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Visual feats

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VISUAL FEATS

In October 2012 a collection of the world's best news images came to HKDI, highlighting the virtues of professional skills in a world where abundant smart phones and instant Internet access have turned everybody into a press photographer. **DAISY ZHONG** reports.

EVENTS



PREVIOUS PAGE: IN SANAA, YEMEN, A WOMAN CRADLES HER 18-YEAR-OLD SON WHO WAS GASSED WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTEST. (WORLD PRESS PHOTO OF THE YEAR 2011, SAMUEL ARANDA, SPAIN, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES); LEFT AN AFRICAN MODEL POSES IN FRONT OF A TAILOR'S SHOP IN DAKAR DURING THE CITY'S FASHION WEEK. (2ND PRIZE, ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT SINGLES, VINCENT BOISOT, RIVA PRESS FOR LE FIGARO MAGAZINE); ABOVE: MELICA MEHRABAN, AN ACTRESS BORN IN IRAN WHO GREW UP IN DENMARK AND PLAYED A LEADING ROLE IN THE IRANIAN SPY THRILLER FOX HUNTING (1ST PRIZE, PORTRAITS SINGLES, LAERKE POSSELT, FOR POLITIKEN)

OUTSIDE A MONOCHROMATIC BUILDING IN PYONGYANG, an orange-lit portrait of North Korea's founder Kim Il-sung shines faintly in the mysterious gloom. On a Cairo street a few minutes after afternoon prayers a man was caught shouting during a mass protest that would eventually topple the Mubarak regime. And in front of a tailor's store in Dakar an African model is seen wearing a luminous red evening gown as she poses during the city's Fashion Week.

These and 164 other images were part of *World Press Photo 2012*, a collection of award winning photographs rich with inspirational and thought-provoking perspectives that were on display in HKDI's d-mart from 7 to 21 October. This year the annual exhibition has made 100 stops in 45 countries and it was the first time since 2003 that Hong Kong was included in the itinerary.

Established in 1955 in Amsterdam, *World Press Photo* is regarded as the most prestigious professional press photography contest in the world, providing a platform for outstanding photographers to inspire deeper understanding of the world's major issues through quality photojournalism. Unlike the Pulitzer Prize, which is awarded only to work that appears in media based in the United States, *World Press Photo* contest welcomes submissions from all over the globe and has nine categories to the Pulitzer's two, the winners being selected by an independent international jury composed of 19 experts.

Aidan Sullivan, chairman of this year's jury says that he and his colleagues wished to select photos that symbolised "hope", or those that not only reflect truth and reality, but also "give us encouragement and comfort" after a year – 2011 – that was full of natural disasters and human conflict.

"*World Press Photo* is a very meaningful and valuable international photography exhibition," says Joe Lam, the Chairman of Hong Kong Press Photographers Association and an officiating guest of the *World Press Photo* exhibition held at HKDI. "The awarded pieces provoke the audience to think more deeply about all the important events that have happened around them in the past year".

The "*World Press Photo* of the Year 2012" was awarded to Spanish photographer Samuel Aranda, who took a photo of a woman in Sanaa, Yemen cradling her 18-year-old son who is suffering from the effects of tear gas after participating in an anti-authoritarian street demonstration, capturing the heroism, solemnity and desperation of the Arab Spring.

Damir Sagolj from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the winner of the first prize for a single image in the "Daily Life" category, came to the exhibition at HKDI and shared his experiences and views on press photography in a talk called *Photo Journal from War in the Balkans to Asia*. Vincent Yu, an Associated Press photographer for over 16 years who was awarded 3rd prize singles in the category "People in the News" in 2011, accompanied him.

Yu, who received his training in basic photography at the Kwun Tong Vocational Training School in 1984-85, believes press photography still plays an important role in the Internet age, even when every witness to a newsworthy can easily take photos by using a camera or smart phone.

"A professional photographer not only honestly records what is happening, but also can create an angle," he says. "The most important thing is to show reality with a critical, meaningful angle,



ABOVE: A PORTRAIT OF NORTH KOREA'S FOUNDER, KIM IL-SUNG, HANGS ON A BUILDING IN PYONGYANG, NORTH KOREA. (1ST PRIZE, DAILY LIFE SINGLES, DAMIR SAGOLJ, FOR REUTERS); MIDDLE: IN BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, A HUSBAND CARE FOR HIS 84-YEAR-OLD WIFE WHO SUFFERS FROM ALZHEIMER'S. (1ST PRIZE, DAILY LIFE STORIES, ALEJANDRO KIRCHUK); BOTTOM: AN ANTI-POACHING TEAM GUARDS A NORTHERN WHITE RHINO, THE WORLD'S MOST ENDANGERED ANIMAL, AT THE OL PEJETA CONSERVANCY IN KENYA. (1ST PRIZE, NATURE STORIES, BRENT STIRTON FOR NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE)

and reveal the depth of an issue, just as reporters do with editorial."

Yu's award-winning piece shows the now deceased North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and his designated successor Kim Jong-un attending a military parade in Pyongyang on 10 October 2010. Kim Jong-un had rarely appeared in public or been photographed until then. In the photograph the elder Kim turns his head to look at his youngest son in what appears to be a complex way mixing doubt and concern, while the son is concentrating on watching the parade and putting on a show of confidence.



In 2012 the *World Press Photo* contest attracted 101,254 pieces of work submitted by 5247 photographers from 124 countries. The 167 photos exhibited at HKDI covered all nine categories, namely spot news, general news, people in the news, contemporary issues, daily life, portraits, arts and entertainment, nature and sports. Yu is so far the only *World Press Photo* award winner from Hong Kong but the exhibition may have left many of the aspiring photographers who visited HKDI with sufficient inspiration to ensure that the city gets much greater representation in future years. ☺



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