

Press Release



2023

The 39th Higashikawa Awards

The Town of Photography
Culture Capital of Photography

Information

Higashikawa International Photography Festival Office

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HIGASHIKAWA, KAMIKAWA-GUN, HOKKAIDO

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The 39th Higashikawa Award Winners

◆The Overseas Photographer Award : Astrid JAHNSEN (Peru)

For her works such as *“On Your Knees”* (2017), *“Backdrop”* (2018) and *“The Lost Gaze”* (2019~).

◆The Domestic Photographer Award : HARA Mikiko

For her photo book *“Small Myths”* (Chose Commune, 2022)

◆The New Photographer Award : FUJIOKA Aya

For her exhibitions, *“New Stories”* (Irie Taikichi Memorial Museum of Photography Nara city, 2022) and *“Countermeasures Against Awkward Discourses : From the Perspective of Third Wave Feminism”* (21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa) and her recent diversified activities.

◆The Special Photographer Award : ISHIKAWA Naoki

For his photobooks, *“SAKHALIN”* (amana,2015) and *“Shiretoko Peninsula”* (Hokkaido Shimbun Press,2017) and his series of project “Shashin Zero Banchi, Shiretoko” since 2016.

◆The Hidano Kazuemon Award : HIROTA Naotaka

For his activities of taking photos of the railways closely connected to the local people, nature and culture.

Commentary on the Selection of the 39th Higashikawa Photography Awards

UENO Osamu

Higashikawa Photography Award Jury Committee

Selection of the 39th Town of Photography Higashikawa Awards was carried out on February 22, 2023. Those nominated this year include 51 photographers for the Domestic Photographer Award, 59 for the New Photographer Award, 23 for the Special Photographer Award, 45 for the Hidano Kazuemon Award, and 12 for the Overseas Photographer Award. As with previous years, the morning was spent carefully looking at photobooks and resources, while the winners of the five awards were selected in the afternoon from a total of 171 artists. This year, while two of the eight jury members were absent, their votes were taken in advance and were reflected in the judging process.

The Domestic Photographer Award was narrowed down to five at the final stage, and after repeated discussions and voting, Mikiko HARA was selected by a narrow margin. Ms. HARA's work, in which she devotes herself to snapshots and nurtures the moment, may at first seem quiet and orthodox, but as we repeatedly look over and discuss her photobook "*Small Myths*", the power of her work gradually increased until it felt like overflowing. Ms. HARA is a photographer who has been attracting attention in the judging process every year despite her lack of work. One can say the power of her work, which continues to spread slowly like a ripple, has come to fruition with this award.

The finalists for the New Photographer Award were Maya AKASHIKA, Ryuichi ISHIKAWA, Motonari TAGAWA, Nao NAKAI, Sohei NISHINO, and Aya FUJIOKA but at the final stage, only Ryuichi ISHIKAWA and Aya FUJIOKA remained. Even after repeated voting and debates, the votes remained split evenly. After taking a break and proceeding with the review again, Aya FUJIOKA was selected. In the case of FUJIOKA, who has continued to deepen her thinking while honestly questioning her own work through the use of social media, as well as solo exhibitions and special exhibitions at museums and galleries and publications, it can be said that this became the decisive factor during the discussion process.

The Special Artist Award was given to Naoki ISHIKAWA for his works that explore northern Japan such as “*SAKHALIN*” and “*Shiretoko Peninsula*”, as well as photography exhibitions, workshops, and talks related to the *Shashin Zeo Banchi Shiretoko* project. ISHIKAWA was also the recipient of the 25th Photo Town Higashikawa Award for New Photographers, known as a photographer who continues to capture everyday life from all over the world with his unparalleled activities. This selection also sheds light on the rare balance between staying on the move and keeping your feet on the ground.

The Hidano Kazuemon Prize was awarded to Naotaka HIROTA, a pioneer of modern railway photography who has continued to express the appeal of railways from multiple perspectives. Railways in Japan are deeply related to the concept of regions. The Hidano Kazuemon Award is awarded to "those who have continued to photograph local people, nature, culture, etc. for many years and are recognized for their contribution to the community." If you look at the breadth of railway photography that Mr. HIROTA embodies, he seems to be a perfect match with the conditions of the award. I am delighted that the Hidanno Kazuemon Award, which was established in 2010, has a new chapter.

After explanation based on careful survey by Hiroshi SUGANUMA, judging of the Overseas Photographer Award took place and eventually the award was given to Astrid JAHNSEN from Peru. Jansen's method of carefully reviewing encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, albums, etc., and photographing them in order to reaffirm the use of gender-biased images asks very contemporary questions. Her series of works that expose the ideology behind various discourses and transform memories into criticism are highly acclaimed.

This year marks the third year that the judges wore masks during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, by mid-March, wearing masks became an individual decision, and in early May, after Golden Week, the position of the new coronavirus will be shifted to category 5 under the Infectious Diseases Law. At the Higashikawa International Photo Festival, which will be held in the summer, measures against infectious diseases will be greatly relaxed, and events will be held like in the past. Higashikawa believes cultural activities are neither non-essential nor non-urgent, and the Higashikawa Prize and the Higashikawa International Photo Festival have continued even in the midst of the pandemic. I would like to once again express my deep gratitude to the people of Higashikawa for their great efforts and empathy in their daily lives.

The Jury Committee of the 39th Higashikawa Photography Awards

Anju <Photographer>	36th –
UENO Osamu <Photo Critic>.....	31st–
KAMIYAMA Ryoko <Curator, Japanese postwar art history >.....	37th –
KITANO Ken <Photographer>.....	33rd–
KURAISHI Shino <Photo Critic, Poet>.....	35th –
SHIBASAKI Tomoka <Novelist>.....	34th –
NIWA Harumi <Curator>.....	33th –
HARA Koichi <Designer>.....	34th –

The Overseas Photographer Award (Peru)

Astrid JAHNSEN

Lives in Madrid, Spain



Astrid Jahnsen was born in Lima, Peru in 1972. After graduating in Communication Studies from the University of Lima and working in the advertising industry, she began to work on photography projects.

Her latest projects focus on how photography can transform history through the media. She works and travels between Lima, San Francisco and Madrid. Her great-grandfather was an English engineer who came to Peru to build railroads in the early 1900s. He was an amateur photographer and left behind a large collection of photographs. She began to re-photograph his albums, making her feel like she was stealing and transforming his vision. Over time, this practice became a way of transforming past narratives.

In 2017 she started the project “*On Your Knees*”, in which she re-photographed pornographic material from the 1950s/1960s. It was one of the first projects where she used this strategy, in which she restructured a discourse presented from a male perspective. Around the same time, in 2018, she began working with encyclopedias inherited from her grandmother, spurred by the memory of a conversation from her childhood about the lack of female representation in books. In this work, entitled “*Backdrop*”, she re-photographed women who appeared in the books by chance, without any intention by the photographer and without them posing for him.

For the 2019 project “*Lost Gaze*”, she used her grandmother's collection of art books. This time, she tried to switch from the perspective of the portraitist to that of the women who are portrayed. The idea, impossible to realise, was to recover the perception that the women had of themselves. The project speaks about the importance for women to stop living according to the expectations of the male gaze.

<Artist Statements>

I work sharing what photography teaches me. Stopping to look at space and time is more than the confirmation of an instant in an image; it is a test of consciousness. There is a magic in each photograph in terms of the individual glance that allows us to stop and see ourselves. This creative process is individualistic but at the same time accessible, allowing us to communicate, setting aside differences. Each photo, each personal perspective is a contribution to the universal truth: a truth where we all speak the same language.

It's difficult to discover what photography conceals: the complexity of space and time goes beyond the image. I think that understanding how we look at things in terms of others broadens our perspectives and gives us a voice, but at times I get lost in loneliness. I feel it's like being on a spaceship discovering things without having anyone to share them with.

Receiving this award is like listening to that voice on the other side, the one that feels moved. It's a voice that, coming from a universe very different from mine, from a culture so sophisticated and valued, feels even more special.

Thank you for this important recognition, thank you for listening and celebrating my work. Winning the The Overseas Photographer Award this year and being part of the history of this recognition is a great honor for me.

Astrid Jahnsen

The Domestic Photographer Award

HARA Mikiko

Lives in Kanagawa Prefecture



Born in Toyama in 1967. Graduated from the Faculty of Literature of Keio University in 1990. Graduated from Tokyo College of Photography, graduate course in 1996. Taking street snapshots on school assignment as a start, she often employs the shooting method called no finder without using a viewfinder, consistently capturing daily lives in her original style.

Saying “I try to capture the scenes (she happens to be at) without altering anything” and “leave a lot to cameras”, she takes photographs of people, scenes and things-we often see in our daily lives carrying an Ikonta, film camera made in Germany in the 1930s, whilst raising three children. Her viewpoint is more of that of a person rooted in everyday life rather than as a photographer, but they are all elusive, hard to be defined. She says “I recall someone saying Photography gives birth to questions, I always have that feeling of Zen dialogue”. The snapshots are unique in that you can feel the preciousness and affection towards everyday life. Held her first solo exhibition *“Is As It”* (Gallery LE DECO, 1996) and won the 13th excellence award, New Cosmos of Photography and was selected for the 8th Hitotsubo Photography Exhibition. Held a solo exhibition *“Blind Letter”* (Cohen Amador Gallery, New York, 2007) and garnered attention and participated in a four-person exhibition *“In Focus: Tokyo”* alongside Nagano Shigeichi, Moriyama Daido and Seto Masato (Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2014). In Japan, she presented many recent works in a group exhibition *“The Ongoing Dialogue”* (Yokohama Civic Art Gallery, 1919) as well as solo and group exhibitions abroad. Her photography books include *“Hysteria Thirteen: Hara Mikiko”* (Hysteria Glamour, 2005), *“These are Days”* (OSIRIS, 2014) and won the 42nd Kimura Ihei Award for *“Change”* in 2017. Last year, *“Small Myths”* comprised of the photographs taken from 1996 to 2021 was published from Chose Commune in France.

<Artist Statements>

I feel honored as well as proud to receive this prestigious Higashikawa Domestic Photographer Award. I appreciate it very much.

The awarded "*Small Myths*" is made up of works mainly from my early career to the 2000s, and it's a photobook that gave me an opportunity to look back on my own career.

Up until now, I have used the camera capture the world in a modest way, and before I knew it, it became difficult to distinguish between being alive and taking photographs. Despite my amateurish thinking, the camera still captures images, and the viewer, making connections with these images, can take something away based on their own evoked experiences and memories. As a result, I am only an artist because of this. I would like to extend my sincere respect to everyone who has supported me, as well as gratitude to my family for being with me.

HARA Mikiko

The New Photographer Award

FUJIOKA Aya

Lives in Hiroshima Prefecture



Born in 1972. Graduated from Nihon University College of Art in 1994. Encounters while staying in Taiwan after graduation led her to travel around Europe. Her original intention of traveling for two weeks became a year and a half visiting countries such as Estonia, Finland, England, France, Slovakia and Hungary. Her photography *“Comment te dire adieu”* based on various encounters and experiences won the Visual Arts Photo Award in 2004. The photography book of the same title was published from Visual Arts.

After coming home and life became stable, she began to feel frustrated. She went to New York on the 2007 Japanese Government Scholarship Program of Agency for Cultural affairs. Stayed there until 2012 after finishing the program, she released *“Life Studies”*, *“Home Alone”* (Dixon Place, NY, 2010) with snapshots of her experiences and children she had met. Around that time, she published the photography book *“I don’t sleep”* (AKAACA, 2009) which contained photographs of her daily life when seeing her family in Hiroshima and encapsulating the feelings of distance she felt with her family members whilst there. Once she started living in Hiroshima, “I was confronted with daily reminders of Hiroshima whether I liked it or not”, she faced Hiroshima trying to “make history conscious through everyday life and led to the exhibition *“Here goes River”* (Nikon Salon, Tokyo, Osaka, 2016) winning her 41st Ina Nobuo Award. She won both the 27th Tadahiko Hayashi Award and the 43rd Kimura Ihei Award for the photography book of the same title, *“Here goes River”* (AKAACA, 2017).

Her main solo exhibitions include *“Comment te dire adieu”* (Visual Arts Gallery, Tokyo, Osaka and other places, 2005), *“I don’t sleep”* (AKAACA Gallery, Tokyo, 2009), *“Life Studies 2”* (Place M, Tokyo, 2014), *“Ayako, and her metaphysical study”* (Guardian Garden, Tokyo, 2017), *“Ayako Ekoda Kibun”* (OGUMAGU, Tokyo, 2022), *“New Stories”* (Irie Taikichi Memorial Museum of Photography Nara City, Nara, 2022). Her main group exhibitions include *“DOMANI 2020”* (The National Art Center, Tokyo, 2020), *“Photographed Hiroshima: Everyday Light Image”* (Hiroshima Prefectural Art Museum, 2020), *“Art, with daily life”* (Higashihiroshima City Museum of Art, 2020), *“Countermeasures Against Awkward Discourses: From the Perspective of Third Wave Feminism”* (21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, 2021).

<Artist Statements>

I like to wander around, and since I'm not good at making decisions, I have a habit of leaving photos I've taken pretentiously without looking at them. In the last few years during the COVID-19 crisis, I grappled with how to work with old negatives lying around. I then became obsessed with exploring my own unconsciousness that was reflected in the photographs at that time.

There are some things that I've always liked photographing such as children and flowers. By collecting fixations that even I don't quite understand, I may unexpectedly understand why I take pictures or who I am. *"New Stories"*, *"Hana no Yukue"*, and *"Shiro no Monogatari"*, which were born out of this thinking, were attempts to dismantle narratives that I had built up until now and reweave them on a new axis.

As I strolled through the past looking at old negatives, I realized that I've always approached photography like a student and sighed. It was at that time that I unexpectedly received the news of the Higashikawa Award for New Photographer Award, and it really uplifted me. My photos always look back and make myself doubt my productivity, but knowing people are looking at them keeps me moving forward. Above all, I'm really happy to think that I will be able to go to Higashikawa in the summer after receiving the award. Thank you very much.

FUJIOKA Aya

The Special Photographer Award

ISHIKAWA Naoki

Lives in Tokyo Prefecture



Born in Tokyo in 1977. Walked through from Arctic to Antarctica in 2000 and succeeded in climbing the highest mountains in seven continents making him the youngest to do so in 2001. Graduated from Waseda University, School of Humanities and Social Sciences through the night course. Completed the latter doctoral semester at Tokyo University of the Arts, the Graduate School of Fine Arts in 2008. Being interested in cultural anthropology and folklore studies, he traveled across vastly different fields such as the highest peaks of the world, remote regions, and urban areas and compiled them into photographic works presenting them to the world.

In 2008, he won the Photographic Society of Japan's Newcomer Award and Kodansha Publication's Culture Award for Photography for his *"NEW DIMENSION"* (AKAART Publishing) in which he traveled through prehistoric murals all over the world and *"POLAR"* (Little More) taking a close-up look at the great nature of the Arctic Circle and its inhabitants. Won the Higashikawa New Photographer Award in 2009 for his active works including *"Mt. Fuji"* (Little More) capturing Mt. Fuji as a mountain not to gaze but to climb. Received Domon Ken Award in 2011 for his *"CORONA"* (Seidosha) examining the history and people's lives on the islands of the South Pacific. Produced many photography books such as the Himalaya series, *"Lhotse"* *"Makalu"* (SLANT) focusing on 8000m peaks and won the Photographic Society of Japan's Lifetime Achievement Award for his *"EVEREST"* (CCC Media House) and *"MAREBITO"* (Shogakukan) in 2020. He also received Kaiko Takeshi Non-fiction Award for his book *"The Last Adventurer"* (Shueisha) pursuing the life of an invincible adventurer, Kanda Michio.

His major solo exhibitions include *"JAPONÉSIA"* (Japan House Sao Paolo, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Brazil, 2020-21), *"Capturing the Map of Light on This Planet"* (Art Tower Mito, Niigata City Art Museum, Ichihara Lakeside Museum, The Museum of Art, Kochi, Kitakyushu Municipal of Art, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, 2016 -19), *"K2"* (CHANEL NEXUS HALL, Tokyo, 2015), *"ARCHIPELAGO"* (Okinawa Prefectural Museum, 2010). His works are housed in Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, Tokyo Photographic Art Museum, Yokohama Museum of Art, Okinawa Prefectural Museum etc.

Involved in the project "Shashin Zero Banchi Shiretoko" in which they discover and disseminate the charm of the Shiretoko Peninsula, East Hokkaido to the world, holding photography exhibitions, workshops, talk shows and so on.

<Artist Statements>

I have been traveling for nearly 30 years since I was a teenager. As I repeatedly perceive and digest the world through my own body, sharing my experiences with others has become an important part of my work.

As the number of treasured friends and places I call home in the Japanese archipelago gradually increases, the Shiretoko Peninsula is like my starting point. I'm very happy that what I have been doing steadily over the years through photography has been gradually reaching more people, and that it has come to be recognized in Higashikawa. Thank you very much.

ISHIKAWA Naoki

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

HIROTA Naotaka

Lives in Kanagawa Prefecture



Born in Tokyo in 1935. Graduated from Faculty of Economics, Chuo University. Started having an interest in railways since childhood and took pictures of them for the first time when he was in the 3rd grade of junior high school. Fascinated in railway photography and became a pioneer in that field. Established Japan Railway Photographers Society in 1988 and became a first chairman and paved the way for railway photography in Japan.

After graduating from university, he became a freelance photographer in 1960 after working as an office worker. Held his first solo exhibition “*steam locomotives*” overflowing with expressions full of originality and showed a whole new world of railway photography.

In the same year, he edited his first railway photography book, “*The Lure of Japan’s Railways*” (Japan Times, 1969) and made an English one. There are over 200 publications including his first overseas photography book, “*Steam Locomotives of Europe*” (Asahi Shimbun, 1973), and “*SL Mugen*” (Kagusha, 1975) of which are all monochrome. Also, in his 20s, he began to create an alternative version of children’s books featuring pictures of real vehicles instead of illustrations. As an extra edition of “*Railway Magazine*”, He provided an annual series of magazines “*Railway Photography*”, presenting his own works as well as sharing the works of his senior colleagues in this field. He actively promotes railway photography to amateur photographers.

In 2009, he published “*Era of F*” (Shogakukan) consisting of photos he took in the 60s via a Nikon F. Held an exhibition of the same name in the Nikon Museum in 2018, and in 2019 the town of Higashikawa and was well received. Also, he edits and designs digital books on his own.

Using a self-modified camera, his distinct way of shooting with various techniques such as blur, cloudy and deformation, he was able to widen the expressions of his pictures of railways, surrounding sceneries, relationships between people establishing new standards of railway photography.

<Artist Statements>

With some surprise, I thank you for selecting me. I'm grateful that you have given attention to my work despite the fact that I've just been photographing trains that I like.

Railway fans were originally social outcasts. At that time, it was common to think that it's strange for adults to play with trains. And when I was asked why I took photos of trains, I would answer in a sweat, "Um, for the scenery..."

I decided to pursue photography 56 years ago, when I brought about 10 photos to the Fuji Photo Salon. They promptly decided, "Let's do something next April." Although I was happy but something also worried me. Up to then I had only made prints up to 2L size (12.7cm x 17.8cm). I had no experience of making larger prints. So I was worried if the quality could hold up the exhibition space.

It was a needless worry. Serenar and Nikkor's photos were spectacular at the venue, and I've attracted more customers than ever since the salon opened.

I had hope, although my prospects were a rocky road. It was like a wedge plow pushing through in the desert. In that way, this award is like an oasis in my life. Thank you very much.

HIROTA Naotaka

Higashikawa International Photography Festival

Photo Fiesta 2023

Award Winners' Exhibition

Date: 29 July (Sat.) – 28 August (Wed.), 2023

Venue: Higashikawa Bunka Gallery

Time: 10:00 - 17:00

Admission: ¥100

Organize: The Town of Photography: Higashikawa

Address: 1-19-8 Higashi-machi, Higashikawa-cho, Kamikawa-gun, 071-1423 Hokkaido

Tel: (+81)-(0)166-82-4700 Fax: (+81)-(0)166-82-4704

Artists:

Astrid JAHNSEN (The Overseas Photographer Award)

HARA Mikiko (The Domestic Photographer Award)

FUJIOKA Aya (The New Photographer Award)

ISHIKAWA Naoki (The Special Photographer Award)

HIROTA Naotaka (The Hidano Kazuemon Award)

Event Schedule:

29 July (Sat.) 13:30-14:30 Award Ceremony

17:00-18:30 Opening Reception

30 July (Sun.) 13:00-17:30 Panel Discussion

Panelists: award winners, judges and guests

※There is a possibility that schedule may be modified related to the current coronavirus situation.

Higashikawa Awards

[Purpose]

With the idea of contributing to and fostering photographic culture as well as raising the cultural consciousness of Higashikawa residents, starting this year, 1985, we will annually be awarding prizes accompanied by monetary gifts to the photographer for his / her works.

[Awards]

The Overseas Photographer Award

*1,000,000 yen to a overseas photographer

The Domestic Photographer Award

*1,000,000 yen to a Japanese photographer

The New Photographer Award

*500,000 yen to a Japanese photographer

The Special Photographer Award

*500,000 yen to a photographer from Hokkaido

The Hidano Kazuemon Award

*500,000 yen to a photographer who contributed to society through photography

[Conditions]

The Overseas Photographer Award is presented to a photographer in a specific country or region chosen each year. He / She must be either living or born in that country or region.

The Domestic and the New Photographer Awards are presented to photographers whose work has been taken within the past three years that has significance either in the history of photography or as some unique expression of the art of photography.

The Special Photographer Award is presented to a photographer living or born in Hokkaido or whose theme and / or object concerns this island.

The Hidano Kazuemon Award is presented to a photographer in acknowledgement of his longtime contributions in taking photographs of local people, nature and culture. (The prize is open to both professional and amateur photographers.)

Of all the prizes, no specific restrictions are applied concerning the year it was taken for the Overseas Prize, the Special Prize and the Hidano Kazuemon Prize.

[Selection]

The works selected by nominators charged by the executive committee are judged by the Jury Committee of the Higashikawa Award. The awards ceremony is held each year during the period of the Photo Fiesta in Higashikawa Town and is accompanied by commemorative symposiums and other events.

[Other Stipulations]

The monetary gift presented with the Higashikawa Awards is meant to purchase the original prints of the awarded photographs. Each awardee is requested to voluntarily submit original print(s) of his / her choice from among the awarded works to the residents of Higashikawa town.

The residents of the town shall be responsible for storing the photographs with care and for exhibiting them to visitors to Higashikawa, the Town of Photography.

These awarded photographs are exhibited at the Higashikawa Photography Museum in order to contribute to promoting a friendship and cultural development of the Town of Higashikawa.

We may present other awards to the photographs of outstanding works in order to contribute to photographic culture as well as to development of the Higashikawa Awards. For this reason, awards from other committees and sponsors are negotiable.

The Town of Photography

Culture Capital of Photography: Higashikawa

Higashikawa Town is located in central Hokkaido, northernmost of Japan, and is a part of Japan's largest national park "Daisetsuzan National Park" with Higashikawa's eastern part forming a large-scale forest. Blessed with natural beauty, lots of places in Higashikawa have been the subjects of many photographs.

Higashikawa, firstly cultivated by a group of settlers in 1895, has a shorter history compared to that of photography invented in 1839. Higashikawa declared the "Town of Photography" in 1985 aiming to create a town of "being a good subject to be photographed" co-existing with beautiful nature inhabited by many species of animals and plants.

Higashikawa established the Higashikawa Awards in the same year and started the annual summer festival of photography with the idea of contributing to and fostering photographic culture as well as raising the cultural consciousness of Higashikawa residents. With a history of more than a quarter of a century, it has been the nation's prestigious photography awards and the longest-running photography festival.

Higashikawa awards can also be noted in that it has rewarded overseas outstanding photographers such as Joel Sternfeld, Lewis Baltz and Jan Saudek as well as domestic photographers and introduced them to Japan. Through this, we meet people from abroad and exchange with them. By doing so, we believe we can entrust prayer for peace and our dreams to the future generation.

Since the declaration of the Town of Photography, Higashikawa has been a platform of meeting people, photography culture and nature over the last 30 years. Celebrating 120 years of resource development of the land, we declared the Culture Capital of Photography in May 2014, keeping in mind our motto "Take a picture, Save the picture, Share it with others" and with the determination to link photography and people across the world.