

MALICK SIDIBÉ



Malick Sidibé, Self-portrait, 1956. © Malick Sidibé. All images courtesy of the Estate of Malick Sidibé and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

by Federica Barrios Carbonell

Malick Sidibé, a maestro of photography, is originally from Mali and became well-known primarily for his black-and-white photographs from the 1960s. His animated portraits usually depict scenes of pleasurable celebration, creating a sense of playful joy that radiates from each image to its audience. Most frequently, he is memorialized for depictions of the booming pop culture in his motherland's capital of Bamako. His playful photographs of dancing couples and fashionable personalities create an energetic aura in any place these images may be displayed.

Sidibé was born in Soloba, Mali into a farming family where he dedicated his young childhood working as a shepherd on his family's land until he enrolled in school at the age of 10. Having an affinity for the arts from a young age, his talent was fortunately discovered, and he was invited to attend the School of Sudanese Craftsmen. A pioneer for contemporary Black artists, Sidibé's international acclaim is the outcome of his natural talent and authentic ability to illustrate a historical period through such a warm, personal lens.

The black-and-white theme entices a certain nostalgia within us, a desire to be the subjects of these attractive displays. Romantic yet rebellious, Sidibé creates an intimate relationship between his content and the public, using his camera as a mediator between episodes. During a period of liberation for Mali, after the long process of being freed from French colonial rule, his à la mode depictions of everyday scenes capture the essence of the nation's optimistic energy so perfectly that it is hard not to feel the sensations of pride and relief that are emitted from these portrayals of new national identity.

Sidibé's use of backgrounds and backdrops emphasize the young men and women in his images, leaving room for the imagination of their individual stories. From the viewer's perspective, their pasts and their futures remain unknown as curiosity grows about the beautiful scenes and people whose pleasant looks welcome you into their lives.

Sidibé's career was long and highly rewarding, with many honors bestowed upon him. Sidibé inspired the current African diaspora that has rightfully gained so much popularity throughout the decades. The infamous photographer was able to create a seemingly effortless narrative of happiness and revived political expression unlike anything seen before in a Westernized country. The people's reclaiming of their space shown through the genuine nature of a humble man's perspective offers the public a look into a world that they may have never been exposed to.

Le faux musicien derrière sa voiture shows a young man happily indulging in his musical passions without a care about his surrounding, *Bagadadji* shows us a proud dancer who will dip and turn his partner so she feels as much enjoyment as he does in that moment, a picture of love and celebration in *Nuit de Noël (Happy-Club)* where dance partners are immersed in their routine, forgetting about the world around them. Malick Sidibé's presentations of life are heartwarming and shed light on the importance of community. A country united by victory and independence as shown through the lens of a photographer whose raw skill shows nothing but authenticity and unfeigned freedom.



Nuit de Noël (Happy-club) 1963 Malick Sidibé MS 2008

Malick Sidibé, *Nuit de Noël (Happy-Club)*, 1963 / 2007.



Dansez le TWIST - 1965 Malick Sidibé MS 2008

Malick Sidibé, *Dansez le Twist*, 1965 / 2008.



Soirée - 1974 - Malick Sidibé 2008

Malick Sidibé, *Soirée*, 1974 / 2008.



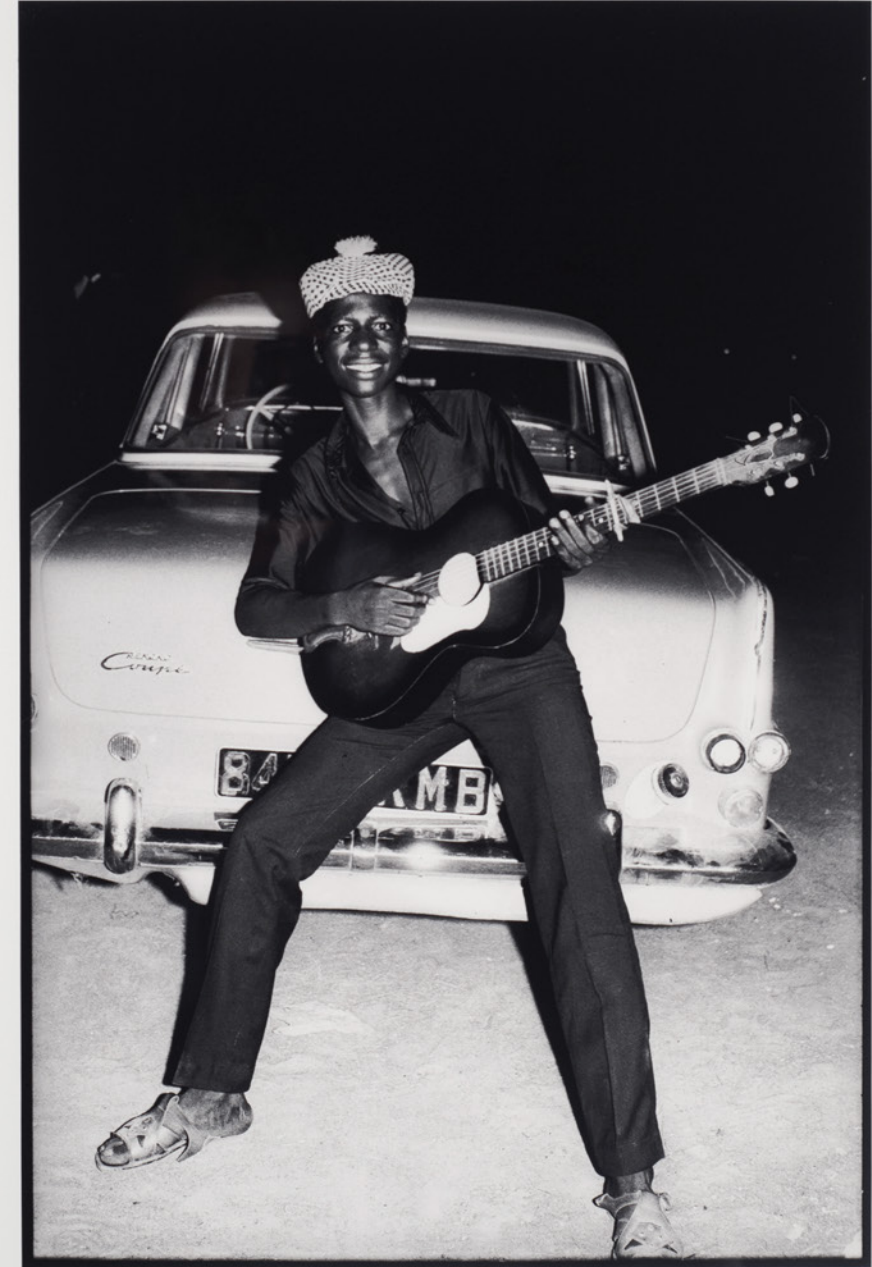
on se regarde! hum? Malick Sidibé 2008

Malick Sidibé, *On se regarde! Hum?*, circa 1970 / 2008.



Présentation de disques sur la moto - 1968 Malick Sidibé 2008

Malick Sidibé, Présentation des Disques Sur La Moto, 1968 / 2008.



Le faux musicien derrière sa voiture 1971 Malick Sidibé 2008

Malick Sidibé, Le faux musicien derrière sa voiture, 1971 / 2008.



Malick Sidibé, *Vues de dos*, 2003 / 2004.



Malick Sidibé, *Untitled (Chris Ofili)*, 2014.



Couple de danseurs de Beatles - club Bagdadji - 1966 Malick Sidibé 2008



ZORO tire le premier - 1972 Malick Sidibé 2008

Malick Sidibé, Couple de danseurs de Beatles - Club Bagadadji, 1966 / 2008.

Malick Sidibé, Zoro tire le premier, 1972 / 2008.