

## BLOUINARTINFO

## ROTIMI FANI-KAYODE

'Rage & Desire' by Rotimi Fani-Kayode at Hales Gallery, New York, Blouin Artinfo, 9 May 2018



Rotimi Fani-Kayode: *Rage & Desire*, installation view, 2018, Hales Project Room, New York.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode described himself as being an “outsider” with “very little to lose.” The ambiguous feelings posed by his situation are explored in an ongoing exhibition at the Hales Gallery in New York. “*Rage & Desire*” is the title of the solo retrospective show dedicated to the Nigerian photographer and has been made possible due to Autograph ABP in London. Black-and-white images taken during the 1980s make up the exhibition, which runs until June 16, 2018.

“These images present intimate looks at his subjects, primarily black men, whose postures and interactions with objects, which act as extensions of their bodies, play with the duality between the hidden and the visible,” the gallery says.

Some of the images will remind viewers of Yoruba culture in their use of clothing, objects, and masks. There are also some objects like tubing, presenting the idea of the umbilical cord which is a mean of nourishment, and scissors which hint to the “violence of detachment.” The

artist depicts the sensuality of naked body with a frankness which distinguishes him from his contemporaries.

“Fani-Kayode’s photographs are infused with a powerful subjectivity that distinguishes them from the sensationalist images of many of his predecessors and contemporaries. They are the singular contribution of an artist determined to transgress the boundaries imposed both on his life and his art,” the gallery says. “In his seminal essay ‘Traces of Ecstasy,’ Fani-Kayode expressed this by describing his desire to reappropriate the ‘exploitative mythologizing of Black virility’ in the work of so much Western art and ‘to transform them ritualistically into images of our own creation,’ filled with reciprocal desire.”

Rotimi Fani-Kayode was born in 1955 into a prominent Yoruba family in Lagos, and was compelled to flee the country due to the outbreak of civil war in Nigeria in 1966. “During his tragically brief six-year career, Fani-Kayode produced a complex body of photographic work, exploring themes of race, sexuality, spirituality, and

the self. His masterfully staged and crafted portraits, sometimes quietly monochromatic and at other times rich in saturated color, stand as powerful, yet resolutely ambiguous, visual statements,” says the gallery.

In all his works, the subject of otherness appears, perhaps due to his dislocation from his native Nigeria as also his sexual preference of being gay. He was active in the cultural movement of the black British as also movement of the queer community. He was pioneer of a new aesthetic movement.

Rotimi Fani-Kayode’s art work has been feature in many international private and public collections including the Tate (UK), Victoria & Albert Museum (UK), Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art (Finland), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (US) and The Walther Collection (US/ Germany) among others.