

Points of Departure: Photography of African migrations

How can a still image capture the movement of migration? How can a still image reflect the problems of (dis)connection experienced by the migrants and the families they have left behind? Looking at the points of departure for historical and contemporary migrations from West Africa, photographers H el ene Amouzou, Mamadou Gomis and Judith Quax examine these questions in different ways.

Migration is a major political concern of our time. More people than ever are on the move in search of a better future – but migrants who travel in pursuit of employment are sometimes seen by their hosts with ambiguity, accused of ‘stealing’ jobs and draining resources.

Although we are increasingly concerned with policing our borders, rarely do we examine the complexities involved in the migration of people from low-income countries to high-income countries. We know little about the lives these migrants have given up, the difficult decisions they have made, the hardships experienced on the move, or the families they have left behind. Where have their journeys started? For whom do they make this sacrifice?

While most African migrants go to other African countries, many young people in pursuit of a future are tempted by the riches of Europe and take their chances. Images of economic refugees risking their lives in small vessels convey their determination to reach fortress Europe. Embarking on hazardous journeys, some die at sea, others make it and live. The fate of those who left is not always known. Judith Quax has photographed the rooms that the migrants once lived in. Her photographs record their absences – as experienced by the families they have left behind in Senegal, a country from which many men have migrated to France, Italy, and the United States.

Even when migrants make it to Europe, many will live in conditions of social, legal and economic uncertainty for years to come. They will make ends meet, operating in a shadow economy. And while they increasingly manage to secure a new future, their past will start to slip away. Migrants are often disconnected from their homeland, and may experience a crisis of identity. In her photography, H el ene Amouzou reflects on a condition she knows herself all too well. Her photographs were taken in the attic of her accommodation in Brussels.

Historically, migration helped African societies cope with drought, economic misfortune, and the political devastation of the slave trade. Today, many Africans view the social and economic upheavals that the slave trade produced as an important reason for Africa’s underdevelopment. To commemorate the slave trade, tourists – including the descendants of slaves – visit the House of Slaves at Gor ee Island (Senegal). This house was for centuries a departure point for slave ships, and is today a national museum. In his work, Mamadou Gomis observes how visitors explore this place, which is haunted by the spirits of the departed.

This exhibition is the outcome of a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship granted to Dr Ferdinand de Jong.



Biographies

H el ene Amouzou was born in Togo and migrated to Germany, where she lived for several years before moving to Brussels, where she lives and works today. She has studied at the Academy of Drawing and Visual Arts of Molenbeek St-Jean, Belgium. Her work reflects on her identity as a transnational migrant and has been exhibited in *Reflections of the Self: Five African Women Photographers* (2012), a Hayward Touring exhibition; *We Face Forward: Art from West Africa Today* (2012); Bozar de Mons; Photoquai, Paris; and several galleries in Brussels.

H el ene Amouzou (b.1969)
Selection from Self Portraits Series / *S erie Auto Portrait*,
2008–2009
Digital prints
Courtesy of the artist

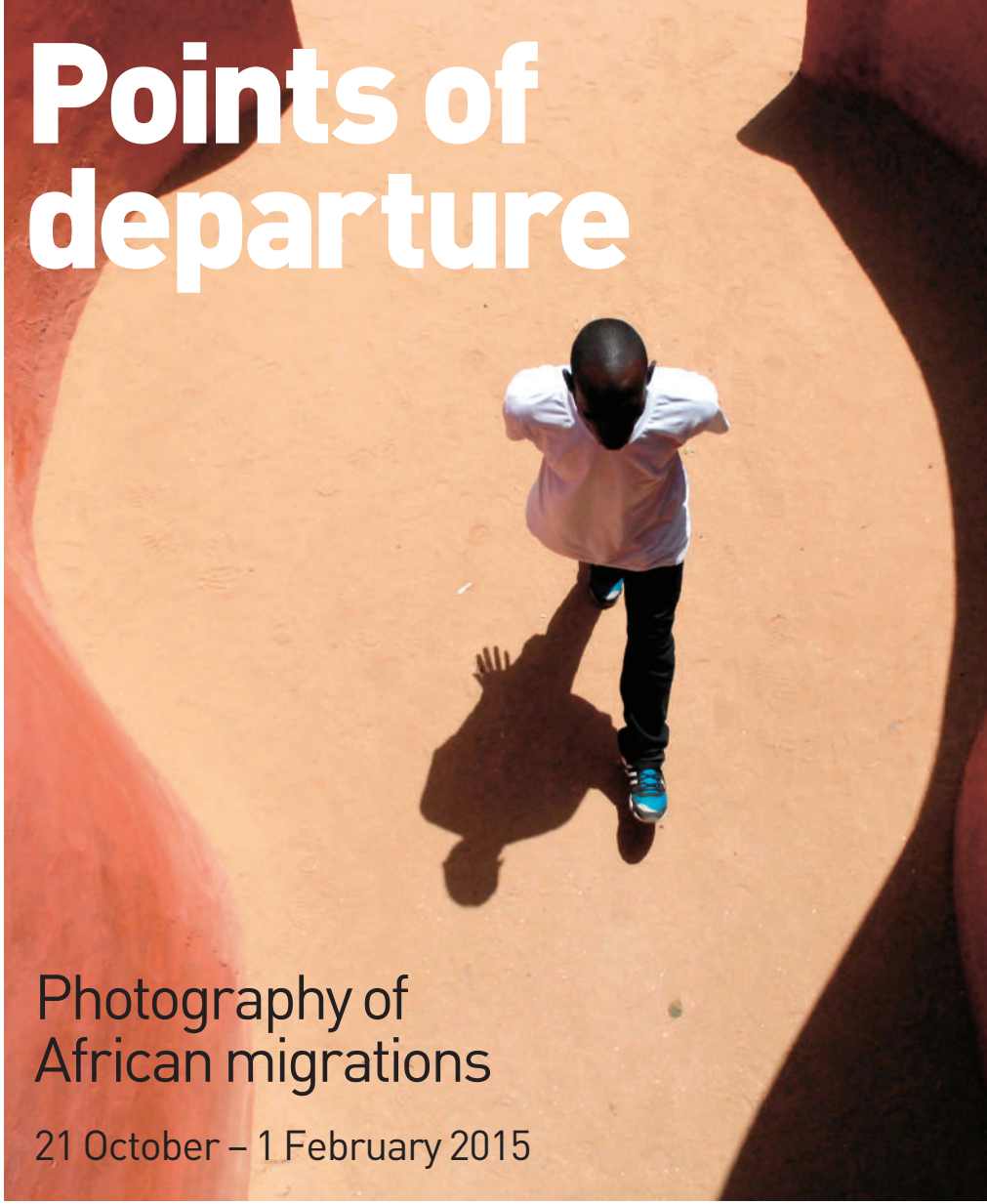


Mamadou Gomis started his career as a studio photographer in a small Senegalese town. Establishing himself in the national capital, Dakar, he began documenting everyday life in the big city, and the independent newspaper *le Journal* published his series of daily snapshots. In addition, he photographed for AFP and Reuters. His work was included in the international exhibition *Snap Judgements* (2006), and has been shown in New York, Lagos, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Berlin. Gomis continues to document life in the cosmopolis of Dakar.

Mamadou Gomis (b.1976)
Selection from House of Slaves / *La Maison des Esclaves*,
Gor ee, Senegal, 2012–2013
Digital print
Courtesy of the artist

SAINSBURY CENTRE for Visual Arts

University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ
www.scva.ac.uk



Points of departure

Photography of African migrations

21 October – 1 February 2015

Gallery Information

Gallery and shop open
Tuesday – Friday, 10am–6pm
Weekends, 10am–5pm
Closed on Mondays, including bank holiday Mondays.

Admission
Free to the Sainsbury Centre Permanent Collections. For temporary exhibition prices, please see our website for details.

Advance tickets
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Adult groups contact: Lisa Blowers, lisa.blowers@uea.ac.uk or 01603 591033.

Modern Life Café
Open Monday – Friday, 9am–5pm
Weekends, 10am–5pm
Enter via School entrance outside gallery opening hours.

Coffee bar open
Tuesday – Sunday, 10am–4pm

Front cover: Mamadou Gomis (b.1976)
Selection from House of Slaves / *La Maison des Esclaves*, Gorée, Senegal, 2012–2013; digital print; courtesy of the artist

The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts is supported by



By car or taxi
Directions from Norwich city centre
Take the B1108 Earlham Road away from the city centre, cross the outer ring road and the 'five ways' roundabout and then look out for UEA and museum signs (a left-hand turn) and enter the campus.

Directions from outside Norwich
From the A47, turn right onto the B1108 Watton Road (which becomes Earlham Road) towards the city centre. After traffic lights leading to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, look out for UEA and museum signs (a right-hand turn) and enter the campus.

Parking (27 September 2014 – 1 March 2015)
Parking at UEA is very limited. Please note that during term time UEA car parks are busiest on weekday mornings – spaces are easier to find at weekends and in the afternoon.

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Two small, dedicated pay-and-display car parks (P5 and P7) are available for Sainsbury Centre Visitors.

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Bus number 25 runs from Norwich city centre to UEA – ask for the Sainsbury Centre stop. Costessey Park and Ride buses run weekdays every 20 minutes at peak times direct to the UEA campus.

By train
The main station at Norwich is the nearest to the Sainsbury Centre. From there, take a number 25 bus or taxi to the Sainsbury Centre (see above).

By bicycle
There are racks outside the Sainsbury Centre and covered racks between P3 and P5.

Information
Call 01603 593199
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Judith Quax studied at the Photo Academy of Amsterdam. After several other projects, she chose to work on international migration from Senegal. Her work was published in *Presence in Absence* (2014), and the journals *African Arts* and *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*. She has exhibited in Dakar, Lagos, Berlin and Amsterdam. Her current work focuses on the role of photo albums in sustaining relations between migrants and their families back home. Working for Amnesty International, she continues to document international migration.

Judith Quax (b.1973)
Selection from Series *Illegal Migration / Immigration Clandestine*
Ibou's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2007 (shown right)
Bassirou's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2007
Alioune's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2008
Mamadou's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2007
Djiby's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2011
Raoul's room, Dakar, Senegal, 2011 (shown below)
All images courtesy of the artist
All prints are C prints from film (Hasselblad)

