

# TRACKING TIME

## WATCHING THE BEATS

By K.D. Self

Our warm, dry, late-September allowed Summer to linger, culminating in a hot 2017 Lotus Festival. But by the end of October, cold Autumn rain exposed haunting Halloween dreams at I Fell and Mathers galleries, and an aged but still-rocking Bob Dylan blew me into Winter's gravity.

This year, for the first time, I brought my twelve-year-old granddaughter to September's Lotus World Music Festival. Given the current isolationist and often-unkind political world, I wanted to share the beautiful diversity of Lotus with her. We began with free Saturday park events, plopping down amidst unknown friends, allowing sun to warm us like lazy cats. We lounge-listened to Outside Track's lively Celtic tunes then Ladama's Latino rhythms. Sandwiched between these two staged acts, the Republic of Tuva singers' tent workshop provided educational insight into throat singing techniques. Later that night, we explored Iberi Choir's traditional Georgian polyphony. Then we traveled uptown to Sixth Street where De Temps Antan was wowing the crowd with lively French Canadian dances. (Their use of footboards provided visceral percussive effect.) By now, the little girl was getting sleepy but, fortunately, she was a trooper. At the Buskirk-Chumley, we soon discovered the best set of our night: Griot musicians Trio da Kali. Despite balafon sticks being accidentally thrown, nothing could stop this Mali band's rhythmic enchantment. From up-tempo to soulfully delicate refrains, Trio da Kali was riveting. (I cannot stop playing their CD, which includes Kronos Quartet accompaniment.)

Autumn continued to dawdle unseasonably warm until a cool Friday in late October when beautifully dangerous photos by Mike Waddell and Chrissie Dickinson were exhibited via the "Haunted" popup show at I Fell Gallery. Shadowy films by Dickinson, plus both Dickinson and Waddell's askew images were disquieting, moving the viewer out of comfort. I became the eye pictured by Waddell in his "Secret" image, found myself looking through a keyhole into these two excellent, experimental photographers' select private fears and frightening memories. I was especially impressed by Waddell's imaginative overlays, by Dickinson's evocative play of poetic text with images, and by both artists' bold public sharing, especially as in Dickinson's "Book of Father"—a dream-inspired portrait plus hair-raising story of childhood abuse and emotional release.

A different kind of reminiscence acknowledging the thin veil between life and death was evident at the Mathers Museum from October 3rd through November 1st. There, Michael Redman amassed his 12<sup>th</sup> annual Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) altar. This is an ongoing community participation project (viewers add notes about—or addressed to—loved ones who have passed). Redman has an uncanny ability to assemble altar objects in ways that both invite participation and encourage whimsical but profound thoughtfulness regarding the passage of time and life.

Our timeless Autumn moved Winter-like when cold



photo by K.D. Self

**The 'Book of Father' photo, held by Dickinson, is Chrissie dressed as her late father the way he appeared in a dream.**

winds blew and two amazing elders played the IU Auditorium; on October 29th, Mavis Staples opened for Bob Dylan (Mavis is 78, Dylan 76). Both received standing ovations from a mixed-generation, packed house. Staples invited all to have a good time—encouraging love, trust, and positivity through her lyrics and beautiful presence: "When I say my life matters, you can say yours does, too." Then, a fragile-looking Dylan alternated between accompanying himself (with his great band) on piano and crooning slow tunes (minus piano). Throughout, arrangements of his songs were masterfully different from originals. On classics like *Desolation Row* and even (surprisingly) his *Blowin' in the Wind* encore, Dylan sang and pounded out rock-blues piano licks, smiling slyly as the audience shouted joy. Touring in support of his 2017 *Triplicate* album (a collection of Great American torch standards), the ballads largely reflected on times gone by. Especially poignant? *September of My Years*: "One day you turn around and it's summer, next day ... it's fall... The springs and the winters of a lifetime, whatever happened to them all?"

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