

PRESS RELEASE

Berlin, March 19, 2024

AFTER NATURE PRIZE 2024

Laura Huertas Millán / Sarker Protick

C/O Berlin is pleased to announce the first recipients of the **After Nature . Ulrike Crespo Photography Prize 2024: Laura Huertas Millán** (b. 1983 in Colombia), who is based in Paris, and **Sarker Protick** (b. 1986 in Bangladesh) from Dhaka. A **double exhibition** will be first presented at C/O Berlin in the Amerika Haus from **Sep 14, 2024, to Jan 23, 2025**.

The *After Nature . Ulrike Crespo Photography Prize* is a joint project of the C/O Berlin Foundation and the Crespo Foundation. It is awarded annually to acknowledge artists or groups who explore new concepts of nature in photography and visual media through their work. Each prize includes a grant of forty thousand euros, an exhibition at C/O Berlin, and an accompanying publication. The annual exhibitions of the recipients will continue to examine the connection between photography, nature, and ecology that was initiated in 2023 with the group exhibition *Image Ecology*.

“Photography after nature,” the overarching topic of the competition, refers to the relationship of photography and nature in two respects. In addition to encouraging contemplation of new concepts of nature that reflect the precarious state of our global ecosystems, it emphasizes the conditions that pictures of the world around us always reveal and construct in photographic media. This is also reflected in the historical expression “photography after nature,” which was used in the nineteenth century to refer to the special illustrative relationship between photography and the motif.

In her prizewinning multichannel projection, **Laura Huertas Millán** investigates the cultural, medicinal, and ritual uses of coca long before cocaine was first produced in Europe in the nineteenth century. Starting with the plant’s prohibition during the Spanish colonization of Latin America, Millán develops a speculative narrative that focuses on a group of métisse women who secretly distributed coca leaves in the seventeenth century. In reaction to the lack of archival material, the artist uses fiction as a strategy, visualizing in a fragmentary narrative the colonial appropriation of nature and the role of resistance in this process.

Sarker Protick examines the extensive changes imposed by humans on the Indian subcontinent in his prizewinning project. Focusing on the historical region of Bengal, which today includes India and Bangladesh, he transfers the examination of the colonial history of the British Empire to a photographic study of the present. He is interested in the expansion of the railroad and the development of coal mining in the nineteenth century. Traveling through Bangladesh and India, he created a body of photographs that addresses the global, geopolitical, and historical dimensions of imperialism as the source of the Anthropocene and its impact on the climate crisis in a visual language that is precise and atmospheric.

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The winning project concepts will be realized for the first time as part of the *After Nature Prize 2024*. After its first stop at C/O Berlin, the double exhibition will be on display at the *Open Space* of the Crespo Foundation in Frankfurt am Main from February 2025.

The jury consisted of Lewis Chaplin (Co-founder, Loose Joints Publishing), Martin Guinard (Curator, LUMA Arles), Hajra Haider Karrar (Curator, SAVVY Contemporary), Iris Sikking (Curator, Fotomuseum Den Haag, The Hague), Olga Smith (Newcastle University), Christiane Riedel (Chair, Crespo Foundation), Sophia Greiff (Co-Head of Program, C/O Berlin Foundation), and Katharina Täschner (Junior Curator, C/O Berlin Foundation). Based on the nominations by fifteen international experts, the jury's decision was unanimous.

Jury Statements

Sarker Protick's prizewinning project could not be more relevant to the issues of ecology. It visualizes the historical role of coal in fueling the world's first fossil fuel economy and precipitating climate change. Through a visual language that is both poetic and precise, Sarker Protick investigates the interlinked histories of the Anthropocene, British imperialism, and resource extraction on the Indian subcontinent.
—Olga Smith (Newcastle University)

Laura Huertas Millán's multichannel installation promises to offer a tangible experience of the coca plant. A plant whose chemical component is the main ingredient of the drug cocaine, and for that reason is merely associated with crime and addiction, it has traditionally played a special role in native communities. By putting this plant back on a pedestal, Millán hopes to liberate it and bring to life a forgotten historical aspect of her homeland Colombia. Her layered visual approach contributes to the powerful depiction of this story.

—Iris Sikking (Curator, Fotomuseum Den Haag, The Hague)

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Laura Huertas Millán's (b. 1983, Colombia) practice spans different media from moving images and writing to pedagogy and long-term enquiries. She holds a PhD from Université PSL (SACRe program) in Paris, partly developed at the Sensory Ethnography Lab at Harvard University. More than twenty film retrospectives and focuses on her work have been held internationally in cinemathèques including TIFF Toronto, the Cinemateca de Bogotá, and the Harvard Film Archive; in museums such as the Austrian Film Museum in Vienna; and at film festivals including the Montreal International Documentary Festival (RIDM) and Mar del Plata International Film Festival in Argentina. Part of the official selections of festivals such as the Berlinale (Forum) in Berlin, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and Cinéma du Réel in Paris, her work has received prizes at the Locarno Film Festival, the FIDMarseille, Doclisboa in Lisbon, and Videobrasil in São Paulo. She has had solo exhibitions at the MASP São Paulo, the Maison des Arts de Malakoff, and the Museum of Modern Art in Medellín. Her films have also been exhibited and screened at the Centre Pompidou and the Jeu de Paume in Paris, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, and the Times Art Center Berlin, and presented in biennials such as the Liverpool Biennial, FRONT International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, Videobrasil in São Paulo, the Videonale in Bonn, and the Sharjah Biennial.

Sarker Protick (b. 1986, Bangladesh) has developed a practice that combines the roles of an image-maker, a teacher, and infrequently a curator. His often minimal, suspended, and atmospheric visuals are coherently open while reflecting a vast and solemn distance. Working with photography, video, and sound, Protick's works are built on long-term surveys rooted in Bangladesh and the larger region of Bengal. The form and materiality of his works often morph into the physicality of time, its raptures, and our inability to grasp or hold time, using the process of image-making as a way to expand time. In his work, the experience of time does not move in a linear direction; it is experienced as a slowing down, a recurring cycle with dips and curves, sometimes changing in a constant flux. Protick studied at the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute in Dhaka, where he has also taught for the last eleven years. He is a co-curator of Chobi Mela, the longest running international photography festival in Asia. His work has been recognized through fellowships including the Joop Swart Masterclass, Foam Talent, the Light Work Residency, the Magnum Foundation Fund, and the World Press Photo Award. Protick is represented by Shrine Empire in Delhi.

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Exhibition

Sep 14, 2024 – Jan 23, 2025

Opening hours

Daily . 11:00–20:00

Admission

12/6 euros

Organizer

C/O Berlin Foundation

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A joint project of C/O Berlin and the Crespo Foundation.