

THE WALTHER COLLECTION

Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive Part III: Poetics and Politics March 22 – May 18, 2013

The Walther Collection is pleased to announce *Poetics and Politics*, the third and last exhibition in the series ***Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive***, curated by Tamar Garb. *Poetics and Politics* presents an extraordinary range of previously un-exhibited vintage portraits, cartes de visite, postcards, and album pages from Southern and Eastern Africa, produced from the 1860s to the early twentieth century. The exhibition makes visible both the ideological frameworks that prevailed during the colonial period in Africa and the exceptional skill of photographers working in the studio and landscape.



Unidentified photographer, Portrait of King Khama III,
South Africa, early twentieth century

The culmination of *Distance and Desire, Poetics and Politics* offers a remarkable opportunity to view the narratives that emerge from this African photographic archive, describing in particular the experience of the studio—the curiosity between subject and photographer, the negotiations of costume and pose, and the will for self-representation. The exhibition investigates typical European depictions of Africans, from scenes in nature, to sexualized images of semi-nude models, to modern sitters posing in elaborate studios, critically addressing the politics of colonialism and the complex issues of gender and identity.

Among over 150 vintage images, *Poetics and Politics* includes a selection of elegant studio portraits by Samuel Baylis Barnard, one of Cape Town's most prominent nineteenth century photographers. Original album pages of landscapes and ethnographic imagery are displayed alongside a series of carte de visite portraits of Africans, circulated in the 1870s from the Diamond Fields of Kimberley, South Africa. The exhibition also features several double-sided displays of album pages, showing striking combinations of personal and stock images, and the juxtapositions of prominent figures in both African and Western contexts.

Distance and Desire is accompanied by an extensive catalogue, published by The Walther Collection and Steidl, and edited by Tamar Garb. Including twelve original essays, the catalogue offers new perspectives by contemporary artists and scholars on the African archive, reimagining its diverse histories and changing meanings. On June 8, 2013 the expanded exhibition incorporating all three parts of ***Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive*** will open at The Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm, Germany.

The Walther Collection is a private non-profit foundation dedicated to researching, collecting, exhibiting, and publishing modern and contemporary photography and video art, based in Neu-Ulm, Germany and New York. *Distance and Desire* is part of the collection's multi-year investigation of African photography and video. The Walther Collection Project Space is located at 508-526 West 26th Street, Suite 718, and is open to the public Wednesday through Saturday from 12pm to 6pm. For further information, call +1 212 352 0683 or email brendan@walthercollection.com.