

PRESS RELEASE

Sweet Like Honey

Kigali Center for Photography Showcases the Creativity of a
Historically Marginalized Community



Photographer: Angélique Nyiramahirwe

Last week the exhibition *Biryoshye nk'Ubuki* or *Sweet Like Honey*, opened at the Kigali Center for Photography. It features photographs by twelve young, historically marginalized people, formerly known as Batwa. They come from Nyabageni – a remote village an hour's drive away from Musanze on unsurfaced roads. Their photographs tell stories of the past, present and future, their challenges today, their love and joy. They form a portrait of a community committed to today's Rwanda and full of ideas for the future.

Each photographer has chosen their own topic: young love, learning to farm, memories of the forest, the pace of change. The images show the dynamism and creativity of their community – a community which doesn't often have a chance to tell their stories to outsiders. We see women farming, teenage couples negotiating the future, kids playing in water their parents have told them to avoid, young people proud of their educational qualifications.

One of the photographer-participants, Nduwayezu Daniel, commented: “My marginalized community, we shouldn't underestimate ourselves, we are capable of different things just like other Rwandans. We say in Kinyarwanda ‘ushaka inka aryamankayo’. If you want something, you really have to work for it.” But the work also speaks to the challenges of life today. Of infrastructure that still needs improving, of families still in poverty who are struggling not to be left behind.

The beautiful photographs on display were produced by the young people from Nyabageni during a four-day workshop at Corner Gallery in Musanze. The project was organised by Kigali Center for Photography, HMP rights organisation AIMPO and King's College London, with funding from the UK's AHRC. The participants learnt about visual storytelling and what makes a compelling image. They worked with digital cameras on their own unique projects.

Director of the Kigali Center for Photography Jacques Nkinzingabo, who taught the young people, observed: “These participants exceeded my expectations. Their dreams for the future are far bigger than what other people imagine for them. You won't believe their images. They're so talented. There aren't currently any photographers with this background in the country. My vision is to see some of these participants come into the industry as professional photographers.”

Richard Ntakirutimana, Director of AIMPO, commented: “These young people have so much to show audiences here in Kigali. They are looking to change people's minds about their perceptions towards the Batwa. We are citizens like others, we deserve opportunities like other Rwandans. We want to participate in the national conversation and this will be considered as one of the parameters of the true national unity. As you can see they achieved so much in a short time. The challenge now is what next? How can we support them to develop their skills? How can we build the infrastructure to enable this community, and other communities like it, to flourish in today's Rwanda?”

Photographer-participant Augustin Murwamashyaka stresses this need for ongoing work. He says: “We go train elsewhere. But we live in a poor area with no facilities. We end up forgetting our skills because we can't practice. Everything goes hand in hand. You can't just have skills, you need to be able to apply them.”

Another photographer-participant Umuhoza Piyorine, whose project is on childhood nutrition, concludes: “As young people from a marginalized community we are living through a time of changes. Our responsibility is to participate in changes for the good.”



Photographer: Sharine Nyarabarimenshi

KEY INFORMATION

The exhibition *Biryoshye nk'Ubuki (Sweet Like Honey)* is open now at the Kigali Center for Photography in Kimihurura, KG 676St. Opening hours: every day 9-6 or by appointment.

For enquiries please contact:

- Jacques Nkinzingabo, Kigali Center for Photography – jackyakubuu@gmail.com
- Richard Ntakirutimana, AIMPO – richardntakirutimana41@yahoo.com
- Zoe Norridge, King's College London – zoe.norridge@kcl.ac.uk

The workshop and an earlier exhibition of work were held at the Northern Creative Corner, a gallery initiative in Musanze by Image Rwanda. The project has been funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council of the UK as part of a network exploring the temporal parameters of humanitarian intervention. The convening team for the workshop included Renée Akitelek Mboya (Filmmaker, Curator), Jacques Nkinzingabo (KCP), Richard Ntakirutimana (AIMPO) and Zoe Norridge (King's College London). Participating photographers are: Nduwayezu Daniel, Mukaperefe Chastlla, Nyirabarimenshi Sharine, Nyiramahirwe Angélique, Muhawenimana Béatrice, Fidèle Manishimwe, Kazungu Pascal, Nyirambabazi Jakelina, Seruhungu Dieudonné, Umuhoza Piyorine, Samson Eric, and Augustin Murwamashyaka.