

05/2020

Samuel Fosso

SIXSIXSIX

Main description

SIXSIXSIX consists of 666 large-format Polaroid self-portraits (each 21.5 x 27 cm), produced in an intensive process by Samuel Fosso with a small team in his Paris studio in 2015 and 2016. Shot against the same rich, colored backdrop, these striking photographs depart from Fosso's earlier self-portraits through their understated and strippedback approach. Fosso's challenge was to create 666 self-portraits each with a different bodily expression, reminding us of the link between his performances and photography.

In Fosso's words: "In this series there is unhappiness and happiness, misfortune and good fortune. I was very inspired by these two aspects. *SIXSIXSIX* refers to the number of misfortune. By that I mean in terms of what I've encountered in my life up to now. After my illness came the Biafra War; millions of people died, and I was fortunate to be saved. I went to the Central African Republic where I experienced the conflicts of 2014, in which I also could have died. [...] For all that I've been through, God has been with me and saved me. [...] In the end, it's about buried emotions that we ourselves create, and about exorcizing my own resentment in the face of this situation. From 1976 to 2014, I have never been at peace in my life when faced with the actions of those who always sow misfortune among children and innocents."

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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English

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