




Why These NY.Strong Photos Shine a Different Light on the Protesters

By Team TRUE (<https://trueafrica.co/article/author/team-true/>) |  [_TRUEAfrica](https://twitter.com/_TRUEAfrica)
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Photography by [@ny.strong](#)
June 09, 2020

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I started the @ny.strong Instagram feed at the end of March, out of a desire to show the resilience of New Yorkers during the Covid crisis.



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I needed to show my European friends and family who were alarmed by news reports of the scale of death in NYC that this was not the whole story. I wanted to shine a light on a different side of what was happening in my city and reveal the individual stories of New Yorkers as they made their way through the crisis.

New Yorkers have an amazing capacity for resilience and empathy in times of crisis, as we witnessed during 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. The difference with the pandemic is that due to the stay at home order, this spirit was not as visible. The streets were empty rather than filled with New Yorkers helping each other.

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The IG feed featured citizens from all walks of life as they coped with the various difficulties

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related to the pandemic; from a pastor to a doctor, a warehouse worker to a teacher—each subject was documented both with photographs and audio interviews.

The feed also had an unexpected positive side effect in that it helped some in my community connect with others who were struggling with similar feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, fear and other issues.

Since May 30th, the date of the first march in Brooklyn, I have shifted the focus of @ny.strong onto the protests, but I wanted to keep the theme of exposing a narrative that often isn't explored in mainstream media.

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their voice heard and effect a positive change.

I hope to convey these feelings to the viewer with the slideshows of poignant individual moments accompanied with audio from the marches and rallies where the photographs were taken.

To see the full Instagram feed, go to <https://www.instagram.com/ny.strong/>

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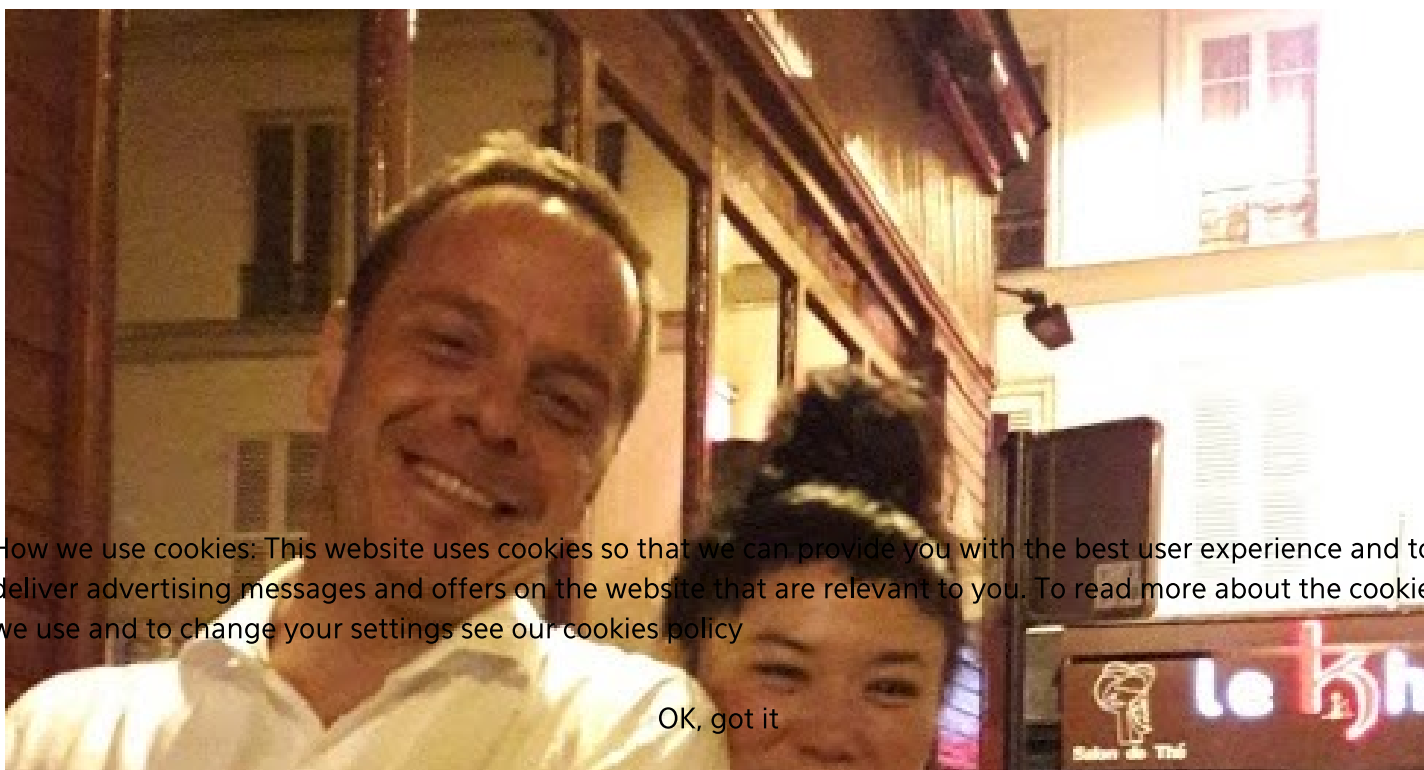
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Dealers

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By Claude Grunitzky (<https://trueafrica.co/article/author/claude-grunitzky/>) |
🐦 [claudegrunitzky](https://twitter.com/claudegrunitzky) (<https://twitter.com/claudegrunitzky>)
September 11, 2020

In this age of Covid-19 devastation, so many lives have been lost that sometimes we forget to pay tribute to the greats. Henri Vergon was one of those greats. The Belgian-born French art dealer died on May 15th, 2020. He was one of the continent's most beloved champions of contemporary African art. From his base in Johannesburg's Newtown neighborhood, he ran the Afronova gallery for more than 15 years, with his partner Emilie Démon as his trusted *consigliere*.



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Henri Vergon and Emilie Démon in Paris

Many art world insiders knew him for his dedication to artists from the African continent and diaspora, and the Afronova gallery stated its mission as aiming “to actively contribute to the intellectual discourse and the emergence of new vernacular art forms from the most urban and

contemporary art scene. This is not to say that some critics expressed interest in his work with artists Ricardo Rangel and Gerard Sekoto, but I was personally in awe of the way he nurtured younger South Africans artists, including Phumzile Khanyile and Lawrence Lemaona, a personal favorite I was able to interview in May 2018, at the 1-54 Art Fair in Brooklyn.



The Afronova crew in front of a Lawrence Lemaona mural

I first met Henri two decades ago, when I brought my TRACE Magazine editorial team to Johannesburg for a special issue we were producing on the new South Africa. At that time, he was working at the French Institute, and he went out of his way to school us on the new dynamics in the post-apartheid nation. We chatted for hours, we partied late into the night, and he introduced us to some of the rising stars he'd identified on the local art scene.



Claude Grunitzky and Henri Vergon at the 1-54 art fair

Those who knew him spoke often about his generosity and enthusiasm, which he brought to all his endeavors and personal relationships. I wasn't surprised when I learnt, less than five years after our first meeting, that he chose to open his Afronova gallery right across from the Market Theatre, which in the 1970s was known as the 'Theater of Struggle' where black, white and so-called "colored" South Africans would collaborate on mission-driven productions.



Henri and Émilie with Malick Sidibé in Bamako

On July 3rd, the art consultant Josette Sayers attended a church service around his funeral in Argenteuil, a working-class city in the northwestern suburbs of Paris where Henri's family is based. Josette sent me an email that day, expressing that Henri's mother was devastated by the abrupt loss of her youngest son and wanted very much for him to be buried near the Vergon family.

"It is certainly true that seeing a casket speaks of an irrefutable fact," Josette wrote me. "It tells you a special person has crossed to the other side, no matter how unacceptable it feels. Yes, Henri is indeed gone. The world changes, life goes on, yet bonds are sealed and some are meant to be kept, like the love and friendships Henri nourished with so many people in different parts of the world. So, no, Henri is not forgotten."

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Henri getting ready for an exhibition at the Joburg Art Fair

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
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