



The outskirts of Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, Nigeria
November 2012

Gideon Mendel: **Drowning World**

Preview: Thursday, 6 June 2013 | 6:30 – 8:30pm

On View: Friday, 7 June – Saturday, 27 July 2013

Tiwani Contemporary presents **Drowning World** an exhibition by South African photographer Gideon Mendel, curated by Christine Eyene. The selection includes 15 images taken in Nigeria that have never been exhibited, and 5 photographs documenting flooding in various parts of the globe including England, India, Haiti and Australia. The exhibition also presents a two-part video of people living amidst floodwaters in Bangkok, as well as video portraits of Nigerian inhabitants returning to their flooded homes.

Drowning World is a poignant depiction of climate change through portraits of flood survivors taken in deep floodwaters, within the remains of their homes, or in submerged landscapes, in the stillness of once lively environments. Keeping their composure, the subjects pause in front of Mendel's camera, casting an unsettling, yet engaging gaze. These images, taken across the globe demonstrate a shared experience that erases geographical and cultural divides. They invite the viewer to reflect on the impact on nature by humankind, and attachment to our homes and personal belongings.

Beyond the documentary aspect of this project, Gideon Mendel subtly treads on the aesthetics of portraiture, yet pushes the boundaries by staging the photographs in unlikely environments. Each portrait isolates individuals, couples or small groups that would otherwise be represented by statistics. The portraits also reveal personality and status through clothes, style and even elegance.

As well as representing destruction, water also contributes to the creative process. Washed out pigments create new painterly patterns, damaged films produce soft tones and mysterious haze, while architecture and landscape are reflected in the sparkling natural mirror.

The selection compiled for this exhibition highlights the confusion of senses between the sight of landscapes of desolation and the attractiveness of colours and compositions. It seeks to examine the tension between drama and picturesque, and the fine line between documentary and artistic imagery.

About the artist

Gideon Mendel was born in Johannesburg in 1959 and studied psychology and African history at the University of Cape Town. Following his studies he became a freelance photographer, documenting change and conflict in South Africa in the lead-up to Nelson Mandela's release from prison. In 1990 he moved to London. He first began documenting the topic of AIDS in Africa in 1993, and in the past twenty years, his work on this issue has been widely recognized. He has won six World Press Photo Awards, first prize in the American Pictures of the Year competition, a POY Canon Photo Essayist Award, the Eugene Smith Award for Humanistic Photography and the Amnesty International Media Award for Photojournalism. Exhibitions include: *Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, curated by Okwui Enwezor at the International Center of Photography, New York (Sept. 2012 - Jan. 2013); Haus der Kunst, Munich (Feb-May 2013), and touring. Part of his *Drowning World* series was shown at Somerset House, London (May - June 2012), and will also be included in *A Different Kind of Order*, The ICP Triennial, New York (17 May - 8 September 2013).

About the curator

Christine Eyene is an art historian, critic and curator. Born in Paris in 1970, she studied History of Contemporary Art at Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne. She has been researching modern and contemporary South African art since the late 1990s, specialising in the story of artists in exile during Apartheid and their cultural interactions with the Black Diaspora in France and England. She is currently Guild Research Fellow - Contemporary Art, at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). Exhibitions and collaborations include: 10th Dak'Art - Biennale of Contemporary African Art, Dakar (2012); *Roma-Sinti-Kale-Manush* with Autograph ABP, Rivington Place, London (2012); 3rd Photoquai - Biennial of World Images, Paris (2011); *Reflections on the Self - Five African Women Photographers*, Hayward Touring exhibition (2011-2013); FOCUS - Contemporary Art Africa, Basel (2010 and 2011); *Uprooting the Gaze*, Brighton Photo Fringe, Brighton (2010). Eyene sits in a number of panels and committees including Prix Pictet and Visible Award 2013. She was member of the jury of Dak'Art 2012 and the Fondation Blachère Prize awarded at the Dak'Art Biennale in 2008 and 2010, and at the Bamako Encounters: African Photography Biennial in 2007 and 2009. She has just been awarded a Curators Grant from the Foundation for Arts Initiatives.

Tiwani Contemporary cordially invites you to join them at the opening on:

6 June 2013 from 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Tiwani Contemporary 16 Little Portland Street | W1W 8BP
T: +44(0) 207 631 3808 | Directions (Oxford Circus tube)

Drowning World will run from 7 June - 27 July 2013 at Tiwani Contemporary.

Forthcoming is a Tiwani Contemporary **Art Connect** event: **In conversation with Gideon Mendel**, on 27 June 2013, from 6:30 - 8:30pm. Please rsvp to: info@tiwani.co.uk

Notes to Editors

For additional information and detailed biography please contact
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For all press enquiries please contact
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Gallery hours are Tuesday to Friday, 11am - 6pm, Saturday 12pm - 5pm

Tiwani Contemporary

Tiwani Contemporary focuses principally on contemporary artists from Nigeria, from across Africa and its Diaspora as well from the Global South. The gallery's aim is to present the works of emerging and established artists to a London institutional, corporate and private collector base. In addition to its commercial activities, Tiwani Contemporary intends to present a dynamic and innovative public programme *Art Connect*, that will include publications, talks, panel discussions, curated projects and events within the gallery space as well as in collaboration with other partners in London and across the UK.