

THE
WALTHER COLLECTION

Close to Home: New Photography from Africa
Andrew Esiebo, Sabelo Mlangeni, Mimi Cheron Ng'ok,
Musa N. Nxumalo, and Thabiso Sekgala

February 4, 2016 – May 14, 2016



Mimi Cheron Ng'ok, *Chebet and Chemu in the garden*, from *The Other Country*, 2008-2016

Opening Reception: Thursday, February 4, from 6pm-8pm

The Walther Collection Project Space
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The Walther Collection is pleased to present the second exhibition in its multi-year series on contemporary photography and video art from Africa and the African Diaspora. Presented thematically from 2015 to 2017, and surveying a diverse range of new and commissioned work, the series builds upon the collection's longstanding focus on African photography to provide an in-depth engagement with emerging artists. The series began in fall 2015 with *The Lay of the Land*, a group show presenting photographic approaches to the postcolonial African cityscape, and continues with *Close to Home*, opening on Thursday, February 4, 2016 at The Walther Collection Project Space in New York.

Vividly documenting the flawed beauty of everyday life, the five young photographers in *Close to Home* represent a powerful new vision of portrait photography in Africa. In their respective photographic practices, Andrew Esiebo, Sabelo Mlangeni, Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, Musa N. Nxumalo, and Thabiso Sekgala explore intense social relationships through intimate portrayals of friends and family, in-depth accounts of eclectic sub-cultures and communities, or typological studies of professions. Drawn from series taken in South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Mali, and elsewhere across the African continent, *Close to Home* describes the emotional ties between subject and landscape, as these artists engage with complex senses of belonging and self-identification. Where some photographers highlight pose and fashion, others explore historical resonances rooted in social politics. Exploring their own relationships to the people and places they portray, the artists in *Close to Home* capitalize on their positions as insiders, or take a step back to gain new perspectives on the everyday. Together, working between familiarity and distance, self-discovery and generational portrait, these artists are at the vanguard of visual storytelling.

Andrew Esiebo (b.1978 Lagos, Nigeria; lives and works in Ibadan) portrays scenes of everyday life through in-depth photographic essays. His series *Pride* examines the dynamics at play within barbershops across West Africa, delving into the close-knit interactions between barber and customer. Through a multilayered and playful approach to composition and figural form, Esiebo documents the common aesthetic language of these local institutions and reflects on their position as sites of social transaction.

Sabelo Mlangeni (b. 1980 Driefontein, South Africa; lives and works in Johannesburg) creates intimate portraits of individuals and communities that convey the complex cultural identities found within contemporary South African society. Highlighting scenes of exuberance and glamour alongside those of strife and grit, his works are populated by individuals that are traditionally overlooked or disregarded, yet strike poses demanding dignity, regard and respect.

The melancholic, nostalgic photographs of **Mimi Cherono Ng'ok** (b. 1983 Nairobi, Kenya; lives and works in Nairobi) invite complete immersion, whether into domestic interiors, everyday suburban scenes, or the textures of natural and man-made environments. Drawn from her experiences traversing the African continent, Ng'ok's intimate compositions investigate themes of home, identity, displacement, and loss. In *Close to Home*, Ng'ok presents a site-specific projection featuring images that span a range of temporal, spatial, and emotional terrains.

Musa N. Nxumalo (b. 1986 Soweto, South Africa; lives and works in Soweto) documents moments of spontaneity and energy in the lives of black South African youth who identify with alternative culture. Raising questions about the nature of deliberate cultural deviation and contemporary modes of self-fashioning, Nxumalo forges a distinct visual language of his own—one of seemingly casual directness, yet penetrating discernment.

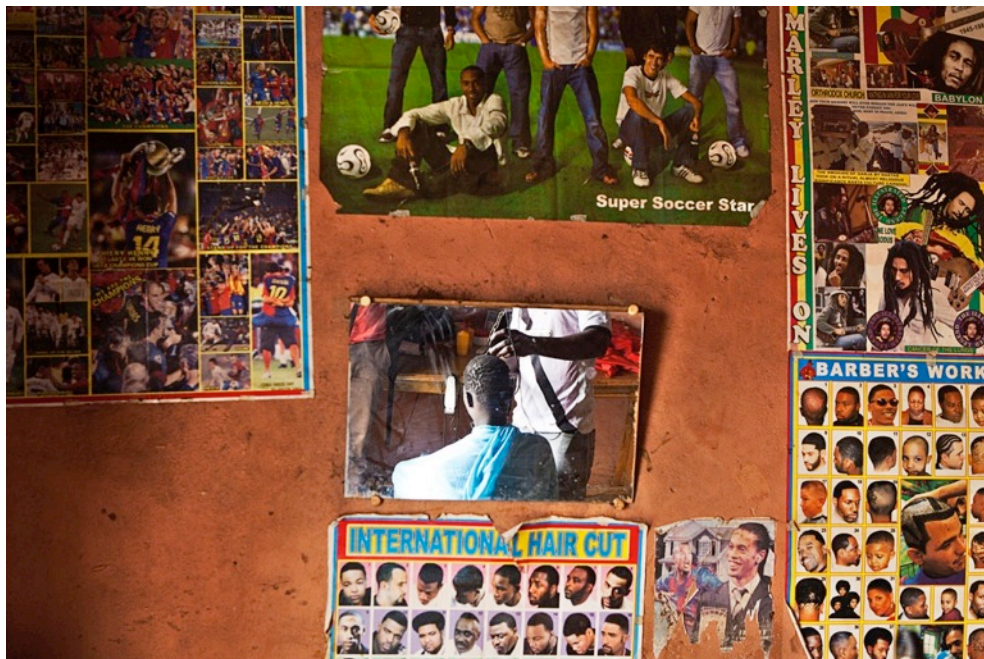
The work of **Thabiso Sekgala** (1981-2014; Johannesburg, South Africa) explores the relationship between geography and social identity across a variety of rural and urban environments. Putting forth a meditation on collective memory, legacies of spatial politics and conceptions of home, Sekgala's compelling and contemplative photographs bind the personal and political to invite new understandings of place and belonging.

The Walther Collection is dedicated to researching, collecting, exhibiting, and publishing modern and contemporary photography and video art across historical periods and geographic regions. The collection comprises a four-gallery museum campus in Neu-Ulm, Germany, and a project space in New York City. Initially centered on the practices of early twentieth-century German photographers, the collection has expanded to become one of the most important private holdings of contemporary African and Asian photography and video art. The collection's extensive publishing program includes *African Photography from The Walther Collection*, a three volume set dedicated to portraiture, landscape, and the archive; *The Order of Things*, investigating serial and typological images across geographical regions and time periods; and the monographs *Santu Mofokeng: The Black Photo Album*, *Martina Bacigalupo: Gulu Real Art Studio*, *Zanele Muholi: Faces and Phases*, *Mikhael Subotzky and Patrick Waterhouse: Ponte City*, and *Guy Tillim: O Futuro Certo*.

Close to Home
Selected Images



Andrew Esiebo, Monrovia, Liberia, from "Nuances", 2012
Courtesy the artist and Tiwani Contemporary, London



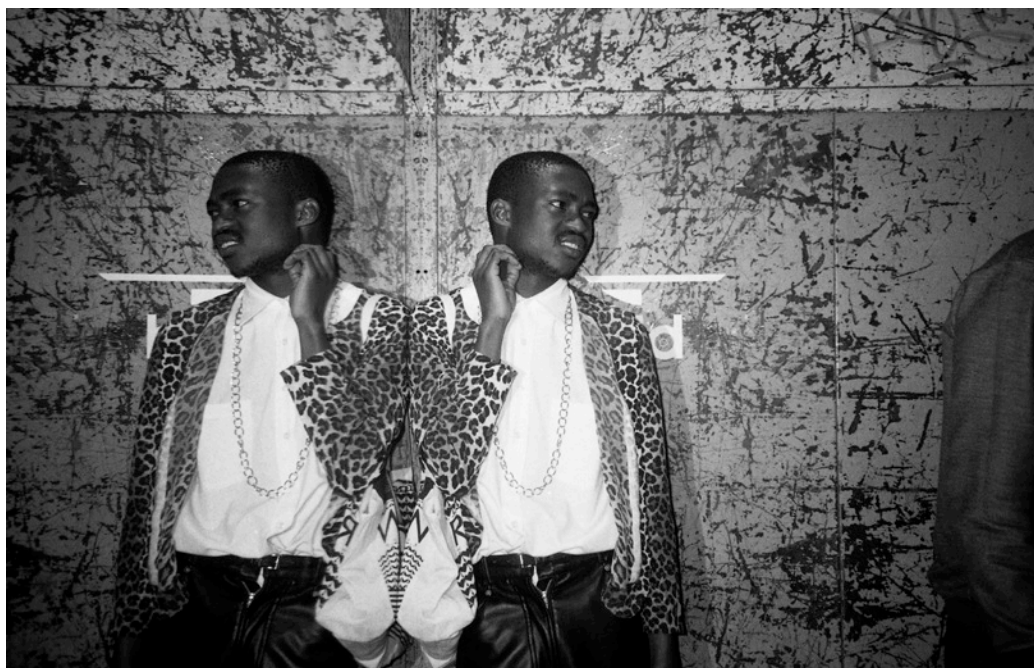
Andrew Esiebo, Bamako, Mali, from "Nuances", 2012
Courtesy the artist and Tiwani Contemporary, London



Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, Chebet and Chemu in the garden, from "The Other Country", 2008-2016
 Courtesy the artist and The Walther Collection



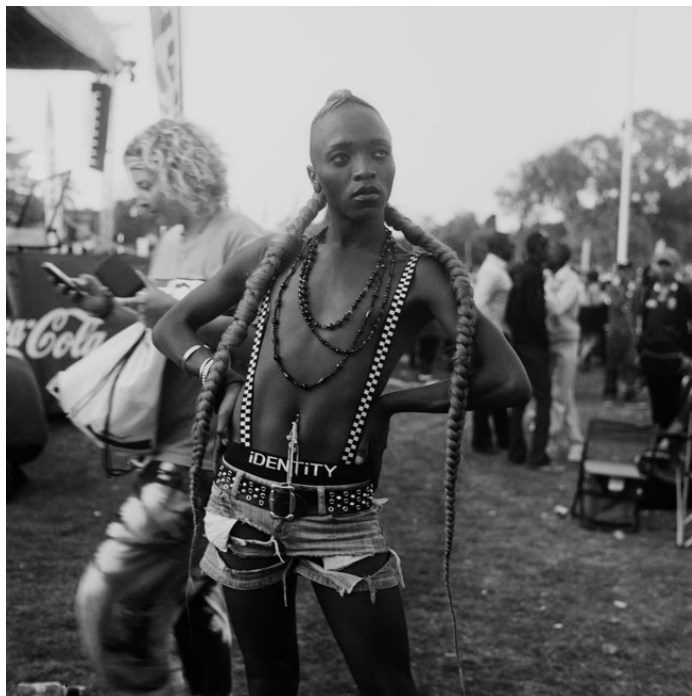
Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, Kwasi, from "Come Closer/It Always Gets Complicated When Feelings Are Involved", 2014
 Courtesy the artist and The Walther Collection



Musa N. Nxumalo, Santu Fela Gucci Ramaisa 2, from "In/Glorious", 2015
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and smac gallery, Stellenbosch and Cape Town



Musa N. Nxumalo, Sihle Khambule, Spruit, Eastrand, from "Alternative Kidz", 2009
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and smac gallery, Stellenbosch and Cape Town



Sabelo Mlangeni, Identity, from "Black Men in Dress", 2011
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg



Sabelo Mlangeni, Lets Get Down to Some Serious Training, from "My Storie", 2012
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg



Thabiso Sekgala, Jane Nkuna, Loding, former Kwandebele, from "Homeland", 2009
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town and Johannesburg



Thabiso Sekgala, Mawili Thubane, Loding, former Kwandebele, from "Homeland", 2009
 Courtesy The Walther Collection and Goodman Gallery, Cape Town and Johannesburg