

LOVA Photo Competition 2020

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In 2020 LOVA member **Mara Lin Visser** organised the third biennial LOVA Photo Competition with *Gender in turbulent times* as central theme. After the successful first edition of the LOVA Photo Competition in 2016 under the heading of *Gender in the field* and a failing one in 2018 with the theme of *Gender out of the box*, Mara Lin offered her expertise to organise the event this time. She did an excellent job! She wrote the flyer with the call for contributions, invited three experts in photography and filmmaking with an anthropological background to conform the jury, and posted a lot of messages regarding the competition on the LOVA Facebook page in the period of April 13 to July 2, 2020. The various announcements were accompanied by the nice logo below. Below I present a report on the event.



Gender in turbulent times

When Mara Lin proposed *Gender in turbulent times* as the 2020 theme of the LOVA Photo Competition we supported it with enthusiasm in the LOVA board. We liked the link with the Covid-19 pandemic which was very fierce in March 2020 when Mara Lin started the event. The theme was explained in the flyer as below:

Images have the power to connect people, especially in times of crisis. So, despite the cancellation of LOVA's Fifth International Conference due to the current corona epidemic, we decided to proceed with the photo competition. For joining the competition, you are invited to hand in a photo that reflects upon the role that gender plays in turbulent times. Photos can evoke memories or feelings from the past; images make us reflect on the social construction of the (small) world around us. They can even express our dreams and our hopes for the social change these turbulent times might bring.

Share your most intriguing, beautiful, extraordinary, or original photo with LOVA and win the audience or jury award. So, dive into your photo archive, be creative in and around the house or take photos from your window or balcony! With limited freedom, art can break boundaries.

The flyer announced that photos submitted would be posted on the LOVA Facebook page. The winners of both awards would receive a 40x60 cm enlargement of their winning photo and a free two-year LOVA membership, consisting of a hard copy of the annual issue of LOVA Journal and messages from the LOVA Mail Service (LMS) about vacancies, workshops, conferences, and other opportunities. The flyer also promised to publish the best five photos on the LOVA website and in the December 2020 issue of LOVA Journal. Furthermore, detailed information was given about how to submit pictures, and the rules about copyright, usage right and ethics.

At the closing date of June 1, 2020, only six pictures of three photographers had been received, and therefore it was decided to

extend the competition with two more weeks. Renewed calls for submission were successful and led to a total of fifteen pictures of nine photographers. All pictures were posted on the LOVA Facebook page and, on June 17 visitors of the page were invited to add “likes” or share their favourite picture(s). On July 1 the photo with most likes was announced as winner of the audience award while the jury award was presented the following day, together with the jury report and three other pictures selected by the jury as part of their TOP 5.

The organiser and the jury

Organiser Mara Lin Visser is a freelancing visual anthropologist and filmmaker, currently working on a social project around food waste and sustainability in Amsterdam. She did a Bachelor’s in Media and Culture and a Master’s in Visual Anthropology at Leiden University. Her Master’s fieldwork in Ghana resulted in the film *Unity: Dress-scapes of Accra* (2016) about African fashion. The movie has been screened at several film festivals and won the Best Student Award 2017 of the Society for Visual Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association. In 2018-2019 Mara Lin was visiting researcher at the Research Group of the Cross-cultural Study of Kinship at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, doing research on queer communities. The movie she made there, *Roller Girls: Performance of Gender in the Roller Derby Community of Barcelona*, was screened on the annual LOVA Day of May 10, 2019, at Leiden University. Mara Lin is also working as an instructor at the Afilm Barcelona Film School and is co-founder of the Dutch collective of *Ethnovision* which aims to bridge the knowledge gap between academics and the broader public by using audio-visual research methods.

Mara Lin introduced the three members of the jury on the LOVA Facebook page in April 2020. **Laisa Maria** is a photographer and cultural anthropologist based in Rotterdam. She completed a Master’s in Visual Ethnography and now she combines ethnographic research

with analogue photography and writing. Her work focuses on cultural diversity, inequality and humanity with the intention to promote and support community relations. **Julia Chanda Zvobgo** was born in Zimbabwe and raised in the Netherlands. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of the Facebook platform *Of Africa*, where “female voices and visuals are weaved together to celebrate women of African descent” in the diaspora. She is also co-founder of the *Ethnovision* collective. **Claire Bontje** followed courses in visual anthropology during her studies in Media and Culture. Since 2014 she works as a freelance photographer and filmmaker for various clients.

Jury’s award-winning photograph

The jury report stated that the three members of the jury had “a long deliberation of almost three hours and a lot of discussions and reflection. This is a testament to the range of creative, thoughtful and varied submissions that touched on *Gender in turbulent times*.” The discussion ended in the pronouncing of **Tina Krüger** as the winner of the jury award.

The jury report stated: “Tina’s photo and text illustrate how even in turbulent times, with the notion of ‘women and children first’, women with children are in a less advantageous position. The photo contains different layers and lines that pull the viewer in. The entire framing and composition tell the story.”

Tina had submitted the picture with the following explanation published on LOVA Facebook of June 10, 2020:

Cyclone Idai made landfall near Beira city in central Mozambique on the night of March 14, 2019, bringing with it torrential rainfalls and winds with gusts of up to 280 km/h, leaving about ninety per cent of the city and its surrounding areas destroyed and flooded. It is considered the second deadliest tropical cyclone on record in the southern hemisphere, and it has caused a humanitarian crisis in the region. The photo was shot in Buzi, one of the hardest-hit areas around Beira. Access by land was completely cut off due to the

flooding. In Buzi a total of 12,280 people was affected by the cyclone. With only one accommodation centre to provide shelter, many people slept on roofs for days on end without any food.



Photo by Tina Krüger

The photo shows a woman with her baby scrambling to get to the dock where Indian navy rescue boats are waiting to evacuate. Many women were carrying babies and small infants with them, adding another layer of stress onto their already dire situation. Although the premise was “women and children first” there was still a frenzy since everyone was anxious to get back to land and the boats had very limited capacity. Often the women with infants were not able to push through the masses as easily as their male counterparts. The Indian navy started boat rescue missions to Buzi and surrounding islands on March 20. During this mission on March 21, seven days after the storm, a total of 64 people were rescued, 24 of them children.

Tina shared the information below about her background and work:

Tina Krüger, born in 1988 in Germany, is a photographer, multimedia artist, documentary filmmaker, visual anthropologist, and graphic designer with an MA degree in Visual Anthropology. Since 2008 she lives and works in Maputo, Mozambique. In her work, she is interested in topics around identity, corporality, sensory knowledge, feminism, unusual perspectives of everyday life, environmental issues, and the intersection between anthropology and art. She is the co-founder of the creative production company Aguacheiro Design & Multimédia, where she works as director, cinematographer, producer, sound, editor, photographer, and communication consultant since 2013. For two years (2017-2018) she was a lecturer in the BA Film and Multimedia program at the Arts and Culture University in Maputo. She is the director and co-founder of emptyroom.art, a creative and arts hub in Maputo.

Audience award-winning photograph

The audience award was won by **Alessandro Belleli**. He had submitted three pictures under the theme of “Life under Covid-19 in Arctic Norway, May 2020, Tromsø,” and the audience preferred by far the picture below which was published on June 15, 2020. It received 164 likes on the LOVA Facebook page, by far the most of all pictures.

According to the jury report, this picture “‘ticked all of the boxes’, both technically and story-wise. The shot is original and engaging. The accompanying autoethnographic description also highlights a male perspective on parenthood which is often invisible.” Alessandro had explained his pictures by stating:

I am reflecting on how it is like to be a caring father in the times of corona and the climate worries and feel the weight of the responsibility that our generation carries toward the younger ones. I want to explore new ways of living, rethink my models and values, the masculine in 2020. I feel that the archetypical Alpine Italian man, many of his characteristics are outdated.



Photo by Alessandro Belleli: 'Father looking for.'

Much of the tools, the knowledge I need to be a modern and loving father, both for my partner and my son, are not what I was taught by the society I lived in earlier. Therefore, it is up to me and us as a couple to innovate and reinvent our understanding of roles and balances.

Also, Alessandro had provided some background information about his work:

Born in Trentino (Italy) in March 1983, Alessandro Belleli is an arctic anthropologist, photographer and filmmaker with a big weak side: a profound and systematic attraction towards the South. Coming from a middle ground, an area in between cultures, he has always been (in his opinion luckily) divided and therefore attracted by two opposite directions: the geographic, cultural and above all, temperamental North and South. As an anthropologist

photographer and filmmaker, he has been working in Denmark, Western Greenland, Brazil and Northern Norway. His works have been shown and published on the National Italian TV RAI, the National Norwegian TV NRK and by the Italian Polar Institute.

Jury's honourable mentions

Three other pictures received an honourable mention as part of the jury's TOP 5. The jury awarded **Andrea Malaya M. Ragrario's** photo and text with an honourable mention because it reflects "the impact of gender across generations; the emotion captured drew us in, and this raw, beautiful moment gives the viewer a sense of being there."



Photo by Andrea Malaya M. Ragrario

Andrea Ragrario had added the following explanation to this picture:

Kanua Andil laughs as she is taught by her youngest son (left) and granddaughter (right) how to read the alphabet in a *bakwit*, an evacuation centre in Davao City, Philippines.

Many Pantaron Manobo people of her generation, especially women, remain unable to read or write. With the help of city-based support groups, they had established their own community schools in the Pantaron Mountain Range so that their children and grandchildren might receive a formal education, but their schools have been vilified as communist fronts, and they have since been forced to flee because of counter-insurgency operations. During my fieldwork in the *bakwit* from 2018 to 2019, many women told me that in their youth, they had hoped to go to school themselves. But wariness of non-Manobo people and cultural expectations to marry early prevented such wishes from being realised. This is why, in spite of rudimentary facilities and a government order to close their school down, they strive to continue classes in the *bakwit*. This has helped reduce early marriages, and girls and boys now aspire to reach university and become teachers and doctors. I remember this scene well because, even though Kanua – like many women her age – is typically reserved in showing spontaneous emotion, here she was relaxed and amused at her own efforts to read. There was no sense of embarrassment whatsoever at her awkward pronunciation of the letters or the fact that it was the young ones who were teaching their elder; it was one of those scenes where you can genuinely say that they were all laughing with each other, and not at one person's unfortunate circumstance of being illiterate. For me, this photo stands for a moment of enjoyment and respite from the physically and emotionally taxing life in the *bakwit*, an image of intergenerational closeness, and of achieving a dream together in the midst of turbulent times.

Irma Beusink's photo below also received an honourable mention of the jury, arguing that “Whether intentional or not, it is interesting how visually the woman takes a lot of the space while the man appears almost above her or on top of the pyramid. This echoes issues raised in the text. The text stood out amongst all of the submissions as it highlighted essential ethical considerations.”

Irma had explained the background of this picture, taken in Bolivia, as follows:

In February 2017 we travelled with indigenous authorities into their indigenous territory Isiboro Securé by boat. These organisations have protested against a planned highway through their territory because of the expected environmental consequences due to deforestation. Besides, the road would not benefit them as they use to travel by boat on the many rivers.



Photo by Irma Beusink: 'Our rivers are our roads'

At the moment of the travel, the territory started to be flooded because of high rainfall upstream. Indigenous women play an important role in the protest against the highway but men are still in charge of the boat. We travelled about five days with five adults, and we returned because we did not want to bother people living in moments of disaster.

The third photo that was granted a honourable mention by the jury, was one of the two pictures submitted by **Luisa Machacón**. The jury

wrote: “Luisa Machacón perfectly depicts how even in times of uncertainty, everyday rituals continue. The composition of the image centres the subject whom we want to know more about and their story.” The text below was added by Luisa to explain her two pictures.

Colombia was in an internal war between the ex-guerrilla group FARC-EP and the government for more than fifty years. By the end of 2016, after four years of negotiation with the Colombian Government, an agreement between the two parties was signed, and more than 6,900 soldiers from the ex-guerrilla group started their transition to civil life.



Photo by Luisa Machacón

By June 27th, 2017, the FARC-EP soldiers delivered hundred per cent of their guns to the United Nations. Many members of the group asked themselves “what is the next step in life?” In the images can be seen two ex-FARC female members waiting to be able to go back to civil life. The pictures were taken in 2017 at the Transitional Local Zone, Pondoires. By the year 2020, most of the agreements made have not been implemented, creating distrust

within the two parties (government and ex-FARC) and large unrest in the country.

Thanks!

The LOVA Photo Competition 2020 was a really exciting event on our LOVA Facebook page in the April-June period. I want to thank Mara Lin Visser, the members of the jury, the photo submitters, and all page visitors who liked and shared the photos for their contribution. I really hope that another active LOVA member will be willing to organise a fourth competition in 2022.