



## Press Information

### **Max Pinckers is the winner of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award 2018**

**In this year's competition, Belgian photographer Max Pinckers convinced the jury of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award with his series 'Red Ink'. The Newcomer Award 2018 goes to photographer Mary Gelman for her series titled 'Svetlana'.**

**Wetzlar, 6 September 2018.** The winners of this year's long-established and internationally acclaimed Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA) photographic competition have been chosen. In the main category, 'Leica Oskar Barnack Award', Belgian photographer Max Pinckers convinced the five members of the jury with his series titled 'Red Ink'. In the category 'Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer' for up-and-coming photographers aged up to the age of 25, Mary Gelman from Russia won the award with her series titled 'Svetlana'.

The pictures of Max Pinckers' 'Red Ink' series were taken under strict supervision. In August 2017, at the height of the propaganda conflict with the USA, he accompanied journalist Evan Osnos on a four-day assignment to North Korea for the weekly magazine 'The New Yorker'. In his series, 'Red Ink', the winner of this year's LOBA virtually plays with the perceptive powers of the viewer. North Korea is still one of the most centrally directed and least open nations of the world. Even though one could gather the impression that the regime has begun to allow more photographers to enter the country, unsupervised photography remains almost impossible. From the outset, Pinckers never imagined that his photos would be able to throw a light on what goes on behind the facades constructed by the regime. Instead, he used his flash as if at an advertising or propaganda shoot to emphasise the obvious staging of the situations he encountered.

In the course of her extremely personal project, 'Svetlana', the winner of the newcomer award, Mary Gelman, regularly visited the village of Svetlana, a community around 150 kilometres to the east of St. Petersburg that is a part of the anthroposophical Camphill Movement, over a period of almost two years. The village is a therapeutic refuge in which people with special needs or disabilities live and work autonomously in a setting untouched by prejudices and discrimination. Gelman reports that the initial reaction of the residents to her and her camera was over-excitement. After a while, the residents became used to her and she became accepted as a more or less permanent guest whose presence was hardly noted. From this moment on, a wonderful time began for the young photographer. Gelman emphasises that respect, openness and honesty, and learning to perceive and accept the personal frontiers of individuals, is essential. The most important thing for her when shooting is to remain calm and unhurried.

'On behalf of the entire jury, I would like to congratulate Max Pinckers and Mary Gelman, the winners of this year's Leica Oskar Barnack Awards. With their photographs, both have impressively cast a humanistic eye on elements of society in which people take centre stage. All members of the jury were impressed by the diversity and exceptional quality of the around 2,500 entries from 110 different countries. The entries make it clear that the theme of the competition, "the relationship between people and their environment", which has been the leitmotif of the LOBA since the first request for entries in 1979, remains as valid and important as ever before', says Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director & Chief Representative Leica Galleries International.

The winners and finalists of the LOBA will be honoured in the course of a formal ceremony in Berlin on 10 October. The portfolios of all twelve finalists will then be on view from 10 to 31 October 2018 at a major exhibition in the 'Neuen Schule für Fotografie', Brunnenstrasse 188-190, 10119 Berlin. The LOBA Catalogue 2018, presenting the winners and finalists in detail with comprehensive portfolios and interview, will be published to accompany the exhibition.

## **Biographies**

### **Max Pinckers**

In his work, the Belgian photographer, born in Brussels in 1988, explores the strategies of visual storytelling in documentary photography. He studied at the Royal Academy of Fine

Arts in Ghent from 2008 to 2012, has since published four books and his work has been shown at numerous national and international exhibitions. He is the founder of the publishing house Lyre Press, and was already a LOBA finalist in 2016, with his entry titled 'Two Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself'.

### **Mary Gelman**

Born in the small Russian town of Penza in 1994, Gelman graduated in sociology before turning to gender studies and photography. She studied documentary photography and photojournalism at the DocDocDoc school of modern photography in St. Petersburg and attended various national and international workshops. In the meantime, the documentary photographer has shot assignments for publications including the Washington Post, The Village and European Photography Magazine. Her multiple award-winning work has been shown at exhibitions around the world. Mary Gelman lives in St. Petersburg.

#### **Note for journalists:**

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