2018 W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography Presented to Mark Peterson for Exploring Modern-Day American Confederacy and White Nationalism

_Fellowship to Sarah Blesener, Special Awards to Enayet Asadi and Monika Bulaj; The 2018 Howard Chapnick Grant Presented to Pete Brook; Marwan Bassiouni Receives First Annual W. Eugene Smith Student Grant_

NEW YORK (PRWEB) October 19, 2018 -- The _W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund_ is pleased to announce that Mark Peterson is the recipient of this year’s $35,000 Grant in Humanistic Photography for his project, The Past is Never Dead. Selected from a talented group of nine finalists,* Mr. Peterson looks at the organizations, political parties and candidates bringing the message of white supremacy to the halls of various state and local governments. The Eugene Smith Grant will help Peterson further explore the social life of the resurgent Confederacy, the removal of Confederate statues, names on schools and streets, and record the process of the long-term impact of these initiatives. Mr. Peterson’s project was selected among 314 entries from 53 countries, the most ever submitted to the Smith Grant since its inception in 1980.

The annual grant was presented to Mr. Peterson during the organization’s 39th annual awards ceremony at the _School of Visual Arts (SVA) Theater_ in New York City Wednesday evening. "I am truly honored to be this year’s recipient of the Smith Grant. Smith’s pictures are so powerful and his passion so real that he has been a great influence for my work,” Mark Peterson told attendees of the annual award ceremony Wednesday evening. “I hope my pictures shine a light on the civil war in this country. The Smith Grant will help me continue this work as I look at the communities affected by this divide.”

The W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund is presented annually to photographers whose work is judged by a panel of experts to be in the best tradition of the compassionate dedication exhibited by W. Eugene Smith during his 45-year career in photojournalism. The grant, along with fellowships and other special awards, enable recipients to undertake and complete worthy photojournalistic projects.

“The judges were extremely impressed with the urgency of Mr. Peterson’s work, and his commitment and courage in revealing a difficult and enormously relevant subject in society today,” explained Stephen Frailey, Smith Fund board member and the Chair of this year’s Smith Grant adjudication committee. “Participating as a judge in this competition gave us tremendous insight to the range of narratives from around the world by so many remarkable photographers. The passion and intelligence each one brings to their respective picture stories is quite evident, and the strength and conviction of work submitted was inspirational.” Joining Stephen Frailey on the adjudication committee were Jody Quon, Photography Director at New York Magazine and Azu Nwagbogu, Founder and Director of African Artists’ Foundations (AAF) based in Nigeria.

*Project backgrounds and images from all finalists are available upon request.

Additional Awards
Photographer Sarah Blesener (U.S.) received a $5,000 Smith Fund Fellowship for her project, Beckon Us from Home, which looks at how the interplay of religion, love of country, and military-style training in youth education is being implemented at patriotic camps and clubs across the United States. Photographed in twelve different states, Beckon Us From Home is an ongoing photography project investigating how the United States
instills patriotism and passes down traditions to new generations.

The judges also presented special awards to Monika Bulaj (Poland) and Enayat Asadi (Iran) for their projects, Broken Songlines || Three Manuscripts, and Rising from the Ashes of War, respectively. Sponsored by The Philip and Edith Leonian Foundation, the $2,500 awards are presented to Smith Grant finalists whose works the judges deemed as “exceptional and worthy of recognition.”

The following photographers were recognized as finalists for this year’s W. Eugene Smith Grant: Mary Calvert: “Defending the Forces: Reforming America’s Military Justice System” (U.S.)
Giancarlo Ceraudo: “Destino Final: The History of Dictatorship in Argentina” (Italy)
Antonio Gibotta: “Stuck in the Cold of Belgrade” (Italy)
Rafael Lerma: “In The Midst Of Violent Change: Covering The Philippine Drug War” (Philippines)
Stephanie Sinclair: “Child Marriage in the United States” (United States)

W. Eugene Smith Student Grant
Marwan Bassiouni (Swiss/U.S./Egyptian), a recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague (Netherlands), received the $4,000 grant for New Dutch Views, a statement that challenges the idea that there is only one national identity and that Islam is separate from The Netherlands. By photographing the Dutch landscape from inside Dutch mosques, Bassiouni invites viewers to literally step inside the perspective of a Muslim person and rediscover his or her own landscape.

“I feel overwhelmed, excited and honored to have been selected to receive this prestigious award, Marwan Bassiouni said. “What especially touched me was the jury’s comment that my work presented ‘a new paradigm in documentary photography for social change.’ This is the first time I have been recognized for taking my own path when making documentary photographs.”

“The Smith Fund board overwhelmingly voted to create a special grant that would encourage the conviction that photography is a potent vehicle for social change, and for an individual understanding and interpretation of complex cultural issues. The future of the medium is in their hands,” explained Stephen Frailey, Smith board member and sponsor of the student grant.

Howard Chapnick Grant
This year’s $5,000 Howard Chapnick Grant was presented to Pete Brook for his project, A History of Prison Photography, Written by Prisoners. The grant is awarded to an individual for their leadership in any field ancillary to photojournalism, such as picture editing, research, education and management. For more than a decade, Pete Brook has written about and curated images of mass incarceration in the U.S. For this project, Brook is teaching the history of photography to 28 men in San Quentin State Prison, California.

“Together, we’re analyzing scores of existing images of lock-ups. In accumulation, we’re creating a prisoner-centric visual critique of the Prison Industrial Complex,” says Brook. "It's an honor to be a recipient of the Howard Chapnick Grant, an award that has championed people-focused pedagogies. I stand in solidarity with prisoners, their families and returning citizens, but I do not have their experience and insights. They are the experts. If, as a society, we’re to halt the failings and abuses of mass incarceration we need to hear prisoners’ voices.”

“Pete Brook and the incarcerated students he has enlisted in this project are creating a history of photography within the U.S. prison system and a curriculum of study that has never been done before,” said Brian Storm,
founder of MediaStorm, Smith Fund board member, and Chair of this year’s adjudication committee for the Chapnick Grant. “The research and production by Brook on this topic are absolutely fascinating and represents the very essence of the Chapnick Grant.”

Jodi Kantor, best-selling author of The Obamas and prize-winning investigative reporter for The New York Times, presented this year’s keynote during the award ceremony on October 17. Along with Megan Twohey and their colleagues, Kantor broke the story of decades of sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein. Their work, which won the Pulitzer Prize for public service, helped ignite the #MeToo movement, shift attitudes, and spur new laws, policies, and standards of accountability around the globe.

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For more information about the W. Eugene Smith Fund, please visit SmithFund.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Project backgrounds and photographs for all award recipients and finalists from the Smith Grant, Smith Student Grant, and Chapnick Grant, are available upon request.

Project backrounders and portfolios for Smith Grant recipients and Chapnick Grant recipient can be accessed via Dropbox.
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