



Jury Report: Fifth Edition of the International Photo Festival Leiden

The winner of the International Photo Festival Leiden 2020 (IPFL 2020)

The International Photo Festival Leiden offers a stage to up-and-coming photographic talent from Europe. The prerequisite for participation in the competition is that photographers graduated (with a BA and/or MA) from an academy or photography-related training program no more than five years ago, and that they are residents or nationals of a European country. The entries for the photo competition form the starting point for the work that can be seen during the Photo Festival Leiden.

In order to draw more attention to these commencing professional photographers, the year 2020 marks the fifth time that a prize will be awarded to the winner of the International Photo Festival Leiden.

An award ceremony that we have to stage-manage and from which virtually all spontaneity has disappeared, because of the situation we are finding ourselves in these days. The corona crisis forces us to make other preparations, to create moments and a careful timing to announce the winner of this fifth edition online.

The jury

The jury, which is reassembled anew every year, consists of at least six professionals who have earned their spurs in the cultural sector, such as image editors, art directors, museum curators, gallerists and museum directors.

Jury 2020

- Chair: Philippien Noordam: Head of the art collection at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, chair of the Netherlands Association of Corporate Art Collections, and jury member of the Rabobank National Portrait Award.
- Monique Beijaert: Works at the VU Amsterdam Art Collection. Designer, art director and former chair of the jury of the annual VVAA Photo Contest.
- Jean-Jacques Almanza: Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague, Department of Photography and Fine Arts (until 2012). Jury member of the Zilveren Camera, the Dutch annual national photography award.
- Willemijn van der Zwaan: Curator at The Hague Museum of Photography. She studied art history at Utrecht University, specializing in Modern and Contemporary Art. Has worked as gallery manager at the Kahmann Gallery for photography in Amsterdam and was a co-curator of the Rotterdam photo fair Haute Photographie.
- Joachim Naudts: Curator at the FoMu (Photo Museum Antwerp) since 2012 and editor of their house magazine Extra. Involved with Punctum, a Belgian non-profit organization for contemporary photography, since 2008. Board member of photography network Depth of Field since 2012.
- Rein Deslé: Curator and editor at the FoMu (Photo Museum Antwerp).

Selection method

The jury selected a longlist of approximately 43 photographers from among all 127 entries. Ultimately, a winner emerged from the 15 nominees. The names of the photographers have remained anonymous until the very last moment, and the jury was only informed about the names of the participants after the winner had been selected.

General findings of the jury

On the one hand, the jury has concluded that a sufficient number of photos of solid quality had been submitted, but also, on the other hand, that the so-called documentary image clearly predominates. This is for instance evident in the fact that fewer series were submitted consisting of autonomous 'fine art' images. Photos in which one breaks away from everyday reality. The innovative, refreshing and experimental, something you could expect from this commencing group of photographers for which this prize is intended, is missing. It is also becoming clear that submitting four photos, composed in such a way that they tell a homogeneous story and thus already starting to expose the particular handwriting of the photographer, is a difficult task. To put it simpler, three photos are easier to select than four. The consistency of the series, the fourth photo that has to fit in as well, can all of a sudden reveal a little more about the photographer's work, in a negative or positive sense.

The winner

The winner of the International Photo Festival Leiden 2020 will be announced on Thursday, May 14 at 8pm. The winner receives a cash prize of 1,500 euros. The winning photo and accompanying series will be exhibited in April 2021 during the International Photo Festival in Leiden.

It is as if the winner already foresaw the future ahead of him. In the series, the photographer has frozen the world into a motionless image. An image that we all know. However, that reality has since become obsolete. We have lost our grip. The photographer of this series has not. He has proven to be in control. He creates his own reality. He manipulates, plays with the image that the media has generated of those in power, and we fall for it. A warning. It is a Fake Photo and is closely in line with that other trend, Fake News.

Is this indeed an image from our everyday reality that reports on an event? Yet another cliché picture connected to an interview, a minister who has resigned, a series of portraits from the Volkskrant magazine? Or are you looking at something else? You feel somewhere in your stomach that something is not right, but you cannot put your finger on it. The pictures ask you questions, it annoys you that you don't see through it, you feel that you are being led around. The photographer accurately staged the image, and we fall for it.

And that is the moment when the image becomes detached from the documentary character it initially evokes. It turns out to be a created cliché picture that closely affiliates with 'staged photography': A movement that emerged in the eighties of the last century and continues to flourish to this day. It looks so self-evident, but it must have been a real challenge and chore to create the right situations. The "recreation" of the recognizable moments in and around your own home. The right lighting, and dynamics, and transforming family members into top politicians. This has been done with conviction, care and craftsmanship. And therefore surprises us, despite the fact that we have long known that in today's world we can replicate everything.

Jesper Boot warns you to take a closer look at his photos. It is his reality that he created, and is not self-evidently ours as well.

Jesper Boot graduated in 2019. The series "Power" dates from 2019.

Philippien Noordam, jury chair International Photo Festival Leiden 2020