

RWANDAN DAUGHTERS BY OLAF HEINE

Almost a million people fell victim to the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, around 250,000 women were raped. Today, perpetrators and victims live as next-door neighbors. And while women have become more influential within Rwandan society over the past 25 years, the rape victims and their children are still often marginalized, living with the stigma of widows and orphans. Today, it is the daughters of the raped women in particular who support their traumatized mothers and fight against this stigma – with incomparable courage and boundless optimism in a society marked by major trauma and authoritarian rule.

Rwandan Daughters is a tribute to the power of these women. In these expressive pictures, German photographer **Olaf Heine** (born 1968) has made portraits of the mothers and daughters of Rwanda – side by side at the scene of the crime. Sometimes the gaze of mother and daughter goes in different directions, sometimes they touch each other gently. Even a slight smile would be a lie. But the resemblance between their faces speaks of their connectedness and thus their shared hope of being able to leave the past behind. The natural settings often feel peaceable, while the urban space keeps the deprivation and the hurt alive. Nonetheless: crimes took place in all of these locations.

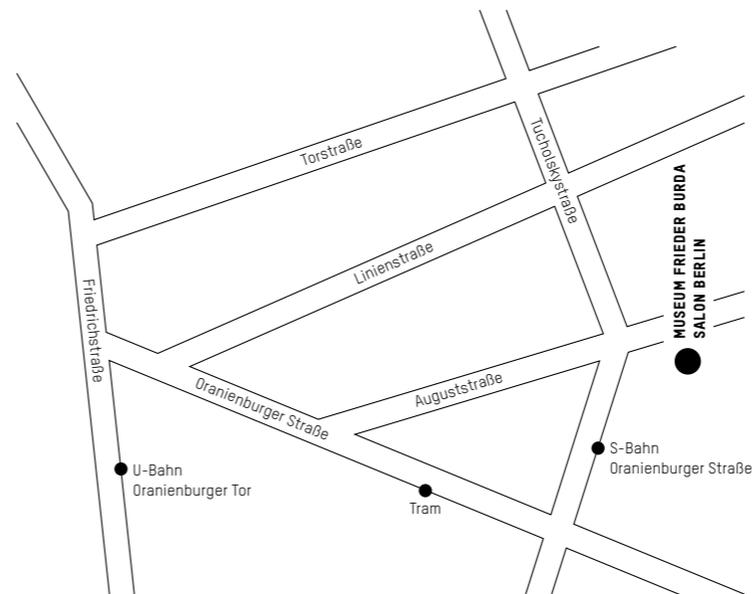


Olaf Heine, *Rwandan Daughters, Thérèse B. with her daughter Apollinaire and the Solace community, Nyanza*, 2018. C-Print, 180 x 236cm. Courtesy of the Artist with support by Volkswagen AG © Olaf Heine, 2019

For the viewer, the *Rwandan Daughters* project is touching and unsettling in equal measure. It was made between 2017 and 2018 in close cooperation with 'ora', a children's aid organization that has been working in Rwanda for years. A moving and intense project about memory, it celebrates the strength of Rwanda's women. "How is it possible to develop love for a child who reminds you every day of the worst time of your life?" asks Heine. His documentation also shows that it is not always possible to forget and that mother-daughter relationships are not always unproblematic. In spite of this, the strength and willpower of these women build bridges to carry them over the traumas of the past.

Systematic violence against women is one of the most common human rights violations worldwide and a recurring means of warfare. Marginalized by the big debates about weapons technology and their destructive impact, Olaf Heine's striking and subtle pictures not only act as a voice for the *Rwandan Daughters* but also raise awareness for victims of war.

Born in Hanover in 1968, the photographer and director Olaf Heine came to prominence through his work with internationally known recording artists like U2, Sting, and Coldplay, through his portraits of actors like Daniel Brühl, Thomas Kretschmann, and Don Cheadle, and through his photographic engagement with the work of the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. His photographs have been published on countless album covers, in international magazines, and in the books. *Leaving the Comfort Zone* (2008), *I Love You but I've Chosen Rock* (2010), *Brazil* (2014), and *Rwandan Daughters* (2019), as well as featuring in exhibitions at Camera Work (Berlin), Folkwang Museum (Essen), *Noorderlicht* (Groningen), and Icon Gallery (Los Angeles).



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12 October 2019 – 8 March 2020

On the mezzanine of the museum:

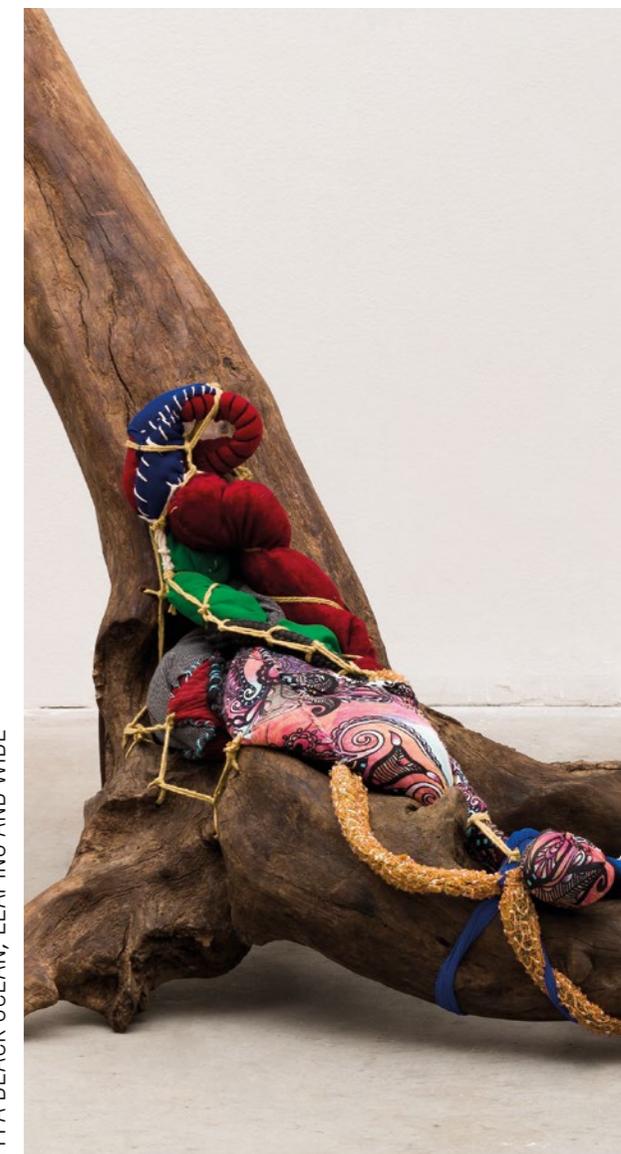
SONIA GOMES | RISE

I'M A BLACK OCEAN, LEAPING AND WIDE
12 October 2019 – 8 March 2020

Cover 1: Sonia Gomes, *Eu Me Levanto, from the Raiz series* [detail], 2018, mooring and sewing on wood, 70 x 82 x 127cm. Courtesy of Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Copyright of the Artist; Photo by Bruno Leão

Cover 2: Olaf Heine, *Rwandan Daughters, Glorioso U. with her daughter Alice, Kigali*, 2018. C-Print, 160 x 122 cm. Courtesy of the Artist with support by Volkswagen AG © Olaf Heine, 2019

7. SEPTEMBER 2019 – 22. FEBRUAR 2020



SONIA GOMES | RISE
I'M A BLACK OCEAN, LEAPING AND WIDE

MUSEUM FRIEDER BURDA
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Olaf Heine, *Rwandan Daughters, Jennifer M. with her daughter Esperence, Kabuga*, 2018. C-Print, 160 x 122 cm. Courtesy of the Artist with support by Volkswagen AG © Olaf Heine, 2019



Sonia Gomes, *Made in Brussels*, 2019, mixed media on hanemühle paper, 51,5 x 40 cm. Private collection. Courtesy of Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Copyright of the Artist; Photo by Kristien Daem

SONIA GOMES | RISE I'M A BLACK OCEAN, LEAPING AND WIDE

»My work is black, it is feminine, and it is marginal. I'm a rebel.«
— Sonia Gomes

Bodies hung upside-down, twisted into one another, recalling lynching victims or wilting vegetation. Nerve paths, mental maps, dreamcatchers: **Sonia Gomes'** biomorphic sculptures have a worrying, magical presence. Born in 1948 to an unmarried black mother and white father in Caetanópolis, a center of the Brazilian textile industry, Gomes grew up, after the early death of her mother, in the white, Catholic family of her father, who also worked in the textile industry. But the African culture and spirituality of her mother and grandmother, as well as an interest in rituals, processions, and myths, made a lasting impact on her life and her later work as an artist. As a teenager, Gomes began deconstructing textiles and items of clothing to create her own style and to make both items for practical use and craft objects. Only at the age of 40, however, when she attended the Guignard University of Art in Belo Horizonte, did she decide, with the support of a teacher, to make a career in contemporary art. Today, following her participation in the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015, she is among Brazil's most influential artists.

In her work, Gomes uses a wide range of found materials and objects given to her as gifts, such as old textiles, driftwood, furniture, or wool, to make sculptures and large-scale installations. In this way, she combines craft techniques traditionally associated with women, such as embroidery, wrapping, sewing, and binding, with many different references,

drawing on the folk art and spiritual traditions of African immigrants, the formal idiom of Surrealism, Brazilian modernism, and current contemporary art. At the same time, there are often links to the culture of the Black Atlantic, a hybrid and polyphonic Afro-diasporic "counterculture to modernity," described by the cultural historian Paul Gilroy in 1993 as "not specifically African, American, Caribbean or European, but all of these at once." Gomes' describes herself as politically engaged not in the Afro-Brazilian movement, but directly via her work. Her textile works develop a distinctiveness and formal virtuosity comparable with those of Louise Bourgeois.

I Rise – I'm a Black Ocean, Leaping and Wide brings together works from the early 2000s through Gomes' current mixed-media sculptures. The exhibition's poetic title is inspired by passages from the poem of the same name by Afro-American poet and civil rights activist *Maya Angelou* (1928–2014). *Still I Rise* is a hymn of protest against racism, sexual violence, the marginalization of black women, and the history of slavery. The show documents the way she uses traditional craft techniques to create objects that combine extreme physicality with the sacred and transcendental. Especially in her more recent work, Gomes makes many-layered references to suppression and violence, but also to the existential cycle of life and death. The tangled chain hung from the ceiling in *Cordão dos Mentecaptos* (2016), for example, looks like a symbiosis of umbilical chord, climbing plant, and worry beads, while its title, 'The Fool's Chord', refers to both slavery and colonial carnival



Sonia Gomes, *Picaré from Raiz series*, 2018, fabric, seam and wood, 70 x 230 x 100 cm. Courtesy of Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Copyright of the Artist; Photo by Bruno Leão

customs. The organ-like forms dangling in a net in *Hiato* (2019) are also ambivalent. They could hint at a nest or a grave, a mother's body or barren seeds and intestines. At first glance, sculptures like *Aninhado* (2019) or *Picaré* (2018) seem to be about the captive, tormented female body. Squeezed into cages, stretched or twisted to their limits, Gomes' surreal figures nonetheless resist physical violence and victimhood with all their might, signaling escape, new departures, and the kind of spiritual resilience evoked by Maya Angelou in the opening lines of her poem *Still I Rise*:

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*



Sonia Gomes, *Hiato*, 2019, stitching, bindings, different fabrics and laces and wooden ball, 260 x 45 x 45 cm. Private Collection. Courtesy of Mendes Wood DM São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Copyright of the Artist; Photo by Kristien Daem

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