



JAMES MURIUKI

26th Oct - 22nd January



roots contemporary

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27th Oct - 22nd January



opening 26.10.2011 at 18h00

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i n T R A N S I T I O N

This exhibition presents James's work in progress. It is his engagement with a city and by extension a country in transition. A transition that has been expected for long. Recent strides in business opportunities with the East, consumer spending, inflows of currency from the Diaspora and other factors fueling it.

Many streets and neighborhoods in Nairobi are being transformed every day by its shifting architecture. In the last few years road infrastructure set the pace for expansion and land prices sky-rocketed as developers and speculators go for every available square foot. There are many that are left out relegated to spectators. They hear and read about development statistics, and work on the very spaces that generate the statistics.

Many of those left searching for hope, console themselves as having found it in the Pentecostal phenomena, which is not left behind in the rush for growth and expansion. The church leaders quest to conquer new grounds in the sprawling peri-urban and rural landscapes. They wear smart and flamboyant attire oozing confidence in the name of Jesus and rebuke the spirit of hopelessness and despair from their followers, who are only required to make a generous contribution to the work of God.

The new youngsters have their space too. It is a generation that is highly connected to the rest of the world as it has grown knowing the mobile phone and the internet. Alternative clothing labels for attire and apparels have been coming from China while graphic design; expression and style have found common ground in the public transport. The ever vibrant Matatu (aka ma-three or matt e.t.c) has had it's internal metamorphosis, each stage claimed by it's generation. It has become an icon, at least to many in Nairobi, of an urban culture and identity.

3collect – September 2011



roots contemporary

James muriuki

James came across photography as another tool for practicing artistry when he joined the university to study design. He started making experimental snapshots once in a while when he could manage to get the negatives printed. After the university he worked for some years at RaMoMA - Rahimtulla Museum of Modern Art in various capacities. In 2004, he was asked to create a body work to be included in the "KenyaArt" exhibitions showcased in five galleries in New York. For the first time, he was challenged and confronted by the idea of consciously creating a theme. Since then, James has created numerous works that have been included in many important and seminal exhibitions, workshops and projects.

A recurring subject demonstrated in many forms, is the transition and a record of the urban space and its many attributes. Living in Nairobi makes it his primary observation space and this extends to other urban spaces. The works are an illustration of a confluence of inter-dependent happenings in an ever-changing landscape. Some work from this series was included in the exhibition Snap Judgments: New positions in Contemporary African Photography, curated by Okwui Enwezor at International Centre for Photography in New York. This exhibition is one of the landmarks of photography generated from and influenced by Africa, which toured many museums.

Architectural forms and constructions are another of the visual elements that are evident in his work as a metaphorical symbol. The forms brew numerous questions of a society and its interactions. Some of these works are presented as solid forms and lines, elevating themselves very sculpturally. This work was part of his solo exhibition at Goethe Institute, Nairobi curated by 3Collect (an artists collective engaging the curatorial practice of which he is a member). It was also part of the exhibition Mwangalio Tofauti, first exhibited at the Nairobi Gallery, National Museums of Kenya. Other works that are predominantly architectural have been selected for inclusion in photographic exhibitions on Africa and won an award in the pan-Africa photography contest; the Taarifa Africa Film Festival, Spain.

At present, he is experimenting with motion, video and alternative ways of using photography and combining it with other media - ultimately exploring photography as a medium and a process of making art. He has collaborated with artists from different countries on new works over residencies and workshops as well as on a personal edict.

James lives and works in Nairobi and his work has been exhibited in Kenya, South Africa, USA, Denmark, Spain, France and Germany among other countries.

3collect – September 2011



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