

COME TO DADDY: LARRY SULTAN

'I want to measure how a life was lived against how a life was dreamed,' Larry Sultan has said of his *Pictures from Home* series (1982-92), an extraordinarily nuanced stream of colour photographs of his retired parents in their well-appointed home in California's San Fernando Valley. *Practicing Golf Swing* (1989) is typical of Sultan's subtle anxiousness. The father who'd gone West, jobless, in his youth, freezes with club raised and bare feet tickling plush carpet, while the television plays in the corner of the lounge. It's something he would do, but staged - neither quite documentary nor fiction; neither a straightforward avowal of the American Dream nor a demolition of it.

That's true too of *The Valley*, the later series also included in Sultan's current show at Alexandre Pollazzon. Spurred by a 1998 magazine commission to photograph a day in the life of a pornographic film star, Sultan consequently spent five years in bourgeois tract houses like his parents', rented from holidaying dentists and lawyers by the 'odd assembly of unrelated adults' that puts together any given porn film. Again it's a kind of fractured family portrait; again, though, truth and fiction are blurred. *Cabana* (2000), with its cluster of copulating nudes glimpsed through a rosebush, feels like a real shot of something artificial; *Sharon Wild* (2001) - where an underwear-clad starlet pauses between takes on a bed - a fakery of an authentic mood. It's less sociology than the autobiography of a perturbed sensibility reacting to the strange weightlessness of what it perceives. Or as Sultan's father apparently summarised it, 'That's you you're photographing.' *Martin Herbert*

LARRY SULTAN: AROUND THE HOUSE
10 OCTOBER - 24 NOVEMBER,
ALEXANDRE POLLAZZON LTD, LONDON
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Malick Sidibé, *La Nuit de Noël*, 1963, gelatin silver print, 100 x 100 cm.
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QUESTION TIME: WHY AFRICA?

It is something of a shame that *Check List Luanda Pop*, the Venice Biennale's first attempt at recognising sub-Saharan Africa's unique contributions to the increasingly globalised field of contemporary art, became subject to a fray concerning its origins in the collection of Sindika Dokolo, a prominent Congolese businessman, some of whose family financial dealings were the subject of controversy. Perhaps it is as a corrective, then, that this month a different Italian venue, the Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, in Turin, is staging *Why Africa? The Pigozzi Collection*, which will feature holdings from Jean Pigozzi's Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC), a Geneva-based enterprise conceived of and built by Pigozzi, an 'Italian Harvard-educated venture capitalist', so the CAAC website tells us (that Harvard plug no doubt implying a background beyond reproach), and his private curator, André Magnin.

To continue to think about African contemporary art in terms of the patronage that supports and preserves it, however, can only serve to diminish the artists' individual and very real contributions to a greater understanding of aesthetic meaning in the present. For that the art needs exposure. Which is why we should be thankful that there is veritably no overlap between *Check List* and *Why Africa?* Though the latter presents representative pieces by the esteemed Seydou Keita and Venice-darling Chéri Samba (whose paintings hang in the Italian rather than the African pavilion), *Why Africa?* includes a host of other important works, such as Abu Bakarr Mansaray's mechanomorphic drawings, Richard Onyango's Alexis Rockman-esque vision of a downed airliner and Bodys Isek Kingelez's large-scale architectural reimagining of Kinshasa, Congo. Why Africa then? Only the art can render it a rhetorical question. *Jonathan T.D. Neil*

WHY AFRICA? THE PIGOZZI
COLLECTION, 6 OCTOBER
- 3 FEBRUARY, PINACOTECA
GIOVANNI E MARELLA
AGNELLI, TURIN, WWW.
PINACOTECA-AGNELLI.IT,
WWW.CAACART.COM

Sharon Wild, 2001 (from *The Valley* series), c-print, 127 x 152, edition of 10