K. Kofi Moyo and FESTAC '77: The Activation of a Black Archive

Logan Center Exhibitions
February 12 - March 21
The Activation of a Black Archive

Kofi Moyo and FESTAC 77

About Karega Kofi Moyo

Kofi Moyo is a photographer based in Chicago, Illinois, and an artist in the Black Photographers Archive. He was born on Black History Month (February 12), and his work explores themes of identity, race, and culture. Moyo is known for his distinctive style and his dedication to capturing the essence of African American life and culture.

Representing mainstream American trends as well as the broad Blackstream movement and its various tributaries, the USZ visual artists at FESTAC ’77, more than any other group, comprised the most comprehensive microcosm of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of African-American cultural expression. Representing 24 states and ranging from 21–70 years of age, the mix of 108 artists of international repute, national prominence and regional influence—not just the traditional disciplines but photographers, ceramicists, weavers and other craftsmen—were well blended in the balanced exhibition...

— Jeff Donaldson

Kofi Moyo and FESTAC ’77: The Activation of a Black Archive

The exhibition Kofi Moyo and FESTAC ’77: The Activation of a Black Archive challenges several narratives and agendas. This includes both visually activating a Black photographic archive, visually commemorating FESTAC ’77, advancing a collaboration between an artist and an art institution, and teaching. Each of these elements addresses a bigger question about the rules of Black consciousness in an institution, in a museum, and in the digital domain. Each endeavor also helps to extend the exhibition, which is the first to showcase the photographic work of Kofi Moyo, who, like other members of the “Blackstream” movement of the 1940s and 1950s, used the camera as an artistic tool for resistance and identity. Offering an entry point to Moyo’s archives, which imaginatively points the character of Chicago’s Black arts and culture during this period, the exhibition honors and highlights images that reference an important moment of Black discovery, contextualizing that time period in Lagos, Nigeria, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, known as FESTAC ’77.

With recent exhibitions underscoring the significance of Black art and photography, such as Chimurenga’s FESTAC 77: The Activation of a Black Archive, which examined nations that have produced a range of Black photographers, along with the Ebony/Jet photographic archives, the Moyo exhibition extracts a concise selection of Moyo’s FESTAC photographs, focusing on twelve images that index the FESTAC events and the journey to the event. They capture the progression of the FESTAC initiative—from the scenes of Chicago-based organizers to various modes of transport (airport, train, and car) and ultimately events on the ground in Lagos, such as the opening ceremony, an exhibition, and the opening performance.

As a first step in the journey of producing a more thorough Chicago to FESTAC story, this exhibition invites a personal collection of Moyo’s FESTAC photographs, focusing on twelve images that index the FESTAC events and the journey to it. They represent the progression of the FESTAC initiative—using the scenes of Chicago-based organizers to various modes of transport (airport, train, and car) and ultimately events on the ground in Lagos, such as the opening ceremony, an exhibition, and the opening performance.

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