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Richard Hay Jr.
Resounding with Echoes
Sojourns across Africa and America

Texts by Richard Hay Jr., Emmanuel Iduma

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The social landscape of everyday life across Africa and America

Through a nuanced interplay of black-and-white and color photography, Richard Hay Jr. traces quiet correspondences between West Africa and the Americas, offering a lyrical meditation on everyday life across geography and time. Refusing dominant visual tropes of poverty, conflict, or exoticism, Hay approaches his subjects with a distinctly artistic lens, lyrically rendering shared human experiences shaped by local and global material cultures. The photographs, taken during the 1970s, are often contextually ambiguous. Streets, interiors, landscapes, and fleeting encounters resist fixed narratives, instead opening a contemplative space in which affinities and differences between cultures emerge organically. An ocean apart and decades removed, these places appear intrinsically linked through rhythm, repetition, and lived experience.

West Africa and the Americas have been historically entwined since the seventeenth century, when millions of enslaved Africans were forcibly transported to the so-called »New World«. By the mid-twentieth century, newly independent African nations were once again connected to the Americas through cultural, social, and economic exchange. Hay's images inhabit this charged historical terrain obliquely, attending not to grand narratives, but to the textures of daily life shaped by the deep, often unspoken histories.

Hay first traveled to West Africa after working within his university's African Studies program. He journeyed from the coastal rainforests through vast interior regions to Kano, Nigeria, the ancient Islamic city at the edge of the Sahara. Carrying a used Leica, a limited supply of film, and a backpack, he photographed with the same openness and mobility that had previously shaped

his road trips across the United States and Mexico. Influenced strongly by the New Topographics movement of the 1970s, known for its objective, detached documentation of the modern, human-altered landscape, Hay explores the social scenery of everyday life on both continents as a site of quiet revelation. Framed by an essay by renowned Nigerian author Emmanuel Iduma, the images are situated within a broader reflective context, collapsing temporal distance and encouraging reflection on continuity, transformation, and impermanence.

Resounding with Echoes invites slow looking and proposes photography as a means of attentive witnessing—one that honors the ordinary while acknowledging the layered histories embedded within it.

The present becomes the past—in the subsecond click of a camera's shutter, in the arc of a lifetime or in centuries of historical legacy. The echoes in these photographs resound even today—moving backward and forward in time.—Richard Hay Jr.

Richard Hay Jr. lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area. He studied photography at Northwestern University, where he earned a PhD in Sociology. His work has been exhibited extensively in places such as the Los Angeles Center of Photography and the Center for Photographic Art in Carmel.

Emmanuel Iduma is a Nigerian writer and art critic. He is the author of *I Am Still With You* (2023) and *A Stranger's Pose* (2018), and co-founder of Tender Photos, a digital platform dedicated to African photography.

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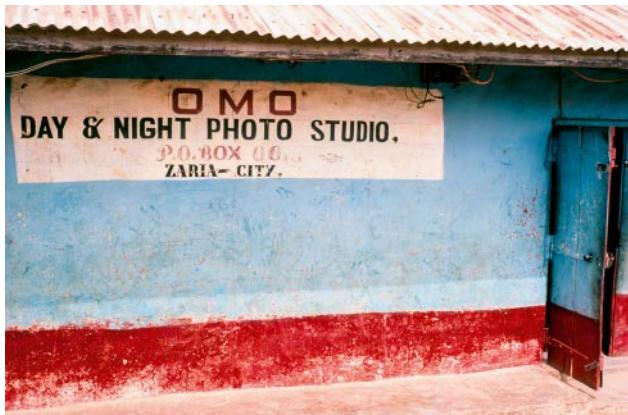
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