



Press information

Mustafah Abdulaziz is the winner of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award 2019

In this year's competition, American photographer Mustafah Abdulaziz convinced the jury of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award with his series 'Water'. The Newcomer Award goes to the German photographer Nanna Heitmann for her portfolio entitled 'Hiding from Baba Yaga'.

Wetzlar, 3 September 2019. 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', American photographer Mustafah Abdulaziz convinced the five members of the jury with his series titled 'Water'. In the category 'Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer' for up-and-coming photographers up to the age of 28, German photographer Nanna Heitmann won the award with her project titled 'Hiding from Baba Yaga'.

LOBA winner Mustafah Abdulaziz, speaking about his winning portfolio 'Water': 'Photographs have the potential to be beautiful by nature, but this makes me cautious. When it comes to content and composition, there must be a harmony with something else, otherwise I don't believe them. When I don't believe in them, I can't expect the people who see them to believe in them, either. For the pictures in "Water", this means that I evaluate every part of my visual approach over and over again. There must be a continuous and organic process of discovery. "Water" is my way of exploring the world, of taking part in it in a relevant and responsible way and lending meaning to an overwhelmingly big but immensely important topic. I work on this not only for the immense satisfaction it brings me, but also because it's necessary. Our relationship to our planet could be the most important issue of our age.' 'Water', a long-term

project that has taken the photographer around the world for the past eight years, illustrates and documents how people interact with nature and what this means for civilisation and the future.

A journey into the realm of myths and legends: The Yenisei, one of the world's longest rivers, became the leading light of photographer Nanna Heitmann on her journey through Siberia. 'It soon became clear to me that the role played by the river itself was not so important. Most of the time, I just kept my eyes open for interesting characters, because people have always sought protection and freedom on the banks of the Yenisei and in the neighbouring Taiga: serfs on the run, criminals, rebels, or simply adventurers and Orthodox believers', explains Nanna Heitmann. The photographer's mother is Russian by birth. With the exception of Moscow, Russia had always been only a big, dark patch on the map for the LOBA Newcomer Award winner. She therefore decided to absolve a semester abroad in the Siberian city of Tomsk. Up until then, her idea of Russia was predominantly shaped by children's films of the Soviet era and the Slavic folk tales she had read as a child, which inspired her photographic project 'Hiding from Baba Yaga'. Baba Yaga is an important character of Slavic folk stories. She is a dangerous and unpredictable witch who lives in a hut in the depths of the forest. Heitmann borrowed a jeep and camping equipment for her project and drove off towards the Republic of Tuva with a couple of ideas for pictures and potential destinations in mind. Following the course of the Yenisei, Nanna Heitmann drove through the harsh wilderness of the Siberian Taiga, a region rich in ancient myths, legends and rituals. She saw her journey not only as a documentation of life along the river, but also of the myths and folk tales of the region. She searched for dreamlike images.

'On behalf of the entire jury, Enrico Stefanelli, Director of Photolux Festival, Milena Carstens, Director of Photography ZEITmagazin, Max Pinckers, Photographer & winner of the LOBA 2018 and Steve McCurry, Photographer & founder of ImagineAsia, I congratulate the winners of this year's Leica Oskar Barnack Awards, Mustafah Abdulaziz and Nanna Heitmann. They have won through against a total of around 2,300 competitors from 99 countries and have convinced all members of the jury with their impressive and moving portfolios', 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 25 September. The portfolios of all twelve finalists will then be on view from 25

September to 25 October 2019 at a major exhibition with the kind support of Ilford Imaging Europe and Halbe-Rahmen in the 'Neuen Schule für Fotografie', Brunnenstrasse 188-190, 10119 Berlin. The LOBA Catalogue, presenting the winners and finalists in detail with comprehensive portfolios and background information, will be published to accompany the exhibition. Further information and in-depth interviews with the twelve photographers can be found at www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com.

Biographies

Mustafah Abdulaziz

Born in New York in 1986, Mustafah Abdulaziz studied journalism and political sciences, but did not complete his studies. He is a self-taught photographer. He moved to Berlin in 2011, after working as the first staff photographer for the 'Wall Street Journal'. His long-term project 'Water', on which he has been working for more than eight years, was sponsored by the United Nations, WaterAid, WWF, VSCO and Google. The project has been published in 'Spiegel', 'The Guardian', 'New Yorker' and 'Time'.

Nanna Heitmann

Born in Ulm, Germany, in 1994, Nanna Heitmann finished her studies of photojournalism and documentary photography with a semester abroad in the Siberian city of Tomsk. Her work was shortlisted for the 'LensCulture Emerging Talent Awards' organised by the online magazine in 2018. In the same year, she was also honoured with the Vogue Italia Prize at the PH Museum women photographers grant for the portfolio shown here. She has been a candidate for membership of the Magnum agency since 2019.

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