

## *Sogno d'oltremare* | **François-Xavier Gbré**

curated by Luigi Fassi

from 9 November 2018 to 3 March 2019

**Opening:** 7 p.m., Friday 9 November 2018

From 9 November 2018 to 3 March 2019, the **MAN** Museo d'Arte Provincia di Nuoro presents *Sogno d'oltremare*, the first solo exhibition in Italy by the French-Ivorian artist **François-Xavier Gbré** (Lille 1978), curated by **Luigi Fassi**.

In *Sogno d'oltremare*, **François-Xavier Gbré** – who is exhibiting in Italy for the first time – presents a selection of African photographs, documenting his exploration of West Africa's capital cities, including Abidjan, Bamako, Porto Novo and Dakar, together with a new series of images taken during his stay in Sardinia and commissioned by the MAN.

Gbré's residency in Sardinia, which lasted from July to September 2018 thanks to funding from the **Film Commission Sardegna**, covered the majority of the island's historic regions. This resulted in the photographic research seen in this exhibition, which takes on the form of a hypothetical dialogue between an Ivorian citizen living in Sardinia and someone who has stayed at home, or, perhaps, between someone living in Africa and writing to a friend who is now far away in Europe. The emotional solitude of geographical displacement, the exploitation of the land and the relationship between what is classified as south and what is defined as north, are the themes that permeate these works. The exhibition seeks to highlight the problem of identity in West Africa today, divided by the after-effects of the Cold War, the migration of its people and the ascent of an economic occupation headed by China.

Gbré developed a diary of photographic notes on the island's inland areas, visiting neglected buildings, old industrial areas, archaeological sites, abandoned infrastructures and the surrounding natural landscape. In fact, he investigated civic facilities and public architecture (swimming pools, sports stadiums) and historical places such as monuments and decorative elements (murals) observed as futuristic symbols of progress, as well as selective places of social exclusion.

The artist's visit to Sardinia is transformed into a cultural and social journey, following in the stratified footsteps of settlements and memories, the overseas identity of the colonial era, victories and defeats.

The exhibition also features an ancient eighteenth-century map that shows the image of "another Sardinia", where the usual cartographic rules are unrecognizable. If Africa is no longer distinguished from Europe and Mali is no longer distinguished from Sardinia in Gbré's images, this is because the world of the Mediterranean islands, immersed within "layers of slow history" to cite the historian **Fernand Braudel**, eludes perspective and shapes the present through the enigma of its history, packed with crossbreeds and hybridizations, languages and landscapes, mourning and regeneration. Observed from Africa, the Sardinia described by Gbré is therefore

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a fleeting and elusive place, in which other cultures, other peoples and other worlds have previously cohabited.

François-Xavier Gbré's research is a photographic investigation of African modernity, a seamless observation of rural places and urban settings that helps us to rethink the recent history of the continent through an intimate and private confessional.

We would like to thank the institutions that support the MAN: Regione Sardegna, Provincia di Nuoro and Fondazione di Sardegna.