

RICKY  
LAVERN  
MARTIN

RICKY LAVERN MARTIN  
my eyes are burning

EXHIBITION SHOW FROM JUNE 16<sup>th</sup> → AUGUST 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023

GALLERY KENT

This catalog is published as part of Ricky Lavern Martin's solo exhibition at the Kent Gallery.



19, rue Jabha Al Watanya, Tangier  
(Next the hotel Rembrandt)  
gallerykent19@gmail.com  
Tél: +212 (0)6 60 72 40 55

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Photographs / **Ricky Lavern Martin**  
Contributions / **Kristi Jones, Ricardo Martin,**  
**Ricky Lavern Martin**  
Editorial direction / **Kenza Amrouk & Aziza Laraki**  
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« I am sensitive to the people and things that surround me, I am viscerally attracted by their energy. I like to photograph the difference: a magical moment that for me sets the authenticity.» **R.L. Martin**





Cafe worker \_ Sidi Yayha, Morocco. 2022

[...] Ricky Lavern Martin uses color in his photographic work and focuses his research on precise framing, a particular quality of light and selected atmospheres that help him to freeze critical moments.

Images of streets and popular districts—taken in Morocco, Georgia, India, the United States, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia and Senegal—hold within them the idea of universal human qualities and values. [...]

**Kenza Amrouk**  
**CasPar - Morfra**  
**Curator & set design of the exhibition**



Do you believe in people? The lights' are doused over the pool. People tell us how not to feel. This little frame mustn't close us in. Confusion doubles. If I had my way, eyes wouldn't shut. The card table is drenched. You'd like a glass lid to fit over the carousel.

You've asked me four times to tell you if I had any secrets. Do you have any? I wanted to open up, but it is such a pristine set-up, the trees sparkling with colored lights. Fantasy is swift luring us from the television countering everything we have learned. Laughter causes pain.

I tell myself things late at night.  
I must remember that today it  
rained. **R.L Martin**



**Chair** \_ Saly, Senegal. 2019





Bat Boy \_ Dhaka, Bangladesh. 2018



**B**orderless poet, explorer, seeker of truth, dancer, teacher, aesthete, barfly, friend. Photographer. Though he picked up his first camera only five years ago or so, Ricky Lavern Martin has always been an image-maker. Mental images and cartographies of corners of the world, people, animals. Once he told me of a trip he had planned (Atlanta? Tbilisi? One Georgia or the other), and I asked if he had any friends there. He turned to me with wide eyes and said “Well not yet!”, surprised that I hadn’t yet understood the meaning of it all.

Every place is equal to another in the sense that something might happen at any one moment, by the simple fact that the photographer is there. The space of one frame, one second, or a series of moments, boys on the beach, horses in the sea, snails climbing a fence, glorious goats. His camera is a tool of empathy, a stethoscope, kaleidoscope, periscope, moving in and out, above and below, full frontal or discreet, he enters the dance. The resulting images are at turns witty, violent, delicate, waggish, surreal. The insatiable curiosity he reserves for his subjects in turn elicits an emotional response from the viewer. We are in it, seeking the peculiar, eager to read the story revealed in the details of the image.

Over the brief span of his photographic career, Ricky Lavern Martin has developed the technical skill to build composition into every image, in that split-second of the frame. The viewer’s eye roves around the image, noticing detail, color, texture, ironies and gestures; ultimately entering the artist’s skin by the skill of his intervention, feeling the moment as we imagine he did. In and out, he cleverly pulls meaning from uninhibited encounters, and pushes us toward the image and the action held within it.

Each image is complex, and juxtaposed they are strange, haunting, delicious. The work of an artist who is unconcerned by definition of any kind, a poet who needs only a change of clothes and his camera, an old soul with the heart of a child. To experience these photographs is to feel the underlying meaning of it all: Martin’s own brand of human empathy.

**entering the dance**  
**by Kristi Jones**  
**Seattle - United States**



Hand with Nails \_ Cairo, Egypt. 2020



Horse Mane \_ Oujda, Morocco. 2021



Roots \_ Jaipur, India. 2019



**Beach Boys Dreaming** \_ Essaouira, Morocco. 2019



**Broken Watermelons** \_ Kulasi, Georgia. 2021

**Taxi Connection** \_ Akhaltsikhe, Georgia. 2021



**Girl in water** \_ Diyarbakir, Turkey. 2021



**Sleeping Dog** \_ Varnassi, India. 2019



Animal Market \_ Cairo, Egypt. 2020



Bird Wisher \_ Saly, Senegal. 2019

**A**biertas al asombro, como poemas gráficos, las fotografías de Ricky Lavern responden a una necesidad interior, un poderoso estímulo creativo para fijar momentos y perpetuar lo que reclama su capacidad de sorpresa.

Desde que de niño salía con su bici a buscar tesoros por su barrio de Flint, en Michigan, Ricky no ha parado de viajar por el mundo como observador atento y minucioso, oteando el horizonte de lejanos países, primero sin cámara porque “no quería que nada se interpusiera entre la experiencia vivida y yo mismo”. Y fue solo hace hace cuatro años, lleno de vivencias, cuando el viaje y la foto se juntaron en él de un modo indeleble. El rotundo despertar al uso de la cámara cambió su vida como una revelación, “como una experiencia religiosa”. De modo que la fotografía se convirtió en su refugio íntimo, y personas y extraños lugares en alimento de su mirada inquieta.

Como gran fotógrafo, Ricky elige estar en sus fotos inadvertido y presente a la vez. Mantiene una relación participativa sin forzar las escenas. Deja estar sin manipular, no pretende ocultarse. Pero tampoco invade el territorio de los demás. Crea entornos de respetuosa influencia entre él y sus personajes.

Afirma que sus fotografías lo despiertan como una gran sacudida. “Es crucial no saber qué va a pasar, no planear nada ante lo que se cruza en mi camino”. Así, vive el momento, no como memoria documental, sino como un presente sin datos. “Mi memoria no es nada más que mis fotos”. Instantes vividos que no intenta testimoniar como historia periodística. “Si no hubiera sacado esa foto esa escena no habría tenido lugar. No tengo complejo, no me oculto para no ser visto. La foto es la que da alas a la escena.” Se trata de vivir el presente con plenitud. “Mis fotos son escenas dentro de un cuadro que no necesita un pie informativo”.

De espíritu libre, es el registro de la experiencia lo que le interesa. Artista sin doctrina, también libre de prejuicios y etiquetas, su herramienta consiste en una cámara pequeña de un solo objetivo y su método es espontáneo pero también reflexivo y certero. Atrevidas composiciones, disparos que son chispas cargadas de inspiración, el ritmo interno de sus imágenes cercanas y amistosas nos produce a la vez inquietud y perturbación.

Con su juego de formas, Ricky es un creador de belleza desde la más pura realidad cotidiana, de lo común y corriente. Sabe que en el arte verdadero, de cualquier motivo, incluso aunque la convención decreta su fealdad, se puede extraer hermosura. Por eso estremece la majestad y misteriosa presencia de sus cuadros, y debe ser el propio espectador, y no él, quien desvele su poderoso enigma. La mirada de Ricky nos interpela con su pura ironía, también con su humor, una mezcla de placer y dolor. Su mundo es una realidad diversa y rara, desolada y tierna. Instantáneas que son invitaciones a hacernos preguntas, conmovedoras en su grito y su silencio.







Temple Goat \_ Udaipur, India. 2019



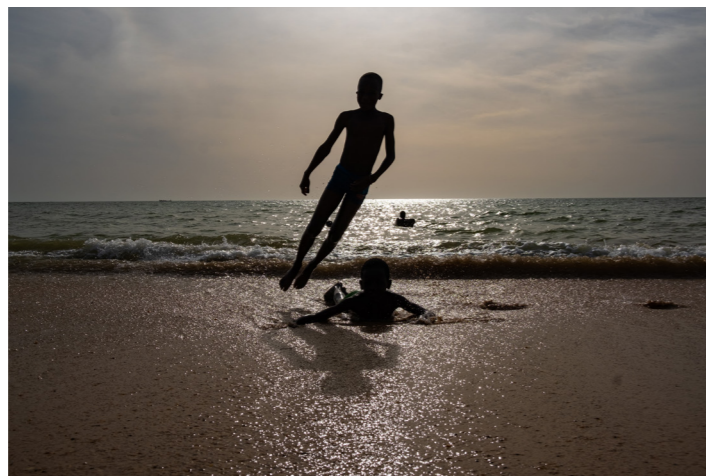
Late Night Playground \_ Mumbai, India. 2019



Man in Jelaba \_ Azemour, Morocco. 2019



Woman and goat \_ Mumbai, India. 2019



We have so much to tell ourselves. There's a supplement to every thought, your weary head with its ties to the world coming out in the whitewash, though we have ceased to believe beyond dreamless childhood.

No one polices these thoughts, instead like weeds they play in the wind tasting the confusion gathered around them. Memory gently wears away its impulse in whatever parallel world it's inhabiting. Someone is always digging, damming, twisting.

Nameless men and women who wrench open their roofs.  
Children cry out with self-knowledge stuck between their rotating eyes. **R.L.Martin**





Figure throwing sand \_ Saly, Senegal. 2019



Self-portrait - Reflection in Pet Store window  
Bali, Indonesia. 2018

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