

OUMAR LY

Oumar Ly's archives — counting more than 5,000 photographs — are an anthropological treasure of daily life in Senegal, presenting an unaltered look at the women, men and children who, over 50 years, have visited his little studio in Podor, the country's northernmost city. On Feb. 29, 2016, however, the studio's doors remained closed. Ly, aged 73, has died.

"[Ly] leaves behind a large family and unique photographic archives," friend and curator Frédérique Chapuis says in a statement. "[In them] we discover a small world populated with faces of children and adults who posed for him as early as 1963, in front of painted canvases representing a Boeing 747, a mosque, a luxurious landscape. We also find thousands of snaps shot in the surrounding villages with, for unique background, a loin cloth, the door of a city official's 2CV or simply the pale sky burnt by the heat."

"These magnificent and moving portraits will forever retain Podor's memory," she adds.

Ly was born in Podor around 1943, and began to take pictures while in his teens. He opened his own studio in 1963 and benefited from his country's recent independence, working with the government as new identity cards were issued — each with a portrait photograph. Gaining popularity in and around Podor, he quickly started offering group portrait sessions, which came to define his work beyond Senegal's borders.

Significant Exhibitions

Galerie du Manège, Dakar, Senegal (2009)

Hôtel de Sauroy, Paris, France (2009)

Musée Africain, Lyon, France (2010)

Oumar Ly retrospective, Rencontres de la Photographie de Bamako, Mali (2011)

Monograph exhibition, Brighton Photography Festival, UK (2011)

Tribute to Oumar Ly, Saint Louis and Podor, Senegal (2011)

Galerie Filles du Calvaire, Paris Photo, Paris, France (2011)

Comptoir Général, Paris, France (2013)

Festival La Gacilly, Brittany, France (2017)

Bibliography

Portraits de Brousse, 2009, Filigranes Editions, by Frédérique Chapuis