

SORY SANLÉ: THE PHOTOGRAPHER THAT TIME FORGOT

Words by Bryony Stone, Tuesday 29 August 2017

Time has not been kind to Sory Sanlé, a photographer whose name has been buried beneath the dusts of time — until now.

Sory Sanlé -Volta Photo 1965-1985 is new book due for publication by Reel Art Press this September and launched in tandem with Sory's first international solo show at London's Morton Hill Gallery which opens later this month. The exhibition lifts Sory Sanlé's work from private collections to turn an eye on his career over a two decade-long period.

Hailing from West Africa's Burkina Faso (which at the time was known as Republique de Haute-Volta), Sory's black and white images tell the tale of a country's residents embracing their new found independence with open arms.

Born in 1943, Sory started out as the apprentice to a Ghanaian photographer. It was here that he learned to process and print photographs. In 1960, the year Burkina Faso took back independence from the French, the young photographer opened a studio of his own in Bobo-Dioulasso named Volta Photo, where he shot the city's unfailingly stylish residents.

The book and exhibition are the work of French archivist, record producer and author Florent Mazzoleni who decided to "[preserve the] great wealth of culture that was produced". Florent said of Sory that he was "a democratic photographer in a good sense. Rich people, poor people, religious people, artists, musicians, everyone could become a hero at his Volta studio."

The exhibition Sory Sanlé: Volta Photo 1965-85 is due to run at Morton Hill Gallery in Ladbroke Grove 14 September — 27 October 2017