

Q&A with photographer Mário Macilau

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

13 May 2019

Award-winning Mozambican artist Mário Macilau will be exhibiting his solo show, titled *Faith: Rituals, Spirit & Sea* in collaboration with Ed Cross Fine Art in London, at Guns & Rain in Johannesburg.

Opening night will take place on the 16 May 2019 and will include a charity auction facilitated by [Aspire Art Auctions](#). Proceeds will be donated to [Gift of the Givers](#) to support Mozambican survivors of Cyclone Idai.

Macilau has exhibited in many international exhibitions, fairs and festivals, including the 2015 Venice Biennale. Macilau's last solo show in South Africa took place at Blank Projects, Cape Town in 2014.

We got in touch with Mário for #AfricaMonth to find out more.



Mário Macilau

■ ***Tell us more about the inspiration behind your *Faith: Rituals, Spirit & Sea* series? What do you hope viewers of your *Faith* series will take away from it?***

My working process is not based on pressure and fashion, I try to understand the space and the subject that are part of my work through the image language. In this way, I am not only exploring the medium but also creating and living it. I believe in photography not only as an aesthetic object but also as a tool for positive influence in our environment. I take my time to do a project, I create my own light and I play with it in a poetic way – which can take the viewer to another level of understanding the subject.

■ ***How do you hope your photography will make changes when it comes to social, environmental and equality issues?***

My photography artwork focuses on political, social and cultural issues, linked to the radical transformations of humankind in time and space. With my photography practice, I usually deal with the complex reality of human labour and the

environmental conditions evolving over the times. Using the still image, I capture a form of visual confrontation that states a line of reflection to the reality.



Net Fishing (2018). 60 x 90 cm. Edition of 1/6 + AP. Charity auction proceeds to Gift of the Givers - Estimate ZAR 10,000 - 15,000 - Image courtesy of the artist and Guns & Rain

Previously, I have consistently attempted to portray socially isolated groups such as street children, elderly men and women, e-waste, subjects about identity, culture and inhabitants of large refuse sites. This portrayal contrasted the fleeting and fragile state of these individuals with the permanence of the photographic document.

In continuity to this personal artistic interest and in view of these worldly developments, I am always hoping to generate a new photographic body of work through examining the physical and psychological condition related to the living processes and with the passage of time, as my work has always been concerned with social and political issues, specifically how they are articulated through the environment in which people live and the relationship that people have to that environment. How do humans sustain themselves and adapt to shifting environments, when their labour, their lives, and by extension, their relationships are all affected by that environment?



Zacarias and Raul Chibanza, 2015/2019 - Image courtesy of the artist and Guns & Rain

■ ***Have you or your family been personally affected by Cyclone Idai in Mozambique?***

Both cyclones happened in the north and the centre of Mozambique and my family is based in Maputo, so luckily, we're haven't been affected by it. Even so, it's still painful for me to witness what happened.

■ ***What do you love about being an African?***

Well, it's obvious. The first thing I like is the people, they are so friendly, warm and easy, and then on the continent, we have a lot of richness, I like our stories of everyday life. In Mozambique, you can be hungry and laugh at the same time. You have a meeting with someone in the agreed time, the person will be late and won't tell you in advance, once you call, you will be informed about an accident or something, the person will make you laugh with his stories.



Inside a Man, 2015/2019 - Image courtesy of the artist and Guns & Rain

■ **What have been some of your career highlights?**

One of my proudest achievements is, of course, my experience. Photography has changed my life in a way that no one would understand, the way I see everything around me is different, my vision regarding society and the changes are facts that I look at as a photographer willing to record those moments to share with others. Working with the urban landscape and isolated groups of my country is something important as it helps to restore the hidden identities. My life might have changed, I am open-minded and tolerate more than my neighbour's friends but I was born in the same environment and the way we have been seen and defined is not what we deserve, that's why it is important to give a voice to the voiceless and to talk about the stories that they've lived.

■ **What other African artists do you admire or believe deserve better recognition?**

I am inspired by the work of many photographers, new talents, old, from documentary to fine arts, fashion to editorial, I look at things every day online and in the continent, I admire artists like Gareth Nyandoro, Sabelo Mlangeni, Andrew Tshabangu, Nelson Makamo and many others.



God Bless my Child II, 2015/2019 - Image courtesy of the artist and Guns & Rain

■ **What would you like to see change in the African art world?**

I think education is the key. I would like to see more opportunities for better education quality and gender inclusion in economic activities. I would also like to see better responsibility regarding human rights, this would help us to have less social inequalities between locals.

Myself, I try to dedicate myself to bringing a positive step forward that improves the lives of others by practicing philanthropic programmes to make a real difference and drive awareness of today's most pressing issues in Mozambique. I provide access to education for girls and women with tools and resources to move from them from their current reality to self-suitability for the future and this is still a small project that I aim to grow.

Exhibition Opening

Thursday 16 May, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, with Charity Auction at 7:00pm

[55 12th St, Parkhurst](#)

Artist Walkabout

Saturday 18 May 11:00 - 12:00 am

Tea & Coffee

gunsandrain.com

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity. ruth@bizcommunity.com

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