the afronauts

www.lademiddel.com
studio@lademiddel.com

In 1964, still leaving the dream of their recently gained independence, Zambia started a space program that would put the first African on the moon, catching up with the USA and the Soviet Union in the space race.

Edward Makuka Nkoloso, the passionate brain behind the project, had a hard time convincing both the national and international institutions to fund a visionary space program that challenged the manichean vision of a world completely immersed in the Cold War. For a year he trained a group of students to become astronauts in the headquarters of the Zambian National Academy of Science, Space Research and Philosophy that he built outside of Lusaka. With no financial support and one of his most advanced students getting pregnant, the project vanished and was set to become one more exotic episode in African History.

The series “The Afronauts” revisits the chronicle of these days, completing the very few information available of the historical event with stereotypical reconstructions of the imagery that the idea of an African space program triggers. Based on the numerous clichés that come from the Western mythical understanding of both the African continent and the outer space, the series becomes a documentation of the Western expectations towards what Africa can achieve rather than a proper record of what really happened.

After 10 years working as a photojournalist, Cristina De Middel, decided to start studying the effects that intensive and partial documentation has in certain territories and to question the role that photography and the media have played in building our biased understanding of the world and the patterns of the stories that we consume as real.

CRISTINA
DE MIDDEL