

## GALLERY

*Photograph by***JK BRUCE-VANDERPUIJE**

**The work of the prolific Ghanaian** photographer JK Bruce-Vanderpuije (1899-1989) is considered one of the most significant archives of African photography. Spanning seven decades, his oeuvre ranges from government commissions, corporate campaigns and records of major political events to intimate depictions of family life, charting the transition of the nation from colonial Gold Coast to independent Ghana.

“Our understanding of Africa’s past is often hindered by the lack of documentation or the inaccessibility of historical records,” says Aida Muluneh, Ethiopian photographer and curator of an exhibition of Bruce-Vanderpuije’s work currently on show in Dubai. “It is therefore essential to showcase Africa’s visual archives, not only to shed light on our history but also to underscore the significance of contemporary photographers who document our present for the benefit of future generations.”

Bruce-Vanderpuije founded the Deo Gratias photographic studio in Accra in 1922, and it remains open today - one of the continent’s oldest studios still in operation. In his work, we see the full gamut of mid-20th-century society, from young boxers to village elders, families in traditional kente fabrics to tuxedo-clad members of Accra’s Optimist Club, a group of people who looked hopefully towards Ghana’s future, pictured here. As Bruce-Vanderpuije’s granddaughter Kate Tamakloe, current custodian of the Deo Gratias studio, says, “The photographs continue to teach us new things about life and society during his time.” **FT**

Words by Josh Lustig. “Unveiling the Shadows of the Past: JK Bruce-Vanderpuije - The Hidden Icon of Photography in Africa” is at Efie Gallery, Dubai, until February 24; [efiegallery.com](http://efiegallery.com)

‘Accra Optimists Club’, 1930s

COURTESY OF DEO GRATIAS STUDIO AND EFIE GALLERY

