



CAROL BECKWITH & ANGELA FISHER

# AFRICAN TWILIGHT

VANISHING RITUALS & CEREMONIES



# INTRODUCTION

Over 40 years ago, American-born Carol Beckwith and Australian Angela Fisher met in Kenya and began a relationship with the African continent. They have journeyed over 300,000 miles, through 48 countries, and recorded 150 African cultures.

They have produced 16 acclaimed books of their photographs, including *Maasai* (1980); *Nomads of the Niger* (1983); *Africa Adorned* (1984), *African Ark* (1990), *African Ceremonies* (1999); *Passages* (2000); *Faces of Africa* (2004); *Lamu: Kenya's Enchanted Island* (2009); *Dinka: Legendary Cattle Keepers of Sudan* (2010); and *Painted Bodies: African Body Painting, Tattoos and Scarification* (2012).

Their book, *African Ceremonies*, depicts pan-African rituals and rites of passage from birth to death, covering 93 ceremonies from 26 countries. It was the focus of the exhibition, *Passages*, held at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 2000 and received a United Nations' Award for Excellence for its 'vision and understanding of the role of cultural traditions in the pursuit of world peace'.

Angela and Carol have been honoured twice with the Annisfield-Wolf Book Award in race relations for 'outstanding contributions to the understanding of cultural diversity and prejudice', and won the Royal Geographical Society of London's Cherry Kearton Medal for their 'contribution to the photographic recording of African ethnography and ritual'.

These multi-talented photographers have also been involved in the making of four films about traditional Africa, including *Way of the Wodaabe* (1986); *The Painter and the Fighter*; and *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World*.

Their latest two-volume book, *African Twilight: Vanishing Rituals and Ceremonies* is published by Rizzoli, New York (October 2018), completing the journey begun in *African Ceremonies* (Abrams, New York, 1999) covering rituals and ceremonies from some of the most inaccessible corners of the continent.

# AFRICAN TWILIGHT VANISHING RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Beckwith and Fisher's new two volume book of photographs with accompanying texts, encompasses 35 ceremonies portraying the passage of life from birth to death across the African continent. All of the photographs have been taken over the last 14 years and appear for the first time in this publication.

## LIMITED EDITIONS

ART FIRST is launching a selected portfolio of limited edition photographs from the book.

The editions are limited to 10 and are on Hahnemühle Matt Photo Rag paper. Two print sizes are available:  
140 x 100 cm and 70 x 50 cm

For further information see  
[www.artfirst.co.uk](http://www.artfirst.co.uk)  
and  
[www.carolbeckwith-angela-fisher.com](http://www.carolbeckwith-angela-fisher.com)

'Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher are not only truly remarkable photographers, but their dedication to preserving for all time the dazzling diversity of African Ceremonies is unparalleled. Their celebration of African cultures will forever serve as the most compelling and passionate portrayal of the splendor of human creativity from the very continent that gave rise to all humanity.'

**Dr. Donald Johanson**

Director/Founder, Institute of Human Origins

'I believe that Carol and Angela have responded to an urgent call from the continent's ancestors to record sacred ceremonies before it is too late. African Ceremonies has been born from their dedication and it stands as an enduring statement for future generations as well as a call to preserve the priceless diversity of Africa's ceremonial life.'

**Malidoma Patrice Somé,**

Dagara Shaman and writer

'This collection represents the collective heritage of humanity, rare and incomparable in both quality and quantity, it is a jewel of jewels and a resource of knowledge of unparalleled value. In this archive, the two have ensured that what has been captured will be safeguarded forever, never to die in human memory.'

**George Okello Abungu**

Associate Professor of Heritage Studies  
University of Mauritius



Pende Chief Aristotle Kibala, DR Congo





Salampasu Warrior, DR Congo  
Samburu Initiate, Kenya



Pokot Male Initiate, Kenya





Kalin Harvest Man, Burkino Faso





Bamileke Elephant Mask, Cameroon





Kara Painted Chest, Ethiopia





Mursi Scarified Chest, Ethiopia



# CAROL BECKWITH AND ANGELA FISHER

## ARTISTS' STATEMENT



Africa is the cradle of humankind and a crucible of our creativity. It is the continent on which humanity first flourished and, two hundred thousand years later, it shows no sign of slowing down.

On a continent where urban city dwellers live within a few hundred miles of tribal hunter-gatherers, it is no wonder that Africa remains one of the world's richest melting pots of art, culture and spirituality, producing artists, musicians and dancers that continue to inspire the rest of the world.

For the last fourteen years of our continuous 40-year journey across Africa, we have been seeking out remote communities; we have crossed thousands of miles of often extremely inhospitable terrain, in order to record the sacred ceremonies, powerful art forms, and boundless creativity of the people living there today. We have been granted rare access to ceremonies usually closed to outsiders, including the Royal Igue Ceremony in the Palace of Benin, the Royal masquerade dances for the Kuba King of DR Congo, the Famadihana, the biannual rewrapping of the dead in Madagascar, and the secret rites in the Voodoo shrines of Ouidah Benin.

Africa is changing at a dramatic pace. Over 40% of what we have recorded no longer exists. Our photographs present traditional cultures in a contemporary context—we focus on the living rituals and ceremonies that not only express the great creativity and diversity of the continent but also facilitate the passages through life. The images reveal the epic splendor of Africa and also intimately portray the depth and breadth of human emotion as an individual undergoes the symbolic rituals which mark the most profound and exhilarating moments of life.



# SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

## Passages

### Photographs in Africa by Carol Beckwith & Angela Fisher

This powerful exhibition of African tribal ceremonies reflects 30 years of commitment to preserving the endangered cultures and peoples of 90 tribes across Africa. Beckwith and Angela Fisher pay homage to the rituals that mark every important occasion in tribal life—birth, initiation, courtship, marriage, royal coronations, seasonal rituals, healing exorcisms, and death.

- 2000 Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York
- 2002 Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi
- 2002/3 Borges Centro Cultural Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 2003 Naples Museum of Art, Naples, Florida  
Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 2004/5 National Geographic Museum, Washington, DC
- 2008/9 Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California
- 2009/10 The Museum of Natural History, Turin, Italy

## No Strangers

### Ancient Wisdom in a Modern World

Beckwith and Fisher's photography was featured alongside a global selection of photographers, including Chris Rainier, Brent Stirton, Hamid Sardar-Afkhami, and Steve McCurry, in an exhibition which occupied the entire museum. Curated by anthropologist Wade Davison.

- 2012/13 Annenberg Space for Photography, Los Angeles, California

## African Twilight

### Vanishing Rituals and Ceremonies

This exhibition includes 85 photographs from the new double-volume book, *African Twilight: Vanishing Rituals and Ceremonies*, accompanied by immersive film installations, music recorded in Africa by David Bradnum, and artifacts from the Bowers Museum collection.

- 2018/19 Bowers Museum Santa Ana, California  
7th July, 2018–6th January, 2019

## CONTACTS

ART FIRST

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