

Living in Canhabaque — Touré Mandémory's Intimate Africa

Global Africa

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“Born in Dakar in 1956, Boubacar Touré Mandémory belongs to the generation of photographers who emerged in the 80s, at a time when studio portrait photography had given way to documentary and news photography. The development of free media and the decline of national photo agencies led to the emergence of professional freelance photographers who gave a new impetus to the industry. Touré Mandémory was one of the initiators of the Dakar Month of Photography in the 90s, and contributed to the development of private press agencies. By elevating photography to the status of an artistic practice, he encouraged its entry into galleries and museums.

After exploring portrait photography, Touré Mandémory turned to documentaries, focusing on research and analysis of African societies. Famous for his low-angle views and snapshots, his themes are veritable aesthetic and socio-cultural manifestos. His series on African capitals, the populations of the Niger River, the rap phenomenon and urban cultures in Dakar, and the ethnic minorities of Senegal have helped to break down the outdated image of a continent tied to obsolete traditions, plagued by drought, famine and authoritarianism.”

(Ndiaye, S., & Fall, N. (2023). *Thiaroye-sur-mer, land of emigration. The gaping wounds of illegal emigration. Global Africa*, (3), pp. 30–32.)

It is within this continuum that the series *La vie à Canhabaque* takes shape. Through it, Touré Mandémory offers a sensitive immersion into the Bijagós Archipelago in Guinea-Bissau. In close proximity to the inhabitants of Canhabaque Island, the photographer captures fragments of life—gestures, gazes, and atmospheres—that reveal a reality both singular and universal. Through this intimate approach, he asserts a visual language in which the everyday becomes narrative, and where each image contributes to a deeply human reinterpretation of African territories.

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