



Secretive, solitary and well-camouflaged among the snow-covered rocks of their mountainous habitats, snow leopards are among the most elusive creatures on earth.
PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD PRESS PHOTO



Rescue crews carry a survivor through the rubble of collapsed buildings in Beichuan City, two days after the May 12, 2008, earthquake that devastated parts of central China.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF WORLD PRESS PHOTO



A woman cries as an apartment block burns, following a Russian air strike on Gori. Conflict broke out between Russia and Georgia in August over the breakaway region of South Ossetia.
PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD PRESS PHOTO



Detective Robert Kole of the Cuyahoga County Sheriff's Office enters a home in Cleveland, Ohio, on March 26, 2008, following mortgage foreclosure and eviction.
PHOTO COURTESY OF WORLD PRESS PHOTO



Above: Jose Antonio Guerra Oliva of Cuba competes in the men's semifinal of the 10m platform diving competition, at the Beijing Olympic Games in August.

Right: A young jockey stands beside a horse during the Naadam festival in Mongolia.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF WORLD PRESS PHOTO



In the right place, at the right time

This year's World Press Photo contest has moved on from war in Iraq and Afghanistan

BY IAN BARTHOLOMEW
STAFF REPORTER

A police officer edges cautiously through an abandoned house, his sidearm held up before him, ready to fire. Furniture is strewn about in disarray. At first glance, the scene looks familiar enough — a crime scene, a drug bust, the war on terror. But the caption for the black-and-white photo, which won top honors at the annual World Press Photo competition and is currently on show at the Eslite B2 Art Space, reveals a different story: the sheriff is “moving through a home in Cleveland, Ohio, following eviction as a result of mortgage foreclosure.”

The picture, taken by American photojournalist Anthony Suau for a photo-essay about the effects of the US financial crisis commissioned by *Time* magazine, was selected as the 52nd World Press Photo of the Year; the essay took second prize in the contest's Daily Life category.

Suau's entry achieves everything that the World Press Photo jury looks for in a top press photo — it asks questions of viewers and makes them want, or need, to delve more deeply into the story. Unlike last year's winner — a picture of an exhausted US soldier in Afghanistan's Korengal Valley taken by Tim Hetherington — this year's carries less of an immediate punch. Instead, it is full of complexity, and its impact is created gradually as you read through the caption, which, as always, is an integral part of this exhibition.

Suau's win is remarkable as this is the second time that the veteran photojournalist has won the World Press Photo of the Year award. The first time was in 1987 for a photo of South Korean riots that flared up during elections.

Another election features prominently in this year's exhibition with Callie Shell's series on the Obama campaign, also for *Time* magazine, which picked up first prize in the People in the News category.

Natural disaster and conflict play a prominent role in this show, as in every previous edition. The violent spat between Georgia and Russia and the Sichuan earthquake in China replaced Afghanistan and Iraq, which have been relegated to yesterday's news, as popular subjects.

“All the stories on the conflict in Georgia show the very different ways that photographers work. You've got the real reportage, and then you have got a different photographer, same place, same time, who gives a totally different way of showing how he experienced it (the conflict),” said Femke van der Valk, the exhibition's project manager, explaining why the conflagration appears in a number of the competition's categories.

As for China, Van der Valk said she was very encouraged by the number of local photographers who won awards for their images of the Sichuan earthquake, which struck on May 12, 2008. “When

something [newsworthy] happens, photographers from all over the world are flown to the place. And the ones with the best training, the best equipment and the ones who get paid best are likely to take the photos that get printed ... [In the exhibition this year, we see] Chinese photographers taking photos of their own country in a situation like this. We now see more and more that local photographers, when they have the right equipment and training, can win prizes for their own stories.”

The images of devastation are overwhelming at times, but overall, they form a minority. “Only 20 percent of the photos in the exhibition are about conflict,” Van der Valk said. “But these are the pictures people remember.”

Aside from the doom and gloom, the exhibition includes glorious images from fields such as science, sport and entertainment.

The Beijing Olympic Games were the subject of some wonderful sports photos, though one of the most amusing entries in the sports category is a series of pre- and post-fight portraits of boxers in New York.

Another highlight is large format prints of Steve Winter's photos of a snow leopard taken in Hemis National Park in the Ladakh region of the Indian Himalayas. The complex quest to capture images of this shy and illusive creature involved months of stakeouts and hugely sophisticated equipment. The intricate planning for and execution of this project is a marked contrast to images captured on the fly, such as Sebastian D'Souza's photo story of the Mumbai terrorist attack for the *Mumbai Mirror*, which received an honorable mention, or Lissette Lemus' photo of a mother shot dead at her child's primary school in El Salvador, which according to Van der Valk, came out of a routine commission for a story on education.

The World Press Photo contest grows larger each year; a total of 96,268 photos were submitted by 5,508 photographers from 124 countries for this edition. While not all the images make for comfortable viewing, there is plenty to think about in this outstanding slice of some of the best images from last year. A photo gallery and reports from the contest can be found at the World Press Photo Web site at www.worldpressphoto.org.

EXHIBITION NOTES:

WHAT: World Press Photo Exhibition
WHEN: Until May 30, every day from 11am to 10pm
WHERE: EsLite B2 Art Space (誠品B2藝文空間), 245, Dunhua S Rd Sec 1, Taipei City (台北市敦化南路一段245號)
ADMISSION: Free