



Mikael Owunna

b. 1990, American, Nigerian

Solo exhibitions and public installations:

- 2021 "Cosmologies," ClampArt, New York City
- "Infinite Essence," Iris Project, Los Angeles
- "Infinite Essence: Celestial Liberation," Curated by Larry Ossei-Mensah, Pittsburgh Pennsylvania
- "Infinite Essence," Pittsburgh International Airport, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- "Infinite Essence," Silver Eye Center for Photography, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- "Infinite Essence," Prizer Arts and Letters, Austin, Texas
- 2019 "Limit(less)," Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina
- 2018 "Limit(less)," Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts
- "Limit(less)," Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont
- 2018 "Infinite Essence," Centre Never Apart, Montréal, Canada
- 2017 "Limit(less)," Rainbow House Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

Selected group exhibitions:

- 2021 "Future Past: Photolucida's Critical Mass Top 50 Group Exhibition," (Curated by Elizabeth Avedon), Center for Photographic Art, Carmel, California
- 2021 "Photo Mural Project | Infinite Essence Series," CAM Raleigh, Raleigh, North Carolina
- 2021 "Art in the Plague Year," California Museum of Photography, Riverside, California
- 2020 "Tate Lates," Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom
- 2020 "Yerevan Biennial 2020," Yerevan Biennial, Yerevan, Armenia
- 2020 "Visualizing Social Isolation and Social Injustices through the Davidson College Art Collection: From Pandemic to Protests," Van Every / Smith Galleries, Davidson, North Carolina
- 2019 "Utopian Imagination," Ford Foundation Gallery, New York City
- 2019 "Mt. Rokko International Photo Festival," C.A.P. Kobe Studio Y3, Kobe, Japan
- 2019 "Three Rivers Art Festival 2019," Three Rivers Art Festival, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 2019 "FotoEvidence Book Award Exhibit," Bronx Documentary Center, Bronx, New York
- 2019 "World Press Photo Exhibition," World Press Photo, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2019 "Owning," Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 2019 "The Self, Realized: queering the art of self-portraiture," The Brew House Gallery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- 2018 "Queering the Gaze: Zanele Muholi & Mikael Owunna," alpha nova & galerie futura, Berlin, Germany
- 2017 "Black(s) to the Future: Festival #2," Petit Bain, Paris, France
- 2017 "Limit(less)," Centre Never Apart, Montréal, Canada
- 2017 "BLACK NUANCE SHADE, Blank Canvas Gallery, Toronto, Canada
- 2016 "Massimadi Art Festival," Massimadi Photo Gallery, Montréal, Canada
- 2015 "I am Atayal (Tayen)," Changhua County Indigenous Peoples Activity Center, Changhua City, Taiwan
- 2015 "I am Atayal (Tayen)," Taoyuan County Indigenous Culture Center, Taoyuan, Taiwan
- 2015 "I am Atayal (Tayen)," Wulai Atayal Museum, New Taipei City, Taiwan
- 2014 "I am Atayal (Tayen)," Nan'ao Atayal Cultural Museum, Nanao, Taiwan
- 2014 "I am Atayal (Tayen)," National Taiwan Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

Selected Collections:

- Centre Never Apart, Montreal, Canada
- Davidson College Van Every / Smith Galleries, Davidson, North Carolina
- Duke University Pratt School of Engineering, Durham, North Carolina

Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, Alabama
Middlebury College Museum of Art, Middlebury, Vermont
Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Houston, Texas
Nasher Museum of Art, Durham, North Carolina
National Taiwan Museum, Taipei, Taiwan
Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina
Hennepin County Libraries, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Iowa State University Library, Ames, Iowa
Metropolitan Museum of Art Library, New York City
School of the Art Institute of Chicago Library, Chicago, Illinois
Umeå University Library, Umeå, Sweden
University of Liverpool Library, Liverpool, United Kingdom
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
University of North Carolina Charlotte Library, Charlotte, North Carolina
University of North Carolina Greensboro Library, Greensboro, North Carolina
Wayne State College Library, Wayne, Nebraska

Books and Catalogues:

- 2021 *Crisis Contemplation*, Barbara Ann Holmes,
Center for Action & Contemplation | ISBN: 978-1-623050-55-9
2020 *Black in the Middle: An Anthology of the Black Midwest*, Edited by Terrion L. Williamson, Belt
Publishing | ISBN: 978-1-948742-69-6
2019 *Limitless Africans*, Mikael Owunna, FotoEvidence | ISBN: 978-1-7324711-2-2
2018 *Flash Forward 2018: Emerging Photographers from Canada and the World*, Magenta
Foundation | ISBN: 978-1-926856-15-5

Film:

- 2021 *Obi Mbu (The Primordial House): An Igbo Creation Myth*, Directed by Mikael Owunna and
Marques Redd

Documentary Appearance:

- 2021 *DIGITAL DOCS: LIMITLESS*, WQED Pittsburgh, Directed by Ash Warren | Role: Mikael Owunna
as self.

Selected Awards, Grants, Fellowships:

- 2021 Iris Project Residency, Iris Project, Los Angeles, California
2021 Idea Furnace, Pittsburgh Glass Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
2021 The Silver List, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
2020 Independent Publisher Book Award for Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans Non-Fiction
2020 *Obi Mbu (The Primordial House): An Igbo Creation Myth*, The Pittsburgh Foundation & The
Heinz Endowments: Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh
2019 *Infinite Essence*, Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council: Lift Grant
2019 *Limitless Africans*, The Pittsburgh Foundation: A.W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust
Fund
2019 *Limitless Africans*, The Heinz Endowments: Charitable Trust Fund
2019 *Limitless Africans*, The Pittsburgh Foundation & The Heinz Endowments: Investing in
Professional Artists
2019 *Limitless Africans*, The Fine Foundation
2019 *Limitless Africans*, The Opportunity Fund
2019 NPR: Favorite Photos & Illustrations of 2019, Washington, D.C., USA
2019 Photolucida: Critical Mass Top 50 | Portland, OR, USA
2019 YWCA Racial Justice Award: Creativity and Innovation Award | Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

- 2019 Taylor Wessing Prize: Long List | London, United Kingdom
- 2019 Three Rivers Art Festival: Juror's Award | Pittsburgh, PA, USA
- 2019 FotoEvidence Book Award with World Press Photo | Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2018 Kathryn Davis Fellowship for Peace, Middlebury College | Middlebury, Vermont
- 2018 Photolucida: Critical Mass Top 200 | Portland, Oregon
- 2018 Review Santa Fe | Santa Fe, New Mexico
- 2018 Magenta Foundation Flash Forward 2018 | Toronto, Canada
- 2018 CDS Documentary Essay Prize: Finalist | Durham, North Carolina
- 2018 Robert Giard Fellowship: Finalist | New York City
- 2018 New York Times Portfolio Review | New York City
- 2017 Best Portrait, Head On Photo Awards: Semi-finalist
- 2012 Fulbright Scholarship, U.S. Fulbright Commission
- 2009 Rothermere Scholarship, Oxford University
- 2008 Angier B. Duke Scholarship, Duke University

Selected artist talks:

- 2021 California Museum of Photography, Riverside, CA, USA | *Infinite Essence*
- 2021 Prizer Arts and Letters, Austin, TX, USA | *Infinite Essence*
- 2021 Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH, USA | *Art and the Transfiguration of Police Violence*
- 2021 Duke University, Durham, NC, USA | *Black & LGBTQ+ at Duke - A Journey in Resilience and Progress*
- 2021 SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA, USA | *In Conversation: Mikael Owunna and Jonathan Calm*
- 2021 Duke University, Durham, NC, USA | *Left of Black: Exploring Black Cosmologies Through the Art of Mikael Owunna*
- 2020 Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom | *Tate Lates*
- 2020 University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA, USA | *Global Health Equity Lecture Series*
- 2020 Colby College, Waterville, ME, USA | *Panel: Disrupting Norms of Representation*
- 2020 Indiana University Bloomington, Bloomington, IN, USA | *Indiana Switchgrass*
- 2020 August Wilson African American Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, PA, USA | *Lit Fridays*
- 2020 SF Camerawork, San Francisco, CA, USA | *SF Camerawork Artist Showcase*
- 2020 Van Every / Smith Galleries, Davidson, NC, USA | *Artist Talk with Mikael Owunna, Katyayani Singh, and Shan Kelley*
- 2020 University of Pittsburgh School of Engineering, Pittsburgh, PA, USA | *PITT STRIVE*
- 2020 The Heinz Endowments, Pittsburgh, PA, USA | *We Can Be Podcast (S03EP01)*
- 2020 TEDx Trinity College, Hartford, CT, USA | *Transcending the Body*
- 2020 Fotografiska New York, New York, NY, USA | *Limitless Africans: Panel*
- 2019 University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA | *Reimagining the Black & Queer Body*
- 2019 Duke University Center for Documentary Studies, Durham, NC, USA | *Limitless Africans*
- 2019 Davidson College, Davidson, NC, USA | *Limitless Africans*
- 2019 University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN, USA | *Black in the Middle Symposium*
- 2019 Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT, USA | *Limitless Africans*
- 2019 Griffin Museum of Photography, Winchester, MA, USA | *Limitless Africans*
- 2019 Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA, USA | *Limitless Africans*
- 2019 World Press Photo, Amsterdam, the Netherlands | *Crisis Ethics: Social Justice in Photography*
- 2019 Black Archives, Amsterdam, the Netherlands | *Reimagining the Black Body*
- 2019 Columbia Law School, New York, NY, USA | *Speaker: Paul Robeson Conference*
- 2019 University of North Carolina - Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, USA | *Keynote Lecture: Art History Symposium*
- 2019 The Light Factory, Charlotte, NC, USA | *Finding Your Artistic Voice*
- 2018 Duke University, Durham, NC, USA | *Finding Your Artistic Voice*
- 2018 Center for Documentary Studies, Durham, NC, USA | *Guest of Honor: 2018*
- 2018 Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, USA | *Limit(less)*
- 2018 alpha nova & galerie futura, Berlin, Germany | *Queering the Gaze*
- 2017 Paris Institute of Political Studies – Reims, Reims, France | *Limit(less)*

2017 Sune Jonsson Center of Documentary Photography, Umeå, Sweden | *Limit(less)*
2017 Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, USA | *Limit(less)*
2017 Centre Never Apart, Montréal, Canada | *Limit(less)*
2016 American University, Washington, DC USA | *Limit(less)*
2016 Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA, USA | *Limit(less)*
2016 World Social Forum 2016, Montréal, Canada | *Limit(less)*

Selected Bibliography:

Amanda Waltz, "Silver Eye Center for Photography opens two new exhibits featuring local and national artists," *Pittsburgh City Paper* (May 7, 2021).
Shana Nys Dambrot, "Prizer Arts & Letters: Infinite Essence," *Austin Chronicle* (Apr 10, 2021).
Shana Nys Dambrot, "Art in the Plague Year' Processes the Experience," *LA Weekly* (Mar 18, 2021).
Taylor Dafoe, "Hollywood Has the 'Black List' for Undiscovered Screenplays. Now, Photography Has a 'Silver List' for Up-and-Coming Photographers," *Artnet* (Feb 15, 2021).
Shirley McMarlin, "Silver Eye Center for Photography creates list of artists worth watching," *The Tribune Review* (Feb 15, 2021).
Aline Smithson, "Art in the Plague Year," *LENSCRATCH* (Feb 14, 2021).
Katey Rich, "Introducing the Inaugural Silver List, Featuring 47 Exciting Contemporary Photographers Whose Work You Just Have to See," *Vanity Fair* (Feb 11, 2021).
Jon Feinstein, "Astro-Black Mythology: in Conversation with Mikael Owunna," Humble Arts Foundation (Sept 24, 2020).
Dale Berning Sawa, "Four queer women defying the snow: Mikael Owunna's best photograph," *The Guardian* (Aug 19, 2020).
Mina Benaisa, "Mikael Owunna vill skapa nya bilder av svarta kroppar [Mikael Owunna wants to create new images of black bodies]," by Sveriges Radio (June 10, 2020).
Amber Hickey and Anney Traymany, "Mikael Owunna's Photographs Show the Essence of Black Healing," *Aperture* (June 4, 2020).
Emily Bogle, "Favorite Photos And Illustrations Of 2019," *NPR* (Dec 30, 2019).
Seph Rodney, "Imagining Utopia, Just Over the Horizon," by *Hyperallergic* (Dec 4, 2019).
The Guardian, "Queer continent: Mikael Owunna's Limitless Africans – in pictures," *The Guardian* (Nov 12, 2019).
Isabella Gomez Sarmiento, "'Un-African'? Photos Challenge Notions Of LGBTQ Identity In The African Diaspora," *NPR* (Nov 2, 2019).
Nadja Sayej, 'Imagining a Utopian Future,' *GARAGE Magazine* (Oct 20, 2019).
Jonathan Feinstein, 'Limitless Africans' Is a Stunning Snapshot of LGBTQ African Immigrant Lives," *VICE* (Oct 11, 2019).
Mikael Owunna, "Candid portraits explore the lives of LGBTQ African migrants," *CNN* (Oct 10, 2019).
Lise Lanot, "Rencontre: la communauté LGBTQ+ de la diaspora africaine immortalisée par Mikael Owunna," *Cheese Konbini* (Oct 1, 2019).
British Journal of Photography, "Our pick of books and exhibitions arriving in October," by *British Journal of Photography* (Oct 1, 2019).
Conor Risch, "New Photo Book Celebrates Queerness in the African Diaspora," *Photo District News* (Sept 16, 2019).
Marlynn Pitz, "Two foundations award \$169,000 in grants to 15 local artists," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. (Jun 12, 2019).
Simon Sales Prado, "Neue Fotografie: Bilder queerer, afrikanischer Menschen von Mikael Owunna," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Apr 23, 2019).
Andrew Lasane, "Black Bodies Painted and Photographed Like the Cosmos by Mikael Owunna," *Colossal* (Apr 7, 2019).
Katherine Keener, "Changing the narrative: Mikael Owunna's 'Infinite Essence'," *Art Critique*, (Mar 18, 2019).
"10 Gabriel H. Sanchez and Kate Bubacz, "Photo Stories That Will Challenge Your View of the World," *BuzzFeed* (Mar 9, 2019).
Becky Harlan, "'Every Black Person Deserves To See Themselves This Way,'" *NPR* (Mar 3, 2019).
Jill Blackmore Evans, "20 Fine Art Photographers Redefining the Medium," *Format Magazine* (Feb 28, 2019).
Bill O'Driscoll, "Exhibit Showcases Self-Portraits By LGBTQ Artists," *WESA: Pittsburgh's NPR News Station*

(Jan 9, 2019).

Amanda Waltz, "LGBTQ+ artists assert their identities for *The Self, Realized: Queering the Art of Self-Portraiture*," *Pittsburgh City Paper* (Jan 9, 2019).

Mikael Owunna, "Drawing a Portrait of L.G.B.T.Q Life," *The New York Times* (June 16, 2018).

AJ Plus, "Heavenly Black Bodies," AJ Plus (June 3, 2018).

Jake Naughton, "Pride and Self-Love in the L.G.B.T.Q African Diaspora," *The New York Times* (Mar 19, 2018).

Eye Candy, "Queer and Trans African Women Are Celebrated in this Photo Series for Women's History Month," AFROPUNK (Mar 6, 2018).

Antoinette Isama, "This Photo Series Is a Much-Needed Counter to Violent Images of the Black Body," *Okay Africa* (Jan 18, 2018).

Eye Candy, "'Beautiful photo series explores the connections between the black body, the universe and the eternal,'" AFROPUNK (Dec 28, 2017).

Lexie Bean, "'Limit(less)' LGBTQ African Immigrants Photo Series Reframes Identity," *Teen Vogue* (Oct 12, 2017).

Yelena Keller, "Photographers Who Have Captured LGBTQ Life in the African Diaspora," *Artsy* (Aug 16, 2017).

TÊTU, "Cette série photo célèbre l'alliance vibrante des identités queer et africaines," *TÊTU* (Aug 4, 2017).

BuzzFeed, "8 Incredible Photo Stories You Absolutely Can't Miss," BuzzFeed (June 23, 2017).

Preston Mitchum, "Limit(less) Reminds Us that Africans Can Be Queer, Too, and Debunks Stereotypes," *The Root* (June 23, 2017).

Daniel Orubo, "'Limit(less)': Mikael Owunna Captures LGBTQ Africans In This Powerful Series," *Konbini* (June 19, 2017).

By Hélène Brunet-Rivaillon, "Mikael Owunna shoote les looks émancipateurs de la diaspora africaine LGBTQ," *Les inRockuptibles* (June 18, 2017).

Kamaria Roberts, "How one photographer is challenging the myth that being LGBTQ is 'un-African,'" *PBS Newshour* (June 9, 2017).

Sveriges Radio, "Bristen på HBTQ-förebilder ska förändras i fotoprojektet Limitless," *Sveriges Radio* (May 31, 2017).

Xavier Héraud, "Mikael Owunna, photographe: 'Je travaille à capturer des images positives et émancipatrices des personnes LGBTQ africaines,'" *Yagg* (May 30, 2017).

By Colin Stewart, "Photos' goal: Prove that being LGBTQ isn't 'un-African'," *76 Crimes* (May 29, 2017).

SBS, "A

photographer's portraits of queer Africans using fashion to reclaim their culture," *SBS* (May 27, 2017).

Theophilus Kwesi Imani, "Mikael Owunna's Limit(less) project debunks the idea that being LGBTQ is Un-African," *Griot* (May 27, 2017).

GOOD, "A Photographer Captures LGBTQ Africans Around The Globe," *GOOD* (May 26, 2017).

Lewis Corner, "How this artist is debunking the myth that it is 'un-African' to be LGBT+," *Gay Times* (May 23, 2017).

Jesse Steinbach, "Nigerian Photographer Dispels the Myth That Being LGBT is 'un-African'," *New Now Next* (May 22, 2017).

AJ Plus, "Is being queer un-African?," *AJ Plus* (May 19, 2017).

Katie Dupere, "Stunning photo series celebrates the complex identity of LGBTQ Africans," *Mashable* (May 19, 2017).

Priscilla Frank, "Stunning Photos Debunk the Myth That Queerness is 'un-African'," *Huffington Post* (May 16, 2017).

The Daily Beast, "Limit(less): Moving Portraits of LGBTQ African Immigrants," *The Daily Beast* (May 16, 2017).

AFROPUNK, "The styles and stories of LGBTQ African immigrants get highlighted in #LimitlessAfricans photo-documentary project," *AFROPUNK* (May 15, 2017).

Leah Donnell, "Picturing Queer Africans in the Diaspora," *NPR* (May 12, 2017).

Barbara Gonzalez, "This Artist is Showing the World What LGBTQ+ African Immigrants Look Like," *Cassius Life* (May 10, 2017).

Erin Canty, "13 gorgeous photos reveal what it's like to be LGBTQ and African," *Upworthy* (May 9, 2017).

Lynsey Chutel, "A photographer's portraits of queer Africans using fashion to reclaim their culture," *Quartz* (Apr 25, 2017).

Sarah Karlan, "This Stunning Photo Series Is Highlighting The Experiences Of LGBT African Immigrants," *BuzzFeed* (Mar 6, 2017).

Mikela Jay, "Mikael Owunna: Reaching Beyond Limits," *Never Apart* (Feb 17, 2017).

Lindsay Samson, "Limit(less) by Mikael Owunna: LGBTQ style in the African diaspora," *Design Indaba* (Feb 14, 2017).

Antoinette Isama, "The Limit(less) Project Explores Black Love Beyond the Norm with 4 Queer African Women," *Okay Africa* (Feb 9, 2017).

Jacqueline Lara, "An Ambitious Documentary Photo Project Traces LGBTQ Africans in the Diaspora," *iD* (Dec 14, 2016).

Winter Mendelson, "This Photographer Bridges the Gap Between LGBTQ and African Identities," *POSTURE Magazine* (Nov 16, 2016).

Advocate.com Editors, "LGBT Africans Maintain Their Identity Through Style," *The Advocate* (Sept 22, 2016).

Clarence J. Fulker, "Limit(less): A Photographic Celebration of LGBTQ Africans," *Eye Candy*, "Photographer Mikael Owunna Celebrates African LGBTQ Immigrants in new LIMIT(LESS) Photo Project," *AFROPUNK* (Sept 14, 2016).

Christiana DM, "Mikael Owunna Is Showing the World That LGBT Africans Are Limitless," *A.Z. Mag* (Aug 19, 2016).

SverigesRadio, "Mikael vill ge y bild av afrikanska HBTQ-personer (Mikael wants to give a new image to LGBTQ Africans)," *Sveriges Radio* (Aug 3, 2016).

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Jaimee A. Swift "This Photo Project Is Redefining What It Means to Be African and LGBTQ," *Huffington Post* (April 27, 2016).

Duke Magazine, "Alumni newsmakers," *Duke Magazine* (March 14, 2016).

Aisha Jama, "LGBTQ Africans express identity in 'Limit(less)' ways," *PBS* (August 28, 2015).

Jennifer Sefa-Boakye, "Limit(less): A Groundbreaking New Photo Project on LGBTQ African Style," *Okay Africa* (July 2, 2015).

Taipei Times Staff Writer, "Exhibit shows Atayal children's empowerment by art," *Taipei Times* (July 11, 2014).

Takiyu, "'I am Atayal (Tayen)!' Student photography creates exhibition," *Taiwanese Indigenous TV* (July 9, 2014).

Wu Guihua, "Taiwan Museum, 'I am Atayal (Tayen)!' Exhibition," *Sun Travel* (July 8, 2014).

CNA Staff Writer, "'I am Atayal (Tayen)!' CNA (July 8, 2014).

Fang Jiamen "I am Atayal (Tayen)! Aborigines study themselves." *Taiwan Wake Up Newspaper* (July 7, 2014).

Taiwan Ministry of Culture Staff Writer, "Taiwan Museum displays special exhibit 'I am Atayal (Tayen)!' " *Taiwan Ministry of Culture* (July 7, 2014).

Mary Yan Yan Chan, "'I am Atayal (Tayen)!' Taiwan Museum Special Exhibit." *World People News* (June 17, 2014).

Atane Ofiaja, "Limit(less) Africans: chronicling the lives of LGBTQ African immigrants in America," *This Is Africa* (February 11, 2014).

Education:

2018 French Language (Advanced), Middlebury French School | Middlebury, Vermont
 2017 French Language (Intermediate), Middlebury French School | Middlebury, Vermont
 2012 Biomedical Engineering and History (B.S.E), Duke University | Durham, North Carolina