



# Photofile

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Ahmed Mater. Alex Majoli. Anders Edström. Dean Cross. Hayley Millar-Baker. Joe Wigdahl.  
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#102.

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# Scene

—Alex Majoli.



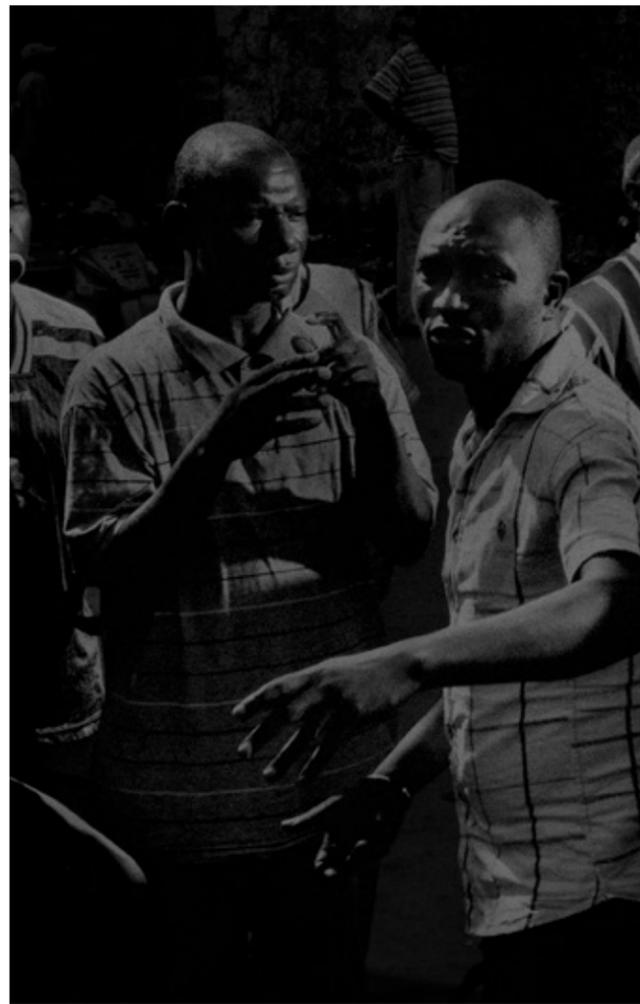
All photographs courtesy of the artist and MACK.

Alex Majoli, Scene #8667, First day of

Brexit at Jamaica Winehouse, London, UK (2017).



Alex Majoli, Details from Scene #9992, Crowd at the stadium, Republic of Congo (2013).



Photofile #102

All photographs courtesy of the artist and MACK.



Alex Majoli, Scene #0435, Republic of Congo (2013).

As the ubiquitous Shakespearean quote goes, ‘All the world’s a stage’, and similarly, the work of Italian photographer Alex Majoli seeks to expose the thin line between reality and theatre. In the past eight years he has been making pictures of daily life, political protests and humanitarian crises in countries including the Congo, Egypt, India, Korea, China and Brazil, and in Europe. The resulting body of work entitled *Scene* is underpinned by the conviction that we are all assigned certain roles to play in life — ones shaped by social, cultural and political structures. In Majoli’s eyes, if we really want to understand how and why certain events — from day-to-day happenings to social upheavals — unfold, then a good starting place would be to closely consider these roles.

Rather than Shakespeare, however, Majoli takes his cues from the early 20th-century playwright Luigi Pirandello who posited that characters on stage might be more real than the actors that play them. Why? Because characters possess causal, defined roles, unlike humans who endlessly question their role in life. With this in mind, Majoli constructs his images with clear characters, albeit not actors. In any given location, he and his assistants set up a camera

and lights and wait for people to sketch out their own script; anyone in view of the installation might avoid it, play up to it, or continue as they were. Meanwhile, Majoli highlights the protagonists using a powerful flash, which lends their surroundings the two-dimensional quality of a stage.

His captions provide a third dimension: significant context to flesh out the scene. (*Scene*, notably, takes its title from the Greek word *skēnē*, which refers to the backdrop used in ancient Greek theatre.) Thanks to Majoli’s captions we know, for example, that a group of suit-clad men are reading newspapers on the ‘First day of Brexit at Jamaica Winehouse’, which sparks the question: which way did they vote? What role did they have to play in this (sur-)real narrative? It’s this kind of inquisition that his exhibition co-curated by David Company, Diane Dufour and Cyril Delhomme will invite. The show, which opens at Le Bal in Paris this Spring, coincides with a book published by MACK. The cropped photographs of a stadium crowd shown here derive from the introductory pages; they are in fact details of much larger, cinematic scenes to come.

—Sooanne Berner.