



FOTO COLECTANIA

EXHIBITION TEXTS IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURES OF IDENTITY

THE WALTHER COLLECTION

This exhibition examines how photographers, across a range of cultures and historical periods, have used portraiture to affirm or challenge social stereotypes constructed around notions of race, gender, class, and nationality. Reflecting on how portrait photography has been deployed, *Structures of Identity* visualizes the political and cultural factors that shape individual and collective subjectivities, with a particular focus on the relation between self-representation and social identity. Since the earliest photographic technologies in the 1840s, individual portraits have been situated within vernacular archives denoting social hierarchies, from the family album to the police lineup. Standardized daguerreotype portraits, occupational and performative tintypes, cartes de visite, and criminal mugshots were all efforts to catalogue and monitor social normativity within emerging industrial economies and regimes. Many modernist photographic investigations into social representation and individual identity have employed the structuring devices of typology, taxonomy, and seriality.

Emphasizing the work of photographers who use portraiture to subvert visual expectations, and challenge markers of identification, *Structures of Identity* questions notions of a stable, authentic self. The exhibition shows how some photographers have capitalized on the power of photographic portraiture to explore changing notions of gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity. Such efforts reflect a precise and widespread practice of using portraiture within a larger classificatory grid that shapes the political meanings of those subjects.

The Walther Collection is an art foundation dedicated to the critical understanding of historical and contemporary photography and related media. Through a program of original research, in-depth collecting, scholarly publications, and extensive exhibitions, The Walther Collection aims to highlight the social uses of photography and to expand the history of the medium. At its three-building campus in Neu-Ulm, Germany, its Project Space in New York City, and with traveling installations worldwide, The Walther Collection presents thematic and monographic exhibitions drawn from its expansive holdings of modern and contemporary photography and media art from Africa, China, Japan, and Europe, nineteenth-century European and African photography, and vernacular lens-based imagery from across the globe. The collection's exhibition program is complemented by public lectures and screenings, international scholarly symposia, and a critically acclaimed series of catalogues and monographs co-published by Steidl.

Zhang Huan

China, 1965; lives and works in Shanghai

Family Tree, 2001, 9 C-Prints

Family Tree presents a dramatic visual rendering of Zhang Huan's intuition that the demands of society somehow come to be directly inscribed upon each individual's body. In a sequence of nine color photographs, the artist's face is slowly covered with black ink calligraphy. Some characters refer to family relationships such as "uncle" and "aunt;" others stand for the primal elements of earth, fire, and water; still others refer to celebrated Chinese tales, such as that of the "foolish old man who moved the mountain." The artist's face slowly disappears beneath the ink, suggesting the weight of an elaborate web of familial, social, and cultural relations that threatens to obliterate any sense of individual identity. Yet, the artist's stubborn and unyielding expression signals his refusal to accept such a preordained destiny.

Unidentified photographer

United States

[Salpointe Catholic High School Class Portraits], ca. 1950–90, video slideshow of 314 black-and-white photographs

Like many high schools throughout the country, the Salpointe Catholic High School in Tucson, Arizona, has an annual picture day on which standardized portrait photographs are taken for personal use and reproduction in the school's yearbook. This extraordinary roll of 314 black-and-white photographs apparently represents a day's work for the photographer documenting the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes of the high school. Salpointe is a co-ed Catholic high school, founded in 1950, and run by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Tucson. In 1993, Salpointe High School was involved in a key ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, in which the court held that being a religious organization did not exempt the school from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that required it to provide a deaf student with a sign language interpreter.

Unidentified photographers

[Workers Displaying Tools of Their Trades], ca. 1865–90, tintypes, various sizes, enlarged and reproduced as fifteen archival pigment prints on cotton rag paper, mounted on dibond

In the late nineteenth century, tintypes were exceptionally popular in the United States, particularly as an alternative to the daguerreotype. Tintypes were durable, rapidly produced, inexpensive, and easily obtained. These qualities fostered an environment in which the sitters played a significant role in establishing their self-expression and cultural identity in the photography studio. Before neutral or stereotypical backdrops, customers were free to pose, with pride or humor, in clothes and props of their own choosing. In the occupational tintypes shown here individuals overtly demonstrate their social status and position within the economic logic of their communities by displaying the tools of their trades, or the products of their labors. While most were destined for family albums, some undoubtedly were intended for reuse as reproductions to promote these professions, such as the photographer, the carnival barker, the actress, and the blacksmith.

Unidentified photographer

[Migrant Farmworkers], ca. 1980, eight chromogenic prints

Migrant farmworkers in the United States—a labor force often comprised of immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries—have long been crucial to the agricultural economy of California. Yet these workers are often employed on a seasonal or temporary basis, lacking any legal rights, benefits, or protections. Little is known about these particular images other than that they were made in a makeshift studio, with a sheet strung up for a backdrop, and a yellow stool as the only prop. The male and female migrant workers, dressed in jeans and work clothes, pose one by one, each holding an identifying number. As each sitter attempts to adopt the same pose, what becomes instantly apparent are the similarities among the members of this series: they cohere as a social group. At the same time, each sitter is clearly differentiated by the unique attributes of clothing, posture, and means of holding the distinguishing number card that characterizes them. How the photographs of this labor pool were used by an employer—or prospective employer—remains unclear, but they reflect the tension between self-assertion and surveillance that often distinguishes identification photography.

Unidentified Photographer

[Men with Beards], ca. 1970, 39 gelatin-silver prints

Flaunting the public characteristics of gender roles through exaggerated and repeated performances of dress, hairstyle, and mannerism is one of the ways that such patterns are established and reinforced. Beards, which symbolize masculine virility and dominance, have long been regarded as a key attribute of male identity, though the popularity of various styles of facial hair has fluctuated. The images shown here may derive from a barber college or male fashion source, and depict the hyperbolic, even campy, forms that male styles adopted in the 1970s through changes in fashion and appearance in order to accentuate gender distinctions.

Unidentified photographer

South Africa

[Kimberley *Cartes de Visite*], ca. 1870s, eight *cartes de visite*

Cartes de visite were small, affordable images mounted on card, which gained popularity as modest collectables in the late 19th century. Often, *cartes de visite* depicted family members or famous personalities; however, just as sought after were depictions of supposed racial or social types. The *cartes de visite* on view here feature "tribal" subjects photographed by British photographers in a studio in Kimberley, South Africa during colonial rule. These images contain tropes and recognizable styles emanating from a crude, romanticized notion of African history: sitters were often asked to wear animal-skin clothing or carry spears, as a performance of traditional village life. Evidence of their popularity and robust circulation, the images are neatly sorted and sequenced and often display official studio stamps and imprints on the reverse. Handwritten captions in English also appear on the reverse side—some also with attached labels in French, likely remnants from an album—which offer additional insight on the meanings attributed to these photographed sitters, describing their roles, dress, and general appearance.

Unidentified Photographer

[Gender Benders], ca. 1970, 9 gelatin-silver prints enlarged and reproduced as digital prints mounted on dibond

The obscure intentions of privately circulated photographs of explicit sexuality or personal performances of gender oscillation contrast sharply with the simultaneous vogue on stage and in the media for female impersonators, men who would deliberately—and often convincingly—don female clothes and makeup purely for entertainment. In this series of so-called *gender benders*, a group of men—presumably actors—display a range of stereotypically female attire and poses.

Unidentified photographer

United States

[Employee Identification Cards for G. & G. Precision Works], ca. 1945–50,
18 vintage ID Cards with gelatin-silver prints

Regulatory systems of photographic identification are often imposed at sites of employment, especially where issues of security and surveillance are involved. During World War II and in years following, for example, many American corporations and political organizations were concerned about infiltration or spying by foreign agents, and created special photographic identification cards for their workers. The Long Island-based G. & G. Precision Works was a small manufacturing firm founded in 1938 and noted for making domestic appliances, electrical signs, and mechanical tools. During the war, G. & G. was a government subcontractor for Grumman Aviation, manufacturing precision parts for warplanes. The ID cards shown here probably date from the years following World War II, and state the citizenship of the employee. Slightly bigger than common business cards, they also feature a black and white passport photograph, a thumbprint, the name, and physical characteristics of its holder; G. & G's diverse wartime workforce included many women and African Americans.

Unidentified Photographers

Fun with the Girls (chromogenic photographs album), 1972, slideshow

Travel albums often show site-seeing friends and family members posing before stereotypical landmarks and local cultural emblems. This joyful album skips the conventionality in favor of, as the embossed title in the cover proclaims, "fun with the girls." The fun involves four middle-aged American women on a getaway to the El San Juan Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The color snapshots depict them having fancy nights out, trying on outfits, relaxing poolside, and posing in their hotel rooms. The four friends take turns with the camera in various formations, performing and aware of the photographers. A few photos include ancillary characters and subjects of interest, such as passing waiters and strolling male musicians, who catch the attention of the friends on vacation.

Unidentified Photographer

[Woman Displaying Various Outfits], ca. 1980–90, 11 digital C-Prints

In these "selfies" from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, one determined woman recorded an array of outfits and poses, all within the same domestic setting. The clothing seems to reflect several facets of life, including business attire, at-home loungewear, casual weekend outfits, and glamorous outerwear. Her accompanying facial expressions—and even use of make-up—convey a corresponding attitude to each representative social role, from carefree and confident, to playful and coquettish, and occasionally exasperated. While these comprehensive snapshots may remain ambiguous in motive, one can read through the distinctly periodized styles certain contemporaneous cultural undercurrents, posing questions about the subject's gender identity, economic status, professional satisfaction, and ritual social obligations.

Unidentified photographer

[Daguerreotypist's Display], ca. 1850, framed group of 48 sixth-plate daguerreotypes

Fulfilling the new demand for photographic portraits, daguerreotypists appeared in every small town in the United States throughout the 1840s and 1850s, often displaying framed collections of images on the street, such as this group of forty-eight daguerreotypes. While principally designed to advertise the quality of the maker's skills, such displays were also expressions of the purported democracy of photography, sometimes showing portraits of celebrities or noted community members alongside everyday workers and tradesmen, and thus establishing their equivalence.

Unidentified photographers

[Circus Performers], ca. 1865, 7 *cartes de visite* reproduced as archival pigment prints on cotton rag paper, and mounted on dibond

In 1860s Europe and the United States, a growing fascination with visual spectacles and collective experiences allowed the circus industry to reach the peak of its popularity. Circus performers, including clowns and acrobats, gained considerable international fame and prominence, which was partly bolstered by the widespread circulation of small photographic cards, or the so-called *cartes de visite*. Reenacting their repertoire of iconic poses for the camera, these entertainers used the cards as both advertisements and calling cards, thereby creating a brief craze for buying *cartes de visite* of famous people to then collect them in albums.

Unidentified Photographer

United States

[Portraits from Casa Susanna], ca. 1970, 7 digital C-Prints

In the pre-Stonewall era, practices of gender insubordination or cross-dressing were often enacted in subcultural communities or private settings. Magazines such as *Transvestia* published images of cross-dressers and transgender people, legitimizing and celebrating their representations. In venues such as Casa Susanna, an upstate weekend home for cross-dressers, individuals could gather to take and exchange photographs. From a surviving cache of personal photographs from Casa Susanna (mostly now housed at the Art Gallery of Ontario), this small group suggests the deliberateness and pride with which the ladies posed for one another in the privacy—or secrecy—of their weekend getaway.

Unidentified photographer

[Asylum Portraits], ca. 1920, 5 gelatin-silver prints

Well into the twentieth century, modern mental institutions appeared scarcely different from earlier lunatic asylums. Often little distinction was provided between various forms of "madness" or "insanity," and patients were generally treated as prison inmates to be controlled or made docile. Even in 1961, after years of reform, sociologist Erving Goffman, in his landmark book *Asylums*, could still describe the goal of "total institutionalization" in psychiatric hospitals to socialize patients into predictable behavior, creating someone who is "dull, harmless, and inconspicuous." This phrase provides an apt description of the patients shown in these early twentieth-century photographs from an unknown psychiatric hospital. As a form of evidence or profiling often found in medical archives, here the facial features and body types are recorded to be measured against a fictional norm or type to compare anatomies, analyze character, and even predict behavior.

Unidentified photographers

United States

[American Mug Shots], 1908-21 and 1925-32, 3 vintage cards with gelatin-silver prints

These mug shots feature criminal subjects photographed at prisons in Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco, as well as various other cities in the United States. Mounted to standardized cards, some of these small, uniformly produced documents are labeled "Bertillon", referring to the French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon, who, in 1879, published an anthropometric system of standardized body measurements that could be applied to individual front and profile head shots of prisoners. Warden Robert W. Mc Claghry of the Illinois State Penitentiary in Joliet introduced Bertillon's method to the U.S. in 1885, and it soon became the dominant form of producing identification of accused criminals. This seemingly objective method for representing, cataloguing, and even predicting criminal types was the standard for a generation, surviving later in the form of wanted posters.

Unidentified Photographers

[The Girlfriends' Album], (black-and-white photographs album), 1934, slideshow

Four young women are featured in this diminutive mid-twentieth-century photo album, which records an everyday outing in the Minnesota countryside. In some images, the women stroll through fields, climb trees, and play with a dog. In one extraordinary sequence, each woman in turn removes her shirt and poses for typological snapshots of her back, her hands, and her feet. A few of the images were removed from the album, perhaps to preserve the identification of one of the women. The purpose of the album and its enigmatic images is unknown. But these highly personal vernacular photographs show private and somewhat unexpected versions of gender representation and sexuality, perhaps suggesting queer intimacy.

Unidentified Photographers

[The Girlfriends' Album], (black-and-white photographs album), 1905, slideshow

This charming album reflects the new spontaneity associated in the early twentieth century with personal handheld cameras and "snaps," particularly for documenting anecdotal incidents and leisure activities of everyday life. In this album, a spirited group of young women is shown engaged in various activities, such as lying on the grass, climbing trees, riding bicycles, and trying on white undergarments. These activities are presented in series of sequential photos, almost like filmstrips. Most of the photographs were taken outdoors, where there is a casual flirtatiousness between the females as they pose, boost each other into trees, and roll around on the grass.

Guy Tillim

South Africa, 1962; lives and works in Cape Town

Mai Mai militia in training near Beni, eastern DRC, for immediate deployment with the APC (Armée Populaire du Congo), the army of the RCD-KIS-ML, 2002, 4 archival pigment prints

Trained as a photojournalist, Guy Tillim has covered conflicts throughout postcolonial Africa since 1986. In 2002, he photographed the civil war in Beni, Democratic Republic of Congo, which claimed an estimated 3.8 million lives. While there, he encountered the Mai Mai militias, comprised of young boys and adolescents training to fight against the Congolese government in the country's rebel army—the so-called *Armée Populaire du Congo (APC)*. Tillim's portrait series captures defiant child soldiers as they camouflage themselves in dried leaves and vines. The logs they carry instead of guns are thought to possess a magical immunity to real bullets.

Accra Shepp

United States, 1962; lives and works in New York

Occupying Wall Street, 2011–12, 15 archival pigment prints

Beginning in September 2011, the political demonstration "Occupy Wall Street" first took place in Zuccotti Park, near Wall Street in Lower Manhattan. The purpose of the demonstration was to protest social and economic inequality, and the group's slogan "We are the 99%!" resonated broadly across the Internet and social media. Accra Shepp set out to create individual portraits of the Occupy demonstrators, to give the protest a human face, and to reflect the diversity of the protesters' backgrounds and messages. "The diversity of the participants and the range of their activities was so great that I felt it important to be able to consider each protester as an individual," Shepp says, "not as a faceless member of a cause."

Leonhard Schultze-Jena

Germany, 1872–1955

Zoological and Anthropological Results of an Expedition to West and Central South Africa 1903-1905 (book), 1928

Leonhard Schultze-Jena was an important and industrious German zoologist and anthropologist, noted in particular for his extensive knowledge of vernacular languages and dialects, and for his sensitive translations of key creation myths, such as the *Popul Vuh*. Before he was thirty, Schultze-Jena, who added the name "Jena" to his own name to honor his hometown, conducted extensive explorations and field studies in various regions of South Africa, where he studied the local zoology, botany, and geography. In his copious reports, such as this one from the 1903–1905 expedition to study the Nama tribe in central South Africa, Schultze-Jena used statistics, bodily measurements, and detailed anatomical photographs to analyze the nature of the indigenous groups and tribes he encountered. Although some of the ethnographic photographs that Schultze-Jena published are typical scientific front and side profile studies of the period, many are invasive and humiliating. An avowed colonialist and racist, Schultze-Jena gave little credence to the humanity of his subjects; when members of the Hereros tribe were massacred by German soldiers in 1904, he boasted that it allowed him to acquire fresh corpses for anatomical examination.

August Sander

Germany, 1876–1964

Face of Our Time, 1910–29, 14 gelatin-silver prints

August Sander favored an objective attention to detail and a comparative approach to portrait photography. In *Antlitz der Zeit*, a 60-image portfolio from his ongoing master project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts (People of the Twentieth Century)*, Sander intended to create a photography of precision that contextualized and emphasized varying social strata, while underscoring the psychology of a period. He unsentimentally captured a society faced with transition. Arranged into seven archetypal categories, Sander's visual portrayals of farmers, workers, students, families, artists, and the bourgeoisie, highlight both the individuality of the sitters and the typical traits of these "types" from early twentieth-century Germany.

Thomas Ruff

Germany, 1958; lives and works in Düsseldorf

Untitled Portraits, 1981–86, 9 C-Prints

From 1977 to 1985, Thomas Ruff was a student of Bernd and Hilla Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. Like his mentors, Ruff is a practitioner of serial, conceptual photography. His portraits, which he began taking in 1981, distill his distinctive sense of objectivity and detachment. These sober color images of young German men and women, many of which were fellow students, resemble photographs of passports or identity cards. Rather than responding to a particular individual, the portraits' structural similarities refer to a young generation under surveillance—which to Ruff, reflects the repressive political climate in Germany at the time.

Adolfo Patiño

Mexico, 1954–2005

La Tierra Prohibida de Terry Holiday, 1979, 13 digital C-Prints

In 1979 Adolfo Patiño made a dramatic series of portraits of the famous transsexual Mexican actress Terry Holiday. Patiño was a photographer and multimedia artist who often used Mexican kitsch to critique global consumer culture. In the collaborative performance series titled *La Tierra Prohibida de Terry Holiday*, Patiño envisioned Holiday as the embodiment of one of Andy Warhol's superstars. In the original tiny color images, Holiday, who earlier starred in Patiño's films and performances, preens and poses for the camera, offering an exaggerated image of conventionalized female sexuality. With their theatricality, eccentricity, and carnivalesque character, these images create a camp parody of the powerful patriarchal institutions of surveillance and censorship of queer culture in Mexico during the 1970s.

J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere

Nigeria, 1930–2014

Untitled [Hairstyles], 1970–79, 9 gelatin-silver prints

Shortly after Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960, J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere embarked on a remarkable self-assigned project: to systematically record key elements of Nigerian culture during the country's postcolonial cultural transition. In 1968, without any specific anthropological or scholarly agenda, he began documenting a wide variety of Nigerian women's hairstyles. Throughout the following forty years, Ojeikere compiled over 1,000 photographs of braided, twisted, and wrapped hair, recalling delicate sculptures while referencing components of Nigerian life—from its various ethnic groups to the expanding shapes of the country's urban spaces.

Zanele Muholi

South Africa, 1972; lives and works in Johannesburg and Cape Town

Faces and Phases, 2006–ongoing, 6 gelatin–silver prints

Nosi ‘Ginga’ Marumo, Yeoville, Johannesburg, 2007; Gazi ‘T Zuma, Umlazi Township, Durban, 2009; Phila Mbanjwa, Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal, 2012; Lerato Marumolwa, Embekweni, Paarl, 2009; Dikeledi Sibanda, Yeoville, Johannesburg, 2007; Tumi Nkopane, KwaThema, Johannesburg, 2013.

Zanele Muholi describes herself as a "visual activist." Her work draws attention to the invisibility and intolerance that is often felt by black South African lesbians and transgender individuals. Although the country's constitution ensures equality to all citizens and allows same-sex marriages, these policies are rarely enforced and protected by government officials. With great subtlety and tenderness, Muholi's black-and-white photographs in *Faces and Phases* portray black queer and trans people from different places and professions. Adopting a serial portrait format, she has created a "wall of fame" to honor those individuals that her society denigrates as a faceless group.

Hiroh Kikai

Japan, 1945; lives and works in Tokyo

Asakusa Portraits, 1985–2003, 10 gelatin-silver prints

Since the early 1970s, Hiroh Kikai has taken street portraits in the Asakusa district of Tokyo. Home to the Sensoji Temple, this "urban backwater" neighborhood draws a cross section of the Japanese population—pilgrims from all over the country flock to the temple, while an assortment of vibrant, eccentric personalities is attracted by the area's idiosyncratic aspects. Kikai's *Asakusa Portraits* convey this sense of abounding individuality, yet they retain a strict sense of continuity and grouping—no doubt attributed to his precise working method. Spending no more than ten minutes on each subject, Kikai photographs passersby in front of the scarlet walls of the Sensoji Temple, which provide a uniform backdrop essential for an improvised outdoor studio. He has also rooted this constructive choice in his artistic approach. "When I photograph things or people," he states, "I want to capture not only surface qualities, but also the essence of the subject. So with my portraits in Asakusa, I decided that I wouldn't chase my subjects too far." Captured on a handheld Hasselblad camera, each black-and-white Asakusa portrait is accompanied by an excerpted quotation from Kikai's conversation with his subject. These captions impart a means for extending the project beyond a composite portrait of contemporary Japanese life, by creating what Kikai views as an inexhaustible "two-way conversation between the viewer and the picture."

A man dressed in leather, 1985

A middle school student who was walking alone in a crowd of people, 1998

A man who tells me he fell into a fight when he got drunk, 1985

A junior high school student on a school trip, 1987

A man wearing a coat that he says is made from the pelts of twenty-eight raccoons, 1999

A reticent laborer, 1985

A man who tells me that he is a bookbinder, 1990

A waiter in a club in Ikebukuro, who responds politely to my queries, 2003

A performer of butoh dance, 2001

A professor of economics, 1995

Seydou Keita

Mali, 1921–2001

Untitled Portraits, 1949–60, 9 gelatin-silver prints

In 1948, Seydou Keita opened a commercial photography studio in Bamako, Mali. His formal portraiture style and masterful compositions, which emphasized the visual interplay between the subject's clothing and a selection of densely patterned textile backdrops, shaped the new image of postcolonial Africa. Keita depicted a panorama of mid-twentieth-century Bamako during a time of intense social transition—reflecting the influence of cinema, the merging of traditional and contemporary fashions, and a burgeoning consumer culture. In highly-conscious poses—and frequently pictured with elaborate textiles, jewelry, radios, and cars—Keita's subjects expressed the emerging myth of the modern African citizen. To be photographed by him was to be made "Bamakois," to be seen as beautiful and cosmopolitan.

Johnie H. Hayes

[U.S. Army Airforce Bombardment Portraits], ca. 1944, 24 gelatin-silver prints

This series of striking portraits details a group of American pilots, navigators, and bombardiers serving in a United States Army's Air Force Bombardment unit, which operated in the Pacific during World War II. Photographed by pilot Johnie H. Hayes, each of the images contains commentaries on the reverse side, completed by a different serviceman, with personal information and rich psychological observations. Hayes, who included his own portrait, is described as a "camera addict." Other impressions throughout the series range from details on personality traits—"very witty, though frequently coarse"; humorous judgments—"age for age he probably has more tales of adventure than Casanova"; and melancholic statements—"he's no longer with us, was married, no children." Each airman is photographed similarly, wearing a uniform of tan collared shirt, aviator's cap, and brown leather jacket, but each adopts a unique pose and manner, one that often corresponds to his written description. As a record of wartime, this nuanced historical document offers an unfiltered, often wry view of military behavior and psychology, conveying contemporaneous notions of camaraderie, respectability, romantic relationships, and exoticism.

Manuel García Fernández

Colombia, 1912–2006

Untitled Portraits, ca. 1950, 9 gelatin-silver prints with writing

Little is known about the life and work of Manuel García Fernández, who, for many years, operated a portrait studio in Pereira, Colombia. He photographed city landmarks and festivals as well as individual sitters. In this unusual set of double portraits, Fernández made large format photographic prints of couples, then wrote long and sometimes cryptic commentary in Spanish on the versos of the prints, which include love poems and ham radio instructions.

Samuel Fosso

Cameroon, 1962; lives and works in Nigeria and France

African Spirits, 2008, 7 gelatin-silver prints

In *African Spirits*, Samuel Fosso extends the impulse of his early studio self-portraits by reenacting historical imagery drawn from magazines and newspapers. *African Spirits* comprises portraits of Fosso posing as icons of the pan-African liberation and Civil Rights movement, including Angela Davis, Miles Davis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Patrice Lumumba, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, and Kwame Nkrumah. These highly theatrical, often uncanny impersonations not only honor the figures who fought for civil rights and postcolonial independence, but also display how their mastery of self-styling for the media helped to shape and enforce political ideals. According to Fosso, *African Spirits* is an "homage to the leaders who have tried to liberate us, to give us back our dignity as Africans and as blacks."

Rotimi Fani-Kayode

Nigeria, 1955–89

Nothing to Lose VII; Nothing to Lose XII, 1989, 2 digital C-Prints

Rotimi Fani-Kayode was a leading voice among Black British artists in the flourishing queer culture of the late 1980s. Influenced by his experience as an African exile in Europe and his spiritual heritage—members of his family were keepers of the shrine of Yoruba deities in Ife, Nigeria—Fani-Kayode staged and photographed performances. The imaginative space of the studio allowed him to create new icons whose sexuality and keen sense of mortality offered a vision of the black body outside of common Western perceptions. "On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality; in terms of geographic and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for," Fani-Kayode said. "Such a position gives me the feeling of having very little to lose."

Thomas Cunningham (attributed)

United States, 1836–1900

[Criminal Photographs, No. 19], ca. 1885, albumen photographs in ledger-style notebook, enlarged and reproduced as 6 archival pigment prints on cotton rag paper, mounted on dibond

Early forensic police work, rooted in French criminologist Alphonse Bertillon's method of archiving nineteenth-century portraiture, used comparative photographs to classify criminals by the physical characteristics of his or her face, or "mug"; hence the colloquialism "mug shot." Photographs of criminals were not just identifications, however, they established categorical standards of normalcy and deviance as a means of identifying or profiling strangers, with obvious applications for surveillance. The subjects of these images are prisoners, from an album compiled by the noted law enforcement officer Sheriff Thomas Cunningham of Stockton, California. Cunningham made a systematic study of criminals, and gathered one of the largest collections of mug shots in the country, reportedly consisting of over 42,000 images from various prisons. Each prisoner is presented in a relatively uniform photograph, with his or her name and serial number—the inmate's official new identity—clearly marked.

Alphonse Bertillon

France, 1853–1914

Identification anthropométrique. Instructions signalétiques (book), 1885

While working as a clerk for the Paris police department, Alphonse Bertillon was overwhelmed by the massive accumulation of files of criminals and the lack of a system to sort or retrieve them. In particular, he was concerned with the institutional inability to identify previous offenders, or recidivists, who may have taken on new names or identities. In 1879, Bertillon, who came from a family of statisticians, devised a method for organizing the identity records of prisoners. Applying anthropometry, the science of bodily measurements, to police work, Bertillon established a rigorously standardized card-filing system to track records of prisoners' statistics. Later, Bertillon added photography to his methodology, developing the mug shot, which consisted of a full-face shot accompanied by a profile view of the same size. The profile view was added because Bertillon believed that the unique shape of each individual's ear was the key identifier. *Identification anthropométrique. Instructions signalétiques*, published in 1885, was an instruction manual, with how-to diagrams for recording prisoners and sample photographs. This forensic method, dubbed *Bertillonage*, was adopted by the Paris police department in 1888, and was soon used in the United States, Britain, and throughout the world.

Richard Avedon

United States, 1923–2004

The Family, 1976, 24 gelatin-silver prints

Apart from being the most innovative and successful fashion photographer of his generation, Richard Avedon was also profoundly engaged in the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Commissioned by *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1976 to make portraits of U.S. presidential candidates, Avedon chose instead to undertake a more ambitious project, chronicling the pantheon of the American political establishment. The resulting series, titled *The Family*, filled an entire issue of the magazine with 69 searing portraits of government officials, statesmen, corporate chairmen, lawyers, union leaders, and presidents—each posed against a solid white background. Avedon’s anthropological approach profiles a political power clique who were in control, but often out of touch.

The Shadow Archive

Photographic portraits are markers of social identity. Often identification photographs were made for legal or employment purposes within emerging industrial economies and modern colonial regimes. While such vernacular images deliberately replicate the conventions of the studio portrait genre, their significance does not rely upon notions of originality, aesthetics, or authorship. Here, the social, economic, and even political motives of both sitter and photographer are equally significant to the portrait's creation. As such, these seemingly common and banal representations can offer new meanings regarding the role of photography within everyday life.

Mistaken Identities

At a time when gender roles are being questioned in the mass media and in everyday life, it is important to reconsider how photographic representations reinforce, subvert, or simply play with social stereotypes. This installation regards gender as a construction or a social performance and looks at specific examples of gender role-playing in vernacular photography, especially those images in which there is a deliberate misidentification or queering of conventions through exaggeration or scrambling of expectations. In these cases, photography opens a range of potential positions and roles for subject and viewer, destabilizing not only the guise of normative binary heterosexuality but also the presumed fixedness of gender itself.