

GRAY



So Be It! Asé!
Photographic Echoes of FESTAC '77:
Roy Lewis, K. Kofi Moyo, Bob Crawford

Oct 26 - Dec 22, 2023
GRAY NEW YORK

***So Be It! Asé! Photographic Echoes of FESTAC '77:
Roy Lewis, K. Kofi Moyo, Bob Crawford***

Oct 26 - Dec 22, 2023

Opening Reception: Thu, Oct 26, 6-8 PM ET
GRAY New York, 1018 Madison Ave

“We had come on faith, not knowing what was going to happen, but all the artists from all the countries had one thing in common: we wanted it to be a success, we wanted to be all together in one place at least once in our lifetimes. And we did it.”

— Roy Lewis

[September 28, 2023] – GRAY is pleased to announce ***So Be It! Asé! Photographic Echoes of FESTAC '77: Roy Lewis, K. Kofi Moyo, Bob Crawford***. Curated by Romi Crawford, the exhibition unveils visual documentation of one of the most significant, yet lesser known, cultural events of the twentieth century: the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, held in Lagos, Nigeria. Known as FESTAC, this Pan-African festival, which convened in early 1977, brought together around 17,000 artists from African countries and Black diaspora communities across the world. The exhibition draws from the archives of Roy Lewis, Bob Crawford, and K. Kofi Moyo, three members of the United States delegation to FESTAC.

Members of the Black Arts Movement in Chicago, Lewis, Crawford, and Moyo each embarked on careers of documenting momentous social and political developments. Lewis started his career as a freelance photographer for publications such as ***Jet*** and ***Ebony***, and recorded the historic 1974 match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman in Zaire. Bob Crawford documented black life on the city's South Side throughout the 1960s and 70s. Photojournalist K. Kofi Moyo's extensive archive of street photography and photojournalism chronicles some of the most pivotal moments of the period, including the Chicago uprising after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. As curator, Crawford is "interested in placing these archives side by side, staging the related subject matter and happenings that resonate between them."

Nigeria, bolstered by oil wealth, modeled FESTAC on the World Festival of Black Arts, held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1966. A more expansive and ambitious program held over twenty-nine days, FESTAC gathered delegations from dozens of countries in Africa, as well as from Brazil, India, the Caribbean, and beyond. Painters, sculptors, dancers, fashion designers, ceramicists, and musicians were assembled, including artists and thinkers such as Faith Ringgold, Audre Lorde, and Stevie Wonder. ***Photographic Echoes of FESTAC '77*** includes photos of the US delegation's travel to Nigeria; the Olympic-style parade that marked the opening of FESTAC; intimate gatherings, planning meetings, and social events; Lagos's contemporary architecture, and performances, including the Kano Durbar, a ceremonial, mounted equestrian parade, are all highlighted.

The exhibition will be held at GRAY New York, 1018 Madison Avenue, Floor 2, from October 26, through December 22, 2023. A public reception will take place on Thursday, October 26, from 6-8 PM ET.

Photographic Echoes of FESTAC '77 will travel to GRAY Chicago in 2024.

PUBLICATION

A series of exhibitions and writings over the last few years reflects the recent surge of interest in FESTAC. In highlighting the work of these three artists, the exhibition provides new insights on the historic event and its impact on subsequent generations. Now, forty-six years since its occurrence, FESTAC is receiving much deserved re-examination from contemporary critics and historians. Accompanying the exhibition, GRAY will release a fully illustrated catalogue, including an essay by curator Romi Crawford and first-person accounts by two of the exhibiting photographers, as well as several artists involved in the Black Arts Movement who participated in FESTAC, such as Darlene Blackburn, Val Gray Ward, and Charlotte Ka, among others.

ABOUT ROMI CRAWFORD

Romi Crawford, PhD, is a professor in the Visual and Critical Studies and Liberal Arts departments at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago. Her research explores areas of race and ethnicity as they relate to American visual culture including art, film, and photography. Crawford is the editor of ***Fleeting Monuments for the Wall of Respect*** (Green Lantern Press, 2021); coeditor of ***The Wall of Respect: Public Art and Black Liberation in 1960s Chicago*** (Northwestern University Press, 2017); and the author of many essays including “Surface and Soul in the Work of Nick Cave,” in ***Nick Cave: Forthmore*** (DelMonico Books/Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2022), and “Reading Between the Photographs: Serious Sociality in the Kamoinge Photographic Workshop,” in ***Working Together: Louis Draper and the Kamoinge Workshop*** (Duke University Press, 2020). She is founder of the Black Arts Movement School Modality and the New Art School Modality. Crawford curated ***Citing Black Geographies*** (2022), an exhibition at GRAY presenting fifteen artists whose practices examine “black space”—the topographies, zones, scenes, and structures that portend Black cultural experience.

ABOUT GRAY

GRAY is a globally recognized team of art professionals devoted to fostering the development of historically important artists’ careers and to building outstanding art collections. Founded in 1963, GRAY has established its reputation as a resource for Modern, Postwar, and Contemporary art with prominent private and institutional clients worldwide. Known for producing critically acclaimed exhibitions and programming from its galleries in Chicago and New York, GRAY represents a roster of internationally recognized artists such as McArthur Binion, Torkwase Dyson, Theaster Gates, David Hockney, Rashid Johnson, Alex Katz, Ellen Lanyon, Jaume Plensa, Leon Polk Smith, and Evelyn Statsinger.

For press inquiries, please contact Rebecca Mottley at rebecca@mottleypr.com.

For sales inquiries, please contact GRAY at inquiries@richardgraygallery.com.

Cover image: Roy Lewis (b. 1937), ***National Theater Night Time, Flags of All Countries***, 1977. Archival inkjet print on Simply Elegant Gold Fibre paper.