

PRESS RELEASE

Osnabrück, 19th October 2019

Johanna Maria Fritz is the winner of the German Peace Prize for Photography.

The photographer from Berlin wins through against her international competitors

Osnabrück. Saturday evening saw the awarding of the first ‘German Peace Prize for Photography’ to Johanna Maria Fritz. Lord Mayor Wolfgang Griesert presented the certificate and the winner’s cheque for 10,000 euros to the photographer from Berlin. With her work titled ‘Like a Bird’, Fritz won through against projects submitted by top-class competitors from 43 countries around the world. The prize is the result of a joint initiative launched by the City of Osnabrück and the Felix Schoeller Group. The winning entry and the work of the nominees will be on view to the general public in an exhibition in Osnabrück’s Museum Quarter from 20 October 2019 to 8 March 2020.

Wolfgang Griesert, Lord Mayor of the City of Osnabrück, expressed his appreciation of the enormous engagement of the photographers from 43 countries who submitted entries for the ‘German Peace Prize for Photography’: ‘The ‘German Peace Prize for Photography’ is a wonderful opportunity that ensures that we never lose sight of the concept of peace, even in troubled times.’ He also emphasised the special connections with Osnabrück, ‘The City of Peace’, and its numerous activities and events in the name of peace. ‘Up until now, there has been no comparable art award in Germany. With the German Peace Prize for Photography’, we have created a special format for addressing the subject of peace’, says Griesert.

The new culture prize as a commitment to the City of Peace

It is no coincidence that the new cultural peace prize comes from the City of Osnabrück. With the creation of the award, the initiators paid tribute to the special role played by the city in history. As the city in which the Peace of Westphalia was negotiated in 1648, Osnabrück understands its history as a commitment to engage in the politics of peace. This also applies to the cultural programme being developed for the city and beyond regional borders.

The German Peace Prize for Photography Exhibition, from 20 October 2019 – 8 March 2020.

The winning entry and the work of the nominees will be on view in an exhibition in Osnabrück's Museum Quarter from 20 October 2019 to 8 March 2020. The exhibited works are all printed on Felix Schoeller photographic paper, some of which are in formats of up to 120 x 100 cm. The exhibition of the Peace Prize also breaks new ground in public space: In the bus shelters in downtown Osnabrück, the photos of the winners and nominees are presented to a broad public.

The prizewinner:

Both initiators of the 'German Peace Prize for Photography', the City of Osnabrück and the Felix Schoeller Group, stipulate that peace must not necessarily be exclusively defined as the absence of war. In view of this, the diversity of the works submitted was correspondingly extreme. 'Like a bird' is the title of the work by photographer Johanna Maria Fritz from Berlin that convinced the jury. Fritz shows the power that the traditions of the circus can develop for the everyday lives of people in various crisis-torn countries and regions. In her concept, she writes that the '...circus acts ... reflect the absurdity of living on the front line between Hamas and the Israeli Defence Forces, ... Circus schools show Afghan children an alternative path.' The pictures show '... the age-old tradition of tightrope-walking in Northern Caucasus and a circus in Iran, where, despite the Islamic dictatorship, people can still find friends and have fun. ... Under the title 'Like a little bird', a small boy tells his story of life with the circus. As Fritz says, '... this title simultaneously stands for the essence of the work.'

The jury's reasons:

'The prizewinner has successfully depicted a universal joie de vivre that is insuppressible, even in the contexts of conflict and violence. On the one hand, the series impresses with the contrast between human creativity and diversity in the respective crisis contexts that refer to situations of conflict and violence that, in the pictures, serve only as a backdrop before which the artistes spread hope, wonders, joy and laughter. Seen photographically, it is an utterly peaceful work that expresses faint hopes and lends the political clown a voice.'

Vita

Officially, Johanna-Maria Fritz, born 1994, lives in Berlin – in reality, however, she is on the move the whole year round. She studied photography at the Ostkreuzschule, and has been a member of the agency of the same name since the beginning of 2019. Her work has been published internationally in numerous magazines and shown at exhibitions around the globe: not only in Australia, France, Germany and Switzerland, but also in China and the USA.

Nominated for the German Peace Prize for Photography:

Roberto Guerra Toledo, France

‘Les désastre de la guerre’

Concept: This project is the consequence of civil unrest during a visit to the Behresht-e Zahra cemetery in Tehran, Iran, where the Iranian soldiers who were killed in the war with Iraq in the 1980s that cost so many lives found their final resting place: 800,000 dead or missing, 1.82 million wounded. At that time, children from the age of twelve could be recruited, which also led to massacres in which almost 80,000 Iranian child-soldiers were murdered. I think of the Spanish painter Francisco Goya and his series of prints titled ‘The Disasters of War’. They depict the gruesome atrocities of war. The piercing look that I photographed is reminiscent of funereal portraits like those by Al Fayoum (paintings that go back to the time of the Roman Empire). Here, however, its aim is to remind us of the reasons that lead to the murderous insanity of war. In my choice of five images, I picked out precisely those in which the eyes almost directly confront the future viewer, as if in a personal and inner dialogue.

Sameer Al-Doumy, France

‘Peace is ...’

Concept: War can have quite different meanings, depending on the geographical location and the respective circumstances. In the Syrian town of Eastern Ghuta, peace can mean that children play happily on swings made from the remains of rockets that were intended to kill them, or that young men play football in their devastated school, that children ride around on bikes without taking notice of the fighters and bombers flying above them and the destruction all around; peace can also be a man baking bread in the ruins of his bakery, or people who simply lead their everyday lives despite the difficult circumstances.

Toby Binder, Germany

‘Youth of Belfast – between Peace Agreement and Brexit’

Concept: The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement was signed 21 years ago, which means that the young people of today never experienced the armed conflict known as ‘The Troubles’. Although the majority voted remain, Northern Ireland will nevertheless be forced to leave the European Union as a consequence of the Brexit referendum. While the Protestant Ulster Unionists voted leave, the Catholic Irish Nationalists expressed their wish to remain in the EU. There are serious fears that Brexit will endanger the Northern Ireland Peace Agreement from 1988, which finally put an end to the violent clashes between the Protestant Unionist and Catholic Nationalist factions. Today, they live in homogeneous urban districts that are separated by walls.

Cletus Nelson Nwadike, Sweden

'Peace is the greatest thing 2'

Concept: War is horrific, and war is cruel to people. My people were almost wiped from the face of this planet. Two million of my people were killed. Our humanity was stolen, and our trust was almost destroyed. 1967-1970. It was dark, and the darkness endured long after the war was over. When I was growing up, I saw no pictures at all, because the soldiers had burned all our photos. My father said that I look like my grandfather, but I never saw my grandfather or even a picture of him. The war may be over now, but the heart still feels the pain. I have left my country and have studied photography at a Swedish university. The new world around me gives me hope. I have found a new family that no war can ever take away, because Sweden has enjoyed peace for the past 200 years.

The jurors of the German Peace Prize for Photography

Michael Dannenmann

Michael Dannenmann is an internationally acclaimed portrait photographer from Düsseldorf. He has been the chairman of the jury of the Felix Schoeller Photo Awards since it began and the curator of numerous exhibitions.

Gérard A. Goodrow

Gérard A. Goodrow is a popular speaker and publicist on the subjects of international contemporary art, photography and the global art market. Today, Gérard A. Goodrow lives in Cologne and works as a freelance curator and author.

Clara Maria Sels

Clara Maria Sels is the owner of the Clara Maria Sels Gallery in Düsseldorf, which she founded in 1989. Among the first artists she represented were the photographers Duane Michals and Francesca Woodman. She is the founder of the Duesseldorf Photo Weekend and has managed the successful event from 2013 until the present day.

Nils-Arne Kässens

Nils-Arne Kässens is the Director of the Museum Quarter Osnabrück, the complex comprising the Felix-Nussbaum-Haus, the Museum of Cultural History, the Villa Schlicker, and the Akzisehaus.

Dr. Dana Landau

Dana Landau is Senior Researcher at 'swisspeace', the Swiss peace foundation, a practically-oriented peace research institute at the University of Basel.

Professor Ulrich Schneckenher

Ulrich Schneckener has been Professor in International Relations & Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Osnabrück since 2009. He has been the chairman of the board of the German Foundation for Peace Research (Deutschen Stiftung Friedensforschung - DSF) since 2016.

Quotes:

Lord Mayor Wolfgang Griesert:

‘The German Peace Prize for Photography’ will further expand our perspectives with regard to the issues of ‘Peace’ – in a way, we could say it gives us a wide-angle view. Here, it will be photographs, not words, that challenge us, bring us to our senses and question our previously held ideas and misconceptions of what peace truly represents. Here and now, the pictures by the prizewinner and the nominees show us their intensely personal views on this complex subject. What unites them all – and raises them high above the daily tidal wave of ephemeral snapshots – is the powerful radiance that will provoke discussion and debate and root itself firmly in our memories.’

Hans-Christoph Gallenkamp. CEO Felix Schoeller Group

‘We, as the Felix Schoeller Group, have always considered the Felix Schoeller Photo Award to be a commitment to qualitative excellence in photography, for which purpose we have been supplying correspondingly excellent papers for almost 125 years. We have always understood the award ceremony and the exhibition of the works here in Osnabrück to be a commitment to the city in which our company began and grew. It is our intention to adhere to this sense of commitment in the future. Particularly, when a new dimension is added, as is the case this year’

Image files are available for all entries that are nominated for a prize in the Felix Schoeller Photo Award. We will be happy to send you high-res image files for publications in connection with this press release, along with any other information you might require about the award. Please email your enquiry to:

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About the Felix Schoeller Group

Founded in 1895, the Felix Schoeller Group is a family business with worldwide operations producing specialty papers. With around 3,600 employees, the renowned Osnabrück-based company produced

and marketed more than 450,000 tonnes of specialty papers in 2018 and posted a total turnover of 952 million euros.

The Felix Schoeller Group develops, produces and markets specialty papers for photographic applications, digital printing systems, the packaging market, self-adhesive applications and for the furniture, wood-based products and wallpaper industry.

In addition to its Osnabrück main site and headquarters, the Felix Schoeller Group has four other production facilities in Germany - in Weissenborn and Penig in Saxony, in Titisee-Neustadt (Baden-Württemberg) and in Günzach (Bavaria). It also has production facilities in the USA and Canada and is involved in joint ventures in Russia, India and China. It has representative offices in Sao Paulo, Tokyo, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Melbourne, Moscow, and Prague.

The Felix Schoeller Group exemplifies uncompromising quality, unique flexibility and true partnership. The result: Best Performing Papers. Worldwide.

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