

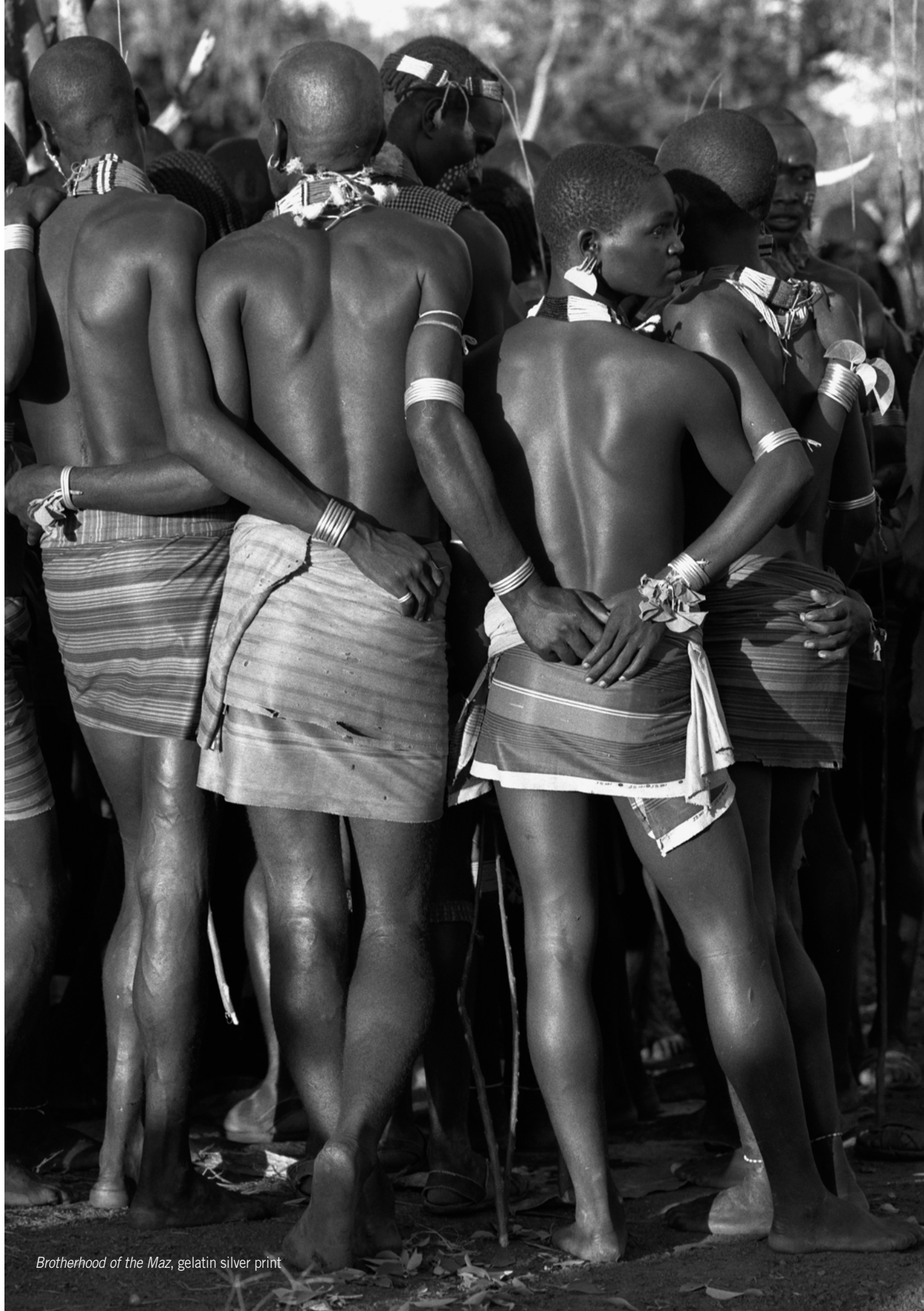
Yao Dancers of Malawi,
gelatin silver print.
All images ©Elizabeth Gilbert,
courtesy of the artist

HISTORIES *in* AFRICA:

20 YEARS *of* PHOTOGRAPHY *by* ELIZABETH GILBERT

On view 09.13.12-12.30.12 at THE CUMMER MUSEUM *of* ART & GARDENS

www.cummer.org



Brotherhood of the Maz, gelatin silver print

*HISTORIES IN AFRICA:
20 Years of Photography by Elizabeth Gilbert*

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AMERICAN PHOTOJOURNALIST, Elizabeth Gilbert, has lived and worked in Africa since 1991, traveling from Kenya to the Congo, throughout the Great Rift Valley, and reporting on civil wars in Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan. She is the author of two photographic books on vanishing African culture: *Broken Spears* and *Tribes of the Great Rift Valley*. Her glorious black-and-white photography, accompanied by her thoughtful, engaging text, offers sweeping views of a magnificent and sometimes harsh landscape and its peoples. Thought-provoking and remarkable, her work is a time capsule, perhaps even the last record, of age-old traditions and a way of life that will almost certainly soon vanish from our planet.

Histories in Africa: 20 Years of Photography by Elizabeth Gilbert, at The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens in Jacksonville, presents a mid-life retrospective as diverse as Africa itself, depicting a traditional world seemingly suspended in time, as well as its modern urban parallel. The gelatin silver prints on exhibit pull the viewer into an intimate world of African ritual and tell the story of a continent's journey through change.

When Gilbert first came into contact with the Maasai, over ten years ago, their images were everywhere in Africa. Pictures of warriors were printed on postcards, T-shirts, safari advertisements and hotel logos—but in reality, their traditional life was disappearing. So Gilbert set out on a four-year journey to photograph what was left of traditional Maasailand.

Her book, *Broken Spears: A Maasai Journey*, is the stun-



Samburu Initiate Wearing Trophy Birds, gelatin silver print

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Right:
Holding the Bull,
gelatin silver print

Opposite:
Sekenani Warrior, 1998,
gelatin silver print,
edition of 20, 20 x 24"



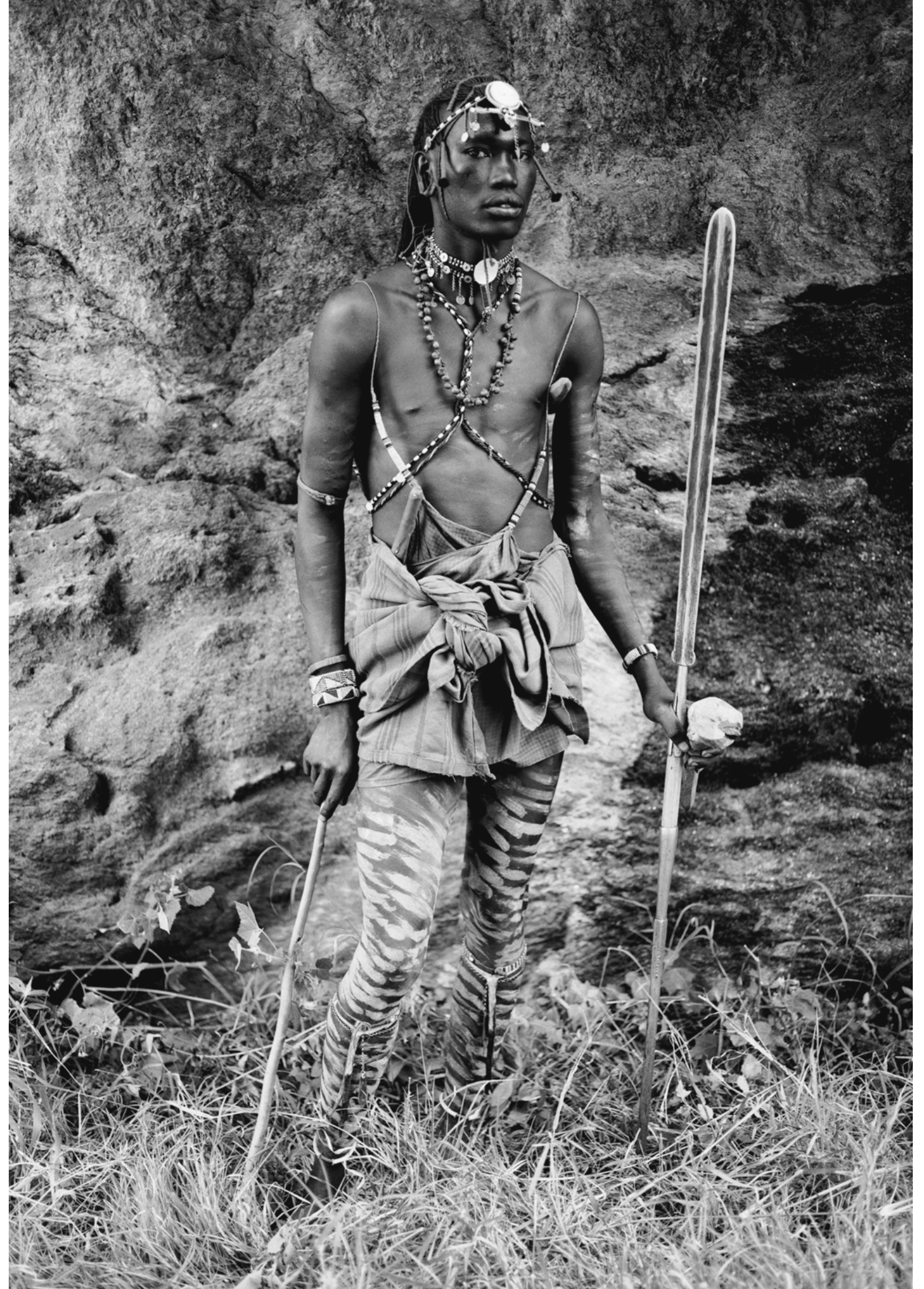
Above:
Leaping Warriors, gelatin silver print,
edition of 20, 16 x 20"

ning result of this remarkable journey. Over 120 images capture the rituals, secret ceremonies and landscapes of the Maasai, documenting the life of this extraordinary tribe.

Gilbert's intimate relationship with the Maasai allowed her to photograph centuries-old Maasai ceremonies, including male and female circumcisions, weddings and perhaps the most dangerous of all Maasai rituals—a lion hunt. A moving photographic journey into the vanishing culture of the Maasai warriors of Kenya and Tanzania, *Broken Spears* is a haunting testament to a rapidly dis-

appearing way of life.

Gilbert's second book, *Tribes of the Great Rift Valley*, is a celebration of the traditional peoples who occupy the lands of the Great Rift Valley, from the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Eritrea, across the Ethiopian highlands, and down to the great lakes and plains of Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi. Here are the proud, majestic warriors of the Maasai and Samburu, the Mursi with their jutting lip-plates, the guinea-fowl-painted faces of the Karo, the bull jumpers of the Hamar, and the honey seekers of the forests, the Batwa, among many other





tribes. Sadly, nearly all of these communities face extinction in the near future due to Western influence.

“The loss of African tradition in the last century and the change I witnessed during my own travels slowly redefined my role as a photographer,” said Gilbert. “I no longer saw

bert’s work: “Across Kenya and Tanzania, from Serengeti to Kilimanjaro and beyond, Elizabeth Gilbert has heroically and artistically photographed the last moments of tribal Africa with the Maasai, those herdsmen, lion hunters, warriors and aristocrats of the bush. The pages of this book are already history

“The loss of African tradition in the last century and the change I witnessed during my own travels slowly redefined my role as a photographer.” —E. GILBERT

myself as an invisible recorder, but as a collaborator with the people whom I photographed. I was a stranger, yet they had allowed me to document their most private rituals and ceremonies. This permission in itself was their own acknowledgment that a way of life was disappearing. Influenced by this, I began to create a more idealized portrayal of what I believed was a vanishing world.”

Peter Beard, author of *The End of the Game*, said of Gil-

bert in a compromised, ravaged, denatured content. Luckily, Gilbert has photographed what is left—everything that is authentic and valuable in Africa.”

Gilbert’s pictures have appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Men’s Journal*, *Life* and *The New York Times*, as well as numerous major European publications. Her photographs of the Maasai have been awarded prizes for portrait and reportage by the Society of Publication Designers. **ON VIEW**



Above: Elizabeth Gilbert,
courtesy of the artist