

Beyond the Frame

Stories from the Sony World
Photography Awards

 Sony
World
Photography
Awards



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Introduction

The Beyond the Frame editorial series was launched to share a deeper insight into successful images from the Sony World Photography Awards. Asking a selection of photographers to share the story behind one of their most intriguing photographs they had entered as part of a photo project in the Professional competition or as single image into the Open competition, Beyond the Frame platforms the talented photographers of our time, their individual viewpoint and the inspirational stories they've chosen to share.

From Hanoi's moped delivery drivers to a rockstar's magnetism on stage, baby dolls to aging populations, a UK pilgrimage to Peru's ice caps, the richness and diversity of these stories showcase the artistic talent, skill and technical expertise seen in the Sony World Photography Awards through the photo projects and single images submitted year after year. In the distinctive stories and styles that appear throughout this booklet, you'll also notice a variety of creative techniques, reinforcing how the Awards champion the creative development of the photographic medium: collage, underwater and images taken on large format cameras are just a few examples of the approaches you'll see here.

You'll also find contributions from photographers living in Australia, Greece and Poland, as well the Netherlands, Italy and the United States – to name just a few – reinforcing the global scope of the Sony World Photography Awards.

As you look through this booklet, we hope the selection, which has been selected from the last four editions of the Awards, not only expands and enhances your visual language but highlights what the competition sets out to achieve every year: to champion the photographers framing the world's most captivating stories through their enriching and thoughtful perspectives.



2023 Stories

Al Bello

1st Place
Sport
Professional competition

'I wanted to show in one photograph how much, physically, she had to overcome.'

This photograph was taken in Central Islip, New York on 7 July 2022. Here Kelsie Whitmore, number three of the Staten Island Ferryhawks, stands with her teammates for the national anthem before their game against the Long Island Ducks at Fairfield Properties Ballpark. When I arrived that day, I was glad it was sunny so I could work with the light. The photograph was taken just past midday and the stadium was full of fans. There was a very friendly atmosphere that day – it was a good day to play baseball. I was working alone and I was at the stadium for about six hours. The shoot was not a commission but a self-assigned project for my employer Getty Images.



© Al Bello

This image depicts the size difference between Kelsie Whitmore, who is the only female athlete competing in this professional league against her male teammates. I wanted to show in one photograph how much, physically, she had to overcome – kind of like David vs Goliath. I'd spent around six months documenting Kelsie. She'd slowly started to trust me and I got to know her as a person. It was a very fulfilling experience for me and she's inspired me to be better every day. She works so hard and has such a strong mental attitude to help her succeed.

I used a Canon R3 camera with a 16-35mm lens, as well as a Profoto B10+ flash head with a 30-degree grid to single out Kelsie. I wanted to introduce off-camera strobe lighting to this project because I feel it gives a different look. I'd planned this shot ahead of time in my head. I noticed while covering previous games how much physically smaller Kelsie was – some of the men were 1½ feet taller and 20-60lbs heavier than her. She only came up to the shoulders of most of the men. I wanted to show what she was up against each time she competed and the only time I could get that comparison was when she would line up with her teammates.

I took this shot when the sun was (pretty much) just overhead, so the shadows on the players were very harsh. I thought if I just lit her and let the other players fade into the shadows while retaining their shapes it would show the stark difference in their height. The anthem is about two minutes long, so I had to be ready and aim my strobe perfectly in

her face. It was hard to get it right as I was holding the light in one hand and trying to take a photo with my camera in my other hand.

I shot off several frames unsuccessfully, missing her face with the light. Luckily the players were standing still so I kept working quickly and managed to get two decent frames before the song finished.

What I really like in this shot is that Kelsie may be the smallest player but she stands like the biggest. I feel her assertive body language and determined expression, mixed with the lighting technique and her juxtaposition to the players, highlights this. I planned how I was going to light the shot, where I was going to stand, and how I'd frame the composition. All I needed was a bit of luck with the weather, the placement of the players, and that I would execute the photo correctly.

I have been in the sports photography business for 35 years and have seen so much attention being paid to male athletes, so I wanted to work on a project showing what women are doing. I wanted to show through Kelsie that the mind is powerful, and how hard work, dedication, and an undying desire to succeed, can lead to interesting and inspiring stories. People seem to react very positively towards the project.

I've also completed a video piece on Kelsie Whitmore's journey that can be seen on YouTube.

Carloman Macidiano Céspedes Riojas

2nd Place
Still Life
Professional competition

‘It’s by knowing these people that I found inspiration for this project.’

Every time I travel on vacation to Peru, my country of origin, one of my obligatory visits is to the Penal de Pisci Prison, located in the province of Chiclayo in northern Peru.

I have family and friends in the prison, as well as friends and acquaintances whose husbands are detained there. It’s by knowing these people that I found inspiration for this project, which shows in a series of still life images what the prisoners’ relatives bring to them during their weekly visits.

I started this project in 2017, using the title *Canera*, a word that originates from ‘lunfardo cana’, a common nickname that visitors – wives, daughters, mothers and lovers – called themselves.

I submitted the original series as coursework for my photography degree. In early 2023 I returned to continue developing the idea and look closer

at particular themes I was interested in delving into, such as the food and provisions that visitors bring along for the inmates. It intrigued me as the subject was something so common and ordinary that it often goes unnoticed.

Many of the inmates ask their loved ones not to bring anything, but no visitor wants to arrive empty-handed. Each bag tells a story, each bag is a dedication of love.

For this series I used my mobile phone in order to give it that look of immediacy and simplicity that I was after. Most of my projects are created out of personal experiences, from what makes me happy, or what makes me suffer.



© Carloman Macidiano Céspedes Riojas

Erhan Coral

National Awards winner
Travel
Open competition

'Each photograph became a memento of the peace I felt.'

The open-air spa in the village of Budaklı, which is seven kilometers away from the Güroymak district of Van in Turkey, is visited by those who seek healing in the summer and those who want to bathe their buffalo and horses in the winter. The air temperature drops to 20 degrees below zero and the animals are taken to the water where they bathe for about two hours. The hot water of the spa cleans them from lice and parasites.

I visited Budaklı with a group of photographers in January 2022 on a bright sunny morning to document this bathing routine. We followed the herd from the village to the hot springs, taking pictures along the way. I used my Leica Q to capture the whole journey, taking about 100 to 150 frames. Beyond the breath-taking scenery, Budaklı offered me a chance to connect with the local culture. Interacting with the people who frequented the hot springs, I captured candid moments.

What inspired me the most in this specific shot was the true friendship and affection between the boy and his horse, as well the peace and happiness of the village boys despite the economic hardship they ensue. Photographing Budaklı hot springs was an unforgettable experience. Through my lens, I aimed to encapsulate the



© Erhan Coral

mesmerising beauty that resonated within this natural wonder. Each photograph became a memento of the peace I felt and a reminder of the captivating allure that nature so graciously bestows upon us.

When I received the email saying I had won the National Award for Turkey in the Sony World Photography Awards, and that I was shortlisted in the Open competition, I was elated. It was a moment of sheer joy and excitement, plus an overwhelming sense of accomplishment and validation for all the hard work and passion that

I have poured into my photography. The feeling of being acknowledged by experts and peers in the industry was an incredible feeling. It has fueled my desire to continue pushing boundaries, experimenting with new techniques, and exploring different genres of photography.

Budaklı village, together with the boys and the buffaloes, will forever hold a special place in my heart.

Edgar Martins

Photographer of the Year
 Portraiture
 Professional competition

‘...how do you grieve
 in the absence of all of
 these things?’

This photograph was taken in Libya, between Benghazi and Brega, in 2022. It's part of my personal project *Our War* which tells the story of Anton Hammerl, a photojournalist who documented various conflicts around the world. He was also my dear friend. A few days after arriving in Libya in 2011, he was forcefully abducted with a few other journalists by government militia loyal to Muammar Gaddafi during the country's civil war.

He was captured on the front line near the city of Brega. When his colleagues were finally set free two months later, we discovered that he had actually been shot there on the very first day of their capture. His body was left in the desert. His mortal remains are missing to this day.



© Edgar Martins

Over the past 10 years, Anton's family and friends have lobbied the British, South African, and Libyan governments as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions to launch an inquiry and investigation into his disappearance. It has yielded no material results.

So in 2019, I decided to travel to North Africa to understand the conflict, the circumstances of his capture and execution, and the absences that remain in our knowledge of what happened to him. Each trip was for around 10-14 days but I visited each location multiple times over the course of three years. The project was born of a series of questions: how do you tell a story when there's no witness, no testimony, no evidence, and no subject? And, moreover, how do you grieve in the absence of all of these things?

From the moment I entered Libya, I recognised the immensity of the challenge ahead. I knew straight away that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to carry out an independent and thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding Anton's disappearance, in such a fragmented and volatile place.

I had to come up with a different approach. I retraced Anton's steps, the places he visited, and the place where he met his end. I engaged with people directly or indirectly involved or affected by the conflict, from combatants like freedom fighters, ex-militia, Gaddafi loyalists, and dissidents to local residents

who hadn't experienced the traumas of war directly.

'It felt like I was able to step into Anton's shoes, even if only momentarily.'

Over the course of years of research, and several trips to Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, I assembled a small cast of characters I photographed. Some reminded me of Anton, whether physically or in their mannerisms.

The man in this image, whose identity I've kept secret, reminded me a lot of Anton. When I knew him as an 18-year-old he had long, flowing hair just like this man.

This photograph was taken in the desert between the city of Benghazi, on the northernmost coast of Libya, and Brega, an industrial city further down the coast where Anton was slain. The self-seeding weed that you see in the background stood out in the landscape. It was a geographical marker for those travelling the desert. It was imposing.

I was fascinated by how something could survive such harsh conditions – and how these living structures had survived wars and conflicts that so many people had not been able to. I took the photograph early in the morning. It was very sunny which was a positive as you need a great deal of light to shoot

on large format – I was using a Toyo 8x10 film camera. I was travelling with a driver, fixer and two other subjects.

It was desolate, hot. We were in the desert. You could hear every single sound: the wind, the beetles rustling in the sand, the whistling chant of the desert birds. I was talking to the gentleman in front of the camera about Robert Capa's *Falling Soldier* photograph, shot in 1936 and the ethics and power of the image when, suddenly, he started rehearsing a scene of being shot in the head and demonstrating how he would evade it because of his athletic prowess and his unique ability to kind of bend backward without falling.

I told him it reminded me of the scene in *The Matrix*, where Neo bends backward to dodge bullets speeding toward him. Of course, the man in the photo had never seen it. But it felt like an uncanny moment: Anton had named one of his sons Neo.

'For me, this image works on various levels. It's layered. It's intriguing but also insufficient. Hopefully, it arouses sufficient curiosity in the viewer to want to discover more about the work.'

Throughout this project, I tried to keep a cool head, to remain rational in some way. I didn't realise that the project was a way for me to process the bereavement. For so long, I had suppressed it – or just put it to one side, so I could actually complete the work. Only when the work was nominated in the Sony World Photography Awards and won did it hit me.

I entered the Awards to draw attention to Anton's family's plight to find his remains and bring awareness of the wider project, so when I was at the Sony World Photography Awards ceremony in London and could hear people mutter Anton's name – people who had never met him, and would never have the chance to – I was overwhelmed with emotion. The image seems to keep resonating with people. It was recently featured in The Guardian newspaper.

I absolutely connected with my subjects and landscape. That is the only way I work. I have to have a connection with my subjects and know the locations I am working on very well prior to shooting them. I thoroughly researched them beforehand. I scouted them and studied every single aspect of them.

As to my subjects, I have to gain their trust before photographing them. It took nearly 12 months before I actually picked up a camera.

Sandra Mickiewicz

Shortlist
Portraiture
Open competition

‘I like to photograph people. I think each human being is unique and everyone has a different story to tell.’

This portrait of Acolyte holding a golden cross was taken in Norfolk at the National Pilgrimage in Walsingham Abbey. Thousands of people gather from the UK and beyond for the event and it was the first time it had happened since the pandemic. I really liked the vibe of the whole area – the residents and people there were very welcoming and kind.

I took this image late in the afternoon, when it was a bit cloudy which helped to soften the light. I was there to document the event for a story commissioned by the Financial Times. I used a Mamiya RB67 with a 90mm lens. It was a very spontaneous portrait. The boy was about to go to guide the National Pilgrimage along with his family and friends and when I saw him in the distance, he looked very happy – he was laughing. Before he took off, I used the opportunity to have a moment with



© Sandra Mickiewicz

'I felt people were even more connected than ever.'

him for a little chat and portrait. When I asked to take his picture, he suddenly became very serious however, I don't think he was uncomfortable being photographed. He was a very open person but I think religion plays a huge role in his life and I believe he wanted to show that in the photograph.

Thinking back to the atmosphere around the Abbey at the time, it was about the connection between people and their God. It had been cancelled for a few years because of COVID-19, I felt people were even more connected than ever. Looking at the image again now, I would say it asks us questions about religion which I think is an open, interesting and very subjective topic to talk about – even if you are

not religious at all. I am not a religious person but I think the subject itself is interesting because of the history and traditions that other people believe in and most importantly their practice in everyday life.

I wasn't really considering entering the Sony World Photography Awards as my first thought was: 'The competition is so big and the amount of photographs entered to the award is huge and the chances of winning it or even being shortlisted are so small.' Entering the awards is another way of showing your work to other people, so I entered the award one week before the final deadline. This proved to me that you have to believe in yourself even if the chances are very small. The image was

shared on my website, social media and was also published in the Financial Times newspaper and the portrait won the Portrait of Britain competition sponsored by the British Journal Of Photography.

I like to photograph people. I think each human being is unique and everyone has a different story to tell. This is why I find humans fascinating. Especially when it comes to photographing strangers. It is very challenging as it takes time to build trust between you (the photographer) and the subject. However, if you're successful in this part, it's unbelievable how strangers can open up to you. I think the key is to talk less and listen more. Seems such an easy thing to do but it's actually not.

This is how you build trust, especially with strangers and if there's not a lot of time for a portrait. It is also about finding the right boundaries and balance.

Cath Muldowney

Shortlist
Street Photography
Open competition

'I took lots of images that day, including some directly after this one where Jefferey saw me and posed and waved, but I prefer this un-posed candid shot, with its slightly melancholic feel.'

Elvis is in the building.

This image was taken in November 2022 at Viva Blackpool, a cabaret club close to the iconic Blackpool Tower. The event was one of the many contests held throughout the United Kingdom to find the country's best Elvis Tribute Artists (ETAs), and I had travelled there with the intention of photographing some of the contestants.

My preference was to take some candid poses, mirroring the shots that grace hundreds of books about Elvis, though I did take shots of the performers on stage too. I generally process images in black & white, preferring it to colour, which can distract from the storytelling qualities of a monochrome picture. I use a Nikon Z7, in this case with a 24-70mm



© Cath Muldowney

lens, and no flash. I'm not particularly concerned with the technicalities of photography, more with trying to capture a feeling - a sense of what it was like to be there.

I'd checked with the venue that photography was allowed before buying my ticket, but it turned out that the promoter wasn't delighted by my presence, with his own authorised photographer present taking images of the audience with their favourite 'Elvis', so I was given a verbal list of do's and don'ts.

The lighting was poor as you would expect in a club, so the photograph is quite grainy, but I don't mind that, given that many iconic images of Elvis himself are old and grainy. I took lots of images that day, including some directly after this one where Jefferey saw me and posed and waved, but I prefer this un-posed candid shot, with its slightly melancholic feel. The ETA featured is Jefferey Brett Herman, an American living in the United Kingdom, and he loves the shot. He has featured it on his social media.

Sometimes you just get lucky, and I think the combination of the star printed carpet, the solitary, Jefferey's slightly downbeat pose, and possibly even the mobility scooter in the background, all combine to give an interesting image. It was the unusual nature of the shot that made me decide to enter it into the Sony World Photography Awards, but I had absolutely no expectations of any success with it, I just liked the image.

This was the first time I had documented the Elvis Tribute Artists, but has become an on-going project - I've been drawn in and captivated by their world. I've had the opportunity to introduce myself to some of the ETAs and explain the project (working title *If I Can Dream* - after the famous Elvis song). Now when they see me approaching, they studiously 'ignore' me to give the unplanned look that I'm after.

Eleven of the images are having their first showing in a documentary photography exhibition at the great Trapezium Gallery in Bradford, but I'd love to see them in print eventually. The project is continuing until it comes to a natural conclusion, but that's the difficult bit - deciding when it's finished!

Lee-Ann Olwage

1st Place
Creative
Professional competition

‘How can I create an image that makes the viewer stop and think about a number so far removed from their reality?’

This image was created in July 2021 at Kakenya’s Dream school in Enoosaen, Kenya. Kakenya’s Dream, is a non-profit organisation that leverages education to empower girls, end harmful traditional practices including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, and transform rural communities in Kenya.

Their goal is to invest in girls from rural communities through educational, health, and leadership initiatives to create agents of change and to create a world where African women and girls are valued and respected as leaders and are equal in every way.

While spending time with the girls at Kakenya’s Dream, I was inspired by the impact the school had on the girls and the local community. I thought about the many girls around the world who were not given an opportunity to go to school. The numbers are staggering, with approximately 129 million girls out of school globally.



© Lee-Ann Olwage

The school uniforms blowing in the wind on washing lines at the boarding school caught my eye as I was trying to figure out how to visualise the number of girls that are out of school. How can I create an image that makes the viewer stop and think about a number so far removed from their reality? How can I create an image that makes people stop and think about what that statistic really means?

I didn’t want to go to the surrounding villages and show girls who are not in school, but instead wanted to create an image that felt more emotive and spoke of the loss that happens when girls are not allowed to go to school.

I came up with the idea to suspend the dresses in a classroom at the school. The school uniform is a universal symbol of education and childhood, but the empty uniforms allude to a more serious reality. Every day, girls face barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms, poor infrastructure and violence.

With this image I wanted to highlight the loss to society, communities and countries when girls are not given the opportunity to go to school. It is not only the girls who are robbed of their futures, but also their communities.

The project *The Right To Play* highlights this reality, but also shows what the world could look like when girls are given the opportunity to continue learning in an environment that supports them and their dreams.

Angela Ponce

Latin America Professional Award Winner
Environment
Professional competition



© Angela Ponce

'I see the portrait as something very organic.'

This photograph was taken in 2021 at the Quelccaya Glacier, in the central Andes of Peru, which was the world's largest tropical ice cap. The trip to carry out my *Guardians of the Glaciers* project could be described as "magical" not only because of the landscape but also because of all the mysticism that surrounds the tradition of the Peruvian Andes.

I was there for one week with the aim to document how climate change is affecting the people who live near the snow-capped mountain in the Cusco region in Peru. When we arrived and before I took out the camera, the inhabitants of the Quechua community told me: 'You have to ask permission from Mother Earth to do the report.' We did a ritual with coca leaves, flowers, corn, and other elements. Within seconds of finishing the ceremony, an eagle flew over our heads. 'That is the response of the land, it means that we can continue,' said Exaltación, a person from the community.

I met Teresa, who you see here, the first day we arrived in Phinaya. She greeted us and as it is a place that does not receive many visitors, she asked us what brought us there. We told her that we planned to go to the snow for a documentary project and she replied: 'I have my cabin near the snow, I can take you along a route where I used to go with my father as a child and now I go with my young son.'

The weather was very changeable the day I took this image. We had minutes of sun followed by wind and hail. The Quelccaya Ice Cap is located almost 5,000 metres above sea level. The temperatures are very cold. When we reached the top of the snow-capped mountain, there were only a few minutes of daylight left. I only had time for a few shots because we had to descend before it got dark.

I see the portrait as something very organic, the snow is part of Teresa's daily landscape, and she knows it and connects with it. She stood inside a small snow cave for the shot and I feel her placement represents a human's connection with nature. From the Andean worldview, nature is seen as a living being, it represents a father or a mother, and the people of the community feel that it's their mission is to protect the natural world.

Winning the Latin America Professional Award has helped with the visibility of the project. I feel very committed to the issue, especially the Phinaya community, so to see their story reaching different parts of the world has been so important. Many people have felt moved by the portrait and without a doubt it is a call to pay attention to the changes that the world is undergoing and how people living in remote places are so dependent on nature.

Marylise Vigneau

2nd Place
Portfolio
Professional competition

‘Maria Ivanovna’s story serves as a poignant reminder of the human experiences woven into the fabric of history.’

This image was taken in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, on 17 April 2022.

It’s part of my long-term personal project *It was for forever until it was no more*, which focuses on countries (mainly in Central Asia and the Caucasus), that gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The project aims to build a memento to better understand the history of these spaces and, therefore, the present. Diverse and interwoven stories form a fragmented and subjective portrait reflecting on political utopias, corruption, identity and memory, and people’s independence and resilience.

This photograph is a story about Victory Day. In 2021 and 2022, with the precious help of friend Didana Suseeva, I spent Victory Day making portraits of Second World War veterans in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Meet Maria Ivanovna, portrayed here in her house once built by her late husband who died on Victory Day 18 years ago. Remarkably, in a poignant turn of fate, Maria herself bid her final farewell to the world this year, also on Victory Day, forever tying her life’s narrative to this momentous date.



© Marylise Vigneau

Maria Ivanovna Kudryavtseva was born in 1923 in the Saratov region to Ukrainian parents. Her father fell victim to the Soviet famine of 1933, an era in which an estimated 5.7 to 8.7 million lives were lost. Maria endured a harsh childhood, begging for bread and taking on menial jobs from when she was 12 years old.

At 16 she was sent to Kyrgyzstan, a place that would become her lifelong home. When the Second World War took hold, she became a machinist on a steam locomotive, tirelessly loading coal day and night. The train was an ambulance, and it was picking up wounded soldiers all over Central Asia. Maria’s family paid a heavy toll, losing two of her brothers in the throes of war.

Later she spent 30 years working as a train compressor machinist. In 1950, she married a colleague, and she

describes her 50 years of marriage as a happy companionship. Despite her hardships, Maria reminisced about the Soviet era as a time of unity and equality, fondly recalling the spirit of camaraderie that permeated society. As narratives surrounding history evolve, the complexity of Victory Day’s meaning grows ever more apparent. In an era where historical interpretations are increasingly scrutinized, Maria Ivanovna’s story serves as a poignant reminder of the human experiences woven into the fabric of history.

Maria was obviously happy to share her life story, and after some cups of tea, I staged her in the intimacy of her living room, trying to convey her dignity. I hope to publish a book about this project that has been at the centre of my work for almost a decade. The image was taken with a Leica Q2.

2022 Stories

The background features two large, overlapping, wavy shapes. The shape on the left is a darker brown, while the shape on the right is a lighter beige. They overlap in the center, creating a layered effect.

Samiran Chakraborty

Shortlist
Motion
Open competition



© Samiran Chakraborty

‘Driven by instinct,
I positioned myself with
my camera, eager to
capture this magical
moment.’

It was autumn, the most enchanting season in the cycle of Bengal’s weather. After enduring the sweltering heat of summer and the relentless downpours of the rainy season, the arrival of the monsoon brought a sense of constant relief. Amidst this season, Durga Puja, the grandest religious festival for Hindus, unfolded, marking a significant celebration in autumn. On the final day of Durga Puja, known as Bijoya Dashomi, hundreds of Durga idols would be immersed in the sea. I intended to capture this extraordinary spectacle with my Canon EOS 6D and 40mm lens.

Leaving early in the morning, I embarked on my journey to Chittagong Patenga Sea Beach, and reached my destination around noon. The beach, a popular destination, was adorned with beautiful sunshine, a blue sky, and at that time no crowds. As the light of the afternoon highlighted the sandy shore, visitors began trickling in after noon, creating a vibrant atmosphere. A few cars arrived, carrying the Durga idols.

Every minute the crowd continued to grow. At around 4 o'clock I noticed an abrupt change in the sky. The transformation was mesmerising: a peculiar colour infused the light, creating a moment of startling beauty. In an instant the afternoon light transformed into a deep golden hue, while a massive cloud of sand or dust approached the sea. It took a moment for me to understand what was unfolding before my eyes.

Driven by instinct, I positioned myself with my camera, eager to capture this magical moment. Completely

engrossed in the sandstorm, I noticed people scurrying around in search of shelter, and the entire area became enveloped in sand. I began taking photographs, unaware of what the images would reveal due to the impossibility of keeping my eyes open amidst the swirling dust. My eyes focused through the viewfinder, unaware of the chaos surrounding me. Although there was a risk of damaging my camera in the heavy sand, capturing this magical moment became paramount.

For approximately 15-20 minutes, I continued capturing images as the storm intensified. It was then that I realised the beach had emptied of people. My younger brother (who was also photographing the event) and I were the only ones left. We sought shelter under a beach umbrella by the sea. After an hour the rain began to subside and we sought refuge in a shop.

As soon as the rain had stopped, I retrieved my camera and began reviewing the pictures. I'd captured

roughly 100-120 shots, and among them round six stood out as perfect shots. This particular photograph showcased a distinct allure, with the red veils against the dust and frozen scene resembling a painting. This photograph deviates from my usual style, however bearing witness to such challenging conditions in adverse weather – and successfully capturing the moment on camera – felt like a remarkable achievement.

This experience was an extraordinary chapter in my photographic journey. It allowed me to witness and document challenging moments amid unfavorable weather conditions, amplifying my passion for photography and motivating me to continue seeking captivating moments.

Giacomo d'Orlando

3rd Place
Environment
Professional competition

'This picture makes us think about the effort that humans undertake to find new solutions to counteract climate change.'

This picture belongs to my series *Nemo's Garden*, which looks at the first underwater greenhouses of terrestrial plants in the world. I took this image in July 2021 in Noli, a small town on the North-West coast of Italy, where the biospheres are located.

As you can guess, the peculiarity of this greenhouse system is that of being underwater, at a depth that can vary from six to 15 metres. This project has immense value as it aims to find a new sustainable method of agriculture that will mitigate pressure on water resources.

Documenting the whole story surrounding *Nemo's Garden* took me around five months. During this period, I went back and forth from Verona, my hometown, to Noli. I visited at least five times in order to document all the

phases of this project. These phases include the biospheres mounting, the seeding of hydroponic plants, the maintenance of the structures and the final harvesting of the plants, until their chemical analysis at Pisa University.

Shooting this picture was a coincidence. While I was underwater, documenting the routine maintenance of the biospheres, suddenly a group of curious divers approached the site. As I was at an ideal distance with relatively good visibility, that moment seemed like a kind of futuristic expedition on another planet.

Seeing these people floating, surrounded by blue, and approaching the biospheres with curiosity, made me think of a scene from a sci-fi story. As I'm a symmetry freak, I waited for the divers



© Giacomo d'Orlando

to each reach a position where they weren't overlapping to press the shutter. I'm particularly satisfied with the result as for me it's coherent with my style and the type of image I had in mind. I took this image with my Nikon D7500 equipped with a wide-angle lens, a Tokina 11-20mm F/2.8, and Nimar water housing. I use this setup just for underwater photography, as usually I shoot with a Nikon D800 and a series of prime lenses.

This picture makes us think about the effort that humans undertake to find new solutions to counteract climate change. I entered the Sony World Photography Awards because I consider it among the most important competitions for professional

photographers. I'm working hard to tell new important stories and raise greater awareness about the environment.

Other than the recognition in the Sony World Photography Awards, *Nemo's Garden* received extensive recognition through international competitions such as the Award of Excellence of POYi in Science and Natural History, first prize of BarTur Awards for Climate Change, second place in the Andrei Stenin International Press Photo Contest, Photographer of the Year at Indian Photo Festival, Best Gomma Grant Documentary Award among many others. *Nemo's Garden* has also been exhibited around the world and published in more than ten countries with nearly 15 publications in international magazines.

Owen Harvey

Shortlist
Portraiture
Open competition



© Owen Harvey

**‘A lot of the imagery
I make reflects on notions
of identity, heritage and
family.’**

On the 7th June 2020, the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down in protest in Bristol city centre due to his connections with slavery. This placed a spotlight on the statues we walk past every day and what they represent. Statues from the past represent what people chose to memorialise, this photograph demonstrates the legacies we celebrate today.

Ayesha is a Team GB Fencer who has represented England in the Commonwealth and Senior British Championships. She had her ambition set on the Olympics. When she agreed to sit for a portrait, together we explored the symbolism behind the sword and the use of plinths both in the presentation of statues and winners within sport. Ayesha and I decided to make images celebrating her strength, ambition and achievements by displaying her in a statuesque pose.

The image was made in Shoreditch Studios, London, in early 2021. One of the strengths of working in a studio environment is that there are no distractions. The photographic approach can be simplified, allowing us to show only what is needed in order to get across the concept of the work. We created one setup for this image so

there were just the two of us in the studio and no need for a larger team. I enjoy working alone on personal projects, as it helps to create a setting where communication between the sitter and photographer is paramount.

A lot of the imagery I make reflects on notions of identity, heritage and family, however I’ve never wanted to confine myself to making repetitive work. The most important element has always been the message or themes I’m exploring and the photographic approach can, and should, differ to suit that best. Like the majority of the work I make, the end goal isn’t to educate the viewer but hopefully act as a way of creating a conversation around that topic. For this image, I researched statues in the UK and the symbolism of swords in historical art.

I decided to enter this image into the Sony World Photography Awards as the image felt both visually engaging and was responding to what was going on in the country at that time. It’s this balance of the conceptual and visual that I try to maintain in imagery. This image still feels like a strong representation of the two.

Bernardo del Cristo Hernandez Sierra

Latin America National Award Winner
Motion
Open competition

This photograph was taken in August 2021 at the Aquatic Complex in the city of Medellín (Colombia) during a national diving championship. For several years I have been interested in this sport and every time there's championships I try to attend.

Before leaving my house with my photographic equipment, I checked the weather and imagined the type of image I wanted to capture. That day was cloudy and the competitions were held throughout the morning with the presence of a large number of people and some photographers. I spent about four hours taking photos. I was especially struck by those at the 10-metre platform which allowed me to observe in better detail the movements and turns the divers were making before they entered the water.

I looked for a suitable location that would help the filtered light from the clouds to illuminate the extended body of the athletes during the jump. I knew I wanted the background to be the cloudy sky and have an image that was as clean and clear as possible.

As a photographer, I have always been interested in capturing action and movement. What I like most about

the image is the diagonal composition of the diver's body in the frame, the strength that the character transmits, the shadows and lighting, the textures, the position of the diver's arms, the expression on his face and in general, his whole body, which in the end I think captures his essence as an athlete.

'For me, this photo represents freedom, the desire to fly, and the effort to achieve a goal, and it teaches us that with a lot of discipline and dedication you can overcome many barriers and be better every day.'

Much of my work is nature photography, especially bird photography, but for a few years I have been pursuing sports photography, especially diving, because I like to capture action and movement, whether that's by a bird or a person in the air.

I entered this photo in the Sony World Photography Awards because when I

saw it in black & white I felt it had a great visual impact and was sure I had achieved the image I had envisaged. I thought it had a lot of potential to be awarded.

I shared this photo on my Instagram @berches.co a few days after taking it. It was also part of the exhibition of the 67 years of the Medellín Photographic Club. After obtaining first

place in the Latin America National Awards, I contacted the athlete in the photograph. His name is Luis Carlos Guisao, a 23-year-old who is currently studying Physiotherapy and dedicates 32 hours a week training to compete in national events. I told him that his photo was going to start appearing in national and international media. That filled him with great pride and joy.



© Bernardo del Cristo Hernandez Sierra

Gareth Iwan-Jones

3rd Place
Landscape
Professional competition



© Gareth Iwan-Jones

‘I wondered if it was possible to photograph these quiet giants in a unique way.’

This photograph is part of a larger project born out of the UK COVID-19 lockdowns and the ensuing impact it had on my work as a freelance portrait photographer. The series *Tree* is inspired in part by my home county of Wiltshire, where the distinctive landscape features many knolls with lone or small groves of trees raised above the horizon line. Unable to photograph human subjects, I turned my attention to my love of trees. I wondered if it was possible to photograph these quiet giants in a unique way. I chose to photograph against dawn or dusk skies and lit the trees with the assistance of drone spotlights to create an otherworldly mysterious impression. This particular tree, a solitary Scots Pine, is located on a hill near my Wiltshire home.

This image, or as I like to call it ‘portrait’, was captured at dusk, during that brief period after

the sun has set and the sky becomes a deep, dark blue. It was actually one of only two occasions during the whole project that my wife accompanied me. I was certainly glad to have the help pushing my heavy wheelbarrow of kit up the long steep hill! However I rarely met anyone once the sun began to set and it was often just me, the trees and the darkness, which was an experience that at first terrified me but with time I began to relish.

Aviation law in the United Kingdom stipulates that drones can only take flight within a half-hour timeframe following sunset. As such, my time spent onsite primarily revolved around location recceing and the arrangement of positions and angles, all in pursuit of the perfect composition ahead of the ambient light dropping. Taking the finished photograph is a fairly quick process. I would typically make no more than about 20 exposures in total once the ambient light reached the optimum level to achieve the effect I was after. Most of the time spent on

this image was in the planning stages rather than the execution. Looking at Ordnance Survey maps and finding the best approaches in the preceding days took up far more time than the image-making process itself.

Lighting the trees with a drone from above was enchanting. Tilting the light source just a fraction one way or another gave each tree a completely different atmosphere and personality. One particular thing I love about this image is that if you look closely, the tree appears to be subtly vibrating. On the day I took this shot, there was a gentle evening breeze. I used long exposure to capture the tree's pine needles swaying in the wind and an illusion of movement.

Just like other trees showcased in this project, this Scots Pine stands alone atop a hill, evoking a sense of solitude and a timeless ambiance. In retrospect, this is not unlike the emotions that many of us experienced during the various COVID lockdowns — an atmosphere of suspended time, tinged with melancholy

and curiosity. I couldn't claim this is entirely intentional but I find it interesting to think about the connection now.

I shot everything on a Sony a7r IV paired with a wide angle lens, the drone was a DJI Matrice 210 with a search and rescue spotlight attached. I was delighted (and slightly stunned) that a little personal project of mine, quite distinct from my everyday work as a portrait photographer, received recognition in the Sony World Photography Awards.

It is truly remarkable how something born out of a necessity to navigate a challenging phase in my career has blossomed into an immensely positive endeavour to which people have responded so enthusiastically.

Shunta Kimura

1st Place
Environment
Professional competition



© Shunta Kimura

'I decided to show an alternative angle on the climate crisis.'

This image shows a woman catching fish near some sandbags that have gradually sunken into the Kholpetua River in the Gabura Union - a village in Bangladesh. The photograph is part of my ongoing project *Living in the Transition*, which depicts Bangladeshis and how their lives have been impacted by global warming. Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate devastation, and many of its citizens have suffered severe and long-lasting burdens from the severe environmental shift.

I noticed how people were living peacefully and quietly, despite the negative impacts of climate change. I decided to try and show an alternative angle of the climate crisis, one that captured the more peaceful, slow tempo pace of everyday life where people have had to gradually adapt to their new surroundings. I created this project in three weeks.

I used a Mamiya RZ67 Pro II and low saturation film. I chose to shoot when the light was soft and then overexposed each frame, just a little bit, to emphasise these feelings of beauty and harmony. I then decided to enter the project into the Sony World Photography Awards so people around the globe were aware of the story. My aim was to show a different perspective of what's happening for the people at the forefront climate change, and how these effects are not only changing people's lives but how people are co-existing with the shift.

Raido Nurk

Winner
Motion
Open competition



© Raido Nurk

‘It’s a good reminder that there is always more than one way to see things.’

This picture, named *Surfing Festival*, was taken in the windy Netherlands in November 2021, in The Hague on a cold and rainy winter evening at dusk. The Netherlands is not the first choice when we are talking about top surfing spots, but from time to time it can reveal some great conditions.

The viewpoint I chose on a pier has an iconic view of The Hague’s famous ferris wheel in the background. About a year ago, at the same spot where I took this photograph, five experienced surfers lost their lives due to unfortunate circumstances and severe weather. This made the atmosphere quite intense. That day there was a big storm on the far North Sea, bringing a perfect surfing wave to the shore. That day attracted a large number of surfers to the cold water, and with little daylight left and the lights on the ferris wheel made the scene atmospheric and mysterious. I was using a super zoom lens and needed to fine-tune the settings to get the photo sharp with minimal noise.

For me, surfing is an interesting subject matter as it can be beautiful and intense and (usually) photographed on sunny days, but it can also be dark, mysterious and gloomy. This picture portrays dedicated surfers, who take every opportunity to get out on the waves and make the most out of the North Sea conditions. Despite the cold,

rain, and darkness, they are there patiently waiting for the perfect waves to ride.

To get that shot, whenever there were waves or a storm I visited the beach and pier every day to learn about light and find the best spot to frame the moment. Because of the rain, the cold and the diminishing daylight, I was the only one at the pier that evening. The North Sea winter winds cut through the skin, and I stood there for an hour and a half – I stayed until I couldn’t feel my fingers or toes anymore! I think that’s why I like winters and evenings more than sunny summer days because I’m usually alone and everything is quieter. I can hear myself better and be myself, as there is less to be distracted by.

For this image, I used a Sony a7III camera and a Sigma 150-600mm sports lens. It’s hard to tell what I like about this photograph. For me, everything in the image works visually. Surfing photos do not have to be bright and sunny to be beautiful. Most of the time there isn’t a deeper perspective or narrative in my photos, however, this image invokes some emotional response for me, and that’s what I now seek to create in every image.

I think this photograph shows a different perspective on something we are used to seeing in a certain way. It’s a good reminder that there is always more than one way to see things. People on social media have seemed to really dig it, I’ve got a lot of positive feedback. It is great that people see what I had in mind and find something mysterious in this photograph.

George Tatakis

2nd Place
Portraiture
Professional competition

'I always use available props that I find onsite...'

I took this photograph in the village of Glinos in Greece. It was inside an old mansion owned by a local family. The mansion had a rich history which added a beautiful backstory to my shot.

During the shoot, there were six women wearing the local Karagouna costumes. They posed in different rooms of the mansion, creating interesting compositions. In the main, central room, I added a special effect to make it appear as if it was snowing. To achieve this, I used feathers from my old pillow and had an assistant throw them in the air while I pressed the shutter. We turned on an electric fan to help the movement of the feathers. My assistant would rush behind the wall on the right-hand-side of the frame just before I took the shot.

Forming a connection with my subjects

was important for the success of the shoot. We had good communication, and I directed the whole process. It was a collaborative effort that resulted in capturing their pride and grace. I used my Leica Q with a single 28mm f/1.7 lens for this project. I always use available props that I find onsite to enhance my images – everything you see in this image was found inside the mansion.

The image was planned, and there was extensive research involved. I collaborated with scientific advisors to ensure authenticity in the costumes, as I always do for my *Caryatis* project. The local helpers were experts in folklore and owned the actual garments. What I like about this image is the balance of the frame and the surreal quality of the snow effect, but I leave it to the viewers to discover their own appreciations and interpretations.



© George Tatakis

I entered selected images from my *Caryatis* series into the Sony World Photography Awards to test my luck and gain recognition. It's a prestigious award, and I've received positive feedback and press coverage since winning, which has been rewarding.

Photography, like any art form, is a means of communication. The image should speak to the viewer, conveying my view of the world, rather than relying on words. This image aligns with my overall aesthetic, as each work is a reflection of myself as the creator. I strive for a cohesive body of work that authentically communicates my perspective. Along with success in the Sony World Photography Awards, the series has been shared in various media outlets and has received an additional 21 international awards. It's gained recognition and is archived, along

with the rest of my work, by the Benaki Museum in Athens.

In summary, this photograph captures the beauty of the Karagouna costumes. It invites viewers to explore Greek folklore and cultural heritage. Through photography, a single image can convey traditions, evoke emotions, and create connections among people.

Tihomir Trichkov

Shortlist
Natural World & Wildlife
Open competition

‘Instead of standing up I went down and squeezed the camera through the lower left window of the vehicle.’

This image, titled *Chimera*, was taken in Maasai Mara in Kenya, February 2021. The photograph is named after the creature in Greek mythology that has a head of a lion and the tail of a snake.

My best friend, Kiril, spotted the sight first. A single lion, getting up from a nap to our far right, disappeared into the bush. At this point I was almost fed up, we had been seeing the same thing for the last few days, over and over again. Lions, when not hungry at daytime, like to preserve energy and just rest in the shade.

Kiril and I decided to follow the lion and we then had the whole pride next to us – all nine of them. Sala’s pride. Sala means prayer in Swahili but is also a camp in the Mara. Prides often bear the name of a nearby landmark. We circled in front, luckily they decided to continue their path and followed the same trajectory which would take them right next to us and right next to where I was sitting.

They were coming closer and closer. I knew I wanted to get low so I could frame as many of the big cats as possible. Instead of standing up I went down and squeezed the camera through the lower left window of the vehicle. I was using a 100-400mm lens as I wanted the image to be tightly cropped. When I started to frame the shot I realised how hard this was to do with focusing. As the lions were coming closer and closer, I had to make a decision as this moment could not be replicated. We were still the only car around but I was starting to see other vehicles approaching – news travels fast in the Mara. The lions were also heading to another bushy area with trees, which was near. Very near so the show was almost over.

I didn’t have many options, I switched to manual focus, hoping to get a lion’s eye or face when one was close. I waited for the first group of three to pass and then focused on the next group of six behind them and, as you see here, it worked. What I particularly like about this image is that one sees the face of the first lion and the mind does the rest, completing the whole picture. The eyes just confirm what the mind already knows. And how naturally they all appear, like the flow of a river. I also love how the lions didn’t care about my presence. They were well aware I was there but they’re just going about their business and I am just a witness.

I have the image exhibited in my gallery and the question I hear everyday is ‘How close were you?’ but this image is not about presence, or proximity, it’s about being invisible.



© Tihomir Trichkov



2021 Stories

Andrea Alkalay

Latin America Professional Award winner
Creative
Professional competition



© Andrea Alkalay

'I am always curious about the discrepancy between what we see and what we know.'

This image (titled: Cod # F7C29F) is made up of two digital photos. The front is a black & white photograph, manually folded. The background is a chromatic digitization of the original, before I converted it into black & white. It is part of my *Landscape on Landscape* project.

While I was spending some time in my home in Buenos Aires, I remembered my travels. I can clearly remember the feeling of certain places. It got me thinking that images on postcards never reflect the experience of actually being in a place – I was inspired to follow this idea. The project comes from my explorations into my photo archives, looking specifically for untouched natural scenes. It is also an observation into the notion of landscape, which is defined variously within changing ideas about place. I am interested in the idea of nature as a cultural construction and the composition of a new landscape.

For me, photography is a way of putting into question our sense of certainty. As John Berger says, 'To look is an act of choice.' For this project, the consideration of parallels between figuration/abstraction is part of the objective. In the foreground is a monochrome scene, and behind it is a digital 'backstage'. These photographs combine opposing qualities that attract each other, such as the perception of colour through its absence or the flatness of the paper through its fold.

This chosen photograph was shot at sunset in Luang Prabang, Laos. Both the mountains and the cloudy sky are not really orange, gray and dark green, but it's the way the light is scattered from the blurred atmosphere and the way it is reflected. An object appears coloured because of the way it interacts with light and, clearly, the perception of colour depends on individual interpretation. The range of colours that emerge seems artificial at a glance, although they belong to the natural world. They are working like barcodes.

The chromatic palettes are shown through the folding of the black & white print. I perform manual gestures (the folding of the paper) to break the illusion and draw attention to the artifice and materiality of the photographic representation. I am always curious about the discrepancy between what we see and what we know, where these qualities contradict each other and co-exist simultaneously.

I entered this series into the Sony World Photography Awards to give exposure to my artwork. Receiving the Latin America Professional Award is a key moment in my trajectory as an artist. It's so wonderful to see the series receive such good feedback, the Award has opened dialogues with other photographers, curators and media. So many opportunities are happening now. For this, and for the super Sony camera that will help me maximize my technical performance, I am enormously grateful and proud. It empowers me by opening opportunities for new challenges.

Emma Collins

Alpha Female Award
Shortslit
Open competition

‘I felt the scene unfold into something more profound.’

My work typically uses a documentary aesthetic to explore the changes in my own children, both within themselves and in their bonds with one another. This particular image is a portrait of my two daughters embracing.

I initially intended the image to be a portrait of my older daughter. I noticed her sitting there, softly lit by a chink of light, so I spoke to her to gain eye contact. My youngest daughter then came into the room and as she nestled next to her sister, I felt the scene unfold into something more profound.

I felt this moment encapsulated the shifting relationship of siblings as they journey from childhood to adolescence. As a mother I recognised this as a time of great change, my heart ached for the past and yet simultaneously swelled with pride as I saw a hint of the strong young women they were becoming.

Their embrace shows the emotional tie that binds them, intensified by the quiet, intimate atmosphere of the bedroom

setting. The body language tells the story of a little sister looking up to her older sibling, hanging on tightly, not ready for change. In contrast, the steely stare and non-tactile posture of the older sister exhibits her independence, whilst still allowing herself to be held, implying that she isn't quite ready to leave the safety of her childhood world. Her turned back reinforces the idea of a juncture in their relationship, a metaphorical distance that grows between them despite their strong bond.

I took this image in the summer of 2020. We took a summer road trip off the beaten track to avoid crowds. The first place we stayed was a beautiful old farmhouse in The Vosges. Sometimes you find yourself in a place that oozes potential and as soon as we arrived I knew I wanted to take a portrait there. I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck prickle with excitement.

When I walked through the front door it was like stepping back in time – every room untouched for decades and filled with beautiful old furniture and art. Each window was clad with heavy wooden shutters keeping the air cool and dark. Shafts of light leaking through the gaps, softly illuminating everything in their path.

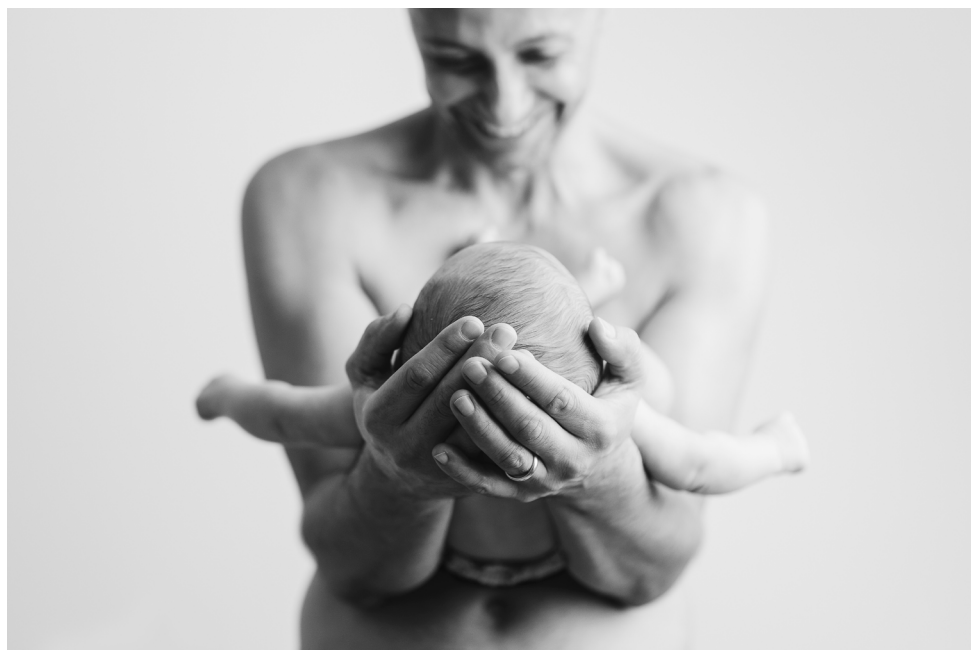


© Emma Collins

Adriana Colombo

Alpha Female Award Winner
Lifestyle
Open competition

'I wanted to convey the father's message 'the world is in my hands.'



© Adriana Colombo

Since 2018 I've been a professional photographer. I was a building surveyor, which I enjoyed, but my real passion has been photography since I picked up a camera several years ago.

I started attending a basic photography course in 2014 after buying my first DSLR camera. The course teacher took me under his wing and asked if I would like to be his assistant on wedding shoots. It was during those jobs that I started to capture what a masculine eye might miss.

He concentrated on photographing the protagonists of the event and capturing key moments: the tear the father of the bride dries in secret; the little girl who plays with the bride's veil. I would constantly walk around with my camera and try to seek out something that might just be a cursory glance for most.

I am particularly drawn to photographing faces and hands. I'm always looking for that compelling portrait that tells us something about the sitter. I have moved on from assisting weddings and now have a small studio for photoshoots. I specialise in maternity photography. My pictures are mostly mothers with their children – especially newborns.

My photograph that won the Alpha Female Award in the Sony World Photography Awards a few years ago is of a newborn baby and his father. In this early period (when the babies are less than 15 days old), fathers are always a little in the background. Mothers are often seen as the chief providers of this

new life - from pregnancy to childbirth to nursing the child. I try to involve the fathers, so they feel an integral part of this miracle.

They are often more clumsy than the mothers, so I try to direct them a little more. I stretched out the father Silvestro's arms and when I placed the baby, Martin, in his arms, he melted into a beaming smile, his eyes lit up and...I took the shot. I focused on the baby's hands and head, leaving everything else slightly out of focus. I wanted to convey the father's message 'the world is in my hands.'

Since I bought my Sony a7II, I've been following Sony's news with interest. When I saw the Sony World Photography Awards I immediately thought of this shot. I find the photograph deeply moving so I hoped it would conjure the same response with the jury. I was so pleased when it did and I won first prize!

Winning the Alpha Female Award has pushed me to be better and better, to encapsulate emotion and seek out artistic portraits. I dedicate this award to my own father, who I lost recently. He always supported me and when he looked at my photos his eyes were full of emotion. I'm glad I made him proud.

Bartłomiej Jurecki

Shortlist
Street Photography
Open competition

‘Somewhere in the distance, however, you can hear the increasingly clear sound of bells, barking dogs and cheerful screams.’

This photograph was taken in the town of Maniowy in Poland at sunrise. Redyk – otherwise known as a cattle drive – often crosses the main roads, so I decided to use the right perspective. It seems to me that each of us would like to meet these amazing sheep herd rushing back to their homes.

First, a yellow spot appears on the road. It's a reflective vest worn by shepherd Robert. He goes first and warns oncoming cars to slow down. You can't see anything behind him for a long time. The fog hangs heavily over the road. Somewhere in the distance, however, you can hear the increasingly clear sound of bells, barking dogs and cheerful screams. Suddenly, almost 2,000 sheep emerge from the dense fog. They still have several kilometers to go. On that day, shepherd Józef Klimowski and his helpers are finishing the march in Nowy Targ.



© Bartłomiej Jurecki

The tradition of Redyk goes back several centuries. It's the name given to the Spring departure of sheep herds to graze in the mountain pastures and their return from there in the autumn.

Each pastoral season is inaugurated by a mass in Ludźmierz, usually around 23 April on St. Wojciech. A few months later, at St. Michała on 29 September, the return from the hills begins. 'Well, you miss home, but we are like family, some have been working with me for over 20 years,' says shepherd Klimowski, who grazed sheep in the pastures in Czarna in the Low Beskids.

The shepherds wake up before four in the morning for the first sheep milking and preparation for making oscypek or bundz (traditional cheese). Around 10pm some go to sleep while others, with the help of Tatra sheepdogs, guard the herd to protect them from wolves.

Klimowski took part in Redykas from an early age. My dad was a shepherd, and he has been for over 30 years. He led the first Redyk in the mid-1980s. He has now led more than 40. He, nine juhas (helpers), plus a driver and carter have walked the same route, almost 160 kilometres, for five days on their feet. The ceremonial entry of Klimowski's shepherds to Nowy Targ is accompanied by musicians and crowds. Then sheep are herded to pasture.

Niloofar Mahmoudian

Shortlist
Creative
Professional competition



© Niloofar Mahmoudian

'Some pictures had been partially damaged while others were unrecognisable.'

I studied photography at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Tehran and, as a student, I spent some time in the university's library to look through photobooks and study the history and techniques of photography. I started to notice some books had photographs that had been defaced, manipulated or written on with a marker, biro or tape. Some pictures had been partially damaged while others were unrecognisable.

A few books had hateful notes from readers who were angry at the authors or the university because of the content – many depicted naked female models. Others were angry at those who were criticising the contentious images, making the pages a place for debate. For me, those corrupted images made studying and understanding the pictures much harder than it should. It was one single subject, a woman's bare body, that goaded the harsh comments. The detractors felt everything but the head should not be seen. The photo was considered sinful and unethical.

These kinds of beliefs drove the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 and many of us adhere to this thinking even if we don't entirely believe it. Looking at every photography book in the library, I found this type of censorship was more evident in books that had been registered between 1979 to 2009. Those years were when people were more radical about these issues. I wanted to respond to this discovery, so I picked every book with defaced images, made a copy of the damaged pages and made some slight changes myself. I tore away at the part of the image that had been censored, put the rest of the page on a mirror and then took a self-portrait showing the parts of the body that had been omitted.

The images came together as a photo series I call *Retrieval*. All 35 black & white images are presented in a photobook. This picture is from the book *Diane Arbus: An Aperture Monograph*. At the end of my book, *Retrieval*, you can see my complete self-portrait representing the fact that it's not wrong, sinful, or weird to look at a woman's body.

Alex Pansier

National Award Winner
Natural World & Wildlife
Open competition

‘I then saw another autumn leaf, but this time it had a hole in it. That was it!’

It was autumn and dark outside. I still wanted to go out and take pictures that afternoon. As an internet entrepreneur in an ever-changing world, I find taking my camera into nature very pleasant; it's nice to unwind and capture the wild beauty around us. Over the last three years it's become my passion.

Since it was the season for mushrooms, I decided to try out my macro skills that day. I packed my relevant gear and drove to a local forest, hoping to find some photogenic subjects. After wandering around for a while, I came across a clearing in the forest. The extra light from the lack of trees made it a great spot to experiment.

After unpacking my kit and looking for the perfect cluster of mushrooms,

my eye caught sight of a huge ant colony. Always drawn to wildlife and insects, I thought this was a great photo opportunity, so I headed over. I moved my set-up to sit at the edge of the ant hill, but not too close so I wasn't in danger of disturbing or being bitten.

Next to the colony I placed a stick so the ants would pass in front of my lens. It worked well, but after reviewing the shots I thought: 'Is that photo really exciting?' I needed something more, I wanted to capture some kind of emotion in the photo.

My eyes then saw the fallen leaves scattered all over the place. A red ant on a beautiful orange autumn leaf would match perfectly, I thought. I put one of the leaves behind the stick,



© Alex Pansier

hoping an ant would crawl onto it. One did, yet I was still not satisfied.

I wanted more, I wanted the ant to look straight into the camera. I then saw another autumn leaf, but this time it had a hole. That was it! I positioned the leaf so I could photograph straight through the hole.

As it was a dark day, I decided to put a flash behind the leaf to introduce some extra light and freeze any movement. Another great advantage to using a flashlight is that it would give the ant a nice white glow and draw out the texture of the leaf well.

Now it was time to wait for an ant to look through the hole. It took patience but the rewards were huge when it happened.

The moment I took the shot I had a good feeling. The real test however is to see how it looks on a large screen. When I got home, I viewed the images on my laptop. Yes, the photos were sharp and yes, there was a nice composition in the series.

A few days later I submitted the image into the Sony World Photography Awards Open competition. After all, you want to know if fellow photographers also appreciate the photograph.

Luca Rotondo

Shortlist
Portraiture
Professional competition



© Luca Rotondo

'The family portrait is one of the fundamental steps of the Lares project. The biggest obstacle with this specific photo was making all the animals that are still alive to stay still and look at the camera.'

Lanfranco is Count Lanfranco Secco Suardo. He lives in Lurano, a little village near Bergamo, where his family has for centuries owned a castle. The Lurano castle is a very old country villa that was part of a larger complex in which many important personalities of art and politics have passed over time. Rumours of a visit from the French military leader Napoleon Bonaparte at one time are told, but there's no real proof about this fact.

Lanfranco is the owner of Dob, a desert uromastix he found in 1975 in the Sahara. He brought the lizard back to Italy. After the death of his pet, Lanfranco decided to keep the reptile's remains in formalin through a process that was carried out personally by him to eternalise the memory of his beloved pet.

This photograph was taken in the living room of the apartment where

Lanfranco lives with his partner Federica. Lanfranco is surrounded by his family: Roberta, Andrea, Annamaria, Giulia and Federica. The location was a deliberate choice as the intent of this series is to also narrate the typical environment of family life.

I was interested in threading this idea of family life with the Roman statues Lares - often known as household gods that were believed to observe, protect and influence what took place within the area they guarded. I wanted to compare (from a historical and symbolic thinking) this idea of the ancestor statues to the remains of domestic animals.

The family portrait is one of the fundamental steps of the Lares project. The biggest obstacle with this specific photo was making all the animals that are still alive to stay still and look at the camera. When I met families who had living pets, I decided to include the living pets as they added to the family unit. The second challenge for this shot was to manage the space, which wasn't much. The relationship between all the people, pets and furniture meant it was very crowded.

Like all the family portraits in the project, this one too was shot with a 24mm lens with vertical shift in order to obtain stitching a 4:3 format during the post-processing. This image has been published by Sunday Times magazine, Stern, D di Repubblica and xl semanal, as well as being selected in several international festivals.

Parker Yost

Shortlist
Landscape
Open competition

'When I was a mile into my retreat I noticed the moon lined up perfectly over one of the peaks I had spent the last three days in close proximity to.'

This image was taken on the third day of a solo backpacking trip in Colorado's Weminuche Wilderness. The summer was coming to a close and I was looking for one more trip that really pushed me, physically.

The first day started in a deep and wooded valley but within hours I was starting the 5,000+ ft climb to my first campsite. Trails at this altitude are very intermittent and the terrain here mostly consists of talus – endless miles of boulders ranging in size from a basketball to a school bus.

I spent the next 48 hours or so exploring these long and arduous talus-fields with endless peaks and lakes all around. I was here mostly for the experience and the views, but also to take photographs. I had mapped out points of interest for potential campsites where I knew I could capture great shots of alpenglow on the nearby towering peaks.

This trip wasn't the backpacking trip I'd often envisioned, of sleeping between trees and strolling through dense forest with the hum of life all around me.



© Parker Yost

It was more of a barren landscape with towering piles of rock, rising above flat plains and nearly all life existing somewhere more hospitable.

On the third morning I rolled out of my tent in the frigid high alpine air about an hour before sunrise to gain a lookout point and photograph the light of the rising sun on a row of nearby 13,000 ft peaks. After this photo session I strolled back to my tent to pack up for the day while eating a cold granola bar, because leaving the camp stove at home shaved another pound of weight from my load.

When I was a mile into my retreat I noticed the moon lined up perfectly over one of the peaks I had spent the last three days in close proximity to. I grabbed my camera, mounted with a prime 45mm lens, and took a quick handheld shot, not thinking too much about it.

The alpenglow had long passed, and the light was fully bathing the peak that the moon was crowning, but the valley I was in was still half dark as the sun had yet to climb above the peaks behind me. This led to a dark foreground and bright subject in the background, creating the dreaded histogram (with a peak on both sides!) that every landscape photographer hates. I didn't realise at the time that the black foreground would lend itself to be an integral part of the photograph.

After driving home and spending hours pouring and editing over the images, that quick shot ended up being a favourite of mine. I was disappointed that I didn't take the extra couple of minutes to swap to my 110mm prime lens, because this image is cropped well over 100% and will not print very large, but I didn't think much about that while taking the shot.

Before I wrote I looked at past articles submitted to Beyond the Frame. Almost everyone has incredible stories often about social injustice or heartwarming stories of loved ones. I'm sitting here thinking about how my solo trek and photograph of a mountain can have some profound revelation about humanity; after some frustration I come to the realisation that it doesn't have any deeper meaning. It's admittedly a more selfish endeavor than the photographers using their craft to bring awareness. I backpack to hit pause on everyday worries, strip life down to its essentials, escape mobile phone service and clear the mind of the latest politics.

I think the minimalism of this photograph helps to portray how simple life is for just a few hours when on the trail, where the lack of notifications and unpromising news affords a moment of harmony.



2020 Stories

Didier Bizet

2nd Place
Documentary
Professional competition

‘I’m not used to producing this kind of photograph.’

I had spent a few months investigating the reborn doll phenomenon with writer Charlotte Vannier, when I met Amanda, a photographer and adoptive mother of a reborn doll, who lived in London. It was one of the most incredible steps for the project.

The reborn doll, which appeared in the United States in the 1990s, looks like a real newborn baby. After photographing dozens of female reborn artists before, I knew this meeting would be different. I had an appointment with Amanda, who lives in Wembley. She’s been depressed since she was a teenager. She named her reborn A.J., which was short for Albert Joseph, the names of her two grandfathers. The doll has helped her overcome her illness.

Amanda found A.J online in 2017 and immediately knew that he was the lucky one. When I arrived at her photo studio, A.J. was sitting in a bassinet while she was organising a photoshoot. Amanda was extremely friendly and welcoming. I was struck by her very real attachment to A.J. Amanda lives a 20-minutes walk from her studio. I discovered that she takes him to her studio almost every

day, cuddling him in-between shots. She wraps A.J. gently against her every move, with the same care you would give to a real baby, and makes fun of the looks of passers-by. When I started taking photographs (I usually shoot with a Nikon DSLR) I wanted to document Amanda working with A.J at her side. Amanda was very relaxed and was delighted with the shots.

She later invited me to her flat, and to my surprise, dozens of toys and baby clothes were lying on the floor. This surrounding disorder, which was because of a fake baby, seemed strangely normal to me. I understood Amanda’s pain. She told me how she was feeling much better since the adoption.

I was happy for Amanda. A.J. still has his reserved spot on the left side of the couch in the living room. Amanda takes advantage of these moments with her reborn to play with him and soothe herself. Amanda feels like a real mother but without the worry about nappies. As she sits on the couch and shows me two photo albums, I photograph her with her baby.



© Didier Bizet

I take very few pictures. I place importance on the meeting, setting up the trust between me and the person I’m photographing. As Amanda gave me a tour of her flat, we discussed the reborn phenomenon, daily life, and photography. Amanda wanted to show me where A.J slept.

There was still too much light on this beautiful September early evening. Amanda closed the curtains and gently placed A.J on her bed. She gets under the duvet. A.J. was ready for bed. Amanda never falls asleep without him. Her parents and close friends finally understand her desire to have a reborn doll. She wants a second one, but only a boy. ‘It’ll have to be love at first sight, just like A.J.’

I’m rarely satisfied with my images but I liked this shot right away. In its simplicity,

it represents all the delicacy of the relationship between Amanda and A.J. I’m not used to producing this kind of photograph. Usually I stay in my habits, quite far from my subjects, but in the case of this story, I had to get closer, to be immersed in the situation while sticking to my style.

The series evokes a range of reactions and emotions. Rejection, incomprehension, strangeness, to name a few. The story doesn’t please everyone, so I say to them, don’t you think that publishing stories of people who collect weapons is more weird? While I haven’t won awards yet, I was awarded second place in the Sony World Photography Awards Documentary category in 2020. The work has been awarded finalist in other competitions and been exhibited at festivals.

Jon Enoch

Shortlist
Portraiture
Professional competition



© Jon Enoch

I'd never been to Vietnam before but a friend had recently returned from a holiday there and was showing me her pictures. Among the usual images you would expect – beaches, trips to the markets and temples – I was struck by the shots depicting chaotic street scenes, in particular the oversized and bizarre loads that the locals transported on their motorbikes. So, in a pub in London talking to my friend, that's where the idea for this project was born. I went to Hanoi, Vietnam, specifically to shoot this series, *Bikes of Hanoi*.

'I tend to work things out in my mind before I start a project so I have a pretty good idea of what I'm trying to achieve.'

To elevate the series above the standard travel images I decided to shoot at night.

There were a number of reasons for this decision. Firstly battling and controlling the midday sun of Hanoi would have taken some serious kit which was going to be hard to fly with or find locally. Secondly I had imagined – and rightly so – that there would be a bit more space at night, it would be quieter. The streets were far less busy, so finding suitable locations was easier. The more interesting parts of the city are incredibly compact so by working at night I just had a bit more room to work and think. Thirdly, I wanted to shoot bikes that would be laden with weird and

wonderful objects so a pop of flash was always going to make the images sing.

On the first night in Hanoi I jumped on the back of a scooter and had a whistle stop tour of the town. I had flown out with an assistant from London so the two of us hurtled around the city to do a recce. The balance was finding somewhere with a bit of space, but enough life and background interest to give the image some context. At this stage we only had the location.

I found a local translator who also had a motorbike. We set up our lighting, a pretty simple system of three Profoto B1X lights, and I shot with my Canon 5DS R. I tend to shoot tethered as I like to be able to tweak little details until I'm happy.

It was then just a case of waiting for great riders to pass by and convince them to pose for their photograph. As we were only shooting at night it meant we had the days to explore the city and find potential subjects. We'd spotted this guy (see image featured) during the day and he'd agreed to meet us at a specific time and location. His bike is carrying children's toy footballs from a wholesaler.

One of the main reasons I wanted to shoot this series is simply because scenes like this are becoming less common. Everyone I spoke to said, 'You should have seen what it was like five years ago.' The country's rapid economic growth means goods are not transported like this as much as they used to be. The minivan is slowly but surely taking over.

Jenny Evans

Shortlist
Environment
Professional competition



© Jenny Evans

My first trip to Louth was in 2008 to photograph the horse races. Louth is a small hamlet in north-western New South Wales, Australia, that at the time of my first visit, had a population of around 30 people. The beautiful community on the Darling Barka River is inundated with thousands of racegoers who arrive for the annual race meeting. It's a sensational event that brings together locals and visitors from all over Australia.

I'm addicted to the outback, it's landscapes, people, solitude, harshness and beauty mixed in with a wonderful sense of community spirit. I went back to Louth in 2019 to photograph the drought and the shocking condition of the Darling Barka River. The river was completely dry in some parts, and it felt eerie to stand in the middle of a dry bed which was once a mighty river.

The temperature was hitting 50 degrees celsius most days and it was pretty unbearable. I was at the Shindy's Inn, the only pub in Louth, actually the only anything in town, and after a day in the scorching heat, I mentioned it was time for a cold shower. My comment was met with much laughter.

'...but the blown sludge just kept coming, All I could think about at the time was, 'Could you imagine if this were to happen in Sydney?!' There would be a public outcry.'

It wasn't until I turned the tap on in the bathroom that I got it, the water was scalding hot and murky brown. I kept the tap running, waiting for the temperature to cool and the murky water to clear. It did get a little cooler, but the brown sludge just kept on

coming. All I could think about at the time was, 'Could you imagine if this were to happen in Sydney?!' There would be a public outcry.

In this photograph Talita Cohen is seen in a bath filled with tap water from the Darling Barka River. For Talita, the brown foul-smelling water is nothing out of the ordinary for her, it is her reality. It is the only water available for the people of Louth. The water is piped in from the river to the town water supply. I was debating about whether I should take the image of Talita in the bath.

It was important to photograph the river story factually. I wanted to show the condition of the water used in households for bathing. I thought for days about whether or not it was appropriate to add a setup portrait. I eventually took the image and I still question whether or not it was the right thing to do. I feel it's probably good always to examine your motives for photographing something.

For me it was important not to sensationalise the story. The portrait indeed became a talking point. It received a lot of attention both good and bad. One of the negative comments was, 'What kind of a mother would let her child bathe in that water. Why doesn't she use bottled water?' The whole point was that this is the only water available to many people who live along the river.

Bottled water is not an option, both practically and financially, for most people. New South Wales was in the

middle of the worst drought on record. Finances and water were stretched to the limit.

Local council signs placed along the river in Louth advise locals of the possibility of blue-green algae in the water and the possible harmful effects on humans and animals if they come into contact with it, yet this is the water used for basic human needs. Families living along the lower Darling are dealing with a water crisis they feel is usually experienced in third world countries.

In 2019 most of the Murray-Darling system had been placed on red or amber alert for outbreaks of blue-green algae. Contributing factors of the presence of algae are from low flows or no flows. These low flows and the disconnected pools of stagnant putrid water have been attributed to the over-extraction of water upstream.

'Despite billions of dollars spent by the federal government, the health of the country's most important river system has worsened and been described as an ecosystem in crisis.'

The Darling Barka River is part of the Murray Darling Basin which is the largest and most complex river system in Australia. Despite billions of dollars spent by the federal government, the health of the country's most important river system has worsened and been described as an ecosystem in crisis.

Richard Kingsford, Professor of Environmental Science at the University of New South Wales has said the amount of water extracted now from the river system is unsustainable. People living on the river and relying on its flows are also greatly affected, from traditional owner communities to graziers.

Locals blame the ecological catastrophe on over-extraction of water from upstream corporate irrigators. In 2012, water-sharing rules changed, allowing irrigators to pump water from the river during low flow events and changes to the rules allowed them to take up to 300% of their entitlement in one year. This has resulted in enormous volumes being extracted upstream during the drought.

The rules are now being reviewed, recommending urgent changes to save the Murray-Darling system from ecological collapse.

Massimo Gurrieri

Shortlist
Discovery
Professional competition

'The heat, the cold of the night, the bridges that cross the three sacred rivers, like long tongues that are lost in the fog, test you.'

This image was taken in February 2019 during the first few days of Kumbh Mela, one of the largest Hinduism festivals and pilgrimages in the world. The event lasts around a month, during which Hindu pilgrims go to the chosen city for sacred rituals. It's celebrated every 12 years between the four cities of Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik. This event that sees the presence of millions of pilgrims on several square kilometers of land has been the subject matter many great photographers turn their lens towards.

During the first few days it was difficult to tune in to the situation. I'm also a musician so I was strongly attracted to the songs and plethora of sounds. There was a lot of confusion and some very large spaces to explore, so I spent the first few days trying to understand the place and people.

The heat, the cold of the night, the bridges that cross the three sacred rivers, like long tongues that are lost in the fog, test you. After five days spent listening and exploring, exhausted, I moved towards Varanasi. The city is a special place for me. I see it as a spot where you can regenerate yourself. I spent a few days there and then I went



© Massimo Gurrieri

back to Allahabad, one of the cities where the festival was held.

As soon as I returned, my ideas were clearer. I was drawn to the wide spaces and long bridges. I took this image in the early afternoon during a walk along the banks of the river. The light was particularly fascinating due to remarkable refraction both from the sky and from the sand on the ground. In a field there were some construction workers who were putting together an entrance door where these two vast elephant heads would be attached to. The heads were lying on the ground

in a corner, almost hidden, but when I noticed them I immediately understood what I was looking for could be revealed. I was attracted to this dreamlike picture that was slowly forming. I used a prime lens. For me it's not an easy choice of lens because it forces the photographer to look for something interesting. It pushes the photographer to immerse themselves in the scene.

I am interested in photography acting as a trigger for us to ask interesting questions that can be brought to light.

Ioanna Sakellaraki

Student Photographer of the Year
Student competition

'The idea of the silhouette in this image started to influence the sequence of portraits that followed.'

This is one of the images from my long-term project *The Truth is in the Soil*, shot in Mani peninsula in Greece in August 2018. The series started evolving four years ago, when the death of my father sparked a journey back home and the exploration of traditional Greek funerary rituals. At the crossroads of performance and staged emotion, I aim to look at how the work of mourning contextualises modern regimes of looking, reading and feeling with regard to the subject of death in Greece today.



© Ioanna Sakellaraki

The image, entitled Achlys (mist of death), depicts the silhouette of one of the female professional mourners I documented in Mani. She stares at the mountain range in the distance. The name of the image borrows its title from one of the Keres, the Greek female spirits who personified death in ancient tales. What makes this image important to me is how it gradually informed parts of my documentary and creative process and defined how I could take this project forward.

My process of documenting the communities of mourners was substantial for the initial stages of this body of work. During my making process, it has been important for me to carry out the work in the field, finding the real women and documenting their reality in the remote villages of the region. However, I felt that making a work about grief required a journey through memory and memory loss. As I continued to work on the project, this image made me question how both the mourning and the photographic effect perform their work by arresting time and disordering memory.

I gradually became interested in how space can be indissolubly perceived and represented in the process of reworking memory and negotiating the boundaries of grief in my work. The idea of the silhouette in this image started to influence the sequence of portraits that followed. While constructing the final piece, shot with my Zenza Bronica SQ-A, I experimented by post-editing my film negative and playing with inverted light

and shade, relief and contour, exploring the inherent recognizability of the figure's outline.

During my making process, I moved from the original figure to its concealed form where the distinction between the real and the imaginary led to a tangible experience of separation. Through my image, this separation became an encounter. The human figure of the female mourner turned into the landscape itself, functioning as a passage between sheltering something from death and establishing with death a relation of freedom.

Gradually Greece, which has been a constant inspiration and encounter in this work, transformed into an imagined homeland being a place one knows outside of memory; a land of curiosity where death is an encounter through family, religion, mythology and the self. By consciously adding another layer of intervention to what had been documented as real, to me, this image began to work as a vehicle for mourning perished ideals of vitality, prosperity and belonging, attempting to tell something further than its subjects by creating a space where death can exist.

Magdalena Stengel

Shortlist
Portraiture
Professional competition



© Magdalena Stengel

'We sat down and drank a cup of coffee while he told me many stories from his past.'

I took this photograph of Walter during a trip to the German Baltic coast in early spring last year. I was traveling in East Germany to photograph elderly people for my project about centenarians. Walter, his son and I spent two days together.

On the first day, I didn't photograph anything. Walter opened the door and I followed his shuffling steps to a room with heavy orange curtains. We sat down and drank a cup of coffee while he told me many stories from his past. He served as a soldier in the Second World War and lived in East Germany during the separation of Germany.

My main interest however was how he manages day-to-day living at such an age. The number of centenarians in Germany has more than doubled over the last 10 years, and this number is likely to continue to rise rapidly. I was curious to see what daily life at 100 looks like. How do they manage? What's on their mind? What skills do humans perhaps only acquire at such a ripe old age?

What I found particularly remarkable during my visit was how excited and happy he was about the device he just received. He'd been given a medical alarm system, which transfers a signal to

a central station if activated, and the station's staff can send help.

Walter is 97 years-old and lives alone since his wife died 15 years ago. His house is surrounded by a big garden. With some help like meals on wheels and a caregiver who comes to visit once a week, he manages to live his life self-determined in his own home. As his kids live some hours away, he was concerned that if he would fall one day or have an accident, he couldn't call for help.

On the day I visited, he told his son how happy he was about the wristband with the small red button – which you can see in this photograph. He felt so relieved, he even said that the button changed his life.

Some of the photographs in ±100 appear, at first sight, very positive. The subjects are often smiling into the camera and seem confident and happy. But when you take a closer look, you can find details like a small injury, an emergency button, or even signs of poverty or loneliness. Also, it cannot be denied that their life is coming to an end in the not too distant future.

People of this age are often perceived or portrayed as frail and yet it is precisely these people who have a remarkable degree of resilience, strength, and willpower. Despite diseases, pain, and the limitations that come with age, they are grateful and have a positive attitude towards life. One of the aims of this project was to capture and share their underlying effort and perseverance.

Adam Stevenson

Shortlist
Natural World & Wildlife
Open competition



© Adam Stevenson

'Thankfully the firefighters not only saved our street but our town.'

On the 8th November 2019, our whole world was turned upside down. Our region had just experienced some of the worst droughts on record and the land was dry and brown. To make matters worse, the fire season started and our neighbouring suburbs were experiencing horrendous fires – threatening homes, wildlife and thousands of acres of our beautiful national parks and nature reserves.

It was 6pm on a Friday night, my wife was heavily pregnant and our two other children were playing in the yard. A State Emergency Service worker knocked on our door and advised us to leave our house as the fires were approaching. As I stared over the horizon, the red and pink glow from the fires looked distant – but we knew they were on their way. My wife and I looked at each other and grabbed the kids, our dog and a few important documents and left to stay with my parents.

The next morning we turned on the news and saw our street ablaze with

news crews reporting they didn't expect the houses to survive. Thankfully the firefighters not only saved our street but our town. Not a single home was lost. We returned four days later as the streets were blocked with fallen trees so the power had been out. The scenes that greeted us were apocalyptic. We decided to go for a walk and assess the damage. That's when I was able to capture the image of the kookaburra. I was actually admiring the sunset – the large red sun was setting behind the smoke-filled horizon, the burnt trees were black and the scene was almost beautiful after such a tragedy.

As we were on the way back home we spotted the kookaburra sitting in the tree laughing. I decided to take a photograph. The bird let me walk right up to it, snapping away on my iPhone. It was looking at me as if to say: "There's nothing you can do that is any worse than what sits in front of us." We both watched the sun setting over the apocalyptic landscape. The bird was laughing.

Antoine Veling

Winner
Culture
Open competition

'The biblical feel of the image heralds the arrival of Easter – just four days away at the time.'

Iggy Pop, the punk with a poet's heart and one of rock's greatest frontmen, performed two incredible, riff-laden hard rock concerts with a tight band at the Sydney Opera House in April 2019.

Iggy still performs with insatiable energy. I attended the second concert on Wednesday, 17th April, 2019 just days before Easter Sunday and the proto-punk's 72nd birthday. The photograph was taken during the 14th song of the night: 'No Fun', which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2019. During the performance, Iggy avoids the midwest USA teenage plight of loneliness and boredom that he sings about in the song and instead yells to the crowd: 'Alright now! Get up here and dance with me!'

More of a command than an invitation, his request results in a swarm of people turning the stage of the Sydney Opera House into a mosh pit of nightclubbing energy. The band, hidden behind the

dancers, still plays as Jos Grain, Iggy's assistant, watches the star's back while he jostles with the white microphone stand.

A fan lunges at Iggy as the song nears its end. Iggy, surrounded by revellers ecstatic to be sharing the stage with a living legend, seems unaware of her approach. The woman's determination matches Iggy's signature stare and cocksure salute. Her outstretched fingers reward her effort with a touch. Does she believe the touch will gain her redemption? Or, is it simply Iggy's sex appeal that drives her behaviour?

This photograph has been likened to the works of other artist, including Caravaggio, the 16th century Italian artist who painted with a dramatic use of chiaroscuro; the work of contemporary video artist Bill Viola, especially his 2004 moving image art work *The Raft*; plus Peter Howson, the



© Antoine Veling

Scottish painter and British war artist whose paintings are crowded with a large cast of barbarous characters - see *Meshuggah*, 2015.

The biblical feel of the image heralds the arrival of Easter – just four days away at the time. A friend and fellow photographer felt the photo resembled the passage described in Mark 5:25 to 34 and the brief moment I captured at 1/100 p/s mirrors the Biblical woman's action in the line 'If I can touch even his clothes', she had told herself: 'I shall be well again.'

There is a lot of discussion and debate about camera gear these days: the number of megapixels, sensor size, dynamic range, ISO performance, and so on. However, a great image has less to do with gear and a lot to do with how the photographer deals with the circumstances they're in.

Serendipity is often my best friend and in this case I was fortunate Iggy Pop insisted the house lights be turned on, this is common for orchestral performances but very rare at rock concerts.

I captured this image on a Sony RX100-IV camera. The additional house lighting allowed me to choose ISO 160, which resulted in very little noise. The image is at its best when viewed as a print and I have made prints as large as 93cm x 150cm.

Henri Cartier-Bresson was an early influencer on me and I think he put gear in its place when he said: 'It is an illusion that photos are made with the camera... they are made with the eye, heart and head.'

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