

# Teachers' Exhibition Resource

## *Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos*

Curated by Lagos Studio Archives and Bindi Vora

31 Oct 2024 - 22 Mar 2025 at Autograph, London



Abi Morocco Photos, Aina Street, Shogunle, Lagos, 1974. © Abi Morocco Photos, courtesy of Lagos Studio Archives.

## Visiting Autograph

Autograph is in the Shoreditch area of Hackney in East London.

We are a short walk from Shoreditch High Street, Old Street and Liverpool Street stations. If you are travelling by bus the 26, 35, 47, 48, 55, 67, 149 and 243 buses stop at the Shoreditch Church and Shoreditch Town Hall which are close to the gallery.

Autograph does not have public parking. To find the nearest available parking and rates, we recommend [justpark.com](https://www.justpark.com). We have two disabled parking bays on-site, to book one for your visit please email [adrian@rivingtonplace.org](mailto:adrian@rivingtonplace.org) or phone 020 7749 1240.



### **Address**

Autograph ([Google Maps link](#))

Rivington Place, London

EC2A 3BA, UK



### **Open times**

Wed and Fri: 11am - 6pm

Thur: 11am - 9pm

Sat: 12:30 - 6pm

Closed on public/bank holidays



### **Booking a visit**

Please fill out [this form](#) to book your class visit. Our Education Studio is also available upon request.

Entry to all of our exhibitions is free.

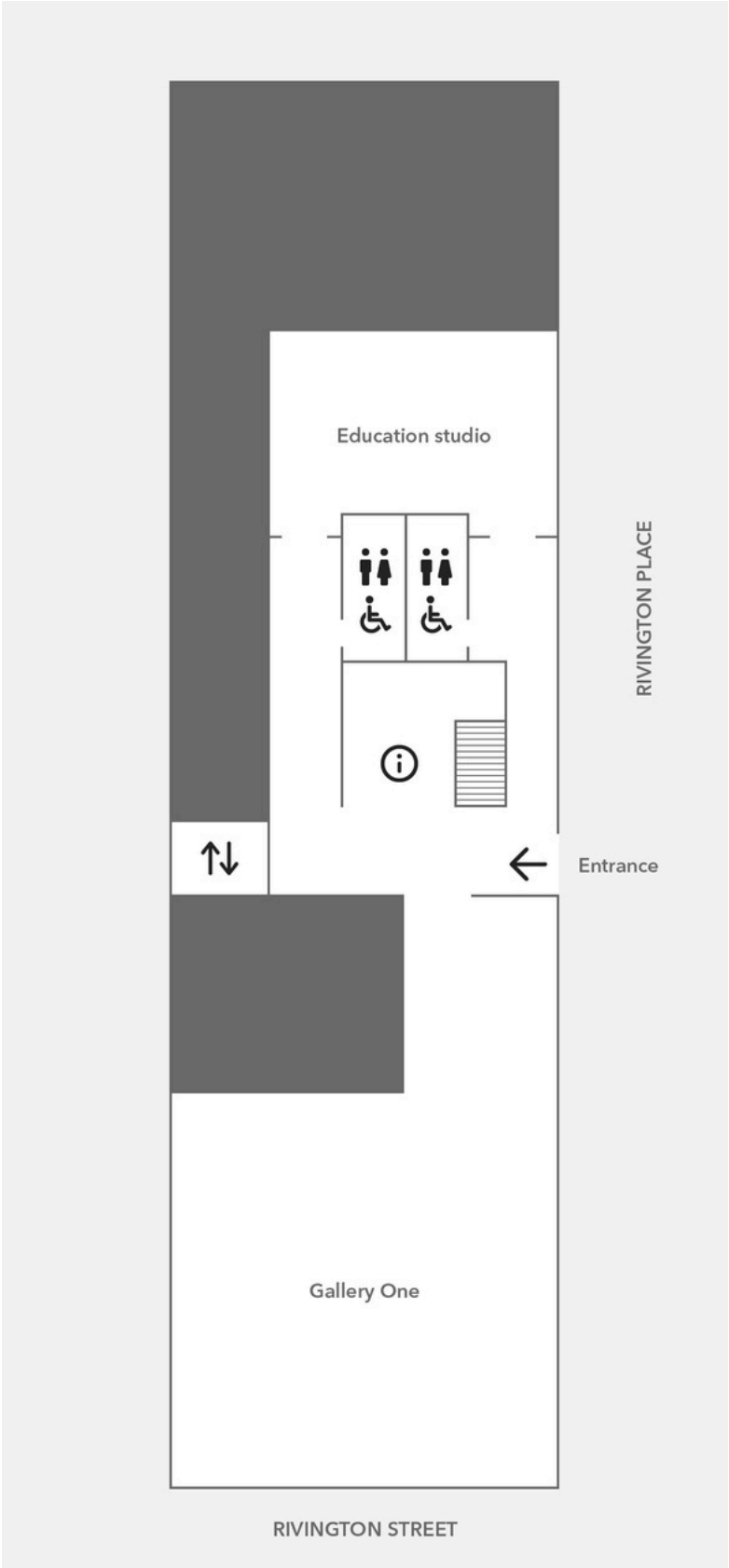


### **Accessible venue**

Our gallery is a step free venue that welcomes people with all types of disabilities. [Download our accessibility guide](#).

You can find more information about your visit [here](#).

*Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos* is situated in Gallery One which is on the ground floor of Autograph.



## **About Autograph**

Established in 1988, Autograph is a visual arts charity with a mission to champion the work of artists who use photography and film to highlight questions of race, representation, human rights and social justice. Through doing so, we invite people to explore the creative and critical power of visual representation in shaping our understanding of ourselves and of others.

## **About this resource**

The aim of this exhibition resource is to support school teachers in engaging students with Autograph's exhibition [\*Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos\*](#), the first exhibition of these remarkable portraits capturing the rich style and joyous spirit of Lagos in the 1970s.

The resource contains prompts, discussion points and ways to engage with the artwork and themes in the exhibition before, during and after the exhibition visit. Activities include:



### **Classroom Activity:**

**Background Research (KS4 & KS5)** - research the exhibition using Autograph's website.

**Look, Reflect, Imagine (KS3 & KS4)** - analyse a photograph by John and Funmilayo Abe through written tasks and group discussion.



### **Exhibition Activities**

**Street, Home, Studio, or Celebration? (KS2 - KS4)** - reflect on different types of photography.

**Photograph Treasure Hunt (KS2 & KS3)** - locate different objects in the photographs.

**Debate, Mate: Film vs. Digital Photography (KS3 - KS5)** - reflect on the differences between analogue photography and digital photography.

**What is a 'freedom ceremony'? (KS3 & KS4)** - learn about the tradition of 'freedom ceremonies' in Yoruba culture.



### **Extension Activities:**

**Writing About a Photograph (KS3 - KS5)** - write a piece of written analysis of a photograph from the exhibition.

**What do you see? (KS3 & KS4)** - analyse a photograph by completing the sentences.

**Your own Freedom Ceremony! (KS3 & KS4)** - create a photograph of their own imagined freedom ceremony.

## About the exhibition

Abi Morocco Photos was a photography studio based in Lagos, Nigeria run by husband-and-wife duo John Abe (b.1956, d.2024) and Funmilayo Abe (b.1953 - ). The studio was active in Lagos from the 1970s through to 2006. Merging their professional and personal lives, the couple balanced raising a large family while running a successful commercial photographic studio.

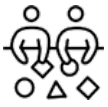
Their photography encompasses a variety of styles: from formal studio portraits to commissioned photos at home and moments of celebration.

In the 2000s many studios, including Abi Morocco Photos, transitioned towards digital photography. As a result, many negatives and physical records were at risk of being lost or destroyed in favour of new technologies. The works on display are the result of the ongoing efforts of the Lagos Studio Archives project, which aims to preserve and present the legacy of Nigerian studio photography. Through their research the contributions of studios like Abi Morocco Photos are now recognised in the cultural history and discourse of African studio portraiture.

*Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos* is first exhibition of these remarkable portraits capturing the rich style and joyous spirit of Lagos in the 1970s.



*Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos* exhibition at Autograph, London. Curated by Bindi Vora and Lagos Studio Archives. Photograph by Kate Elliott.



## Classroom Activities:

Before visiting the gallery you can invite the students to follow Autograph's page on [Instagram](#).

### Background Research (KS4 & KS5)

Invite students to independently research the exhibition *Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos*.

**Read:** [Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos](#)

A comprehensive introduction to the exhibition including a biography of John and Funmilayo Abe

**Read:** [4 Things to Know About 'Spirit of Lagos'](#)

Introducing the context and key figures behind Autograph's new exhibition


**Read:** [The Future from Yesterday: Photographic Archiving Practices in Nigeria](#)

An overview of the development of photographic and archival practices in and around Nigeria, past and present

**Look:** [VR Visit: Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos](#)

Virtually visit Spirit of Lagos, the first exhibition of remarkable portraits from Abi Morocco Photos capturing the rich style and joyous spirit of Lagos in the 1970s

**Listen:** [Spirit of Lagos](#)

Rewind to 1970s Nigeria with this playlist compiled by Lagos Studio Archives to accompany their exhibition at Autograph 

## Look, Reflect, Imagine (KS3 & KS4)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and paper

Ask the students to respond to the photograph below:



Abi Morocco Photos, Aina Street, Shogunle, Lagos, c.1970s.  
© Abi Morocco Photos, courtesy of Lagos Studio Archives.

**Look:** Write down on a piece of paper what you see in the photograph.  
(10 mins)

**Reflect:** Does the photograph make you think 'street' or 'studio' photography? How is this picture different from real life? Discuss in pairs.  
(10 mins)

**Imagine:** Look at the title & the date of the photograph. How old do you think the sitters are? Can you write a short story about the two subjects of this photograph and what they might be doing now, in 2025? In class or homework written activity.  
(20 mins)



## Exhibition Activities:

### Street, Home, Studio, or Celebration? (KS2 - KS4)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and paper

Part 1: Individually or in pairs, ask your students to walk around the exhibition space and stop at their favourite photograph.

- Ask them to write down why it resonates with them. Why did it make them stop?

*Share:* Come back together as a group and discuss which images they liked and why.

Part 2: Ask your students to write down on their paper which of these four categories they think their photograph falls into - ask them to explain their answer:

- Formal studio portrait;
- Commissioned photo at home;
- Moment of celebration;
- Street photography.

*Share:* After the students have written down their reflections, discuss as a group the difference between the four categories.

Additional discussion prompts:

- How do you know what type of photograph it is?
- Why do you think these photographs have been taken?
- Which category of photograph do you think is more interesting?
- How do you document important moments in your life?



## Photograph Treasure Hunt (KS2 & KS3)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and printout

Hand each student a printout of the table below and ask them to find the objects in the photographs and tick them off the list.

This activity can also be done as a group activity where the teacher calls out the object/concept ("Find...") and students actually go to stand next to the photograph.

Additional discussion prompts:

- Do the objects tell you anything about the lives of the sitters?
- Do the objects affect your interpretation of the picture?
- What objects would you include in a portrait of yourself?

OBJECT	FOUND IT!
Goat	
Tyre	
Van	
Radio	
Pipe	
Records/Vinyls	
Bible	
Christmas tree	
Medium format camera	
White flowers	
Guitar	
Newspaper	

## **Debate, Mate: Film vs. Digital (KS3 - KS5)**

Get the class into two groups and assign one side to each group: film photography vs. digital photography. The two groups will debate which type of photography is the best!

Of course, like any good school debate, there is no right answer. The exercise is to engage them in identifying what they think makes photography a compelling art form and which way of photographing they think is best.

During the debate they may want to think about:

- Cost
- Time
- Process
- Aesthetic
- Accessibility
- Skills required

Additional discussion prompts:

- What do you think the difference is between taking a photo with a film camera and taking a photo with a phone?
- How have mobile phone cameras change the way we take photographs?
- How do you think modern technology has impacted film photography studios such as Abi Morocco Photos?
- How has modern technology impacted the community aspect of a photographic studio?
- What is your opinion of photography studios like Abi Morocco Photos and do you think they are still in demand?

## What is a 'freedom ceremony'? (KS3 & KS4)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and paper

Three of the images in the exhibition portray 'freedom ceremonies', a traditional celebration prevalent in Yoruba culture. Ask your students to examine the photographs and answer the following questions.

What are 'freedom ceremonies' in Yoruba culture?

What freedom ceremonies are being celebrated in the photographs and what objects are being used to symbolise the particular apprenticeship, skill, or trade?

Why do you think these ceremonies were important for the local community and the apprentice?

What objects would you use to represent the job or career you wish to pursue?



## Extension Activities:

*Note:* These activities can be done in Autograph's Education Studio, later in the classroom, or be set as a homework activity.

### Writing About a Photograph (KS3 - KS5)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and paper

Ask each student to select one image from the exhibition and write a short piece of analysis - they can take a photo of their image on their phone. Get them to consider the following aspects:

**Composition:** Think about the shapes, patterns, angles and viewpoint. Do you think this was a deliberate, conscious decision or perhaps spontaneous?

**Mood:** How does the photograph make you feel? What emotions and feelings are created by this image?

**Fashion:** clothing can give us some context as to what historical period the images were taken in. It can also give us clues about the styles that were in fashion at the time, the class or social status of the sitters or even give us the cultural and religious significance of the photograph.

**Backdrop:** a backdrop is a surface or material placed behind a subject in a photograph to create the background. Backdrops can be used to:

- Set the mood: backdrops can help create the story or mood of a photograph.
- Isolate the subject: a clean, objectless backdrop can highlight the main subject.
- Add depth: backdrops can add depth to an image.

## What do you see? (KS3 & KS4)

**Materials:** Pens/pencils and paper

Ask each student to select one image from the exhibition and complete each sentence with their own observations - for reference they can take a photo of their chosen image on their phone.

1. In this image I can see.....
2. We can see that the photographer has used.....
3. They have done this to/by/so.....
4. The style/genre of this photograph is.....
5. The texture in this photograph can be described as.....
6. The shapes/textures/patterns are.....
7. The lighting here is.....
8. This technique is used to create a.....effect.
9. This image is similar/different to.....
10. The mood created in this image is.....
11. I feel that this work.....
12. This work has inspired me to.....

## **Your own Freedom Ceremony! (KS3 & KS4)**

*Note:* students will have to complete the activity on page 11 in order to carry out this activity.

**Materials:** a camera/phone with camera

In groups and based on the answers that they wrote during the exhibition, ask your students to create a 'freedom ceremony' celebrating their own dreams for the future.

They may need to think about the following:

- Props
- Lighting
- Clothing
- Backdrop

*Note:* If carrying out this activity in Autograph's Education Studio, please let us know if you would like to have some props/fabric available by emailing [info@autograph-abp.co.uk](mailto:info@autograph-abp.co.uk)



### **Share your outcomes**

We'd love to see your student responses!

Please email any work to [learning@autograph-abp.co.uk](mailto:learning@autograph-abp.co.uk)



Autograph is supported by



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ENGLAND**

This resource pack was made with Niamh Murray, Lead Photography & Art Teacher at Woolwich Polytechnic School  
*Abi Morocco Photos: Spirit of Lagos* is curated by Lagos Studio Archives and Bindi Vora

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