Oman 23°35′N

Salvador de Bahia 12°58′S

SALT MEMORY

YUSUF AHMED

Galerie36

Dakar, Senegal 14°41′N

20 November 2026 to 17 April 2027

OFF programme, 16th Dakar Biennale

galerie36.com

SALT MEMORY

YUSUF AHMED

20 November 2026 to 17 April 2027 · Galerie36, Yoff, Dakar, Senegal

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

LANGSTON HUGHES, "THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS"

Galerie36 presents *Salt Memory*, a solo exhibition of photographs by Ethiopian-American photographer and filmmaker Yusuf Ahmed. Opening during the 16th Dakar Biennale, the exhibition marks Galerie36's first Biennale season and continues through 17 April 2027.

Salt Memory begins with a question: how does memory travel, and what forms does it take when people make a life elsewhere? Ahmed approaches this question through the textures of everyday life across Africa and its Diaspora, attending to the ways people inhabit a place and make it their own.

We begin with the water.

A swimmer floats, shadowed by green light. Two figures sit at the edge of the surf. Boys leap above a river.

Elsewhere, a boat rests in a narrow alley, bringing the suggestion of a shoreline into the built landscape. Across Ahmed's photographs, water is a place of pleasure, work and passage. It carries the

histories of commerce and conquest, of forced departures and chosen journeys.

The exhibition title gives those movements a material trace. As seawater evaporates, salt crystallises, giving visible form to the mineral matter shared by sea, earth and our own bodies. Salt preserves, settles and remains on the skin, offering an image for what contact leaves behind and what we carry within us.

Taken across Africa and its diasporas, in places extending from Dakar to Oman to Salvador da Bahia, Ahmed's photographs are brought together through visual affinities. A gesture of care, the fall of a fabric or a colour on a wall draws the eye from one image to another. These echoes invite questions about inheritance and exchange throughout Africa's global stories, while leaving room for consideration of particular histories of each place.

Cultural memory is renewed through gestures and practices, through the daily decisions by which people care for one another and shape their surroundings. It changes as it is carried away, over, and through. Recognition can begin in a resemblance without ending in an assertion of sameness.

In *Salt Memory* Diasporic life emerges as an ongoing composition, shaped by the stories, both tangible and ephemeral, that people inherit and what we make in relation to others. Ahmed's photographs attend to that process without claiming to exhaust the lives they depict.

Opening during the Dakar Biennale whose theme, "(anti)fragilité : arts de la réparation et stratégies du contrecoup", turns towards care, repair and recomposition, *Salt Memory* considers how people across the African continent sustain and remake a world under changing conditions.

Its attention falls on the forms people give their lives, including under conditions they perhaps did not choose. Cultural invention takes shape alongside loss and possibility, in the continuing work of caring for a child, making a home within a new place, or finding a space of respite beside the water.

Presented in Dakar, on an Atlantic coast shaped by its own histories of departure and exchange, *Salt Memory* offers Ahmed's photographs another setting in which to be encountered.

Salt Memory features twenty photographs in seventeen frames, including a diptych and a triptych, presented in natural cedarwood. A companion online presentation of Ahmed's earlier series, *Between Nostalgia and Dreams*, previously exhibited at The Africa Center in New York, will be on view at galerie36.com.

Curated by Yusuf Ahmed and Ayofemi Kirby
Exhibition text by Ayofemi Kirby

ON VIEW
20 November 2026 to 17 April 2027 · Presented in the OFF programme of the 16th Dakar Biennale

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