

## Cham - A work in progress Memories of a Living Past

NICOLA LO CALZO

October 21 to January 20

*"When it is truly alive, memory does not contemplate history, but invites us to do it, rather than in museums, where the poor gets bored, memory is in the air we breathe. She breathes from the air".*

-Eduardo Galeano



Photograph: Gerardo de Souza and the death. Beach of Ouidah, Benin 2011. From the Tchamba serie.

For nearly seven years, photographer Nicola Lo Calzo has documented the multiple lineages and the various manifestations of the memories of colonial slavery, of the resistances to it, of its abolitions. He documents these memories because they create life, because they irrigate our present with wisdom and knowledge of the other that is essential to us. He made his own Edouard Glissant's affirmation: "To forget is to offend, and memory, when it is shared, abolishes this offense. We need each other's memory, not for compassion or charity, but for a new lucidity in a process of Relation. And if we want to share the beauty of the world, if we want to be solidary with its suffering, we need to learn how to remember together." Nicola Lo Calzo's quest has brought him to West African coasts (Tchamba), the outskirts of Port au Prince (Ayiti), through the Mornes of Guadeloupe (Mas), the forgotten neighborhoods of New Orleans (Casta), the periphery of Santiago de Cuba (Regla), the banks of the Maroni River (Obia). The stays in all these places have been decisive moments in the photographer's approach. He seeks to reconstitute the spirit and the beauty of the way of life of those communities that resist amnesia by remembering the resistances to colonial slavery, this criminal enterprise unprecedented in the history of the humanities. The photographer unveils the importance of living legacies that constitute the practices and knowledge of the communities that share this history. These legacies prolong a history that has too often been ignored. They transcend the political boundaries of the present and remind us that freedom lodges itself in the cracks, in unexpected places, in the differences; it is humanity's salvation to know how to celebrate these differences like rays of light that illuminate our present and our future beyond the disasters too often misrepresented in the form of a desired "modernity." Each of the photographs in this exhibition is a homage, reverence to the beauty of the world when beauty remembers itself. This beauty of the world is all the more, as much in the way one holds oneself in the face of crimes as in the way of inhabiting the world in all the éclat of one's difference.

- Christopher Yggdre

**"Cham - a work in progress: Memories of a Living Past" is a solo show at La Balsa Arte in which Nicola Lo Calzo in 7 series of photographs, all exposed together for the first time, reveals the importance of the living legacies that constitute the practices and knowledge of the communities that share this story.**

Nicola Lo Calzo, an Italian photographer born in Torino in 1979, lives and works in Paris. After studying landscape architecture, he shifted to photography.

His photographic practice and research break down the barriers between art and documentary photography. He is attentive to questions surrounding minorities and questions of identity. Imbued with profound empathy, Nicola Lo Calzo's photographs show the ways in which minority groups interact with their environment, the ways in which they develop strategies of survival and resistance. He has been engaged in a long-term photographic research project on the memories of the slave trade and slavery. This ongoing ambitious project, entitled Cham, has been elaborated into different series in Africa, the Caribbean and America.

His photographs have been widely exhibited in museums, art centers and festivals, most notably at the Musée des Confluences in Lyon, the National Alinari Museum of Photography in Florence, and the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. His photography is present in many private and public collections including the Alinari Archives in Florence, the Pinacoteca Civica in Monza, the National Library of France in Paris or the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam.

Kehrer has published three of Nicola Lo Calzo's catalogues: Inside Niger (2012), Obia (2015) and Regla (2017). He is also a regular contributor to the international press including Le Monde (the newspaper and magazine), The New Yorker, The New York Times, and is occasionally commissioned by institutional or commercial enterprises.

Nicola Lo Calzo is represented by L'Agence à Paris.

Curator: Mónica Santos | In collaboration with: L'Agence à Paris