



THE EIGER FOUNDATION

NADINE DINTER [PR](#)

PRESS RELEASE

The winners of the EIGER FOUNDATION African Photobook of the Year Award 2022



All images from the book *The African Lookbook: A Visual History of 100 Years of African Women* by Catherine McKinley

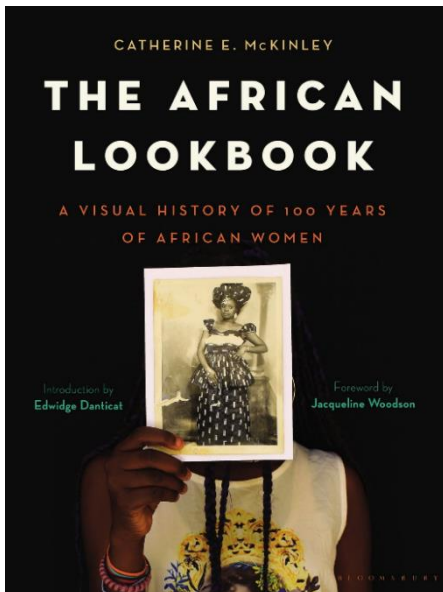
Figure 1. Untitled, c. 1930, Unknown photographer, acquired from the collection of Aladji Adama Sylla, St. Louis, Senegal | Figure 2. Untitled, 1900, Dunau/Lumiere Society, Senegal; Figure 3. Peulh Woman from Niger, 1970, Malick Sidibe, Mali | Copyright Estate Malick Sidibe—ourtesy MAGNIN-A, Paris

In September 2021, the EIGER FOUNDATION, based in Geneva, Switzerland, launched a new photobook award: **the EIGER FOUNDATION African Photobook of the Year Award**. This annual prize supports work that contributes significantly to the evolving narrative of photography. In 2022, the prize was awarded to the most memorable photographic publication by a photographer **from or working in Africa**.

One winner and three runners-ups were selected by the international jury from a total of 4000 submissions:

Winner: *The African Lookbook: A Visual History of 100 Years of African Women*, by Catherine McKinley

Most of us grew up with images of African women that were purely anthropological—bright displays of exotica where the deeper personhood seemed tucked away. Or they were chronicles of war and poverty—“poverty porn.” But now, curator **Catherine E. McKinley** draws on her extensive collection of historical and contemporary photos to present a visual history spanning a hundred-year arc (1870–1970) of what is among the earliest photography on the continent.



These images tell a different story of African women: how deeply cosmopolitan and modern they are in their style; how they were able to reclaim the tools of the colonial oppression that threatened their selfhood and livelihoods. Featuring works by celebrated African masters, African studios of local legend, and anonymous artists, **The African Lookbook** captures the dignity, playfulness, austerity, grandeur, and fantasy-making of African women across centuries. McKinley also features photos by Europeans—most starkly, striking nudes—revealing the relationships between white men and the Black female sitters where, at best, a grave power imbalance lies. It's a bittersweet truth that when there is exploitation there can also be profound resistance expressed in unexpected ways—even if it's only in gazing back. These photos tell the story of how the sewing machine and the camera became powerful tools for women's self-expression, revealing a truly glorious display of everyday beauty.

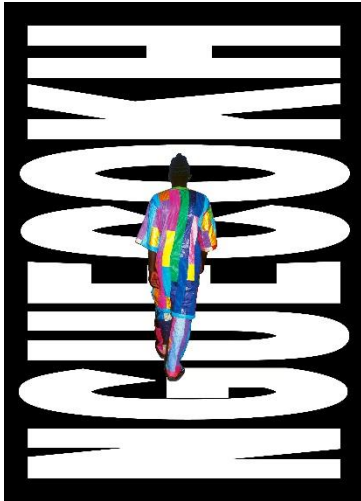
Runner-Up 1: *A City on a Hill*, by Potšišo Phasa



A friend in a fight (left) + *Cleaving* (right), all works: © Potšišo Phasa, courtesy the EIGER FOUNDATION

A product of a visual research project that commenced in 2013, **A CITY ON A HILL** is a highly captivating book offering an inspired and intimate perspective on the human experience as it unfolds in some of Johannesburg's visible but forgotten spaces. The book makes accessible, in alternative and stimulating ways, knowledge often existing in the academic space and hidden in urban development processes and practice. Set in Johannesburg's old but evolving mine dumps, the visual narrative follows a group of men who make a living through 'scavenging' for scraps of metal on the pale hills. It places them in the context of the strange and distorted mining landscapes they inhabit, and artistically reflects on their struggles for success as they navigate these unsafe spaces to unearth leftover metal shards – which are then sold to scrapyards in the nearby central business district for a pittance. Ultimately, the story portrays the workings of an invisible but vibrant economy on the Gauteng City-Region's mine dumps – seemingly dead spaces typically overlooked as mere waste grounds. The book, which is part of a wider collection of creative output including fine art photographic prints and a range of short experimental films by the author and photographer, further expresses imaginaries of the city as a living organism that grows and shrinks at various levels, undergoes challenges and is intricately involved in idiosyncratic relationships with its people. Through poetry and imagery, **A CITY ON A HILL** pictures Johannesburg as a model for the African city – a space bubbling with hope yet haunted by an unjust racial and economic past that complicates the present as it seeks to redefine its own identity in a rapidly changing world. This is explored through themes such as love, spirituality, migration, urban governance, black livelihoods and the notion of work. **A CITY ON A HILL** is a deeply engaging, ingenious and compassionate reflection on present pains and past gains of African cities.

Runner-Up 2: *Nguecokh*, by Tom Huber



All works: © Tom Huber / Christoph Nüssli, courtesy the EIGER FOUNDATION

Photographer **Tom Huber** and designer Christof **Nüssli** travel to the small Senegalese village of **Nguecokh** in the Saloum River delta, about 200 kilometres South of Dakar. They return with portraits full of mystical and poetic beauty, a rare vision of rural West-African life from a secluded sub-Saharan settlement – and many questions. For months, they exchange voice messages with their host Mamadou, the village teacher. They discuss climate change, polygamy, and religion. He describes the challenges in the education and health systems and recounts old folktales of trees and woods, and charts Nguecokh's path to the future.

Runner Up 3: *Nsenene* by Michele Sibiloni:



View of the book *Nsenene* by Michele Sibiloni, © Michele Sibiloni, courtesy the EIGER FOUNDATION

Nsenene are a delicacy and an important source of income in Uganda. Technically bush crickets but generally referred to as “grasshoppers”, nsenene migrate en masse twice a year, right after the two rainy seasons. Huge swarms fill the sky shortly before sunrise. So, night after night during cricket season, many Ugandans stay up till dawn to catch the critters. The omnipresence of the lustrous greenish insects amid the nocturnal mist and the smoke of bonfires submerges the whole country in an otherworldly atmosphere, an eerie effect compounded by all the bizarre paraphernalia involved, especially the fancifully contrived tools and traps. Flurries of hectic activity alternate with long periods of waiting around and killing time. Given their high protein content, they remain a promising source of food for the future, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which points out that if more people were to add edible insects to their diet, that could reduce world hunger and improve food security. However, deforestation has decimated migratory insect populations in recent years and some cricket species are now critically endangered. To make matters worse, the rains in Africa are becoming less and less predictable due to climate change, and cricket-harvesting depends entirely on timing.

Italian photographer **Michele Sibiloni** has captured the Ugandan cricket-harvest, an activity that straddles the very fine line between past and future, tradition and modernization, in his highly atmospheric visual idiom. His immediate cinematographic sequences speak volumes not only about the Ugandan situation, but also about the future prospects for our planet as a whole.

“It has been a true honour to have supported and judged the array of high-quality book entries received for our first year of the EIGER FOUNDATION Africa Photobook of the Year Awards. The array of countries depicted – their landscapes, peoples, and wildlife – capture the diversity, richness, and beauty of Africa. More importantly, with their keen vision and insight, these photographers have helped us to reimagine the continent, and revealed its complexity and magic,” says Leonard O’Brien, Chairman of the EIGER FOUNDATION.

The EIGER FOUNDATION:

Based in Switzerland, **the EIGER FOUNDATION** works closely with the Inside Out Centre for the Arts in Johannesburg, South Africa, to promote African photography and other art forms through exhibitions, educational programmes, competitions, and creative exchanges. Founded in 2012, the EIGER FOUNDATION aims to promote photography as an important art form in Africa and beyond. According to Chairman, Leonard O’Brien: “EIGER stands for quality and inspiring photography and is more than just another art prize. EIGER represents a journey of discovery, inspiration, dialogue, and creating a mark for future generations.” Besides the **EIGER FOUNDATION African Photobook of the Year Award**, a scholarship, a series of lectures and exhibitions, and the EIGER Collection are in the making.

The EIGER FOUNDATION African Photobook of the Year Award 2022

Photobooks eligible for the 2022 award had to be published between 1 January 2019 and 1 January 2022. A prestigious jury of experts on African photography and art decided on the winner of the \$20,000 main prize as well as three runners-up, who received \$3,000 each.

The Jury 2022:

Elvira Dyangani Ose (Director, MACBA – Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art), **Touria El Glaoui** (Founding Director, I-54 Contemporary African Art Fair), **Ben Krewinkel** (photo historian and African photobook expert), **Katharina von Flotow** (filmmaker, photographer, and independent curator), Benjamin Füglistner (artist, cultural entrepreneur, founder of CAP prize), **Roger Ballen** (photographer, artist, and Founding Director, Inside Out Centre for the Arts), and **Leonard O’Brien** (Chairman, the EIGER FOUNDATION).

For more information on the EIGER FOUNDATION and its African Photobook of the Year Award, see:
<https://eigerfoundation.org/>

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