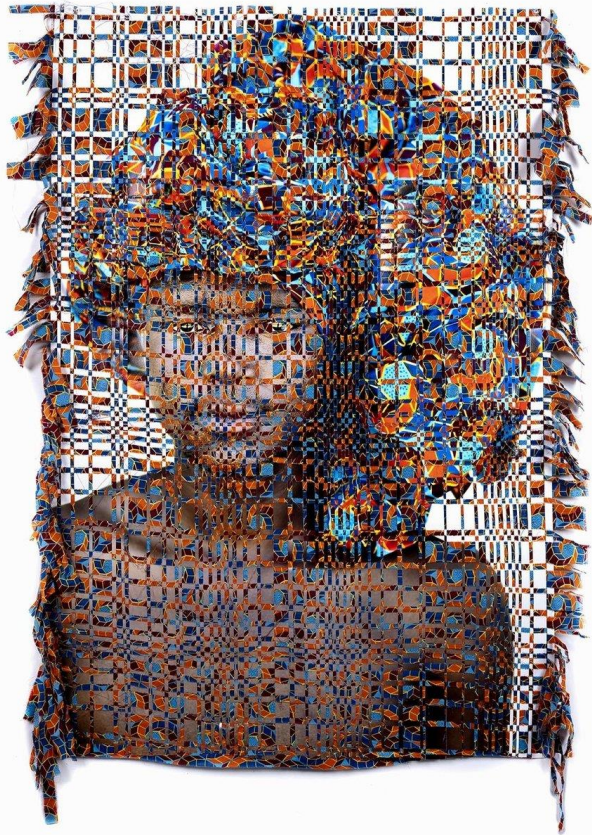
Senegalese photographer Oumar Ly (1943-2016) left a legacy of more than 5,000 photographs of everyday life, many taken in his portrait studio in his rural home town of Podor. *Oumar Ly/Courtesy (S)ITOR, Paris*



Sanle Sory took "autoportraits" as in this selfie showing off his Rolleiflex camera. He was born in 1943 in what was still colonial Upper Volta and is now the country of Burkina Faso. His black-and-white portraits show the old meeting the new: families posing in Western garb, young people side by side with a boom box and a traditional African stringed instrument. *Sanle Sory /Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery, New York*



Born in 1965 in Porto Novo, Benin, Leonce Raphael Agbodjelelou "draws inspiration from growing up working in his father Joseph's prestigious studio and casts models in place of paying clientele," says Yossi Milo, who curated the exhibit. Here, military camouflage pattern seems to merge subject and backdrop into one even while colorful flowers burst out of the background. *Leonce Raphael Agbodjelelou/Courtesy Jack Bell Gallery, London*



Left: Kyle Meyer, born in Ohio in 1985, combines photography with woven tapestry techniques inspired by traditional African crafts to explore the nature of closeted LGBT identity in this work from his series *Unidentified*. Kyle Meyer/Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery, New York

Right: Pieter Hugo, born in Johannesburg in 1976, is known for his photographs of marginalized communities. This portrait is titled *Mimi Afrika, Wheatland Farm, Graaf-Reinet*, and was made in 2013. Pieter Hugo/Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery, New York



The 12 prints from the series *Hairstyles* by Nigerian photographer J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere (1930-2014) show women coiffed in elaborate styles both traditional and of the moment, their similarities and differences seeming to blend together. J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere/Courtesy of Yossi Milo Gallery, New York