

# Two new exhibitions usher in summer at Zeitz Mocaa

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Two new exhibitions focused on lens-based practices mark the start of summer at the museum: *Seeker, Seers, Soothsayers* runs from 27 October 2023 to 13 October 2024, and *Self as a Forgotten Monument* by Mame-Diarra Niang runs from 17 November 2023 to 7 July 2024.

Zeitz Mocaa unveils two new exhibitions for summer, marking the start of an exceptionally busy season for the institution. Focused on lens-based

practices, *Self as a Forgotten Monument* is a solo, survey exhibition by Mame-Diarra Niang, while *Seeker, Seers, Soothsayers* is a group exhibition. The shows and accompanying programming solidify Zeitz Mocaa's vision and mission to maintain its position as a pan-African space and an active agent that caters to and nurtures society through art.

"It is heartening to realise all these ambitious projects at this moment; it is a culmination of consolidated institutional progress and development, for which we have worked exceptionally hard," says Koyo Kouoh, executive director and chief curator at Zeitz Mocaa. "It is our ongoing mission to shine the light on the work of artists and their contribution to our society, and these exhibitions celebrate a luminary of the industry while supporting a new generation of artists."

## Seekers, Seers, Soothsayers

27 October 2023 – 13 October 2024



*Amahubo* by Buhlebezwe Siwani, 2018, digital 4K video, three-channel projection with sound

Curated by Zeitz Mocaa curator Tandazani Dhlakama and curatorial assistant Beata America, and featuring the work of seven artists — Gladys Kalichini, Latedjou, Sekai Machache, Nyancho NwaNri, Pamina Sebastião, Buhlebezwe Siwani and Helena Uambembe — *Seeker, Seers, Soothsayers* explores thematic accounts and experiences connected to the non-physical world — spiritual, psychological, supernatural and abstract — by using the camera lens to expand, project and reflect on how historical narratives are carried through the body and passed on from generation to generation. The artists employ experimental film, immersive installation, performance, sound and narration to depict how ritual, devotion and acts of remembrance can bring restoration and alternative perspectives of the self within the cycle of life.



Here by Nyancho NwaNri, 2021, four-channel video installation with sound, cloth

The number seven acts as an anchor throughout the exhibition, with seven artists symbolising the spiritual significance the numeral holds across various belief and cultural systems, from the past to the present. Seven has signified completion and perfection, has been a symbol of divine introspection and perception, and represents healing and fulfilment.

There are seven phases of the moon and seven days in a week, each day named for a deity in the Greco-Roman tradition. The Abrahamic God is also said to have rested on the seventh day.

The exhibition title is inspired by the 2007 poem 'Speaking in Tongues' by Jamaican author Kei Miller and forms a mantra for the constellation of works on display. The poem points to a human need to engage with worlds one cannot touch while emphasising the limits of language to fully describe the lived experience.

"*Seeker, Seers, Soothsayers* is an exhibition that celebrates the next generation of artists who use lens-based media. The camera lens is an effective medium that the seven artists have used to expand, project and reflect on how historical narratives are carried through the body and passed on from generation to generation. The artists depict how ritual, devotion and acts of remembrance can offer connectedness, bring restoration or provide alternative ways of seeing oneself within the cycle of life," notes Dhlakama.

### **Mame-Diarra Niang — Self as a Forgotten Monument**

17 November 2023 – 7 July 2024



*Call Me When You Get There* by Mame-Diarra Niang, 2020, installation view at Stevenson Cape Town

*Self as a Forgotten Monument* is the first museum solo exhibition by Mame-Diarra Niang and is a survey of the artist's practice from the past decade, bringing together significant bodies of work in dialogue in a spatial choreography. Niang's prolific practice is characterised by an exploratory, abstract and subversive approach to lens-based media, such as photography and immersive audio-visual installation. Her work is an act of remembering, through which she resists categorisation and assumptions about geographies and specificities.



*Le peuple du mur #2* by Mame-Diarra Niang, 2014, inkjet print on 300g cotton paper

The exhibition's title is an invitation for viewers to embrace the artist's notion of 'plasticity of the territory', a concept that forms the foundation of her practice and asserts an inner territory that names life as an experience in and of itself. A monument in Niang's world registers as a commemorative structure of remembrance, an offering to remind us of a never-ending metamorphosis of the self. It is an inner space odyssey to build a self-portrait in constant mutation.



Thato Mogotsi, Zeitz Mocaa assistant curator and co-curator of the exhibition, states: “Niang’s solo exhibition, *Self as a Forgotten Monument*, invites viewers into a complex and immersive visual vocabulary. Working across photography and immersive audio-visual installation, the artist challenges our passive consumption of images.”

This survey exhibition includes a new iteration of Niang’s immersive room installation, which grounds the artist’s sensibility and personal meaning-making embedded in her practice. The work is site-specific to Zeitz Mocaa whilst retaining a lineage to the different spaces that her other works have previously occupied. *Since Time Is Distance in Space*, a multi-screen film installation that envelops the viewer, also includes a nuanced musical score composed and recorded by Niang.

*Self as a Forgotten Monument* was curated by Zeitz Mocaa senior curator Storm Janse van Rensburg and assistant curator Thato Mogotsi, and forms part of an ongoing series of in-depth, research-based solo exhibitions from the museum that bring into focus and contextualise the practices of important artists from Africa and its diaspora.

“This new season of exhibitions is an opportunity to acknowledge new voices in contemporary art while celebrating the garland of stars comprising Zeitz Mocaa’s rich art canon — artists who contribute to our exhibitions’ programme year after year,” adds Lungi Morrison, director of institutional advancement at Zeitz Mocaa. “As a pan-African museum that happens to be located in Cape Town, Zeitz Mocaa is cognisant of its civic duty on the continent, which includes facilitating access to art practice and praxis. The eminent summer programming and exhibitions highlight our commitment and prioritisation of art education, critical thinking and art history through the confluence of diverse mediums reflective of Africa’s art ecology.”

Both *Seeker*, *Seers*, *Soothsayers* and *Self as a Forgotten Monument* by Mame-Diarra Niang will be celebrated at 6 pm on Thursday, 16 November 2023, with the participating artists present.

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