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Samuel Fosso
AUTOPORTRAIT

Main description

AUTOPORTRAIT is the first comprehensive survey of Samuel Fosso's multifaceted oeuvre. Since the mid-1970s, the artist has focused on self-portraiture and performance, envisioning variations of identity in the postcolonial era. From Fosso's early self-portraits in black-and-white from the 1970s to his recent, continually inventive exercises in self-presentation, highlights include the vibrant series "Tati" (1997), in which he playfully inhabits African and African American characters and archetypes; and the magisterial portraits of "African Spirits" (2008), where he poses as icons of the pan-African liberation and Civil Rights movements, such as Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Patrice Lumumba and Nelson Mandela.

This landmark monograph demonstrates Fosso's unique departure from the traditions of West African studio photography, established in the 1950s and '60s by modern masters Seydou Keita and Malick Sidibé. By charting his conceptual practice of self-portraiture, and sustained engagement with notions of sexuality, gender and self-representation, this book reveals an unprecedented photographic project—one that consistently reflects themes in global visual culture, and covers the range of expressive applications of photography.

Co-published with The Walther Collection, New York

Biography

Born in Kumba in Cameroon in 1962, Samuel Fosso fled Nigeria and the Biafra War, and sought refuge in Bangui in the Central African Republic. He opened his own commercial photography studio there at the age of 13. Alongside his portrait work Fosso began a series of selfportraits, a mode of representation he would never abandon. Staging his personal identity, his work gradually took on a universal social and political dimension, as in his celebrated series "TATI" (1997) and "African Spirits" (2008). Fosso's work is held in collections such as the Tate, London; the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; the Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Bibliography

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