

Historic Organization Hosts 1st Online Competition

By Karen I. Hirsch

In honor of its 115th anniversary, Fort Dearborn-Chicago Photo Forum hosted its first international online photography competition and exhibit this year. Photographers from 88 countries visited its competition Web site, while entrants came from 16 countries—from Argentina to Qatar—and from 37 U.S. states.

Sponsors, including Canvas on Demand, Central Camera, Corel and the Lab by Apollo, contributed more than \$8000 in awards. The overall winner received prizes from Manfrotto, Tamrac and a gold passport to Fotofusion at the Palm Beach Photographic Centre in West Palm Beach, FL.

The top 30 images were selected by es-

teemed professionals in the photography industry—Michael Billbrey, art buyer/producer at Leo Burnett advertising agency; Bill Hurter, editor of *RangeFinder* and *AfterCapture* magazines; and David Leigh, owner of Morpho Gallery in Chicago. The 30 photos were exhibited at Morpho Gallery in June.

The jurors chose the first place winner in each of five categories (Nature, Place, Still Life, People and Alteration of Reality). Of those, Wheeling, IL resident Don Bolak's image "Complementary Colors," was named "Best of Show" after being ranked unanimously with the top score by all three judges. Subsequently, Bolak was also named "Photographer of the Year."

Photographer of the Year and First Place in Nature Category: Don Bolak

Don Bolak is an avid amateur photographer who is a landscape architect by profession. A serious photographer for more than 12 years, Don related that his education in science and art has proven useful in his development as a photographer. "I started taking photos to educate myself about how plants grow," he stated. "As I learned more about plants and how to photograph them, I discovered a whole new world of the 'very small,' and that has been my major photo passion ever since."

Bolak derives great satisfaction in finding an exceptional subject and portraying its amazing detail in a composition that transcends the original subject. He believes that his winning image works so well due to its complementary red and green colors. Paired together, they are visually pleasing to the eye and have a strong impact.

A second image of Bolak's, "Gerbera Daisy," received an award of excellence and is included in the International Photography Competition 2010 exhibit.

Bolak belongs to the Garden Photographic Society and Riverwoods Nature Photographic Society. He attributes part of his photographic development to learning from photographers whom he has met in the Chicago Area Camera Club Association.



Other First Place Winners

"I am doing a happy dance right now!" exclaimed Darris Harris of Chicago upon learning that his image, "Sears Power House," earned him a first place in the Place category. Harris is a Midwesterner born in Wichita, KS and has been living in Chicago for the past 18 years. He is a commercial photographer who is commissioned to photograph architectural projects.

The Sears Power House, depicted in Harris' photo, was completed in 1905. The machinery in this structure supplied heating and cooling for the entire 55-acre Sears complex until the company's 1973 relocation to downtown Chicago. In 2006, artists were invited to capture what remained of the once bustling Power House before its conversion to a learning center for students from surrounding neighborhoods. Harris spent about a month capturing images of the decayed edifice. One of the places he documented was the machine shop area, subject of "Sears Power House #2." See more of his images at www.darrisharris.com.



First Place in Still Life Category: Teresa Corsie

Now that her three children are older, Teresa Corsie, from Port Coquitlam, British Columbia, is a student again. Although she began taking photography classes in her early 20s, she was unable to continue her studies while raising her family. At the age of 40, Corsie was diagnosed with breast cancer. She explained, "As a lucky survivor, I have begun to pursue my dream of being a professional photographer once again." She is rarely seen without her camera, which she describes as "an extra appendage."

Corsie created "Imperfect Beauty" as a class assignment at Focal Point Visual Arts Photography School in Vancouver. She remarks, "I was attempting to create a painterly photograph. The combination of imperfect pottery (made by my daughters at art school) and the colors of the bruised and rotting fruit made a beautiful union." Go to www.teresacorsiephotography.ca to see more of Corsie's work.

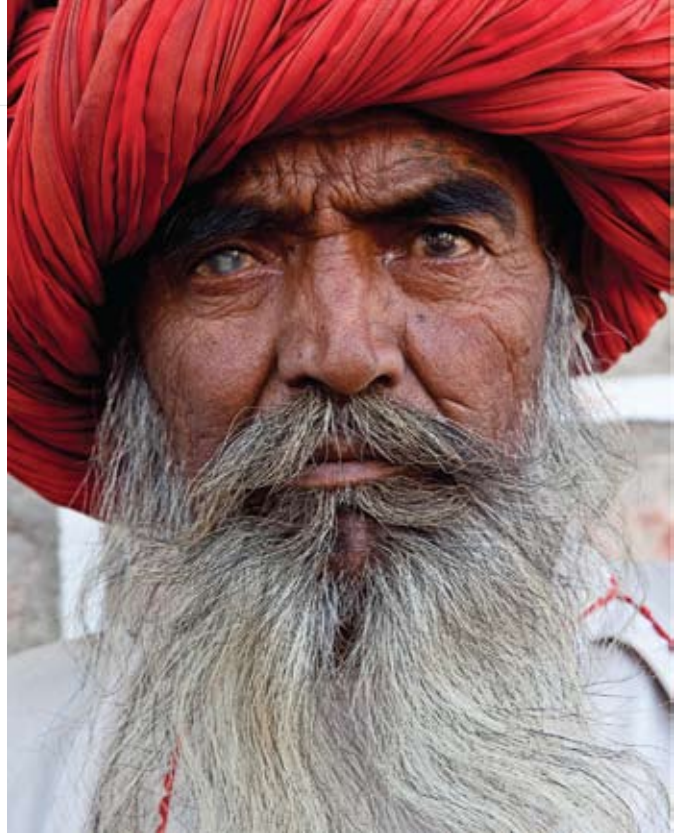


First Place in People Category: Marti Belcher

"Life is a journey, a continuum of everyday events and ordinary people, all of which make for an extraordinary lifetime of experiences," begins Marti Belcher in her Web site bio.

Belcher was born on her grandfather's dairy farm in upstate New York and grew up in an agrarian environment. In 1981, she moved to northern Virginia to complete her studies at Georgetown University. She worked for many years for the federal government, but returned to school in 1999 to study the arts. Once she picked up a camera, she knew that she had found her creative outlet. Since this epiphany, she has received numerous awards for her images.

Belcher enjoys documenting people in far-off places. Her winning photo, "Aged Man," was taken in India. She relates her experience in this way, "I have come to understand that we are all part of the human condition, wherever our sod hut, farmhouse or estate may be. My portraits and photography are ultimately about seeking out our similarities, not our differences." See more at www.martibelcher.com.



First Place in Alteration of Reality Category: Karen I. Hirsch

Karen I. Hirsch is a Chicago-based professional photographer whose photos have been internationally published in books, magazines and calendars. She was introduced to photography when she joined a camera club in Rouen, France, where she lived during her junior year in college. She continued her language and photographic studies in Barcelona, Spain. The *Chicago Sun-Times* published her photos and travel articles upon her return to the States. One of her images from Spain won the grand prize in the *Chicago Daily News/Kodak* competition.

Hirsch spent the first part of her professional career in advertising. She became the in-house photographer and magazine editor for Foote, Cone & Belding in Chicago. Since leaving FCB, she has been running her own business. A career highlight came in 2007 when the Chinese government invited her as one of 10 foreign photographers to document the city of Rizhao.

Hirsch is a member of the ASMP (American Society of Media Photographers.)

"Trumpet Lily" is a collage made from multiple photos of smoke that she formed into a flower using Photoshop. Visit her Web site at www.karenhirsch.com.

Fort Dearborn's International Photography Competition 2010 is the contemporary counterpart of the juried international print salons that it organized in earlier days. Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen were two of the participants of its first print salon exhibited at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1900. In 1933, Fort Dearborn hosted The Century of Progress International Photographic Salon, which was officially part of the Century of Progress Exposition.

Throughout its history, Fort Dearborn has influenced photographers. Some renowned photographers who have taken part in its activities include Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Margaret Bourke-White, Yousuf Karsh, and Yasuhiro Ishimoto. In more recent times, Jay Maisel, Victor Skrebneski, Art Shay and Pulitzer-prize winners John White and Ovie Carter, have made presentations of their work at Fort Dearborn.

Fort Dearborn promotes creativity and education via its regular programs, monthly member competitions, workshops, outings and discussion groups. Its headquarters, located in downtown Chicago, houses a studio/meeting room and two wet darkrooms. In keeping with the times, Fort Dearborn encourages digital imagemaking via monthly member competitions and instruction in Photoshop and Photo Elements. Meetings are open to the public: www.chicagophotoforum.org. 