



TIME HAS GONE

"Time Has Gone", the 9th edition of LagosPhoto Festival, explores the configurations by which the past, the present and the future interact within the photographic medium. Time will be approached from different angles, highlighting matters of momentum, documentation and preservation, taking into consideration the intimacy of stories as well as the breadth of the concept itself.

LagosPhoto has invited four curators to investigate the diversity that time encompasses: Eva Barois De Caevel, Wunika Mukan, Charlotte Langhorst and Valentine Umansky. Their curatorial discourse unearths the non-linearity of time and the complexity of our experience to memory. The team chose to embrace polyphony as a way to bring out the subject's intricacies, which are well reflected in the four curatorial texts. Each year LagosPhoto Festival hosts a variety of workshops, panel discussions, artist talks and portfolio reviews.

CURATORIAL STATEMENTS

It seems that « Time has Gone » is a title for many arcane songs by obscure bands. One of them – « My Time has Gone » – by the prettily named Pussywarmers is a sad meditation on the dashed hopes of childhood and teenage years, at some point all the more threatened that there's not much time before « I'll pass away ».

This randomly picked up song nicely summarizes what « Time has Gone » sounds to me, from its nihilist flavor to its bitter-sweet positivity (the end — or the ruin — of the world or the end of what we wanted to end ; like when we discussed how this festival could or should reflect on the Hollywoodian « Time's Up » movement against sexual harassment). « Time has Gone » sounds like the too expected title of too many expected songs. But there is also something universal in it that makes me love it as the title of an exhibition.

If time and photography are so obviously related, let's explore this relation again and further: materially, conceptually, and — this will be the most important thing to me — in a way of building a show together that fits with our ethics: working to put an end to what we don't want and to keep alive what we wish will never disappear. Time has gone.



Time is fluid and for each of us it passes at different paces and rhythms. Once in a while the stream seems to freeze and at other times, we bemoan that a particular fragment of time that we had wished to keep within our grasp is now in the past. Every now and then we also yearn for the ability to accelerate the present or perhaps a future that we fear. Time however is not a continuum that evolves in synchronisation with space.

Without warning a memory or glimpse of what could happen, embraces us dearly, haunts us unexpectedly, overbears us and at times compels us to overcome time in order to move on. One permanently experiences formations of layers of temporality in which scenes from the past fuse with the current moment, and a time that has been absent from our psyche for decades can astonishingly feel more present and real than the now.

I guess, we all live in temporary realities in which the relation of the past to the present is not at all purely temporal but determines our inner conditions and our perspective on the world. Photography has the unique quality of visualising this beautiful abstraction of time and the inherent ambiguity between a collective and a very intrinsic dimension of the past. What I have always loved about visual art is the polyphony that emerges from the sudden illumination of an image: For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent. (Walter Benjamin, *Awakening, Arcades Project*, 462, N2a, 3)

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"Cette brume insensée où s'agitent des ombres, comment pourrais-je l'éclaircir ?" This is how French author Georges Perec, quoting his fellow poet Raymond Queneau, describes the past, in the epigraph of his novel *W ou le Souvenir d'enfance*. Unusual in its construction, the book intertwines fiction and non-fiction with both narratives told in the first person, confusing past and present. Interestingly, the main character, Gaspard, while confessing an irremediable forgetfulness—he has no recollections of his childhood—expresses a comfort in his lack of "history." No clouds in his sky, I presume.

I have come to read Gaspard as Queneau's and Perec's nemesis of sorts. Nodding at the writers, this year's LagosPhoto took the stand of looking at the past in the eyes. Affirming that time has gone, we acknowledge. Our statement says: there was and we know it.

Yet we fear the tendency to bask (or drown) in the pool of shadows. Instead, we decided to



ponder on distance. Using the past perfect, “time has gone” opens a tiny window. Aware of what was, we voluntarily highlight the space that lies between the then and the now. Isn’t it, after all, the exact space in which photography lies, fixing in the present something that is already gone...

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I consider time as a fixed factor in human civilization. If anything, it is humans that are variable, coming and going over several millennia. Our lives are like intermittent points on a fixed line. The fact of our mortality, and perhaps the speed of modern life, makes it possible for us to consider the urgent nature of our existence. For me, to articulate the idea of passing time in relation to an exhibition, and to artistic output in general is to consider what’s momentous, and therefore urgent. How do works of art illuminate, perhaps sublimate, the urgency of time?

In addition, if artists express the urgent, do they do so because they realize that they must seize on an opportunity, once and for all? This might be especially so for artists who work in relation to life lived on the margins and in wretched conditions. It is promising to think about art that is mindful of the portentous.

There is an additional way to consider the passage of time: Photography is a record of time-past, or evidence of a fragment of a time that is past. But it also has the capacity, through artistic conceit, to create the blueprint of an imagined world. The simplest way to say this would be that “photography freezes time.” A more complex articulation would be that in photography, although time has gone, it has also been passed on for present and future use. Because of this photography can make an utopic idea of the world a norm.

Eva Barois De Caebel, Charlotte Langhorst, Wunika Mukan, Valentine Umansky



CURATORS

Eva Barois De Caevel

Eva Barois De Caevel is assistant curator at Raw Material Company, Dakar, and works as an independent curator. Eva graduated from the Université de Paris-Sorbonne Paris IV in Contemporary Art History in 2011 and in Curatorial Training in 2012, with her research focusing primarily on moving images. She has been working concurrently on academic research as well as on postcolonial questions and socially engaged practices in contemporary art, and on their interaction: how socially engaged practices in contemporary art can become think tanks on postcolonial issues. She is co-founder of Cartel de Kunst, an international collective and solidarity network of emerging curators based in Paris.

Charlotte Langhorst

Charlotte Langhorst, PhD, is Assistant Director of the African Artists' Foundation in Lagos/Nigeria, a non-profit organisation that promotes contemporary artists in Africa and also serves as an academic hub within the region. She is one of the curators at large of LagosPhoto Festival 2018. Whilst being based in West Africa for more than six years, she held the position of a research assistant at the University of Ghana, worked as a visiting lecturer at the Heliopolis University for Sustainable Development in Cairo, Egypt and as an affiliated researcher at the University of Lagos, Nigeria



Wunika Mukan

Wunika Mukan is a cultural producer, working passionately with interdisciplinary artists and creatives, organizations and thought leaders across genres to curate meaningful productions and sustainable initiatives that build strong communities.

Founder and director of the Women's Film Club. She also served as Brand Director at the African Artists' Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting contemporary African art. Wunika has had extensive experience in media and consulting with positions in arts and culture throughout Nigeria, including the Nigeria Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale, Miss Nigeria Competition, television production. Wunika graduated from Howard University.

Valentine Umansky

As an independent curator, author and critic, Valentine Umansky has worked for various institutions dedicated to visual arts. After years collaborating with the Rencontres d'Arles festival amongst others, she left France for the U.S., where she has been based since 2015. That same year, she published *Duane Michals, Storyteller* with Filigranes Ed.. She wrote for and about the following artists: Kader Attia; Mike Brodie; Frédéric Nauczyciel; Oumar Ly; Dimitri Fagbohoun; Sylvie Blocher; Laurent Fiévet or Sory Sanlé, and translated *Pierres* by Roger Caillois for DittoDitto Ed. in Detroit. She is currently working on a second book dedicated to vocal practices in contemporary art and to the Power of Speech. In 2018, she is invited as a Guest Curator at Labanque, Béthune, France, and Curator-in-Residency at the African Artists Foundation in Lagos, Nigeria.