

EMEKA OKEREKE

## **PRESENTATION OF BAGAMOYO**

This portfolio will present a photographic and video work that I initiated during the months of June and July 2008, in Maputo Mozambique. It is called “**Bagamoyo – photography and the useful space**”

The project has two objectives:

The first, rooted in the photographic content, deals with the mixture of people in a common space. The Maputo bay, situated at a point where the ocean partially divides the city into two, forms a sort of common point between the temporary and permanent inhabitants of Maputo in that there is a constant back and forth movement between the two settlement (Maputo-Catembe).

The ferry boat known as Bagamoyo which carry goods, vehicles and people to and fro the two sides serves as a melting pot of tourists, foreigners and indigenes of Maputo. It also stands as a symbolical object which assembles diverse cultures, activities and people into a defined space. My idea is to evaluate the outcome of such a mixture through a constant revisiting of the space and a documentation of the reactions.

The second objective looks at presentation. The photos were exhibited at the vicinity where they were made: the harbour-at the Catembe side of it. The photos are mounted along the length of the bridge with the aid of supporting poles. The prints are made on PVC and were 120 x150cm for each. They were seen by those who also form the subject of the photographic content as well as a large number of people who had a direct and unrestricted access to the venue.

The idea is based on the concept of exploration of unusual but useful space as an essential part of the creative process but furthermore addresses the issues related to the gap between photography and the public space: it supports the notion that artists and art practioners (especially Africans) of today ought to look at more ways of (also) reaching the indigenous public through pushing the borders of restrictions erected by “formal exhibition spaces”.

The most important question to be asked here is: how can we broaden the practices of art and encourage a diversified public in an era streamlined and monopolised by rigid institutional methods of art practices?

## **BAGAMOYO – THE FILM (13 mins.)**

Due to the nature of the project, the outcome can only be meaningful when shown or discussed within the context for which it was made. And since this will be almost impossible especially when shown at indoor venues, it is important that it is accompanied by supplementary materials to help convey the core argument of the project. For this reason, I have made a 13-minutes documentary film (find it in the gallery as well) which discusses the outdoor experience in such away as it creates an avenue towards a global perception of the project's intentions. This film contains the different stages of the actualisation of the thought process right from the actual production of the images to the exhibition.

The main aim of the film is to show the people, the space and the realistic conditions for which the works were made, which in turn was determinant for the final outcome of the project – to bring the exhibition at close range to the context for which the works ought to be discussed. Furthermore, the film tends to highlight the presence of the artist in the space (and his tool) and how that also became a decisive factor for the outcome of the photographic content as well as the reconstruction that took place afterwards. It also shows, in some instances how the space and the people in it where affected by this intrusion into their normality.