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Media Release

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2021 shortlist announced

The four artists shortlisted for the **Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2021** are **Poulomi Basu, Alejandro Cartagena, Cao Fei** and **Zineb Sedira**.

2021 celebrates the 25th anniversary of this long-standing and prestigious annual prize, which recognises artists and projects deemed to have made the most significant contribution to photography over the previous 12 months.

The 2021 shortlist presents four highly individual artists, whose bold wide-ranging projects cover geographical territories from Algeria to China and explore issues affecting both the local and the global.

From Poulomi Basu's uncompromisingly complex depiction of conflict in Central India, Alejandro Cartagena's scathing critique exploring the repercussions of homeownership and developments in northern Mexico, to Cao Fei's dystopic multi-media fabrications that consider the enormous impact of technologies on lived experiences and Zineb Sedira's generous auto-fictive exploration of memory, culture and belonging. All of the nominated projects use photography as a means of challenging political realities to convey subjective truths.

The exhibition of the shortlisted projects, curated by Anna Dannemann, will be on show at The Photographers' Gallery from 19 March—27 June 2021. The exhibition will also be presented as part of the international photography triennial RAY Fotografieprojekte Frankfurt/RheinMain and will be on display at Deutsche Börse's headquarters in Eschborn/Frankfurt from 5 June—12 September 2021.

The winner of the £30,000 prize will be announced at an award ceremony in late Spring 2021. Full details will be announced in January 2021.

The Shortlisted Artists and Projects:

Poulomi Basu has been nominated for her book *Centralia* published by Dewi Lewis Publishing in 2020.

Indian transmedia artist, photographer and activist Poulomi Basu (b. 1983, India) has created a complex and brutally effective body of work that uncovers the violent, largely unreported, conflict between a marginalised community of indigenous people fighting



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under the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA) and the Indian state. Mostly shot in central India, *Centralia* is the outcome of a long-term project focused on the region, but also about the limitations of traditional documentary photography to expose the overt and multi-layered reality of contemporary conflicts. Referencing dystopian tropes of science-fiction, Basu destabilizes the conventional linear order of narratives to create nuanced work that allows a view of a future where current events have reached their climax. To this end, Basu uses a multitude of image types; from cinematic double exposures of dark landscapes, staged portraits and sourced image material, to shocking photographs of lethal crime scenes, testimonies and mugshots of fallen, often female, revolutionary fighters alongside images showing the traditional festivities of the rural communities. By carefully orchestrating the juxtapositions of this visual material, Basu's book reveals the normalization of violence and the mechanisms of conflict from many different perspectives. The project further addresses wider issues of environmental and climate justice, the role of women often battling inequality on multiple fronts and the representation of these conflicts in Western societies.

Alejandro Cartagena has been nominated for his book *A Small Guide to Homeownership* published by The Velvet Cell in 2020.

In his most recent book, Mexican photographer Alejandro Cartagena (b. 1977, Dominican Republic) continues his extensive visual documentation of the urbanisation of land in northern Mexico. The result from over 15 years of work, the project considers idealised notions of life in the suburbs and the enormous impact these dysfunctional developments have had on the surrounding region through transportation links, infrastructure and a cookie-cutter approach to architecture and urban planning. *A Small Guide to Homeownership* takes its stylistic cues from the ubiquitous How to...? guide books. Printed on thin paper and running to over 300 pages, it encompasses an extensive range of visual material. Utilising landscape images, advertisements, texts, portraits, city backdrops and documentary photography to create layered collages, Cartagena weaves a complex cautionary tale about the historical, political, public and personal concepts and processes of home-buying in Mexico. The book follows a series of protagonists, such as Cartagena's brother, illustrating their personal struggles in overcoming bureaucratic challenges to fulfil the propagandised dream of finding their own home. Another important factor is also the influence of the USA and how their approach to urban development and gentrification, adopted by the Mexican Government after the 1960s, has led to the ongoing economic and social divide.

Cao Fei has been nominated for her exhibition *Blueprints* at Serpentine Gallery, London (4 March—17 May 2020 and reopened after lockdown 4 August—13 September 2020).

Working with film, digital media, photography, sculpture and performance, Chinese artist Cao Fei (b. 1978, Guangzhou, China) has built an extensive body of work over the last two decades that considers how the rapid development of the digital and other technological advancements have radically altered our perception of self and the way we understand and navigate reality. This first major solo exhibition in the UK re-

imagined new and existing works in a site-specific installation that included the new VR piece *The Eternal Wave* and the feature-length science fiction film *Nova* as well as earlier projects such as *Whose Utopia*, *Asia One* and *La Town*. Cao Fei's projects often revolve around the effects of automation, virtual realities and hyper urbanisation on the human condition, while further addressing issues of memory, history, consumerism and societal structures – particularly in her native China. Creating complex, surreal and often darkly humorous dystopian fictions, Cao Fei's works scrutinise modern systems of surveillance, production and labour reflecting our relationship with intelligent machines and adding critical commentary about the isolating effect these have on every aspect of individual living. Her moving image works are often set in labyrinthine, industrial, or urban settings where the human body, identity and emotions seem alien or redundant and the impending future full of apocalyptic uncertainty. Yet within these dark, twisted environments there are also moments of subversion in which her protagonists find ways to use the technology to shape alternative, collective futures.

Zineb Sedira has been nominated for her exhibition *A Brief Moment* at Jeu de Paume, Paris (15 October 2019 – 19 January 2020).

Zineb Sedira (b. 1963, Paris, France, based in London) works across photography, installation and film to create powerful immersive projects that tackle the universally resonant themes of identity, mobility, gender and environment. Marking her first major retrospective in Paris, *A Brief Moment* spans a period from 1998 to the present day and focuses on Sedira's use of archives to explore the function and impact of images to (re-) construct meaning through a process of collecting and exhibiting. Frequently combining the personal with the globally political, Sedira uses the lens of her own family history, closely linked to that of Algiers, France and the UK, to form collective narratives that testify to the experience of people living between different cultures. Sedira's projects are rich with metaphors and constantly shifting between a layered portrait of the artist and a broader reflection on memory, culture and belonging. The piece *Standing Here Wondering Which Way to Go*, invited visitors into a set of Sedira's living room as a way of foregrounding the influence of the 1969 Pan-African Festival of Algiers and the revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Similar to her video work these personal installations are inspired by the idealism of a multi-cultural world forged in the counterculture movements of this era, juxtaposed against the repercussions of geopolitical and industrial changes that occurred in the later 20th and early 21st century.

The 2021 Jury and statements

This year's jury are: **Cristina de Middel**, artist; **Simon Njami**, independent curator, writer, lecturer and art critic; **Anna Tellgren**, curator of photography at Moderna Museet, Stockholm; **Anne-Marie Beckmann**, Director of the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation, Frankfurt; and **Brett Rogers**, Director of The Photographers' Gallery as the non-voting chair.

Brett Rogers, Director, The Photographers' Gallery: "All the artists in this year's shortlist invite us to examine urgent, though often unexamined political, cultural and social upheavals across four vastly different geographic terrains – China, India, Algeria and Mexico. In exploring their subjects, they each draw upon an extraordinary range of strategies: dark humour and dystopian fiction in the work of Cao Fei; richly layered personal and political narratives in Poulomi Basu's publication; irony, the archive and personal storytelling in Alejandro Cartagena's approach; and collective and individual memory within Zineb Sedira's practice. Together they amplify universally resonant themes that reflect our times and illuminate photography's ability to encompass the micro and the macro, the surface and the undercurrent simultaneously."

Anne-Marie Beckmann, Director, Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation: "Today's world is characterised by tremendous disruptions, which are shaking up many traditional structures and affecting almost all spheres of life. In this context, it is particularly important to create platforms for the many different voices that need to be heard. This year's outstanding and diverse shortlist reflects the challenges of these very exceptional times. The Prize, in its 25th anniversary year, remains an important and strong indicator for relevant artistic positions and makes an important contribution in showcasing them. We are very excited to present the exhibition in our premises as part of the photography triennial RAY Fotografieprojekte Frankfurt/RheinMain in summer 2021."

Notes for Editors:

You can find the image sheet with captions [here](#), please contact us directly for high-res press images. Artist Bios available on request.

Media contacts:

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation:

Leticia Adam,
Phone +49 (0)69 211 11500

Leticia.adam@deutsche-boerse.com

The Photographers' Gallery

Grace Gabriele-Tighe or Harriet Black at Margaret PR,
Phone +44 (0) 20 7739 8203

grace@margaretlondon.com or harriet@margaretlondon.com

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation

The Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation is a Frankfurt-based non-profit organisation. The foundation activities focus on collecting, exhibiting and promoting contemporary photography. Deutsche Börse began to build up its collection of contemporary photography in 1999. Art Collection Deutsche Börse now comprises more than 2.000 works by over 130 international artists from 27 nations. Expanding the Art Collection Deutsche Börse is one of the key aims of the foundation. The collection and a changing exhibition programme are open to the public. Together with The Photographers' Gallery in London, the foundation awards the renowned Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize each year. The promotion of young artists is a special concern of the foundation. It supports them in the form of awards, scholarships,

exhibitions and cooperations with other institutions, such as the Foam Talents Programme of the Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam. Other focal points include supporting exhibition projects of international museums and institutions, and the expansion of platforms for academic discussion about the medium. www.deutscheboersephotographyfoundation.org.

The Photographers' Gallery

The Photographers' Gallery opened in 1971 in Great Newport Street, London, as the UK's first independent gallery devoted to photography. It was the first public gallery in the UK to exhibit many key names in international photography, including Juergen Teller, Robert Capa, Sebastiano Salgado and Andreas Gursky. The Gallery has also been instrumental in establishing contemporary British photographers, including Martin Parr and Corinne Day. In 2009, the Gallery moved to 16 – 18 Ramillies Street in Soho, the first stage in its plan to create a 21st century home for photography. Following an eighteen months long redevelopment project, the Gallery reopened to the public in 2012. The success of The Photographers' Gallery over the past four decades has helped to establish photography as a recognised art form, introducing new audiences to photography and championing its place at the heart of visual culture. www.thephotographersgallery.org.uk

The Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize History

Founded in 1996 by The Photographers' Gallery, and now in its twenty-fifth year, the Prize has become one of the most prestigious international arts awards and has launched and established the careers of many photographers over the years. Previously known as the Citigroup Photography Prize, the Gallery has been collaborating with Deutsche Börse Group as title sponsors since 2005. In 2016 the Prize was retitled as the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize following the establishment of the foundation as a non-profit organisation dedicated to the collection, exhibition and promotion of contemporary photography.

Winner of the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2020 was Mohamed Bourouissa for his exhibition Free Trade. Past winners include Susan Meiselas, Dana Lixenberg, Trevor Paglen, Paul Graham, Juergen Teller, Rineke Dijkstra, Richard Billingham, John Stezaker and Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin.