

NEW RELEASE KEHRER VERLAG

## *Songs of the Walés*

Patrick Willocq

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**Willocq's elaborately staged photographs show us a beautiful tribute to motherhood, fertility and femininity in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

In the equatorial forest of Congo (DRC), certain Pygmy women, first-time mothers, live in seclusion with their children in the midst of other women who are responsible for their well-being. They are called Walés, which means 'nursing mothers'. During the time of their seclusion, they must create a performance of dances and songs for the big day: their liberation.

For several years now, French photographer Patrick Willocq has been translating the songs of the Walés into images, as closely as possible to the experience of these young mothers, actresses who are fully involved in the process, and thus attempt to pierce the mysteries of this tremendously symbolic rite of passage.

In a unique collaboration with some Walés, their respective clans, an ethnomusicologist, an artist and many artisans of the forest, Willocq constructed elaborate and surreal sets, in the middle of the jungle and without any photoshop montage nor collage, inspired by the Walés' chants, and then photographed staged scenes of the women within them.

This book presents the series produced between 2013 and 2015, among them *I Am Walé Respect Me* and *Forever Walé*. It also documents the collaboration with the tribal communities, from the first sketch to the ready-built set-up.

Through this work Patrick Willocq takes his images far from the usual hackneyed and clichéd depiction of the Congo (where he grew up) and brings a fresh interpretation of Africa.

**Patrick Willocq** (b. 1969 in Strasbourg) lives and works between Paris, Hong Kong, and Kinshasa. A self-taught photographer, Willocq lived more than 35 years abroad, including seven in the

Democratic Republic of Congo. It was a return trip to the DRC (where he grew up) in 2009 that turned him into a full-time photographer. Since 2012, he has been nominated for or chosen as a finalist or winner of multiple prestigious international awards, including the Discovery Award Rencontres d'Arles, the Leica Oskar Barnack Award, the Sony World Photo Awards, and the Prix Coup de Coeur HSBC for Photography. His work has been exhibited at Paris Photo, AIPAD New York, Context Art Miami, Photo Basel, Joburg Art Fair, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. It has also been featured in numerous TV broadcasts and publications, including CNN Amanpour, Arte, France 5, TV5 Monde, The Huffington Post, The Guardian, Stern, Polka, and Paris Match.

Willocq is co-author, with director Florent de La Tullaye, of a 52-minute documentary film, *Le Chant des Walés*, broadcast on the television channel France 5. He is represented by the galleries Clelia Belgrado Vision Quest in Genoa, Project 2.0 in La Haye, and f22 foto space in Hong Kong.

### Exhibitions

*My Story is a Story of Hope*, Château de Saint-Martory

October 28 – November 5, 2017

Leica Oskar Barnack Award Finalists 2017, Leica Store, Paris

November 6 – 25, 2017

*Songs of the Walés*, Project 2.0 / Gallery, Den Haag

October 29 – November 29, 2017

AKAA, Also Known As Africa Art Fair, VisionQuest, Paris

November 10 – 12, 2017

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## Press images



01 WALÉ ASONGWAKA TAKES OFF. Asongwaka — the beautiful.  
From the village of Bioko. Ilongo clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



02 WALÉ BAKUKU, GENEROUS LIKE PALM NUTS. Bakuku — the queen.  
From the village of Bokondobuna. Boonde clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



03 EPANZA MAKITA, BAT WALÉ. Epanza Makita — the trouble maker.  
From the village of Bioko. Ilongo clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



04 BONTONGU, ONE OF THE LAST BANTU WALÉ. Bontongu — the young.  
From the village of Ikoko. Itele clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



05 WALÉ BONTONGU'S POND. Bontongu — the young.  
From the village of Ikoko. Itele clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



06 WALÉ MPIA AND HER MUNDELE. Mpia — the visitor.  
From the village of Bokondobundu. Bonganya clan.  
© Patrick Willocq

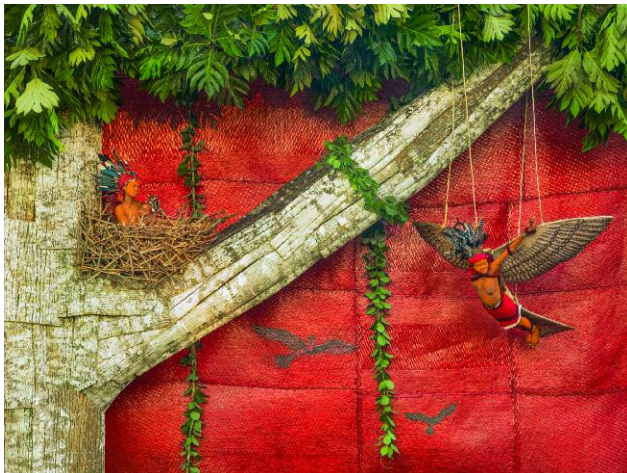




07 WALÉ BAKUKU, ANTS DISH. Bakuku — the queen.  
From the village of Bokondobuna. Boonde clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



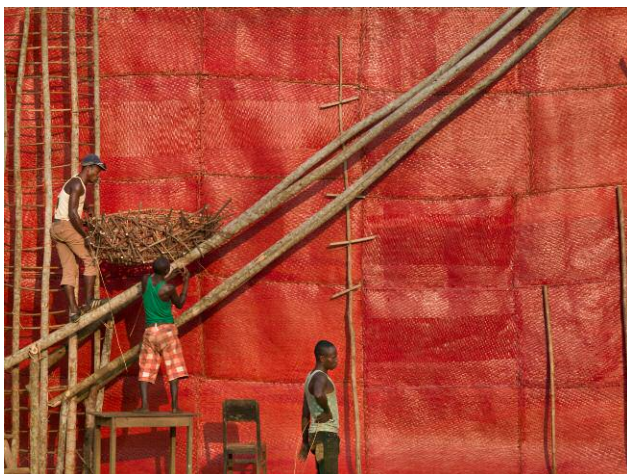
08 ASONGWAKA, EDUCATED WALÉ. Asongwaka — the beautiful.  
From the village of Bioko. Ilongo clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



09 NTEMBE, SPARROW-HAWK WALÉ. Ntembe — the doubter.  
From the village of Bokondobuna. Boonde clan.  
© Patrick Willocq



10 NTEMBE, SPARROW-HAWK WALÉ. Sketch.  
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11 NTEMBE, SPARROW-HAWK WALÉ. Setting up.  
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12 NTEMBE, SPARROW-HAWK WALÉ. Setting up.  
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