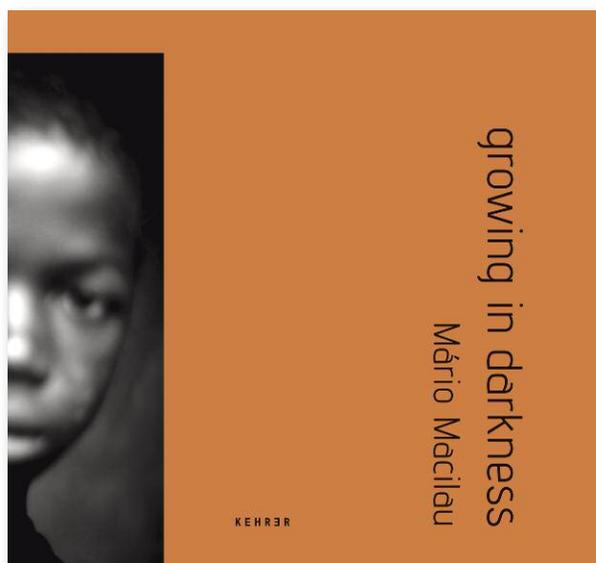




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NEW RELEASE

**Mário Macilau**

## Growing in Darkness

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**This acclaimed series captures the lives of of homeless children in the city of Maputo, Mozambique**

Some years ago, I started working with street children in Mozambique, spending time with them in order to gain a deeper understanding of their reality. The photographs do not necessarily aim to represent these children. Instead, my work attempts to give them a voice, a stage: to shine a light on their fleeting and fragile lives. These photographs offer the children a space of relief, whereby the children can compose them, play with their image and reflect on their own appearance. Considering that these children are engaged in child labor, we can say that they contribute to the functioning of our society. What is our role in this? How can we remedy their unfavorable situation?

(Mário Macilau)

Photography has always had a fascinating relationship with life where it complicates, illuminates or even conceals things. It is the role of the photographer to display a level of sensitivity and consistency towards both his/her medium and subject matter that will determine what is made visible by these cracks and thereby revealed to a collective psyche. Mário Macilau's photography is a powerful documentation of a complex history implicit to the challenging circumstances of homeless children living in the city of Maputo, Mozambique. It makes a significant contribution not only to African photography but also to the tradition of black and white photography.

*Growing in Darkness* thus forms part of a necessary lexicon that navigates between the veracity of lightness and darkness. It denotes a precarious human condition by reflecting a reality that

is often overlooked, shunned and even suppressed. Yet it also illustrates the agility of the human spirit and its tenacity to survive, exist and imagine. (Roger Ballen)

**Mário Macilau** (b.1984) lives and works in Maputo, Mozambique. Macilau started his photographic journey in 2003, and went professional when he traded his mother's cell phone for his first camera in 2007. He specializes in long-term projects that focus on the environmental and social conditions of Mozambique and the complex reality of the labor market in the region. Macilau's work has been recognized with awards and features regularly in solo and group exhibitions in his home country and abroad. Recently he had a solo show of *Growing in Darkness* during the VOLTA Art Fair in New York 2016 and he was one of three artists presented at the Pavilion of the Holy See at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015). Also in 2015, Macilau's work was included in the Vitra Design Museum's exhibition *Making Africa: A Continent of Contemporary Design*, curated by Amelie Klein with Okwui Enwezor as Consulting Curator – the exhibition will be touring several countries for five years, and was presented in spring 2015 at the Guggenheim Museum in Spain. Other notable shows include "Pangea: New Art from Africa and Latin America" Saatchi Gallery, London (2014), *Tempo*, at the Galeria Belo-Galsterer, Lisbon, Portugal (2013), *Dak'art Biennial OFF* (2012), *VI Chobi Mela Photo Festival*, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2011), *Photo Spring*, Beijing, China (2011), and *Lagos Photo*, Lagos, Nigeria (2010 & 2011).

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2. Ninja © Mário Macilau



3. Fak You © Mário Macilau



4. The Shower © Mário Macilau



5. Wrapped in Sheets © Mário Macilau



6. Handcuffed © Mário Macilau



7. Rag Ball © Mário Macilau



8. Intimidation © Mário Macilau



9. Stairs of Shadow © Mário Macilau



10. Enjoyment © Mário Macilau



11. A painter © Mário Macilau



12. Rainy Day © Mário Macilau



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## Credits

All photos are from the long-term project series *Growing in Darkness*, 2012 / 2015

1. At the Entrance © Mário Macilau

Two young boys standing at the entrance of an abandoned building in downtown Maputo.

2. Ninja © Mário Macilau

Humberto Zunguza, 13 years old, dons a costume inside his home in an abandoned building in Maputo's Polana district. He is trying to imitate the lead character of the Chinese action movie *Ninja Assassin*. In this movie, a young boy named Raizo is taken from the streets and transformed into a killer by the Ozunu Clan. Street children watch these violent films in the various informal cinemas that are set up in markets around the city. The cost of a screening is 10 Mts (1 USD = 36 Mts).

3. Fak You © Mário Macilau

A street child shows off his toy gun in an abandoned building downtown Maputo. Violent American and Chinese war movies are shown daily in the informal cinemas set up in Maputo's most popular markets. Street children go to these cinemas for entertainment. When they leave the theatres, they emulate the violence they have seen on screen.

4. The Shower © Mário Macilau

Hélio Chichava, 14 years old, showers before a Sunday meal hosted by a foreign NGO worker. In recent years, public and private institutions around the country have given increasing attention to street children as their numbers have continued to grow dramatically. Children who are likely to end up on the streets include those who have been abandoned by their families and those who have been sent into the cities in the hopes that they will be able to earn money and send it home. Because they are separated from their families and friends for long periods of time, they feel happy when they are welcomed into a community or when they receive any form of affection.

5. Wrapped in Sheets © Mário Macilau

A 9-year-old boy shields himself from the early morning cold in the abandoned building where he spent the night. Having no fixed places to sleep, street children live like nomads, carrying their belongings with them from building to building, night after night. They often move in the early mornings, when there are fewer people on the street. Being light and supple, blankets are easy objects to transport. They also make good garments.

6. Handcuffed © Mário Macilau

Two young boys are handcuffed by local police after being found with a plastic bag full of marijuana. When street children are arrested, they often stay in jail for long periods of time, sometimes to the point of being forgotten, as there is no one to defend their rights. Their only way out is if other street children find a way to pay the police a bribe.

7. Rag Ball © Mário Macilau

A handmade soccer ball made from recycled clothes, pieces of plastic and string.

8. Intimidation © Mário Macilau

A police officer uses violent force against a young boy who lives in an abandoned building in Maputo's Polana district. The child is pinned to the floor, his hands held down by the police agent's boots.

9. Stairs of Shadow © Mário Macilau

Stairs create shadows on the walls of an abandoned old building in downtown Maputo. There are no toilets and water must be drawn from a nearby source. Rubbish is rarely collected. These buildings often degenerate into places of filth, disrepair and disease.

10. Enjoyment © Mário Macilau

A 15-year-old boy smokes marijuana with his friends. Children smoke as a way of enjoying life in their own spaces. In Mozambique, marijuana circulates widely among street children, who use it to sell or to smoke with their friends.

11. A painter © Mário Macilau

Paulino Maciene, 16, left his family about 2 years ago because he couldn't bear the way his father was treating him anymore. Besides giving him too many responsibilities at home, Paulino's father often beat him. On the street, Paulino feels free. He makes a living doing all sorts of odd jobs, from painting shops to fixing people's things to washing cars.

12. Rainy Day © Mário Macilau

Street children hide from the rain in an abandoned old car in downtown Maputo. Street children spend most of their time out-of-doors, whether working, begging or playing. However, when the rain comes they immediately look for a comfortable place to stay dry until the showers subside.