



NEW RELEASE

Reinout van den Bergh *Eboundja*

Texts by Reinout van den Bergh/ Guido van Eijck,
Azú Nwagbogu
Assistant Photography: Bienvenu Nguimamba
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Eboundja: a small Cameroon fishing village and its inhabitants in transition

Eboundja is a photo project that occupies van den Bergh from 2011 onwards. Since 2009, the 30 families of the same-named fishing village in southern Cameroon are in great uncertainty about their future. The village is situated in the middle of a coastal strip where the Chinese, in exchange for Cameroon's iron ore, are constructing a deep sea harbour. The inhabitants are vulnerable to the combination of a corrupt government and megalomaniac project developers.

In a series of photographs van den Bergh shows, with great commitment, the decline as well as the intimacy and beauty of the small community; the resignation but also the pride and resistance.

»In all I have come to Eboundja seven times, each time staying more than a month. And with every visit, my love for the village grew. Initially, it was my plan to cover the creation of the megalomaniac (...) project in the middle of the jungle. But gradually my attention shifted to the way the villagers were dealing with the changes. With the approval of village chief Emile, I was able to take pictures everywhere I went. Whenever I made portraits, I handed out Polaroids to show the results. On my next visit, I brought the photos in a suitcase – durable prints that would survive the humid climate. These portraits opened doors for me, since everyone wanted their picture. I saw these prints in their homes and at funerals. (...)

I developed a strong bond with several of the residents, most notably with Papa Benoît. He was a little out of tune in the village. His appearance was somewhat aristocratic. He spoke a beautiful French and was always well dressed: hat, shirt, and trousers.«

– from the text by Reinout van den Bergh/ Guido van Eijck

»At a time when a new wave of African documentary photographers and other visual artists are setting forth their own narratives and exploring long-suppressed themes of identity, and in doing so redress a balance which had been skewed in favour of the portrayal by Westerners of Africans as the 'exotic other', Van den Bergh's Eboundja shows that, properly handled, a lens in the classical European tradition of documentary photography can still make a valuable contribution towards conveying contemporary African reality. The intimate moments he has captured deserve to live forever.«

– from the text by Azú Nwagbogu (Director of the African Artists' Foundation)

Reinout van den Bergh (b. 1957 in The Netherlands) studied photography and audiovisual design at St. Joost School of Fine Art and Design in Breda, the Netherlands. Since 1982 he has been working from Breda as a photographer and audiovisual designer. In this capacity he has travelled throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the USA and Latin America. He worked for various ethnographical museums and for Dutch development cooperation projects. As of 2006 van den Bergh has been curator of BredaPhoto. His work has been exhibited in various museums in Eastern and Western Europe and Africa, and published in several books and other publications.

Book Presentation & Signing

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