



Press Release

Nominations: the 2026 Leica Oskar Barnack Award shortlist Eleven LOBA finalists present their series, and the winner of the first LOBA Women Grant has been chosen.

Wetzlar, 10th August 2026. Once again this year, eleven outstanding finalists have been shortlisted for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA) – chosen by the prestigious photography competition's international jury. Following an extensive selection process, Leica Camera AG is honouring exceptional photographers with the LOBA for the 46th time.

All the shortlisted photo series can now be viewed at www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com. They will be presented over the coming weeks, accompanied by texts and further information.

In 2026, the jury also selected, for the first time, the winner of the newly established LOBA Women Grant, and her work will then be presented the next year.

The suspense will last until 8th October 2026, when the winners of the Main and Newcomer categories will be announced, along with the recipient of the LOBA Women Grant. The grand award ceremony will be celebrated at Leica Headquarters in Wetzlar.

Since 1980, Leica Camera AG has been presenting the LOBA to international photographers whose remarkable series of pictures focus, in particular, on the relationship between people and the environment. This shortlist was put together by the LOBA jury who drew from nominations presented by more than 130 photography experts from 48 countries. Based upon their personal expertise and understanding, each nominator submitted up to three series. The Leica Oskar Barnack Newcomer Award is selected in collaboration with 28 international institutions and universities from 18 countries.

The 2026 LOBA jury is made up of the following members: Jane'a Johnson, curator and researcher, Curatorial Assistant, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (USA); Celina Lunsford, Artistic Director and Curator of the FFF, Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (Germany); Paolo Pellegrin, photographer (Italy); Gu Zheng, Professor at the Fudan University School of Journalism, Shanghai (China); and Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director and General Representative of Leica Galleries International, Austria.

Following the award ceremony on 8th October all the LOBA series will be presented in a large exhibition at the Ernst Leitz Museum, complemented with a comprehensive catalogue. After the



exhibition in Wetzlar, the LOBA 2026 will appear at further Leica Galleries and photo festivals around the world.

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

LOBA Shortlist 2026

An overview of the series (Main and Newcomer categories) in alphabetical order:

Saher Alghorra: Witnessing Gaza

Since the beginning of the war in Gaza, Israel has been denying international journalists access to the area. This makes the testimony of Palestinian journalists all the more important. In his series, Alghorra (born 1997) has documented the year 2025, in all its complexity: from shortages and famine to violence and loss – scenes that produce international headlines, alongside interpersonal moments that find no interest from news agencies.

Todd Antony: Buzkashi

In his dramatic black and white series, the New Zealand photographer (born 1975) documents the archaic, traditional sport referred to in the title, which is still played in Tajikistan to this day. The literal translation of the Persian word, buzkashi, is “goat pulling”; and the game centres around a fight over the headless corpse of a goat. The sport originated amongst the nomadic equestrian cultures of Central Asia, and to this day strength and horsemanship remain defining characteristics of the players involved.

Anush Babajanyan: The Aral Sea and the Battered Waters of Central Asia

There was a time when the Aral Sea was the fourth largest inland body of water in the world; today, due to Soviet irrigation projects, it has shrunk by over 90 percent. In her series, the Armenian photographer (born 1983) documents not only the environmental crisis, but also reveals how communities in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have adapted in order to survive. They breed camels, harvest brine shrimps, keep bees, and fish in the northern part of the Aral Sea, revitalised following the construction of the Kokaral Dam.

Damir Faizulin: Preserving Nature as Preserving Ourselves

The Russian photographer (born 1986) draws attention to the nature and living conditions in the mountains of Dagestan, which lie in the North Caucasus in the south of Russia. His pictures reveal the



precarious and delicate balance between nature and the people living there. Faizulin documents the changes currently taking place: the advent of tourism and modern architecture, and the neglect of established structures and culture; whilst, at the same time, celebrating the beauty of the region.

William Keo: Extramuros

A glimpse at France today: youths in the banlieues (suburbs) are at the centre of the French photographer's series. The suburbs are characterised by social unrest, the aftermath of the economic crisis, and the housing policies of the 1960s and 1970s; yet, at the same time, they are centres of creativity and political innovation. Keo (born 1996) shares a portrait of a changing, post-colonial France, in which the country's social, cultural and political future hangs in the balance.

Slava Lyu-fa: Inner Distance

The Nizhnekolymsk district in the Arctic region of Yakutia is defined by distance – in terms of geography, time and infrastructure. The communities in the far north-eastern reaches of Russia “remain part of a single fragile system connected by people, memory, and the necessity of survival,” as the Russian photographer (born 1989) explains. In his series, Lyu-fa shows a diversity of places where people – whether fishermen or researchers – are affected by climate and economic changes.

Benedikt Renč: Cairo

In his series, the Czech photographer (born 1982) presents his personal perspective of the Egyptian capital, and the radical changes taking place there. His aim is to capture everyday life in its most authentic form. “I wanted to document the last generation still living in this raw, unpolished reality,” Renč explains. “Today, among dust and stone, I wanted to preserve an atmosphere that will soon vanish as Cairo transforms beyond recognition.”

Elliot Ross: A Question of Balance

For the Navajo Nation – the largest Native American reservation in the USA – water is not something that can be taken for granted. Whilst the American Southwest is experiencing its worst drought ever, the Taiwanese-American photographer (born 1990) sheds light on the story of a water supply system divided along ethnic lines: in Washington County, Utah, affluent communities consume excessive amounts of water per person; in Navajo communities, there is a lack of the water needed for basic living.

Annie Sakkab: We Used to Watch the Rivers Go By

In Jordan, water is not only a physical resource; it also represents memory – embodied in stone, earth and song. “What started as a curiosity about a resource,” Palestinian-Jordanian photographer



Sakkab (born 1969) remembers, “became a deeper excavation of my own history and heritage, a search for roots in a land shaped by centuries of change and deprivation. This is not merely a study of water; it is a story about people.”

David Sládek: People of Šumiac

Born in the former Czechoslovakia and living in Great Britain and Ireland, Sládek (born 1976) found a second home, almost two years ago, in the small mountain village of Šumiac in Slovakia. Since then, the photographer has been documenting the everyday lives and traditions of the people living there. Sládek sees his black and white series as a type of bridge between two groups – the locals, and the severely marginalised Roma – who are divided by more than just a stream.

Laila AnnMarie Stevens: Clayton Sisterhood Project

Inspired by a longing for the remembrance of her ancestors, the American photographer's (born 2001) series explores contemporary queer family relationships and the enduring legacy of strong, self-assured Black women. The series' focus is on the lifestyle created for themselves by Stevens's two sisters and four nieces, who moved from Queens, New York, to share a house on a plot of land in Clayton, North Carolina.

LOBA Women Grant

From among the numerous applicants for the LOBA Women Grant, the jury has selected a winner. The name of the first winner of the LOBA Women Grant will be announced at the Celebration of Photography on the evening of the LOBA awards ceremony.

2026 LOBA Jury statements:

Karin Rehn-Kaufmann:

“The Leica Oskar Barnack Award honours not only outstanding photographic quality, but also photography's ability to illustrate social evolution and bring people together.”

“The LOBA draws the attention to long-term projects which, without such a platform, would not receive the visibility they deserve.”

Gu Zheng:

“By insisting on facing crucial realities, exposing the living environment and condition of neglected communities in the context of globalization and, more importantly, showing the complexity of human nature, the LOBA is playing a very important role within the international photography community.”



About Leica Camera

Leica Camera AG is an international, premium manufacturer of cameras, lenses and sports optics. As part of its growth strategy, the company has expanded its portfolio to include mobile imaging (smartphones) and the manufacture of high-quality spectacle lenses and watches, and is also represented in the home cinema segment with its own projectors.

Leica Camera AG, having its headquarters in Wetzlar, Germany, and a second production site in Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal, operates a global network of its own distribution companies with around 120 Leica Stores worldwide.

The Leica brand stands for excellence in quality, German craftsmanship and industrial design, combined with innovative technologies. An integral aspect of the brand culture is the promotion of the culture of photography, with around 30 Leica Galleries worldwide, the Leica Akademie and international awards such as the Leica Hall of Fame Award and the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA).

Please find further information at:

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