



## PRESS RELEASE

### The winners of the 2023 Leica Oskar Barnack Awards have been chosen

Wetzlar, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Ismail Ferdous and Ziyi Le: the two winners of the renowned international photography competition, the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA), have been chosen for this year. 2023 brings us the 43rd edition of the LOBA. In the main category, the U.S.-based Bangladeshi photographer, Ismail Ferdous, convinced the five-member jury with his Sea Beach series. His project was submitted by Dimitri Beck and James Wellford, who were among this year's 60 international LOBA nominators. In the Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer category (for newcomer photographers up to 30 years old), the honour goes to Chinese photographer Ziyi Le, with his New Comer series. His work was submitted by the Fudan University School of Journalism in Shanghai.

#### **Ismail Ferdous: Sea Beach | Leica Oskar Barnack Award Winner 2023**

Cox's Bazar lies at the southernmost point of Bangladesh. This popular destination for many of the country's inhabitants stretches along the Bay of Bengal. It is considered a cultural melting pot, where people from every walk of life and place in society come, looking for a few moments of recreation and relaxation. The New York-based photographer was born in Bangladesh and returned to this special place to capture its particular mood and the beachgoers, in brilliant colours.

Ismail Ferdous: "The beach at Cox's Bazar represents a popular escape into nature for an overpopulated country. It's a place where anyone, from any level of society, can

afford to take a holiday. The lack of a sense of urgency is noteworthy, as though time itself is begging people to abandon all their burdens and go to the beach. Winning the LOBA has not only brought immense joy to my day, but it has also made this entire year truly exceptional. This triumph stands as a testament to the unwavering belief and passionate dedication that I have devoted to my craft.”

Ismail Ferdous was born in Bangladesh, in 1989, and currently lives between New York City and Bangladesh. He is a member of the Agence VU’ in Paris, and his work is committed to social, cultural and humanitarian themes. He first got involved with photography while studying at business school in Dhaka. Following the collapse of the Rana Plaza clothing factory in Dhaka in 2013, one of the worst industrial disasters in Bangladeshi history, which killed more than 1,100 workers, Ferdous made a powerful photographic statement. His documentary film and photo projects, “The Cost of Fashion” and “After Rana Plaza,” brought to light the devastating effects of the “fast fashion” industry. His photography has also dealt with the issue of migration and flight on four continents. Ferdous works for the most important newspapers and magazines, and his work has received many awards.

### **Ziyi Le: New Comer | Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer Winner 2023**

The Chinese photographer began his project via Weibo, a twitter-like portal for short messages in China, where he found people interested in his sensitive portrait series. He sees the staged photo shoots as a way to reflect on his own self-doubt, feelings of alienation and mental void. The outcome is a touching portrait of the “New Comer,” a generation looking for personal development and in search of its place in society.

Ziyi Le: “Throughout my whole time growing up, I had little communication, and was alienated for a long time, thereby giving rise to a sense of being in the middle of nowhere. Out of a basic instinct as a photographer, I decided to explore the similar void in the state of mind of young people like me, scattered in different cities, to see their faces as well as explore my deep self-doubt.”

Ziyi Le was born in Fujian, in 1993, and currently lives and works as a freelance photographer in Yunnan. He began his LOBA project in March 2020, when he had moved to Hangzhou for professional reasons, but became bored with the routine of his job. This incited him to develop this portrait series of his own generation.

**Quote Karin Rehn-Kaufmann:**

“On behalf of the full LOBA 2023 jury (Caroline Hunter, Photo Editor, The Guardian Saturday magazine, Great Britain; Whitney Hollington Matewe, Photo Editor at TIME magazine, USA; François Hébel, Curator, France; and Luca Locatelli, Photographer, Italy), I would like to sincerely congratulate this year’s winners of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award. Together, and with mutual appreciation, the jury completed the demanding task of selecting the finalists and winners. The outcome reveals a LOBA edition with particular strength, diversity and touching series,” says Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director and Chief Representative of Leica Galleries International.

The LOBA is one of the most prestigious and highly endowed awards in the field of photography: the winner of the LOBA receives 40,000 euros and Leica camera equipment valued at 10,000 euros; the winner of the Newcomer Award receives 10,000 euros and a Leica Q3.

On 12<sup>th</sup> October, both winners will be honoured during an award ceremony and, also, as part of an exhibition of all twelve shortlisted series, within the framework of a festival of photography in Wetzlar. Following the exhibition at the Ernst Leitz Museum in Wetzlar, LOBA 2023 will go on tour to further Leica Galleries and photo festivals around the world.

The LOBA 2023 catalogue will appear on the occasion of the exhibition, and will introduce the full LOBA 2023 shortlist, with complete photo series and background information. The exhibition of the winning and shortlisted series is realised with the

friendly support of WhiteWall. Further information concerning this year's winners, is available at: [www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/en/](http://www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/en/).

### **Leica Camera – A Partner for Photography**

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