

EYES ON: SORY SANLÉ

THE MORTON HILL GALLERY PRESENTS VOLTA PHOTO 1965-85.

Born in the Nianiagara district of Bobo-Dioulasso in 1943, Sory Sanlé began shooting in the 60s as the apprentice of a Ghanaian photographer who taught him to process and print. Travelling around the city with his Rolleiflex camera and motorbike, he documented the area's evolving social and cultural landscape: and now he's getting a solo show in west London's Ladbroke Grove.

Formerly working as a freelance reporter and record sleeve illustrator, Sanlé's real passion was in the studio. In 1960, the same year the country became independent from French colonial rule, he opened his own: Volta Photo. Across the next 20 years he would go on to produce a rich and insightful collection of black and white portraits – not unlike Malick Sidibé and Seydou Keita, both whom his images are frequently held up against.

Interested in Burkina Faso's age-old traditions as well as the popular culture explosion, Sanlé captured the nation's transformation from colonial foothold to cosmopolitan oasis. A "democratic photographer" – the words of his archivist, Florent Mazzolini, the photographer's lens sought "rich people, poor people, religious people, artists, musicians, everyone could become a hero at his Volta studio".

Already tapped by The Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Paris – for summer's AutoPhoto exhibition, where his work was presented alongside photos by Man Ray, Lee Freidlander and Daido Moriyama – the Ladbroke Grove show, held at Morton Hill Gallery from 14th September, arrives in tandem with a new book of the same name, Sory Sanlé: Volta Photo 1965 – 1985. We suggest discovering both.

Words Clara Hernanz