

Foto+Synthesis

# Silafando: A Gift to You on Behalf of my Journey

Jason Florio



Foto+Synthesis organizes traveling exhibitions, accompanying publications and educational programming encompassing a wide array of topics, bringing together different ideas and influences through the unique perspective of the photographic image.

[www.fotosynthesis.com](http://www.fotosynthesis.com)

## Exhibition

There are many ways to capture representations of the complex cultural and social fabric that defines a specific region. New York based English photographer Jason Florio has been regularly traveling to The Gambia for the past 12 years, developing a strong bond with the country, a narrow piece of land situated on the Western coast of Africa. His latest trip in the fall of 2009 was slightly more adventuresome than his previous journeys, a 930 km circumnavigation of The Gambia by foot, taking Florio through a large part of the country, including more than thirty villages.



The Republic of The Gambia, also known as The Gambia or Gambia, is the smallest country on the African continent, less than 30 miles at its widest point. Its population includes most of the ethnic groups found in Western Africa, including the Mandinka (the largest group), Fula, Wolof, Jola, and Serahule. A majority of the people resides in rural villages, where ancient practices remain an important part of everyday life.

*Silafando*, translated from the Mandinka ‘a gift to you on behalf of my journey’, is still a current practice between traveler and host. Upon arrival in each of the villages, Florio made the traditional offering, a bag of kola nuts, to the Alkalo, the elected village chief in the system of local leadership. In addition to this local custom, Florio made a portrait of each of the Alkalos that welcomed him and his fellow travelers in the villages, offering the printed photograph to the chief, which he was able to produce on location. From these encounters Florio brought back a series of beautiful and sensitive color portraits of more than 30 Alkalos he met along his journey, capturing with stunning empathy the elegance, confidence, and the sense of authority that they derive from their status.

The exhibition **Silafando: A Gift To You on Behalf of my Journey** will present a selection of large scale color photographs, alongside with maps, coordinates of the villages, as well as reproductions of the stamps and signatures of the Alkalos, documenting every step of the journey.

## Jason Florio

Jason Florio is a New York City based photographer from London who has worked for the previous ten years as a freelance photojournalist, traveling around the globe for publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Outside*, *Libération*, and *The Times* of London. His work has included the last known photograph taken of the anti-Taliban commander Ahmad Shah Massoud (August 2001), before his assassination by Al-Qaeda (September 9th, 2001), as well as the attack on the World Trade Center in New York (September 11th, 2001). For the past 12 years Florio has been working on a long term large format portrait project of the people that live in and around a sacred forest in The Gambia, called Makasutu, culminating in a solo exhibition that won a *Black and White Magazine* Spotlight Award in 2009 as well as garnering him a nomination for the Santa Fe Prize. Florio was awarded the Joy of Giving Something grant in 2004 to produce the first ever assigned story for *Aperture* in their 50 years history, called 'This is Libya', which is now part of the permanent collection of The Forward Thinking Museum. His work on Afghanistan is in the permanent collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, as well as a number of private collections. In August 2010 he was awarded the 'People Photographer of the Year' by the International Photography Awards for his series of portraits of the Alkalos.



## Preliminary Specifications

Photographs by Jason Florio (archival pigment prints mounted on aluminum):  
32 - 35 color photographs

Size of each of the photographs: 30 x 42 inches / 76.2 x 106.68 cm

Space Requirements: approx. 150 - 200 running feet / 45 - 60 running meters

Security: Limited

Participation Fee: Upon request

## Schedule

Expected Opening: Fall 2012

## Publication

Foto+Synthesis will produce a companion publication in conjunction with the exhibition.

## Educational Program

Photography workshops and guided tours of the exhibition with Jason Florio, for all age groups.

## Contact

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