



BOOMO BIALÉ & THE WALÉS

PROJECT 2.0 / GALLERY

# I BeKoZ YoU

Act 1:  
The Confinement  
Of Life-giving  
Stars

*I BeKoZ YoU, Act 1: the confinement of life-giving stars is rooted in the African philosophy of Ubuntu ("I am because you are") which suggests that one's humanity is affirmed through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference.*

*In the heart of the rainforest of Democratic Republic of Congo, a small community of indigenous people, the Ekonda Batwa, celebrate certain first time-mothers for giving life. This ancient rite of passage provides young girls, called Walés, with a group process for initiating them into womanhood.*

*Photographs shape how we understand the world. Under the dominant white male gaze, indigenous people are, all too often, dressed up in traditional attire, stripped from objects deemed to be foreign. These representations negate their dynamic history, distort reality, leave us disempowered and the subject objectified and removed.*

*My aim is to challenge the classical ethnographic ways of seeing, and show that even in the darkness of the African jungle, humanity progresses. Today, Batwa populations, while asserting their indigenous identity, are also in fierce struggles around the idea of belonging. They, too, refuse to be left behind and want to participate in the global fashion system.*

*Another stereotyped narrative, told through the prism of a white Western lens, is that African women are, generally, portrayed as beast of burden, oppressed woman, exotic creature or domestic worker. Perpetuating these stereotypes take African women out of their matriarchal power. I want to show that Walés are actually part of a tradition of resisting African women who have survived patriarchal oppression by relying on collective feminine rituals and creative expression.*

*Recognizing that aesthetics also carry their own coded messages that have the power to either reproduce or subvert stereotypes, I intentionally chose to employ the global fashion visual language to attempt to shift perceptions and restore the agency, the individuality and humanity of these young women.*

*This long-term artistic documentary, structured in three separate acts released individually, will grow into a full cross-discipline body of work, with a balanced approach of visual, textual and oral storytelling, enhanced through meaningful artistic collaborations.*

*I want this polyphonic narration to give a true voice to the Walés while striving to decolonize the representation, offer a mirror for our own subjectivity and question whether our clichéd gaze belies the rejection of our own modern lives.*

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*Cover Photo: The origin of stars I, 106 x 142 cm, archival fine art print.  
solid wenge wood frame with museum glass*



*The origin of stars II*, 106 x 142 cm, archival fine art print. solid wenge wood frame with museum glass



*The darkest nights make the brightest stars*, 148 x 184 cm, archival fine art print.  
solid wenge wood frame with museum glass





I, WaLé,  
am Like  
a Star  
You cannot  
grasp my  
true  
nature









Previous page: *Bekoz you are worth it*, 148 x 184 cm

Left: *You are bekoz I am*, 76 x 101 cm

Right: *I am bekoz you are*, 76 x 101 cm

Technique: archival fine art print. solid wenge wood frame with museum glass





Left: *Belly of life I*, 31 x 41 cm

Right: *Saisai, daughter of mother nature*, 114 x 142 cm

Technique: archival fine art print. solid wenge wood frame with museum glass











Previous page: *Attitude is everything*, 114 x 142 cm  
 Left: *Short like a cat fish*, 31 x 41 cm  
 Right: *Komekama, daughter of mother nature*, 148 x 184 cm

Technique: archival fine art print. solid wenge wood frame with museum glass





Left: *Recycled hair jewelry - pink*, 31 x 41 cm  
 Right: *Recycled hair jewelry - blue*, 31 x 41 cm

Technique: archival fine art print. solid wenge wood frame with museum glass







Boomo Bialé & The Walés is the signature name of an artistic collaboration between French photographer and humanist Patrick Willocq and several young Congolese first-time mothers, dancers and singers, aka The Walés, identifying as Ekonda Batwa, an indigenous people of Democratic Republic of Congo.

Patrick grew up in DRC. He feels 'black with a white skin'. Since 2009, he spends various trips up to three months at a stretch, deep in the African jungle, immersed within Ekonda territory, to learn about their fascinating rituals and ways of life.

The naïve mise en scene images, co-created with the Walés, of the various series that form part of the body of work Songs of the Walés (2013-2016), an internationally acclaimed and exhibited photography project, revealed the rising of new ethnographic subjectivity that operates from the realm of participatory artistic production.

Feeling deeply accepted and flattered by the title of Boomo Bialé (the husband of the Walés) conferred upon him by the community, a synergistic relationship between him and Walés emerged, rooted deep in respect, trust and a shared lived experience of Ubuntu, the African philosophy which affirms that we have to be touched by another human being to be real, that humanity is a quality we owe to each other.

I BeKoZ YoU, a story told in three acts, is their latest brainchild, four years in the making.

Patrick Willocq works have been exhibited at various international art fairs and museums, including Paris Photo, Photo London, Art Miami, Museum of Photography of Charleroi. Nominated, finalists or winners of prestigious international prizes including Rencontres d'Arles DA, Prix HSBC, Sony WPA and Leica OBA, they have also been featured in numerous TV broadcasts and publications. Patrick is represented by the galleries Project 2.0 in the Netherlands and Vision Quest in Italy. He is co-author of a 52-minute documentary film, Le Chant des Walés, broadcast on the television channel France 5.

Project 2.0 / Gallery

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