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Exhibition of Malick Sidibé photography to open in London

By Mark Brown
July 27, 2016

Special project showcasing the work of the award-winning 'eye of Bamako', who died in April, will run at Somerset House from 6 October to 15 January 2017

The late Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, who became known as "the eye of Bamako", will be the subject of a major solo exhibition in the UK.

The Sidibé show, at Somerset House in London, will be a special project at the fourth edition of the contemporary African art fair 1:54 London. The fair runs from 6-9 October; the exhibition will then continue until 15 January 2017.

Sidibé died earlier this year, aged 80, in the Malian city whose culture and inhabitants he had chronicled since Mali's independence in 1960.

He was particularly known for his monochrome photography chronicling Mali's burgeoning pop culture, and received many awards in his long career. In 2007, he became the first photographer and the first African artist to win the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale.

The art academic and former MoMA curator Robert Storr said at the time: "No African artist has done more to enhance photography's stature in the region, contribute to its history, enrich its image archive or increase our awareness of the textures and transformations of African culture in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st than Malick Sidibé."

Other parts of the fair will include new sculptures by Zak Ové in the Somerset House courtyard. The installation, called the Masque of Blackness, is inspired by and a reaction to the heritage of Somerset House; it will feature a Nubian army of masked men within the fountains.

Touria El Glaoui, the director of 1:54, said she was thrilled to announce "such a strong programme". She highlighted the Sidibé show, describing him as "such a pivotal figure in African art in the 1960s and an enduring influence on young photographers today".