

AUNTY!



AFRICAN WOMEN IN THE FRAME, 1870 TO THE PRESENT

Selections from **THE MCKINLEY COLLECTION**

Curated by **CATHERINE E. MCKINLEY & LAYLAH AMATULLAH BARRAYN**

Aunty! is a unique collaboration between Catherine E. McKinley, a writer and collector, and Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, a photographer and curator, both Black women, presenting works where the subjects of the collection are women. *Aunty!* features over a hundred rare and original images, ranging from portraiture to stereographs, postcards to *cartes de visite*, taken as early as 1870 and as recently as 2013. Photographers include European and African colonial male owned studios—named and unnamed—and celebrated contemporary African female artists, spanning more than 143 years of the the colonial and post-colonial eras.

This exhibition takes up the idea and figure of “Aunty” and the nuances of this naming. At once an expression of love and affection, Aunty is an honorific across most Black world cultures—a recognition of a feminine power rooted in indigeneity. As powerfully, it connotes the violence of the original colonial construction of the word: the corporeal, dark, servile figure, buffoonish or sexualized in her role of colonial servant. It is also a name burdened by African and Diaspora grapplings with gender, and often troubling constructions of motherhood, sexuality, etc. This exhibition looks at Auntys through the troubling lens of colonialism by including a few earlier photographic images of the late 1870s, as well as the colonial and postcolonial lens of African male photographers, through vernacular images of post-Independence partygoers and studio sittings, and contemporary renderings. For McKinley and Barrayn, *Aunty!* is an attempt to look head on at the beauty of the images and also their more often discomfiting legacies, and the moments where the subjects look back at the viewer reassuringly, with a sense of control of her image, and pleasure in herself.

November 15, 2018 – January 31, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday November 15, 6–9pm

PORTRAIT MASTERS

Celebrated masters Seydou Keita (Mali) and Malick Sidibe (Mali) are featured here with images by other African studios of legend, including James Barnor (Ghana), Abderoumane Sakalay (Mali), Adama Sylla (Senegal), and many anonymous authors. Working between 1920 and 1983—eras spanning the later half-century of colonialism through the era of Structural Adjustment—each photographer captures the dignity, playfulness, austerity, grandeur, and fantasy-making of African women sitters. One memorable heroine reappears in several frames captured between the 1950s and late 1970s, reflecting the evolution of a nation from pre-independence Gold Coast to post-independence Ghana (1957), as it entered an era of liberation politics decidedly influenced by American Black Power. A portrait by French photographer Bernard Matussiere reflects a smouldering power and an awareness of both agency and vulnerability in singer and musician Fela's Queens, style icons for women across the continent and Black women internationally. As with earlier eras, many of these images circulated as postcards, as cartes de visite, as colonial propaganda, advertising, and communication in marriage bids. But most were commissioned by the sitter and were hung and enjoyed at home and, produced in multiples, shared among family and friends.



Two Young Ye-Ye Girls with Sunglasses, 1965
Abderoumane Sakaly
Mali



Eva, London, c. 1960s
James Barnor
UK/Ghana



Nuit de 31 December, 1969, 2011
Malick Sidibe
Mali



Untitled, 1952, 2011
Seydou Keita
Mali



Aunty DeiDei, 1970s
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



Untitled #460, 1956–1957
Seydou Keita
Mali



Aunty Korama and Aggie, c. 1960s
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



Aunty Korama I, c. 1970s
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



Aunty Korama II, c. 1975
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



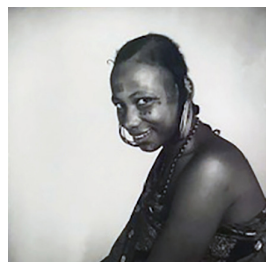
Aunty Korama IV, c. 1960s
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



Fela Queens backstage, 1983
Bernard Matussiere
European tour



Untitled, 1952
Unknown
Senegal



Femme Peulh du Niger, 1970
Malick Sidibe
Mali



Untitled, c. 1960
Unknown
Senegal



Lion Girls, undated
Unknown
Senegal



Marie Rose, undated
Al Hadji Bassirou Sanni
Mopti, Mali



Perfect Aunties, undated
Unknown
Tchad (?)



Woman With Umbrella, undated
Unknown
Togo (?)



Woman with Flowers, undated
Unknown
Belgian Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



1939/1945
Adama Sylla
St. Louis, Senegal



1939/1945
Adama Sylla
St. Louis, Senegal



Untitled, c. 1970s
Adama Sylla
St. Louis, Senegal



Untitled, c. 1950s
Ed. Gevaert
Senegal



Aunty Korama III, 1966
Dan. Minolta, Accra
Accra, Ghana



Fanti Women in Full Dress, c. 1910
Jacob Vitta, Tarkwa
Gold Coast, Ghana



Femme en Tenue Locale, 1911
Unknown
Senegal



Senegalese Woman, undated
Unknown
Morocco (?)



Nos elegantes a Djenne, undated
H. Danel, a Kayes
Mali



Type de Femme Oualoff, 1924
Unknown
St. Louis, Senegal



Une Guernete, c. 1900
CL Albaret
St. Louis, Senegal



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Senegal



Malinke Woman, undated
Unknown
Senegal



Untitled, c. 1950s
Unknown
Mali



Untitled, c. 1970s
Feyre
Senegal



Untitled, c. 1960s
Unknown
Togo (?)



Abena's Week, c. 1975
Unknown
Benin



Dahomey Women, c. 1920s
Unknown
Benin



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Benin



Unknown, undated
Unknown
Mali (?)



Grace Tinuke Oyelude,
Miss Nigeria 1957
Unknown
Nigeria



A Nioro (Soudan)—Une femme
d'un traitant ouolofes, c. 1910
Unknown
Mali



Friends Who Know What To do,
c. 1972
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Ghana or Cote D'Ivoire



Femme Soussons, 1910
A. James
Guinea



From the series, 'The Red Studio'
Oumar Ly
Podor, Senegal



Unknown, undated
Unknown
Mali



Untitled, c. 1900
Unknown
Madagascar

EARLY IMAGES

African entrepreneurs began to pick up the technology of photography by the late 1860s, soon after its arrival on the continent with colonial agents. This was just three decades after François Arago officially announced the invention of photography at the French Chamber of Deputies in 1839. The first photos in The McKinley Collection are dated 1870. We have no other details regarding authorship or the sitters—very plainly clothed silhouettes in what we assume is a European studio because of the way they fit into a style of colonial typology-making, with little detail allowing us to place the subject in a broader context.



**The Reverend James Greaves,
Black African, c. 1890**
John Parkes Decker
Nigeria or Benin



Untitled, 1880
Unknown



Untitled, c. 1870
Unknown
Morocco (?)



Untitled, c. 1870
Unknown
Possibly an edition for La
Exposition Colonial, France



Untitled, c. 1870
Unknown
Morocco (?)



Untitled, c. 1870
Unknown
Senegal (?)



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Morocco



Unknown, c. 1920–1930
Unknown

THE COLONIAL STUDIO

In European studios spanning the 1860s-1970s—images of African women were informed by a long arc of propaganda-making in support of European imperialist projects dating back to the 1400s. The result was a preponderance of nudes, and images fixated on hairstyles, body cicatrization, puberty rites, “women’s work” and “tribal” typologies. Many African photographers working at the same time would engage these tropes, as would later eras of African photographers (1950s-present), revisiting the shots of a woman’s back or hairstyle, but in a way that removed the colonial gaze and replaced it with the loving or honorific, but where a male one still mediated. Behind the European images is the knowledge of relationships between white men and Black female sitters where at best a grave power imbalance lies; often intimations of sexual liaisons or coercion are revealed. We don’t know many of the actual authors of these images. In the photographs of Sierra Leone’s celebrated Lisk-Carew brothers, Alphonse and Arthur, who opened their Freetown studio in 1904, the sitters reclaim a dignity, and the viewer can witness a palpable ease in relation to works of similar composition intended to circulate abroad. A rare photo of “The Reverend James Greaves, Black African,” circa 1890 by John Parkes Decker, a Gambian photographer, of a young girl attending her father disrupts the European gaze but bears a curiously colonialist title. “Coumba, fillette ma blancheuse, Clotilde,” an image from 1908, is placed in a frame made with industrial tape fashioned for a colonial home. Studios in Conakry, Guinea; St. Louis, Senegal; Accra, Ghana have among them the most active, aesthetically fine, and significant production. Central African Republic girls suggestively model a “Premiere corset” and a “Premier chemise,” costly articles that would have been ordered from Europe. A woman in a curious cap, is assumed to be dressed and photographed as part of a French Colonial Expo. A wealthy Senegalese Wolof noblewoman in the 1920s is dressed in costly indigo clothing and jewelry and photographed with dignity, the sitter in control of her image. The colonial studio—African and European— was a complex and storied collision of power and agency, beauty and the tragic.



Accordion, 1930
Unknown
Kapushi, Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



La Femme de Sultane de Mwenda et sa servante, c. 1900
Gabriel L.
Panda, Katanga, Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



Femme de Dos, Undated
Unknown



Woman with Coin Choker, undated
Edition E. Bessieres
Leopoldville-Brazzaville,
Belgian Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



Untitled, 1905
H. Roger Viollet Studio, Paris
Cote D'Ivoire



Une Elegante de Conakry, c. 1910
A. James, Conakry
Guinea



Femme Soussouns, c. 1910
A. James, Conakry
Guinea



Muslim Woman, 1936
Unknown
Eritrea



Bundoo Girls 1, c. 1920
Lisk-Carew Brothers
Freetown, Sierra Leone



Bundoo Girls II, c. 1920
Lisk-Carew Brothers
Freetown, Sierra Leone



Untitled, c. 1920
Unknown
Guinea



Coumba, fillette ma
blancheuse, Clotilde, 1909
Unknown
Senegal



Dahomey—Jeune femme du
Niger, c. 1920
Unknown
Dahomey, Benin



Baule Women, 1928
Unknown
Ivory Coast



Femme dahomeenne, c. 1900
Collection Geo. Wolber
Benin



Dan (?) Woman,
undated
Unknown
Cote D'Ivoire or Liberia



Mulheres da Africa Oriental,
c. 1910
Ed. J. P. Fernandes
Mozambique



Weiber von Ost-Afrika, c. 1910
Unknown
Tanzania



Gold Coast Beauty, c. 1905
Photoholm-Lagos
Gold Coast, Ghana



Untitled,
undated
Unknown
Zanzibar



Femme Foulab (etude no. 2),
c. 1914
Edit. G. Calvayrac—
Mon Guiraud et Mader
Guinea



Premiere chemise, 1920
L.R.
Central African Republic



Premier Corset, 1920
L.R.
Central African Republic



Princesse du Mayumbe, c. 1910
Unknown
Belgian Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



Type Toucouleur, c. 1900
Unknown
Senegal



Little Nancy, Mai 1912,
St. Louis, Senegal
Unknown
Senegal



Saint-Louis (Senegal), En place
pour la pose, c. 1920
Unknown
Senegal



La Femme de Sultane de
Mwenda, c. 1900
Gabriel L.
Panda, Katanga, Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



A Beauty Parlour in Zanzibar,
Africa, c. 1900
Keystone View Company, USA
Zanzibar



Masked Swahili Women
Holding a Fetish, c. 1910
Keystone View Company, USA
Zanzibar



Native Woman, (Blantyre region, Zambia?), c. 1910
Unknown
Zambia



Type de femme haratine—Oasis Sahariennes, undated
Unknown
Mauritania



Un petit Gourmand, c. 1920
Unknown
Morocco



Type, Soudan Francais, c. 1929
Lauroy, ed.
Mali



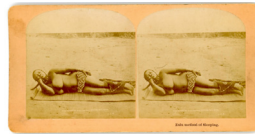
A quatre pattes, c. 1930
J. Geiser, phot. Alger
Mali (?)



Jeune Femmes du Soudan, c. 1910
Collection du Comptoir Parisien,
Conakry
Guinea



Untitled, 1960s (?)
Unknown
Sudan (?)



Zulu Method of Sleeping, 1900
B.W. Kilburn, Littleton, NH
South Africa



Diverses coiffures africaines, L'Afrique Qui Disparait!, 1929-1937
Casimir Zagourski
Belgian Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



Pinda, St. Louis, 1925
Unknown
Senegal



Femmes Bassoundis se coiffant, c. 1950
Hougui
Congo
(Democratic Republic of Congo)



Coiffure Foulbe, date unknown
Unknown
Cameroon



Untitled, undated
Untitled
Ethiopia (?)



Jeune Fille Muhutu de L'Urundi, c. 1930
Unknown
Burundi



Type de Marocaine, undated
Edit. Tehakerian
Morocco



Femme Mousgoum, undated
R. Pauleau
Cameroon



Otufa Girls, Fetish Virgins Crobo Gold Coast Colony, c. 1910
Unknown
Gold Coast, Ghana



Femme Peuhl, c. 1900
Edmond Fortier
Senegal



Young Girl from Togo/North Cameroon, undated
Unknown
Togo/Cameroon



Femme Senegalaise en Madagascar, 1902
Unknown
Senegal/Madagascar



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Morocco



Untitled, undated
Unknown
Senegal



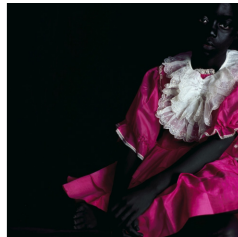
Type de femme de Fort-Lamy, undated
Photo R. Pauleau
Tchad



Aunty Nkor, c. 1970s
Unknown
Accra, Ghana



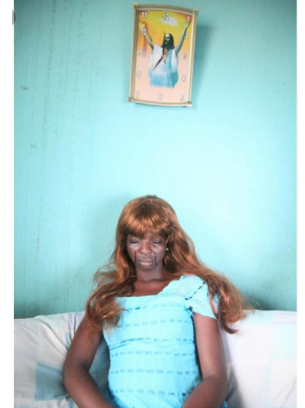
Untitled, 2013
Thabiso Sekgala
South Africa



Far from Home, 2008–2009
Patricia Coffie (US/Ghana)
New York



Teme, 2013
Fatoumata Diabate
Mali



Phyllis: I Am Not Alone, 2010
Zina Saro-Wiwa
Nigeria/UK/US



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United Photo Industries is a New York based non-profit organization that works to promote a wider understanding and increased access to the art of photography.

Since its founding in 2011, UPI has rapidly solidified its position in the public art landscape by continuing to showcase thought-provoking, challenging, and exceptional photography from across the globe. In its first 6 years, UPI has had the opportunity to present the work of more than 2,500 visual artists in gallery exhibitions and public art installations worldwide.

Proudly devoted to cultivating strategic partnerships, creative collaborations, and community spirit, we have approached our goal of cultivating a wide, diverse audience for powerful photographic narratives with unrelenting zeal, working closely with photo festivals, city agencies, and other nonprofit organizations across the globe to create new exhibition opportunities.

United Photo Industries' marquee domestic initiative is Photoville — New York City's premier free photo destination and one of the largest photography events in North America. A modular venue built from repurposed shipping containers, Photoville creates physical platform for photographers of all stripes to come together and interact — and for audiences to experience their work. Photoville each year exhibits hundreds of artists, with dozens of exhibitions, talks & workshops, and nighttime events in an outdoor beer garden.