

## Recent Histories

### Contemporary African Photography and Video Art

Press Kit



Dawit L. Petros, *Untitled (Prologue II)*, from "The Stranger's Notebook," 2016. © The artist. Courtesy the artist and Tiwani Contemporary.

## Recent Histories

### Contemporary African Photography and Video Art

#### Dates

May 7 – November 19, 2017

#### Press Conference

May 5, 2017, 2pm

#### Curators

Daniela Baumann, Joshua Chuang, and Oluremi C. Onabanjo

**Photography and Video Art by** Edson Chagas, Mimi Cherono Ng'ok, Andrew Esiebo, Em'kal Eyongakpa, François-Xavier Gbré, Simon Gush, Délio Jasse, Lebohang Kganye, Sabelo Mlangeni, Mame-Diarra Niang, Dawit L. Petros, Zina Saro-Wiwa, Thabiso Sekgala, and Michael Tsegaye

#### Opening Hours

Thursday-Sunday, 2-5 pm

#### Guided Tours

Public guided tours every Friday, 5 pm and first Sunday of every month, 3 pm.

Private guided tours by appointment

Contact: [info@walthercollection.com](mailto:info@walthercollection.com)

#### Address

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## Recent Histories

### Contemporary African Photography and Video Art

The Walther Collection presents *Recent Histories: Contemporary African Photography and Video Art*, an exhibition that unites the perspectives of fourteen contemporary artists of African descent, born in the early 1970s and onwards. They investigate social identity, questions of belonging, and an array of sociopolitical concerns—including migration, lineage, and the legacies of colonialism—as well as personal experiences. By highlighting specific creative approaches and studying the sites and collective platforms that enable these practices, this exhibition examines a selection of African image-makers and lens-based artists. In accentuating different perspectives within this generation and considering the infrastructures that often link them, *Recent Histories* provides a point of entry to engage critically with current practices, and opens up considerations about how to conceptualize the frameworks of contemporary African photography and video art. The exhibition, organized by the curatorial team of Daniela Baumann, Joshua Chuang, and Oluremi C. Onabanjo, will be on view at The Walther Collection in Neu-Ulm, Germany, beginning May 7, 2017, and will be accompanied by a catalogue published by Steidl/The Walther Collection.

Over the last two decades, a critical mass has gathered across the field of African photography and video art. From existing debates between anthropological and art historical approaches to the booming market of contemporary art from the continent, nuanced perspectives have emerged. In this current, historic moment—with the worldwide swing away from neoliberalism and freedom of mobility, and the proliferation of digital platforms and social media usage—the geopolitical notion of the “African” is further complicated and refracted. As such, *Recent Histories* attempts to reconcile the notion of “Africanness” through its treatment in particular artists’ practices, rather than privileging existing discourses as a means of understanding a work, or a generation of practitioners.

The exhibition presents the work of artists whose practices interact conceptually, aesthetically, and intellectually—not solely through regional similarity or difference. By delineating the layers of approach, subject matter, method, and content for each artist, this exhibition attempts to deepen and extend the expectations and capabilities of what existing discourses of African photography and video art provide. To be attuned to these choices and approaches through a thorough consideration ultimately allows for a critical shift in which to contend with these genres.

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Two overarching curatorial threads—comprising distinct structural approaches and personal anchors—link the different works in *Recent Histories*. The first module, “Deconstructed Spaces, Surveyed Memories,” assembles works by artists who directly address structural notions of identity and memory, and includes photo-essays and large-scale installations by Edson Chagas, Em’kal Eyongakpa, François-Xavier Gbré, Simon Gush, Délio Jasse, Mame-Diarra Niang, Dawit L. Petros, Zina Saro-Wiwa, and Michael Tsegaye. These artists explore such issues by embracing principles of abstraction, examining particular landscapes and built environments, or rejecting these approaches altogether for a more spiritual invocation of the photographic inquiry. Considering the impact of broad sociocultural, economic, and political currents, as they shape the quotidian, these artists examine urban architectures, sites of labor, and products of mass consumption. Probing environments that oscillate between the public and personal, the works provide different commentaries on the transformations of life, brought about within the framework of an increasingly interconnected world.

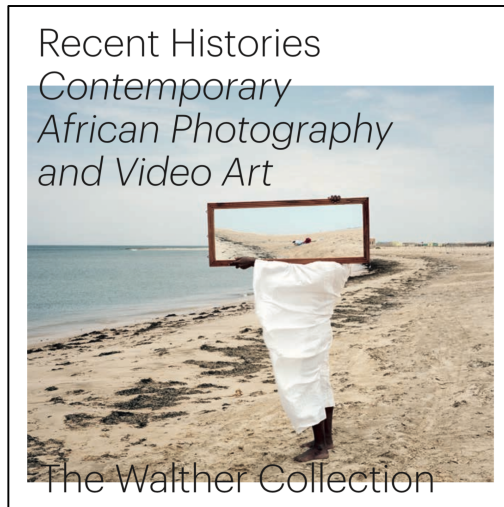
The second module, “Social Life, Emotional Cartographies,” portrays individuals as they navigate across and within specific social spaces. These works present compassionate and varied portrayals of African individuals, providing fertile ground to mine the complex manifestations of the black body within visual imagery and social life. In addition to these conceptual approaches, the works are linked together through a consideration of the emotional ties that forge communities amongst artists and sometimes separate souls between this life and the next. Harnessing the photographic image as tool of investigation and documentation, ranging across expanses of geographic space to concentrated sites within a single city, these artists deploy the medium with a humanistic intent, to tell stories of those made visible and invisible—and ever pulling us to come closer. Key highlights include Mimi Cherono Ng’ok’s “Do You Miss Me? Sometimes, Not Always” (2017), Andrew Esiebo’s “Highlife” (2013–16), Lebohang Kganye’s “Ke Lefa Laka” (2013), “Homeland” (2009–11) by the late Thabiso Sekgala, Zina Saro-Wiwa’s “Table Manners” (2014–15), Michael Tsegaye’s “Future Memories” (2006–ongoing).

*Recent Histories* anchors each of its artistic voices within a critical understanding of the current field. With this exhibition, the artistic practice becomes a means of bridging gaps across space, while amplifying the intensity of the continent’s current moment of creative production. These artists deploy photographic and video art inventively, and grapple with social, political, and interpersonal tensions that are, ultimately, universal. The perspectives united in *Recent Histories* demonstrate the key voices of a new generation of photographers and video artists who continue to gather across the African continent. Through this repositioning, *Recent Histories* provides an entry point for understanding African photography and video art—a premise central to negotiating the field going forward.

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## Catalogue

*Recent Histories: Contemporary African Photography and Video Art*

Edited by Daniela Baumann, Joshua Chuang, and Oluremi C. Onabanjo

*Recent Histories: Contemporary African Photography and Video Art* unites the perspectives of 14 artists of African descent, who investigate social identity, questions of belonging, and an array of sociopolitical concerns. Providing a point of entry to engage critically with current practices and the frameworks of contemporary African photography and video art, *Recent Histories* features contributions by Daniela Baumann, Joshua Chuang, and Oluremi C. Onabanjo (eds.), Antawan I. Byrd, Emmanuel Iduma, M. Neelika Jayawardane, Allison Moore, Moses Serubiri, Mikhael Subotzky, and Drew Thompson.

The publication features a conversation between Okwui Enwezor and Artur Walther; and statements and interviews for each featured artist, conducted by Joshua Chuang, John Fleetwood, Emmanuel Iduma, Marta Jecu, Negarra Akili Kudumu, Eva Langret, Maaza Mengiste, Prishani Naidoo, Ana Balona de Oliveira, Oluremi C. Onabanjo, Sean O'Toole, Ahmed Veriava, Brendan Wattenberg, and Zoé Whitley.

384 pages, 218 images  
25 x 25 cm  
Cloth-bound hardcover with dust jacket  
Published by Steidl/The Walther Collection

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## About The Walther Collection

The Walther Collection is dedicated to researching, collecting, exhibiting, and publishing photography and video art. Since opening to the public in 2010, the collection has grown to become one of the most important holdings of contemporary African and Asian photography and video art, American vernacular imagery, and nineteenth century photographs and books from Europe and Africa. The collection presents exhibitions and public programs at a three-gallery museum campus in Neu-Ulm, Germany and a Project Space in New York City, USA.

Organized in collaboration with leading international curators, the collection's exhibitions endeavor to create dynamic juxtapositions by artists whose contributions to photography significantly expand the history of the medium. The collection's established publishing series with Steidl, complementing the exhibitions program with extensive catalogues and monographs, is informed by comprehensive research by acclaimed writers, critics, and art historians. Recognized as a leading institution in the study and presentation of African photography, The Walther Collection presents various thematic and monographic shows in New York City, large-scale annual exhibitions in Germany, as well as traveling exhibitions around the world. In 2011, the collection was featured in the inaugural series, "Private Collections," at Paris Photo. In 2017, the collection presented *Structures of Identity: Photography from the Walther Collection* at The Photography Show presented by AIPAD, New York City. Other travelling exhibitions include *Time and Again: Photography from The Walther Collection* in Stockholm, Sweden (2016), *After Eden: Photography from The Walther Collection* in Paris, France (2015–16), and *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive* in Berlin, Germany (2015). The Walther Collection will present *Events of the Self—Portraiture, Performance, and Social Identity* at the Amparo Museum in Puebla, Mexico in October 2017 and the collection will be shown at the Foto/Industria, Biennial of Industrial Photography in Bologna in October 2017.



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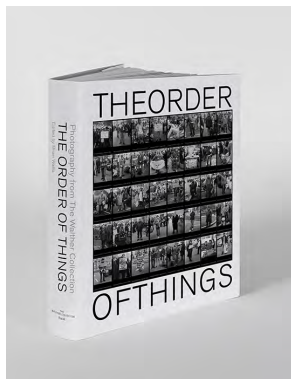
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## Publications by Steidl/The Walther Collection



*African Photography from The Walther Collection* (2010-2013), a three-volume work representing the collection's multi-year exhibition and publishing program, investigates African photography and video through the themes of portraiture, landscape, and the historic archive. Including *Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity*, *Appropriated Landscapes*, and *Distance and Desire: Encounters with the African Archive*, housed in a slipcase. Edited by Okwui Enwezor, Corinne Diserens, and Tamar Garb.



*The Order of Things: Photography from The Walther Collection* (2015) explores the production and uses of typological sequences, serial imagery, conceptual portraiture, archival imagery, and time-based performance in photography from the 1880s to the present, considering works by artists from Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America. *The Order of Things* features contributions by Geoffrey Batchen, Tina M. Campt, and Christopher Phillips; a conversation between Brian Wallis and Artur Walther; and a selection of seminal writings on photograph and seriality by George Baker, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Ulrike Schneider, Allan Sekula, and Joel Smith.

Additional monographs and artist books include **The Black Photo Album** (2013), **Gulu Real Art Studio** (2013), **Faces and Phases: 2006–14** (2014), **Ponte City** (2014), and **O Futuro Certo** (2015).