



IAFOR DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

Press Release 2015

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About

The IAFOR Documentary Photography Award seeks to promote and assist in the professional development of emerging documentary photographers and photojournalists.

The award is supported by The International Academic Forum (IAFOR) and builds off of the strength of the IAFOR Documentary Film Award, now in its fourth year. Documentary has a rich history of exposing truths, telling stories, raising awareness and creating discussion — all practices valued at IAFOR.

The award is judged by a panel of leading industry professionals, including Paul Lowe, Simon Norfolk and Emma Bowkett.

Over 150 photographers from more than 30 different countries submitted photo-essays and portfolios for consideration for this year's award. The award follows the theme of the conference, with 2015's theme being "Power".

2015 Award Theme – "Power"

Photography can have the power to manipulate memories, encourage thought and stimulate emotion, it also has the power to do these things across languages and cultures. The skilled photographer must hold power over their camera and manipulate the power dynamic between photographer and subject. Pointing a camera at someone can be seen as an act of power in itself.

The study and analysis of different expressions of power can move from serious existential questions at the personal level to complex social and even political problems at a wider level. Photography can depict the powerful and those moments when they fall from power, but it can also expose the powerless to the world. The dynamics of power resulting from wealth and status make rich documentary subject as do the struggles for power among the disadvantaged and marginalized. Power is also exerted in issues of censorship and publishing — which photographs make the front pages and which cannot be published?

We hoped that the broad nature of the theme would encourage photographers to submit work that explores 'Power' from a variety of perspectives.

Judges

Paul Lowe

Paul Lowe is the Course Director of the Masters Programme in Photojournalism and Documentary Photography at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. He was responsible for the development and launch of a new part time mode of the course delivered entirely online using web conferencing, blogs and the VLE, launched in 2008. Paul is an award-winning photographer, whose work is represented by Panos Pictures, and who has been published in Time, Newsweek, Life, The Sunday Times Magazine, The Observer and The Independent amongst others. He has covered breaking news the world over, including the fall of the Berlin Wall, Nelson Mandela's release, famine in Africa, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia and the destruction of Grozny.

He is a consultant to the World Press Photo foundation in Amsterdam, on online education of professional photojournalists in the majority world. His book, *Bosnians*, documenting 10 years of the war and post war situation in Bosnia, was published in April 2005 by Saqi books. He regularly contributes to international and national conferences in Photography, Media and Education, and has published chapters in edited books on these themes as well.

Simon Norfolk

Simon Norfolk is a landscape photographer whose work over the last ten years has been themed around a probing and stretching of the meaning of the word 'battlefield' in all its forms. As such, he has photographed in some of the world's worst war zones and refugee crises, but is equally at home photographing supercomputers used to design military systems or test launches of nuclear missiles.

His work has been widely recognised: he has won Le Prix Dialogue at Les Rencontres d'Arles in 2005; The Infinity Prize from The International Center of Photography in 2004; the Foreign Press Club of America Award in 2003: and he was winner of the European Publishing Award, 2002. In 2003 he was shortlisted for the Citibank Prize now known as the Deutsche Bourse Prize.

He has produced three monographs of his work including 'Afghanistan:chronotopia' (2002) which was published in 5 languages; 'For Most Of It I Have No Words' (1998) about the landscapes of genocide and 'Bleed' (2005) about the war in Bosnia.

He has work held in major collections such as The Museum of Fine Art, Houston and Deutsche Bourse Art Collection in Frankfurt and the collection of the British Council.

He has been described by one critic as ‘the leading documentary photographer of our time. Passionate, intelligent and political; there is no one working in photography that has his vision or his clarity’.

Emma Bowkett

Emma Bowkett is Director of Photography for the Financial Times FT Weekend Magazine. Joining the team in 2010 she was involved in the relaunch in 2011. Prior to this Emma worked as first assistant to a commercial London photographer. Also a visiting lecturer and regular participant at international portfolio reviews, awards and festivals she has the experience of looking at photography from an editorial as well as an artistic standpoint.

Prizes

Grand Prize

- £1,000 cash award
- Mentorship sessions from an experienced industry professional
- World Press Photo adds the overall winner to its final list of nominees for the prestigious Joop Swart Masterclass
- The overall winner will receive tuition free access to a MediaStorm Multimedia One-day Workshop
- Exhibitions in the UK and Japan
- Invitation to an IAFOR conference in Asia, Europe or North America*

Second & Third Place

- Exhibitions in the UK and Japan
- Invitation to an IAFOR conference in Asia, Europe or North America*

Winners 2015

Grand Prize

Hosam Katan (Syria)

Title: "Syria"

My name is Hosam Katan and I am a 21 year old photographer from Syria. I was a student before the civil war in Syria. When the war began in my area I left my school and started take photos for the Aleppo Media Center and documenting events and filming battles. After one year of photographing the conflict in my country, I started working for Reuters.

The images in this portfolio document the struggles that people are facing in their daily lives in Syria.

Comments from Simon Norfolk

Hosam's work stood out for me for it's fierce, go-where-no-one-else-can-go bravery. I admire what he's done but also that he was requesting funding to keep doing what he does and not go off globe-trotting. A crucial story and it's not often that you can say without hyperbole that if he doesn't record it, it will not get recorded.

Second Place

Yasmin Balai (Germany)

Title: "Silver Linings"

With the fall of Ceausescu in 1989, so fell a part of society. Under the pressure of the dictator's abortion policies in order to increase the country's population to strengthen the economy, Romania experienced drastic demographic changes. By that time, the majority of the population was already living in poverty, which made it impossible for those people to take care of their many children. Newborn babies were left at the hospitals or put into orphanages. Twenty-five years after the Romanian Revolution, the lack of medical and sexual education still leaves society struggling with a high number of abandoned children and homeless people, leading to issues like unemployment and severe drug abuse.

Silver Linings is a project that follows a group of altogether around 60 people that inhabit Bucharest's underground central heating systems next to the main train station 'Gara de Nord'. Together, they have built something resembling a home, creating a community beyond society. Almost everyone living in the tunnels, built during communism times, is addicted to 'Pure by Magic' a synthetic stimulant drug, injected several times a day.

Therefore nearly everyone suffers from diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis, or is infected with HIV. The most widespread drug in these marginalised communities is 'Aurolac', a silver paint used to be huffed out of small bags, a cheap alternative of getting high. If only for a short time, it is a coping mechanism for the harsh reality of life on the streets, a symbol of each personal story of abuse and abandonment. It has become part of their life outside society, as well as a stigma of the loss of a nation's identity during an era of transition between communism and capitalism, the fall and rise, and fall again of a promised land of wealth and success.

As part of the European Union, Romania's attempt of making progress overpowers the ambition to offer a functioning support system for many homeless communities. People wish for them to disappear, to have them vanish from the streets, and to simply cease to exist in their society. The images therefore aim to tell the story of people who are living in the shadow of the government, with hardly any medical, educational or financial support. Living at the fringe of society, their only power lies within the strength of existing as a community: to live in a shared place called home, underground.

Comments from Simon Norfolk

Yasmin's work is gutsy. It must be a tough environment to work, especially for a woman. But it also has heart and that's rare.

Third Place

Romain Champalaune (France)

Title: "Samsung Galaxy"

After the Korean war (1950-53), South Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world. Yet, less than thirty years later, it became the world's 15th largest economy. This success can be partly explained by chaebols, huge conglomerates supported by dictator Park Chung-Hee between 1962 and 1979.

Established in 1938 by M. Lee Byung-Chul in the city of Daegu, Samsung (which means "Three Stars") is the largest of those chaebols, and the largest group in South Korea. It represents, directly or indirectly, one-fifth of the GDP. With its growth from a small import-export shop to the flagship of the nation, Samsung embodies Korean economic success.

Through its 79 subsidiaries, Samsung can be seen everywhere— from every layer of the society to every aspect of daily life. You can be born in a Samsung Hospital, study in a Samsung university, and live inside a Samsung apartment on a Samsung block. You can

take the subway built by Samsung and walk in the street guarded by Samsung surveillance cameras. If you want to escape from routine you can even enjoy the biggest amusement park in Korea, Everland, a key company for Samsung's financial structure. If that is not enough, you can choose a Samsung life insurance and wear Samsung clothes. From the cradle to the grave.

This extreme form of capitalism, which brings wealth to an entire society but also creates a dangerous dependency towards a single entity, is a fascinating paradox. This project attempts to reveal it through photographs.

This work also reveals the collateral damage behind the power and wealth. For 75 years, the Samsung Group has forbidden trade unions in all of its subsidiaries and denied the relationship between leukemia and the semi-conductor working environment. I wanted to show those women and men who fight against the giant for their rights to build a trade union and have work-related illnesses recognized.

Comments from Simon Norfolk

Romain strikes me as very smart. Making stories about the structures underlying how the world works is complicated. 'Scratching underneath' is an over-used cliché in photography, but I feel it is truly the case here. I voted for him because I can't wait to see what he comes up with next.

Commended Entry

Liton Masud Alam (Bangladesh)

"Requiem For Freedom"

For a human being, freedom is always a relative term. We all have the freedom to think as we please, but can we always express what we think? We are free to fly through air using planes and dive in the oceans using underwater equipment but we can never take off on our wings like birds or breath underwater like the fish.

For the sex workers of Douladia Ghat, Rajbari, Bangladesh, freedom is a dichotomy. Their profession has freed the sex workers from the ordeals of poverty by demanding they give up freedom over their bodies. They are condemned to be free from average norms and restrictions because sex workers are not free to live in conventional society.

This dichotomy pervades every corner of the lives of the sex workers: They feel independent because they are earning money. But they have to turn the money over to the madam or the 'husband'. They feel happy because they have made new relationships, new sisters, and

new families. But they are stuck inside their adopted community. Within the boundary of their community, they are free to dress and behave as they please. But if they should step outside, they have to cover their hair. They are free to love and marry whom they want. But they feel betrayed by the husbands who marry them for their earnings. They are free to strive to reach the top rank of their profession, a madam ruling over her own house. But their self-determination can take them only so far: they are always subject to the licensing powers and the corrupt practices of the police. They are a devout community, free to perform their religious rituals. But they are denied the right to be buried in a proper graveyard. In short, their lives encompass the heights of paradise and the depths of hell.

Yet they have one freedom remaining to them that asks no price: they are free to dream. They dream they are birds that go wherever their imagination takes them. They dream they are living the lives of their fantasies. Their dreams are requiems for true freedom.

Commended Entry
Olga Ingurazova (Russia)
“Scars of Independence”

A disputed region on the east coast of the Black Sea, Abkhazia was once a prosperous subtropical resort. However following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the civil war resulting from Abkhazia's secession from Georgia, the region's tourism-based economy crumbled in the early 1990s. After several years of a total blockade it became dependent on Russia's economic support which continues to help meet some of its basic needs.

Though the UN and other international organizations still recognize the republic as part of Georgia's sovereignty, Abkhazia considers itself an independent state. Every year people mark the anniversary of the self-proclaimed republic with a military parade, while their country still does not exist on world political maps. The Abkhazian passport is still invalid abroad. In the past 20 years, a new generation was born in the country that is still in a state of limbo. Meanwhile, the State has proclaimed a policy of developing relations with other countries and building up its national identity. The government has embarked upon a policy to attract repatriates from Turkey, Syria and Russia, where the largest Abkhazian enclaves are located, providing them with a free living quarters and welfare. All these measures are aimed at making the Abkhazian dream come true - to enlarge a small population and to preserve their ethnosc along with their origins and roots.

For two decades, the aftermath of war and geopolitical isolation continue to inhibit both the people and the land they live in. These trials keep on inflicting both physical and moral scars on the residents.

I'm photographing in the region for over two years now. This series interlaced the stories of the people and their homeland that were alienated from each other yet remaining within one mutual world of seclusion. The project aims to uncover the meaning of deprivation within the context of the turmoil experienced by that republic.

Special thanks to our judges, Paul Lowe, Simon Norfolk and Emma Bowkett

To learn more, please visit www.iaforphotoaward.org, or contact Thaddeus Pope, Creative Director of the IAFOR Documentary Photography Award (tpope@iafor.org)

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