



PRESS RELEASE

The Leica Oskar Barnack Award 2024: these are the winners

Wetzlar, 10th October 2024. Davide Monteleone and Maria Guțu were the two winners honoured with the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA) 2024, during a festive ceremony at Leica Headquarters on the evening of 10th October 2024.

In the 44th edition of the prestigious photography award, the LOBA jury selected Italian-born, Swiss-based photographer Davide Monteleone with his series “Critical Minerals – Geography of Energy,” for the main prize, while Moldovan photographer Maria Guțu won the LOBA Newcomer Award for her “Homeland” series. The two winning series were selected from a field of around 250 submissions, which had been previously presented to the LOBA jury by roughly 80 international photography experts from around 50 countries.

Davide Monteleone: Critical Minerals – Geography of Energy | Leica Oskar Barnack Award Winner 2024

In the photographer’s on-going, long-term study, he questions the current reorientation of the energy industry towards renewable sources, and problematises the resulting and complicated geopolitical, social and ecological effects, using the examples of copper, lithium and cobalt mining in Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia. In his multi-layered series he shows the landscapes and industrial complexes, while making the people working there the central focus of his work.

The winning series was proposed by Italian LOBA nominator Antonia Benedetta Donato.

Statement Davide Monteleone: “The prestige of the award is undisputable, and I am happy my name will be listed among the incredible Masters of Photography who won it before me. I’m also excited about the visibility opportunities the prize will give the project and the story. It’s an important topic; I’m glad it’s receiving attention. The transition to green energy and the fair distribution of resources are critical issues. Any publicity for my project is welcome in this

regard.”

Davide Monteleone was born in Potenza, Region Basilicata, Italy, in 1974, and lives today in Switzerland. He has a Masters in Art and Politics from Goldsmith University London, and is a curator and teacher for many public and private institutions. In 2001 he began to live and work in Moscow. His work as a visual artist and researcher encompasses the fields of image design, visual journalism and writing. For several years now he has been focussing on climate issues, at the intersection between economics and geopolitics. Monteleone has published numerous books, writes regularly for magazines such as National Geographic, Time and The New Yorker, and his work has been exhibited widely. He has been honoured with the National Geographic Storyteller’s Fund, the National Geographic Society Fellowship, the Asia Society Fellowship, the Carmignac Photojournalism Award, the EPEA Award, the European Publishers Award and several World Press Photo Awards, among others. He was already on the LOBA 2020 shortlist, with his “Sinomocene” series.

Maria Guțu: Homeland | Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer Winner 2024

The Moldovan photographer’s personal story was the starting point for her touching portrait series: she grew up with her grandparents, because her own parents – like many others in her homeland – had to move abroad for economic reasons. In the last twenty years, nearly a quarter of the small country’s population have left. Guțu’s poetic and visual narrative asks about the meaning of roots and of home, which have changed significantly over the years.

The series was proposed for the LOBA Newcomer Category – directed at photographers up to 30 years in age – by Docdocdoc, School of Modern Photography, St. Petersburg

Statement Maria Guțu:

“I travel a lot to Moldova’s villages. The quiet places and people inspire me with their simple and natural way of life, connection with the land and animals. I identify with the children and teenagers I photograph: they experience the same reality of emigration of their parents, as I did. My work itself evokes a nostalgic yearning for family, the past, and simply life itself.”

Maria Guțu was born in the Republic of Moldova in 1996. She graduated from the Docdocdoc School of Modern Photography, St. Petersburg, in 2022. Previously she had completed studies of Film at the Academy of Music, Theatres and Visual Arts in Chișinău, Moldova. In 2019 she

received a grant from the CDFD (Centre of Documentary Photography), Bucharest, Romania. In 2020 she was a finalist for the People Photography Award of The Independent Photographer. She has been a member of Women Photograph since 2021. She has already received numerous international nominations and her work has appeared in a number of group exhibitions.

Jury statement Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director and Chief Representative Leica Galleries International: “On behalf of the whole LOBA 2024 jury (Dimitri Beck, Head of the Photography Department at Polka; Per Gylfe, Head of the Education Department at the International Centre of Photography (ICP); Ciril Jazbek, photographer from Slovenia and 2013 LOBA Newcomer Award-winner; Amélie Schneider, Head of the Picture Editorial Department at Die Zeit, Germany, and myself), I would like to heartily congratulate the two winners of the Leica Oskar Barnack Awards. Both series are as different as they are convincing, in their approach to the basic constant of the LOBA, which questions the relationship of people to the environment.”

Jury statement Dimitri Beck: “The LOBA is surely a milestone in the international photography scene and plays a key role in promoting good visual storytelling. Presenting a shortlist of twelve photographers and their works is important to explore the diversity of visions and stories happening nowadays.”

Jury statement Amélie Schneider: “In times of war, crises and social insecurity, photography remains the medium with which to reach and touch people’s emotions, and to make world events tangible.”

Jury statement Per Gylfe: “The LOBA plays a crucial role in the international photography scene by highlighting and celebrating exceptional photographic work from around the world, and also encourages the ongoing dialogue about the role of photography in society.”

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

On 10th October the two winners will be honoured during the award ceremony and as part of an exhibition showing all twelve shortlisted series, within the framework of the Celebration of

Photography in Wetzlar, Germany. After the exhibition at the Ernst Leitz Museum in Wetzlar, the LOBA 2024 series will be shown in other Leica Galleries and at photo festivals around the world.

The LOBA 2024 catalogue complementing the exhibition, introduces the complete picture series and background information from the full LOBA 2024 shortlist.

The realisation of the exhibition of the winning and shortlisted series is kindly supported by WhiteWall.

Further information about this year's winners is available at: www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com.

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