

Beyond Identity: Self-Imagining and South African Art Photography.

"...the ritual of self-imagining would become the singular, most important sustaining framework for photography in Africa."

Olu Oguibe *Flash Afrique* (2001)

The tradition of self-imaging in African photography is one that is historically forged in opposition to colonial photographic practices. It was a tendency that asserted a positive articulation of community and identity in contestation of negative colonial tropes. Contemporary self-imaginings can also be figured as a product or contestation of power relations.

Taking my point of departure from Oguibe, I will explore the framework constituted by "*the ritual of self-imagining*" within the work of Zanele Muholi and Peter Hugo. In doing this I will be unpacking the difference between self-imagining and self-portraiture as I unravel the politics of representation within the work of the two artists. I will question not only the work, but extend my analysis to the structures of power that shape the work's construction and dissemination. Ultimately at stake here is the role of representational and identity politics within contemporary South African photography.