
presentation

In search of new talents, the 4th edition of scopio International Photography Contest is focused on crossing borders and shifting boundaries, emphasising Photography as a questioning medium for Architecture.

Is photography over? It seems an absurd question looking at the amount of photographs that we can see in diverse places such as museums, exhibitions, art galleries, art fairs, newspapers, magazines, books and more places alike. The issue is more about how image, in our contemporary world, is pervading every aspect of our lives and culture through the world wide web and other media or digital artefacts, and what does this mean?

Within this framework, and thinking on scopio International Photography Contest and in scopio Editorial Line project concerns, it can be said that the objective is to divulge a more comprehensive perception and broad perspective about Architecture and Photography practice and subject matter. The former entails, also, the uncovering of the potential of photography projects that integrate significantly the documentary and artistic universes, which we think is the case of present contest winners: 'Shangri-La' (Alnis Stakle, winner), 'Reconstruction' (Tahir Ün, mention) and 'Borderland' (Jiehao Su, mention).

In fact, the exploratory research work of photography integrating the documentary and fictional universe, patent in the work of these authors, is of great potential for calling the attention to significant problematic issues, situations or idiosyncrasies of the territories depicted. The fictional and artistic universe encourages the innovative re-examination of all those aspects coming from those rich and complex places and territories and, in this way, opens the opportunity for thinking and reimagining new ways for improving and reshaping those environments.

Thus, endowing these works we want to go against the narrow view of photography – the idea that the camera is just a recording device, not a creative tool, and that its product is strictly representational. Nevertheless, our concerns are not going so much in the direction of Walter Benjamin's ideas of a return to the forgotten potentials of the medium before its industrialisation or of George Baker's ideas expressed in "Photography's Expanded Field" trying to create a space for photography within the art world. Our main concerns are focused on understanding and divulging photographic projects capable of expressing the complexities of contemporary life and architecture, which in this case means communicating and reinventing our relationship with these territories and their meaning in this global world.

It is believed that these contest entries endorse the idea that documentary photography integrating an artistic or fictional approach can play an important part in projects that try to critically understand the values and life of our time. Within this perspective, these projects are in line with other projects of photographers who are simultaneously renowned in the art milieu, and use photography as an important, unsettling, political and social tool¹, exploring the technical and formal potentialities of the photography medium itself to better convey their ideas and emotions. Just to state some cases in point, Paul Graham² or Paul Seawright³ are good examples of this.

1 Charlotte Cotton, *The Photograph as Contemporary Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 181

2 Paul Graham Archive. "Introduction." Paul Graham Archive, <http://www.paulgrahamarchive.com/introduction.html>

3 Paul Seawright, *Volunteer*, (Artist Photo Books, 2013)

Thus, all winning entries constitute a contemporary photographic series that expresses a compelling narrative of our world and how architecture is lived and appropriated, being it in China's hot zone and all its complexities, semi-cleared buildings and apocalyptic scale (Alnis Stakle's Shangri-La), or in the changing landscape of Eastern China's physical and cultural terrain with their newly built high-rises waiting to be filled with residents (Jiehao Su's 'Borderland') or in the capturing of the new public spaces, housing and industrialisation that affects the identity and image of certain regions of China, blurring the boundaries between the contemporary and traditional life-styles and also urban and rural life during this transformation (Tahir Ün's 'Reconstruction').

To conclude, it is our belief that these projects are significant examples of exploratory research work of photography integrating the documentary and fictional universe – the aesthetization of these territories and transformations –, contributing, each work in their own way, to encourage the innovative re-examination of many aspects of our rich and complex architectural urban places and thus point out new ways of improving and reshaping our territories and environment.

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