

## *“Passage—a song”*

“I can hear the roar of women’s silence.”

— Thomas Sankara

“Passage—a song” is an exhibition of work by Nigerian-British photographer Akinbode Akinbiyi and South African artist Abrie Fourie both based in Berlin, and curatorial collaboration between Musée de la Musique Georges OUEDRAOGO de Ouagadougou and Der Projektraum SCHARAUN, Berlin. The curatorial emphasis would turn the focus to the idea of sound in photography. What do we hear? Can we hear the stories that emanate from the visual information? Are we projecting from our memories or closing our ears to the cries? Can we hear the noise of the place or the deafening silence? What is the sound we hear in silence?

In December 2021, Akinbode Akinbiyi and Abrie Fourie, in the run-up to a coup d’état in Burkina Faso, the artists worked parallel on a photographic investigation of the geography and social topography of Oubritenga & Ouagadougou—considering the dreams manifested by Thomas Sankara then and the reality of the economic malaise of the 21st century. Thomas Sankara is considered “Africa’s Che Guevara”. Despite Sankara’s assassination (1987), the belief in revolutionary renewal is ever present in Burkina Faso.

Sankara promoted Pan-Africanism, self-sufficiency, independence from France and gender equality by banning female circumcision and polygamy. Through a democratic and popular revolution, he brought more progress to the people in the four years of his presidency than during half a century of French colonial rule. Sankara’s revolutionary vision still resonates in Burkina Faso’s architectural heritage, monuments and everyday culture. More importantly, he gave enormous hope to a significant portion of African youth far beyond the boundaries of his country.

Through this Sankara lens, the project and collaboration listen and meditate on his heritage.

Fourie met the curator and director, Mahamadi ILBOUDO, at the Musée de la Musique Georges OUEDRAOGO he leads in Ouagadougou. The building that houses the museum was built in 1983 as the headquarters of the Center for Studies on Local Materials of the Association of Architects and Urban Planners of Africa (ADAUA) in Burkina Faso. Their aims to revive and promote indigenous African architecture and to train local inhabitants in appropriate technologies overlap with the vision of Francis Kéré, the architect of The Opera Village, where Akinbiyi and Fourie were hosted during their stay in Burkina. Fourie’s interest in sound and architecture led him to share this experience with Jaro Straub, director of Der Projektraum SCHARAUN, a space for art and

architecture in Berlin. The space is located in an apartment complex from the 1930s, built by the architect Hans Scharoun (best known for designing the Berliner Philharmonie), who lived and worked in an apartment inside the same building from 1930 to 1960. Francis Kéré was also asked to design the Memorial Thomas Sankara, which is still in the fundraising stage. These confluences with photography, Thomas Sankara, sound and architecture in the project “Passage—a song” is a strong drive for this cooperation, collaboration and investigation.

The project is planned to curatorially engage the audio collection from the archive of the OUEDRAOGO Music Museum in relation to the photographic work of Akinbiyi and Fourie, resulting in a photographic and audio exhibition at SCHARAUN, in public space on Billboards at different points throughout the Berlin and on a curated social media campaign for the duration of the project.

## **Akinbode Akinbiyi**

*born in Oxford, England of Nigerian parents. School and university in Nigeria, England and in Germany. B.A. English, Ibadan University.*

*has been a freelance photographer since 1977*

*1987, STERN reportage stipend to work in the cities of Lagos, Kano and Dakar.*

*1993, co-founder of UMZANZSI, a cultural center in Clermont Township in Durban, South Africa.*

*Akinbiyi's primary photographic focus is large, sprawling megacities. Wandering and meandering the highways and byways in an attempt to understand and deeply engage with the modern metropolis. He walks and works primarily in and on the four major African cities Lagos, Cairo, Kinshasa and Johannesburg, but also wanders in other major cities, Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Dakar, Bamako, to name some. European, North and South American cities are also serious destinations., so recently Sao Paulo and in 2019 Chicago.*

*There is no one viewpoint or way of working, wandering. The work is open-ended and driven by a desire to delve as deeply as possible into the meaning, the subjectivity of everyday. Akinbiyi also works as a curator and has given photographic workshops internationally - in Germany, Nigeria, Sudan, Sweden, England, the United States, Greece.*

*Recent exhibitions - a selection:*

*2017, group show at La Vilette in Paris and one of the artists showing at documenta 14, which took place almost simultaneously in Athens and Kassel.*

*2019 September, participant in the Chicago Architecture Biennial with work on the West Side neighbourhood of North Lawndale, titled: "Easy like Sunday Morning - North Lawndale".*

*2020 February, retrospective exhibition at Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin, "Six Songs, Swirling Gracefully in the Taut Air".*

*2020 March, participant in the Houston FotoFest biannual.*

*2020 September, Steirischer Herbst, Graz.*

*2020 December, Västerås Konstmuseum, Sweden*

*Akinbiyi lives in and works out of Berlin.*

Akinbode Akinbiyi



Opera Village, Laongo, Oubritenga, Burkina Faso, 2021



Ziniaré, Oubritenga, Burkina Faso, 2021



Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; 2021

**Abrie Fourie** born in Pretoria, South Africa, 1969 presently divides his time between Richmond, Northern Cape, South Africa, and Berlin, Germany. He bases his practice mainly on photography and engages in teaching, publishing, and curatorial projects. His approach to image-making is "less about determining a place than about circling the relationship between spaces, signs and the self, referring to the quiet tension between absence and presence, abstraction and reality."

Solo exhibitions of Fourie's work have been held at Camouflage, Brussels (Belgium), the Museum for African Art, New York (USA), at the Forum d'art Contemporain, Sierre (Switzerland), Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (Germany), Johannesburg Art Gallery (South Africa), Iwalewahaus, Bayreuth (Germany), SMAC Art Gallery, Cape Town (South Africa), SCAD, Savannah (USA), SCAD, Atlanta, (USA), Fried Contemporary, Pretoria (South Africa), the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein (South Africa), Galerie Wedding, Berlin, (Germany), Museum of Temporary Art, Cape Town and The Market Theater Gallery, Johannesburg (South Africa).

Two-person exhibitions include "ENEMIES/ VYANDE" with Santu Mofokeng at Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstfees, Oudtshoorn, South Africa (2002); "SEE #1 - 3," a collaboration with Ella Ziegler at the Parking Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2006), Blank Projects, Cape Town, South Africa (2007) and at the Temporäre Kunsthalle Berlin, Germany (2009). "Soil Soul" was also with Ella Ziegler at the Experimental Gallery, Tjaden Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, USA (2021).

Selected group exhibitions include "Translation/ Seduction/ Displacement" at White Box Gallery, New York, USA (2000); "Sugar in the petrol" at The British School, Rome Gallery, Italy (2004); "POST" Tama Art University Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2004); "Real Presence – Floating Sites," 51st International Biennial of Contemporary Art Venice, Italy (2005); "Cosmos Mundo Forever," Triennial De Luanda, Angola (2007); "1910-2010 From Pierneef to Gugulective: A Fresh Look at a Century of South African Art," South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (2010); "Positioning Osmotic Impulses," Prison Neukölln, Berlin, Germany (2012); "THE SPACE BETWEEN US," a project by IFA, in public space of Berlin (2013) and Stuttgart (2014); and "The Day will come when Photography revises," Triennial of Photography, Hamburg, Germany (2015). He participated in SAVVY Funk Every Time A Ear di Soun framework, documenta 14, SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin (2017); "Streams of Consciousness," Bamako Encounters - African Biennale of Photography (2019/2020); "Angst, keine Angst", Times Art Center and "Territories Under my Skin" Changing Room, Berlin, Germany (2021).

Since 2005 he has been the artistic director for Modern Art Projects South Africa (<http://map-southafrica.org/>). While lecturing at the Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria, South Africa (1993-2007), he established "outlet" (2002-2007), an experimental exhibition space. Curatorial projects include "Mine", South African video art that has been shown internationally in Dubai (UAE), Bayreuth (Germany); Johannesburg and Bloemfontein (South Africa); Bordeaux and Paris (France); Victoria (Australia) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)—a revised version entitled "The Film Will Always Be You" in 2015 at Tate Modern London.

Abrie Fourie



Opera Village, Laongo, Oubritenga, Burkina Faso, 2021



Abrie Fourie



Former Embassy buildings behind the Thomas Sankara Memorial, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 2022

Abrie Fourie



Grand Marché, Ziniaré, Oubritenga, Burkina Faso, 2021