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NEW RELEASE

Nicola Lo Calzo

Obia

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The legacy of the descendants of runaway slaves in Suriname and French Guiana

Despite having played a fundamental role in the anti-slavery struggle and identity construction of the African diaspora in the Americas, marronnage is still poorly understood. Marronnage is the mother of communities that wrested themselves free of slavery and proclaimed their sovereignty in the new world. These communities of runaway slaves were dotted all around the Americas, from Louisiana, to Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Brazil, the two Guianas, amongst others. »Obia« is originally an Akan word, specifically attributed to the Fanti. It points to a belief system developed by Maroon peoples since their arrival from West Africa. The *Obia* photographic project – undertaken in the historical Maroon territories of Saamaka-Land and Maroni-Land, in both Suriname and French Guiana – seeks to interrogate the links between the exceptional magical-religious legacy of Maroon people and the new challenges that stem from modernity: intergenerational conflict, loss of references, unemployment and rural migration.

This book is part of Lo Calzo's long-term photographic project *Cham* about the living memories of colonial slavery and anti-slavery struggles. Nicola Lo Calzo (b. 1979 in Turin) lives and works in Paris. His work has been exhibited in France and in other countries.

Exhibitions

Memorial to abolition of slavery, Nantes, 10.05. – 30.09. 2015

Galerie Dominique Fiat, Paris, 20.05. – 20.06. 2015

Brazil and Africa are not far away. In the understated glow of colors, compositions associate the emerald green of the forest with the red of ceremonial dress and the ashen color of smoke.

These moments are decomposed and unfurl as if in slow motion. Nicola Lo Calzo captures them like frames of a film. We can imagine him on the lookout, like a patient hunter, tracking gestures, movements and variations of a look. At times, like a reference to remind us that, despite the timelessness of the landscape and the inhabitants, we are still in the twenty-first century, he brings back some form of proof that seems anachronistic: a Marilyn T-shirt, young people in jeans, an HF microphone placed next to a vase of orchids and then a subliminal sign — the Pietas Fides printed on a commemorative loincloth on which broken chains remind us of history. The truth, all of the truths reside and blend together in the details. Lo Calzo understands this.

This world of wild vegetation and waters is an ideal setting into which beings can dissolve. As if fearing that history might repeat itself, they seem ready to weigh anchor at any moment and set off for a new somewhere else. The river is there, endless.

Here, Lo Calzo makes Maroon photography. That is to say, he joins a brotherly underworld that allows him to fade into the surroundings and capture the quintessence of that which is not visible to all. He has found a way to give subtle movement to this frozen time.

(from the Text by Simon Nijami)

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Pressebilder



1. Molenn Pansa, Basia (assistant headman) giving the departure signal of the Gaama's coffin towards its grave site in the forest. Gaama Belfon Aboikoni's funeral. Asindoopo, Saamaka territory, Suriname. © Nicola Lo Calzo



2. Headless, embalmed parrot. According to Maroon tradition, forest animals are associated with Komanti, Diadja & Opete divinities. Alexandre Franconie departmental Museum, Cayenne, French Guiana. © Nicola Lo Calzo



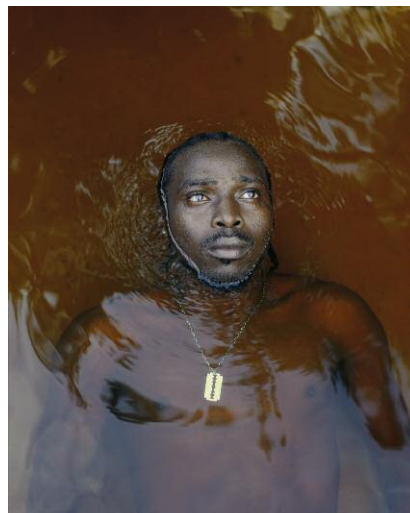
3. On a village canoe, Aboikoni family members dance. As a part of the ritual, the canoe circles around and around several times in order to represent the hesitations of the deceased's soul. Asindoopo, Suriname. © Nicola Lo Calzo



4. Banai Meklien, from Kourou in French Guiana, with a parrot, participant in Gaama's funeral in Asindoopo, Suriname. © Nicola Lo Calzo



5. Headless, embalmed stork. Alexandre Franconie Museum, Cayenne, French Guiana. © Nicola Lo Calzo



6. Adrien Ajeantona, Obiaman and survivor of the Moiwana Maroon massacre in Suriname (29 November 1989). With his family, popular for its history, he's invited regularly to take part in national celebrations. Charvein, French Guiana. © Nicola Lo Calzo



7. Gisla & Sieglen Kent sisters arriving at Asindoopo. They are from the village of Brokopondo, Suriname. © Nicola Lo Calzo



8. Onis works as assistant to his cousin Seké, a Ndyuka touristic guide on the Maroni River, French Guiana. © Nicola Lo Calzo



9. Christian, a Maroon and student at Lumin Sophie College, during outdoor class. Cité Carton, Saint-Laurent du Maroni, French Guiana. © Nicola Lo Calzo



10. Papakente, a Ndyuka gold miner, shows off his rings. Chinese market in front of Grand Santi, Suriname. © Nicola Lo Calzo