
POSTCARDS FROM LAGOS

OZOS SOKOH

Lagos, 2015

CURATOR'S STATEMENT.

Lagos, like every other major city around the world, has been photographed a lot. Too much, some might even argue. So it's easy to think that there's nothing new to see.

Still, there is something about this city with its yellow buses and taxis, open markets, bridges, waterscapes, and general chaos that begs to be captured. To be remembered. To be talked about. Savoured. Enjoyed. The city yearns to be stripped of its hardcore exterior and have its soul bared. To be fallen in love with. This is what Ozoz's photography does.

Showing a side to this city that is not often recognized; a beauty in stillness, Ozoz's work makes the viewer want to take a trip to the city that they most likely already live in or have visited. It's the same landmarks that you probably see everyday, pass by without a second glance, but for some reason, right now, they hold your attention. There's a beauty there that has been ignored for much too long.

Postcards From Lagos is a collection of images that celebrates the everyday beauty of this city that millions call home, in the hopes that you will find a love for it that would ordinarily seem impossible, and with each image, you fall in love all over again.

Enjoy.

- *Anna Kovie Parker.*

ARTIST'S BIO.

Ozoz Sokoh is an exploration geologist, food writer and photographer. Born and bred in Warri and currently living in the city of Lagos, her photography reflects her curiosity—fuelled exploration of the city—and landscapes and sometimes the juxtapositions that result.

Her interest in photography began as a child, progressing to film and Polaroid in the late 90s/early 2000s. Polaroids are one of the reasons she loves Instagram, the other is the interaction of user and photographer. The act of having people share their perspectives on colours, shape, form the photographer may not have seen is a beautiful place to forge friendships, share beauty and grow. This is the photographer's inspiration.

Postcards From Lagos is her first exhibition.



ARTIST'S STATEMENT.

The photos in this collection are my notes of Lagos, my memories, many made with my mobile phone. Some sitting in the back of a speeding car because I'm worst front seat passenger ever—story for another day; some walking, all watching, wondering, exploring this city that I now call home. I keep this visual record for many reasons—one, for a 'side rear view mirror' look on the city I once knew as child and as an undergrad; and two, looking ahead, moving forward but freezing in time, space, scenes and 'scapes the beauty the city amidst the chaos and the struggles, the pain and the confusion that sometimes threatens to suffocate beauty...but can't. these photos are my peace and joy, my streak of golden sun and silver lining on every clod that threatens to storm.

If I had to choose one thing I love photographing, it would be the bridges, especially the Lekki-Ikoyi bridge. I'm quite overwhelmed by the fact that the bridges are never about themselves only. They are about beauty and form, and function. I love the way they curve, arch, bend to make connections. I like the fact that communities thrive under the bridge, the way the columns that hold them up also give their bases to the fishermen who 'bank' there. I also have an affinity for the architecture of this place—from Brazillian designs which make me wonder about those who came back home when the slave trade ended, how they found courage and hope to go on, to the others, monuments by which Lagos was formerly known, landmarks by which junctions and streets were described decades ago.

- *Ozoz Sokoh.*

POSTCARDS FROM MY FATHER'S COLLECTION.



POSTCARDS FROM LAGOS...

My fascination with Lagos stems from three postcards saved from an old photo album my father had. When he died only a month after I moved back home in 2001, I held on to some things. The postcards showed a beautiful Lagos, a sane one. It was a quieter, stiller city, full of colour but not with the mad chaos we experience now, here, every day.

When I began coming here with frequency in March 2014, for work, I saw a city that was different from the one I'd visited as a child, as a rebellious teenager and as an opinionated undergrad.

I was fascinated. The postcards and what I remembered made and still make me search for anchors and the soul of this city. That make me celebrate it, admire it, and want to share its beauty.

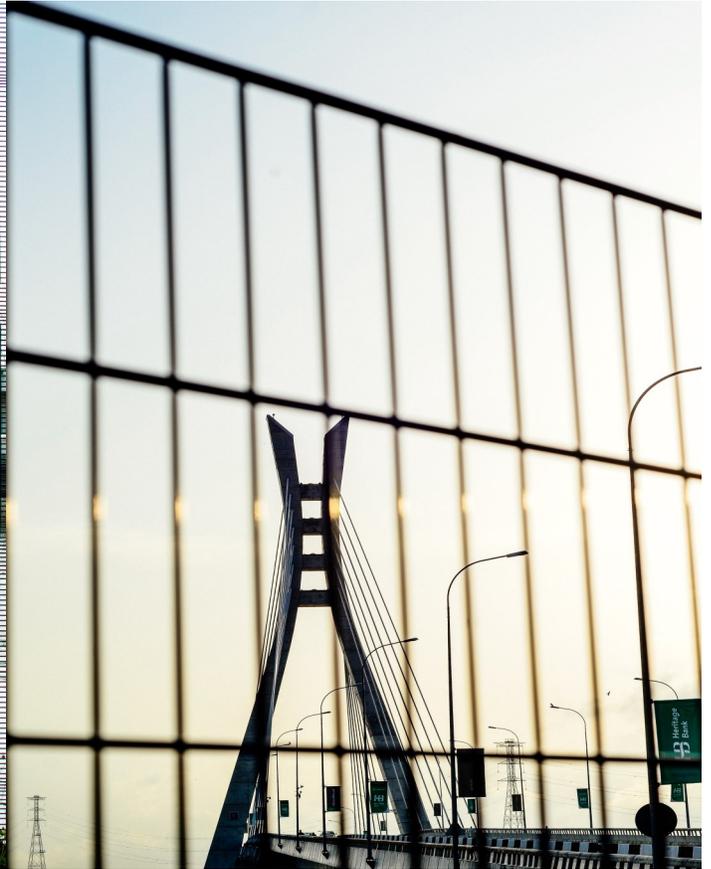
I do that, almost as a tribute to my father who must have known that one day I would find myself here, wondering, seeking, longing.

It's these postcards that fuel this obsession with the city, with urban stills and silhouettes of monuments, with streetscapes and with the Lekki-Ikoyi bridge.

Peace & Love.



Fenced Off.



Peeking Through the Fence.

Fenced off

I see you

Standing tall

Standing proud

I see you

And your reflection

Dark and brooding

I'm standing on the banks

Watching

Waiting

Longing for the green grass

And your blue skies

Longing for yesterday

Longing for tomorrow



Majestic

Majestic

Sometimes, it sets you free

Brings you hope

This remembrance

The memories of all that was good and beautiful

Heroic even

The constants, the unfailing, the steady, the faithful, the kind, the loving

Never mind about all the other things that didn't work

That let you down spectacularly

And all the ways in which you too let yourself down

Never mind about those

Not right away anyway.

Not here

Not now

Not in this moment



Juxtaposition _ Wild Blooms and Towers.

Juxtapositions _ Wild Blooms and Towers

Mornings

Sometimes hard

Sometimes light

I wish I could be deliberate

Every single day about how I greet my mornings

Determine to do it right for morning is the gateway to the day

To smile even with the nightmares past

To put a one-coil spring in my step

To have good food 'op de tafel' - throwback to my Dutch days

To crawl into the grass

See a new perspective of H towers through the blooms

To get grass rash

But still to savor the beauty, the grace of the blooms

Wild

Free

Beautiful

Some mornings are a blessing,

Unwrapped

All mornings are a blessing—given, gifted. With little asked of it

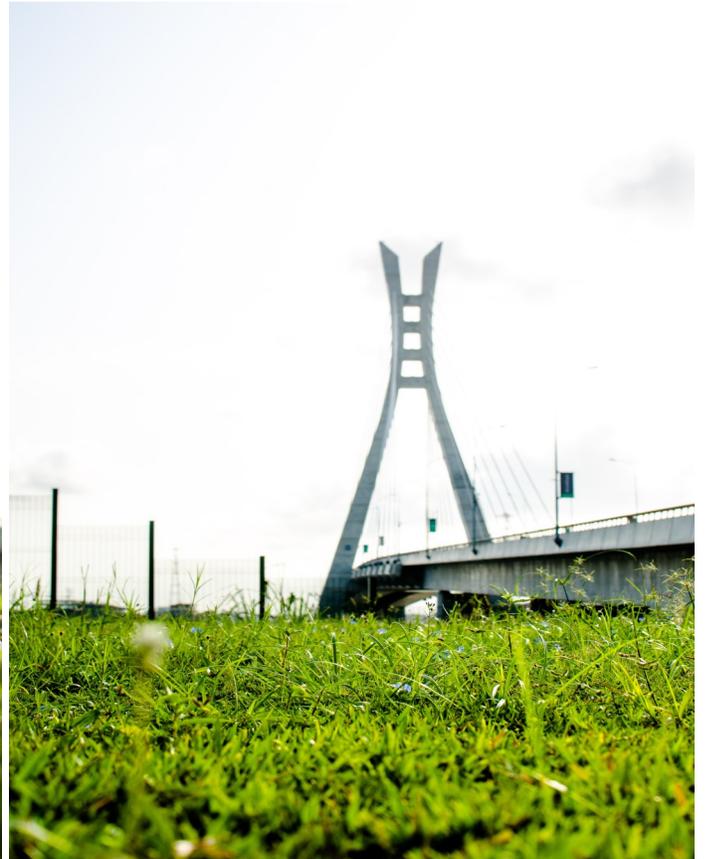
Good morning

Good morning, people

Celebrate

Celebrate the rising sun in the littlest way you can

xxx



Wild Blooms and H Towers I & II

I Cannot Save the World.



I Cannot Save the world

Our house was in Ogunu, at one end of Warri between the Atlantic and the main town, from which we were separated by a bridge. A bridge that arched itself over four lanes of highway traffic, over Ugbangwe and scared me so much that I looked at those who dared walk its paths like caged creatures. Winged. Magical. When I thought of courage and courageous ones, it was them I kept deep in my mind.

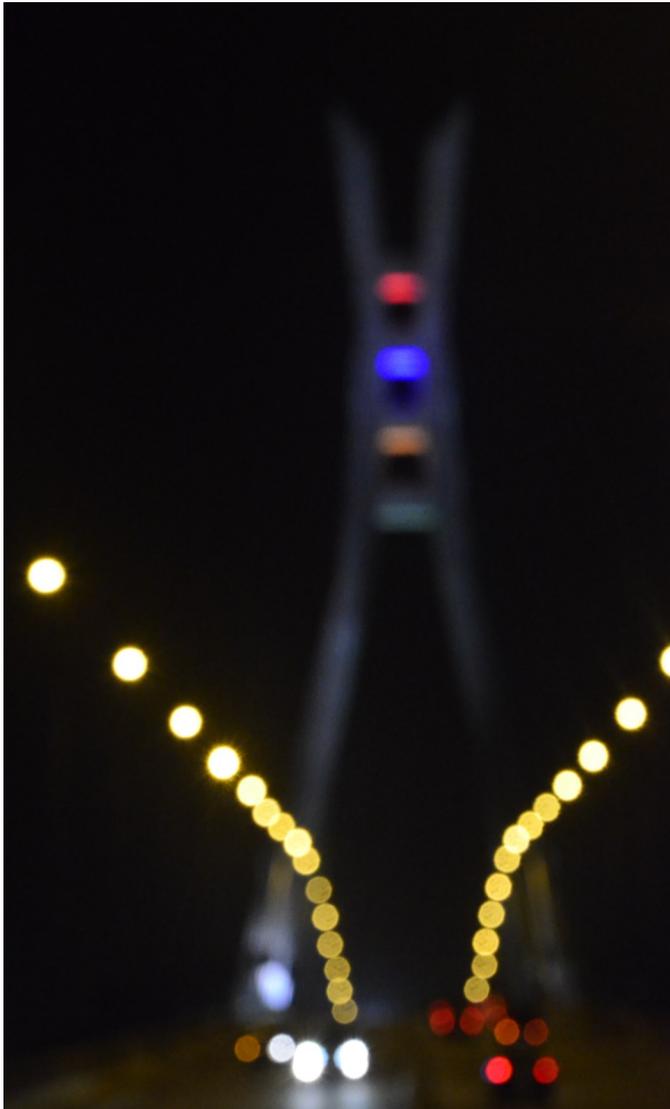
This walking on a bridge was a kind of walking on water for me. That 'come forth' that I could not, would not, did not obey. Not that my parents would have let me though—even if they had, I wouldn't have. I'd have been too afraid. Of wanting to fly but failing, falling, Because. I. Do. Not. Have. Wings. Neither did those who walked on it but I looked at them—their willingness to cross over, to take up arms and life and walk over bridges, backs arched over waters, tar, concrete, calm and stormy, the strength to walk when surely they would have wanted to fly, to soar. Impractical, I know.

But spirits soar. Fly. Breathe. And fear in one form can birth love in another. Evidence? Today, I love bridges and have walked many, fallen in love even with one—The Lekki-Ikoyi bridge. I've walked the length and breadth, in the morning, at noon and at night. I've looked up in wonder, down in amazement. I've felt that tinge of childhood fear but I've gone on. Still.

Sometimes though, I see men stand and stare and talk. Next to gaping holes in rails and missing bars. I fear. I worry. I want to stop and scream, pull them away. But I can't. Don't. probably don't need to. They are fine in the face of my fear. Of my panic. Of my irrational fear. Of my panic. Of my irrational thinking. Fine where I fear they might fall.

And I'm reminded that all I have is compassion and love—sometimes misplaced, sometimes misguided, sometimes unwanted, I am reminded that I cannot save the world. Not even myself sometimes. That I cannot control life—not the what, the when, or the how. That I must trust and believe. Relax and believe. That some were born to walk on bridges, others to build them and still more to love them. Sometimes I'm all three. Sometimes I'm none.

Bridges. And walking on water.



Blurred on Purpose

There's something romantic

About blurred bright lights

Softening

Hiding

Blanking out

The harshness

The lines of truth

The lines that reveal

The truth I should not see

I stay

Lulling myself into the deception of the blurred

Lights

Smiling

Dying inside

There's something romantic

About these blurred lights

Something romantic

That isn't truth

That I love



Anchored

Here

I am

Sending postcards from calm waters.



Courage & Love: Third Mainland Bridge

Every cloud has a silver lining

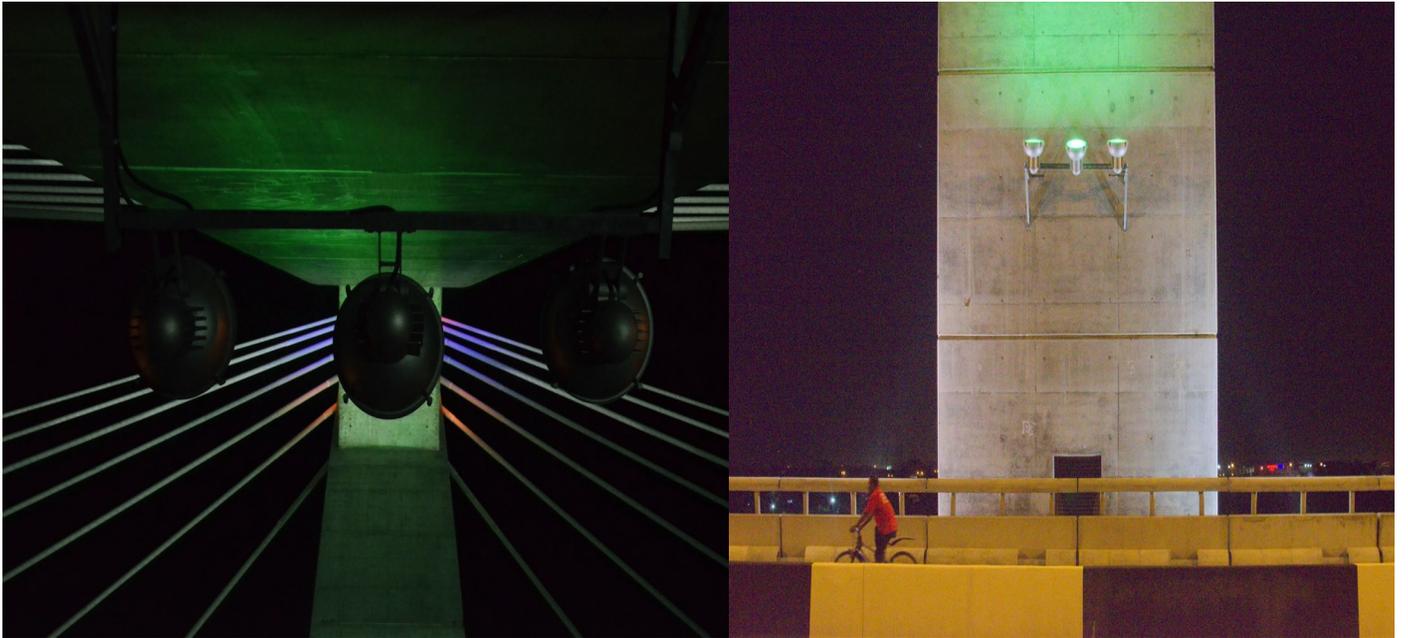
And a lick of golden sun



Silhouettes: Church of Assumption, Falomo

Those who do not adore sunsets

And silhouettes cannot be trusted.



Green Lights Under the Bridge I & II

Sometimes I forget there's more to you
Than the H tower we see in the distance
Sometimes I like to stand under your belly
In the green light



Under the Bridge.



Henna_Inked Beauty

Some things make you, me, feel incredibly sexy, like henna.



To the Light and Shining

If I could choose a favorite photo – I can't — it would be this. One day, I might find the words to say why but right now, it's the reflections, puddles, sunset, back turned, pushing forward, light and laughter that have my heart.



Waiting For.



Flight, in Solo.

Flight, in Solo

Because sometimes

You have to go alone

Soar

Fly

In spite of all around you

Being still

And steady

Sometimes

You have

To go it

Alone



Dickensian Lagos

DICKENSIAN LAGOS

I like how photos speak to me

How sometimes the camera sees things my eyes do not

How rain and blur paint a picture

That translates time and space

How inner city Lagos Island looks like a scene

Out a Dickens book

I can't imagine what that story would be but I imagine

I imagine that there would be hunger and

Running away

And sadness

But also hope

Some sort of cleansing and meaning in the madness of it all

I like how photos speak to me



Lagos: The Beauty of Yellow and Rain.

Catwalk in the Rain.

YELLOW LAGOS

If Lagos was a colour, it would be Yellow

Primary, bright

A burst of colour

A sure stamp on a chaotic landscape

It might be why I have why I have a thing for this city

Yellow

Buses

Danfos

Kekenapeps

Umbrellas

Buildings

Yellow

Yellow my 'optimism'

And happiness...in spite of

Yellow

Its sunniness

Radiance

Brilliance

Its unashamedness in being bright and bold and...way out there

Yellow

Gives me courage

Makes me believe I can 'Be'

'Do'

'Feel'

'Live'

And be everything I want

Yeah, I know

I know that a certain romanticism exists

In the burst of colour

But I love Yellow

Love Lagos

Love Yellow Lagos.



Yellow in the Rain: Rickshaws & Kekenapeps.



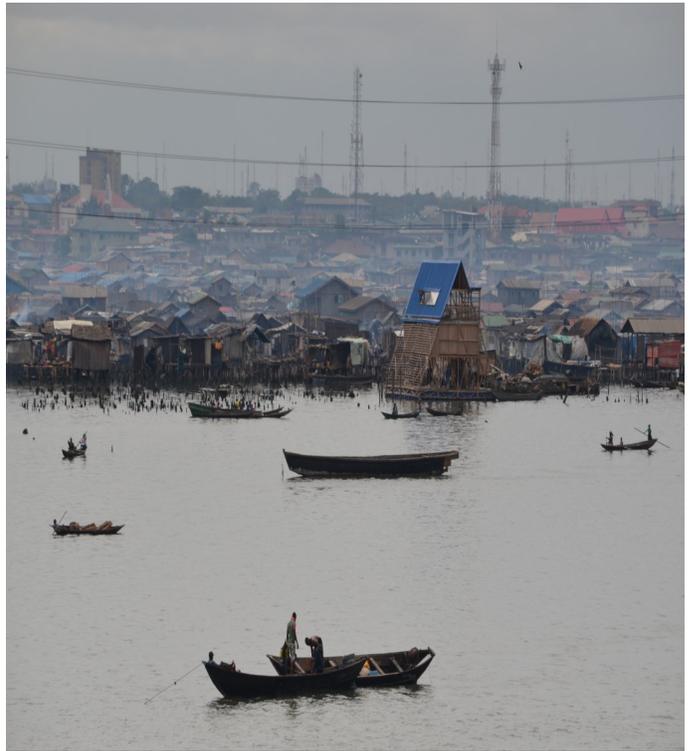
Yellow in the Rain: Volkswagen Buses & Danfos.

FISHING

This for me answers some—not all—the question about partnership, about balance and sharing burdens, about working together for the common good, one for two and looking out for each other. Plain for all to see, in black. And white.



Fishing.



Views of Makoko I & II.



Views of Makoko III



Sailors—On Deck.



Beachscapes, Elegushi.



Construction Pawns.

