



The World Comes to Dhaka



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They say that a picture is worth a thousand words, and nowhere is this aphorism so faithfully reflected than at the annual Chobi Mela, where every year the organisers bring together a spectacular array of the best exhibitions from around the world together with work-shops, lectures, slide-shows, and films, for a month-long photography and visual arts extravaganza.

It is that time of the year again, and this year the Chobi Mela has broken new ground in terms of innovation to bring an unprecedented collection to our shores from every corner of the globe. The month-long festival which opens at the end of this month includes the very best of our domestic talent side by side with some of the most exciting, most inventive, and most reputed names from the rest of the world.

In this issue of Forum, we feature seven of the exhibitions whose works will grace the Chobi Mela, to give our readers a taste of the richness and variety of the works that will be on display.

We invite our readers to take a trip through the following pages and feast their eyes on these provocative and thought-provoking images from all over the world.

Each image captures something essential, and we hope that the stories that they tell will remain with those who view them for a long time to come. From Nepal to Mexico to South Africa to China – and every spot in between -- the featured exhibitions tell a story and shine a spot-light that illuminates our understanding so that we can travel to far-flung locales and learn about the heart-breaks and hardships, the simple pleasures and struggles of different cultures and peoples everywhere in the world.

All this is coming to Dhaka -- the world and everything in it -- and we hope that our photo feature allows you all to take a small piece of the world home with you, to have and to hold, to seek inspiration from, and to see life in a new light.



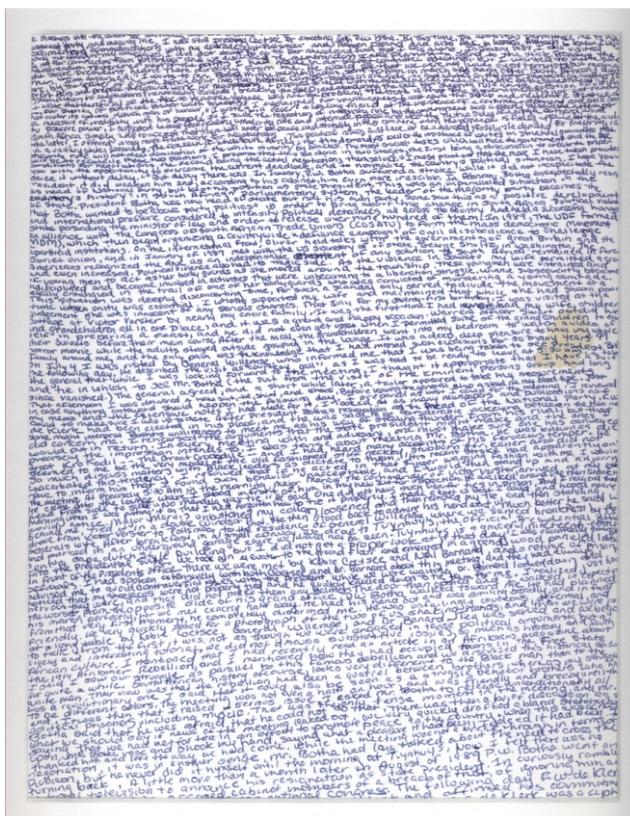
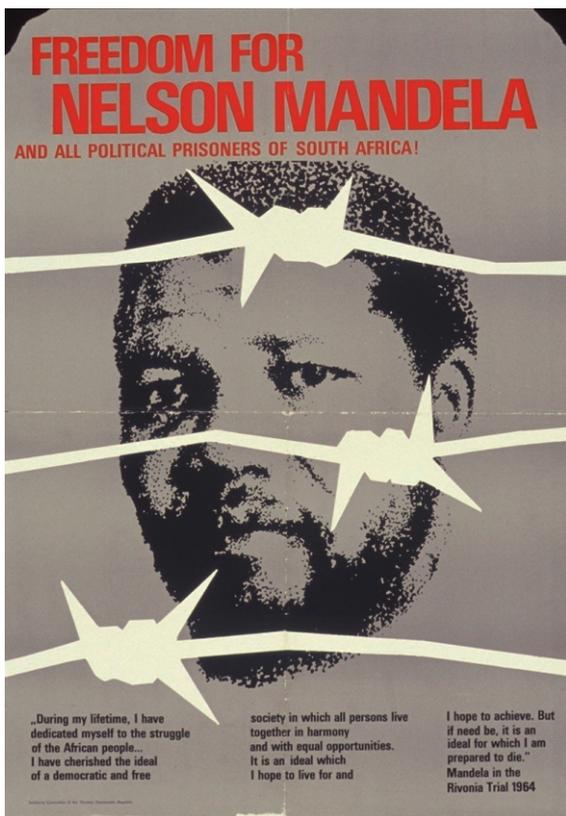
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Madiba

Photographer: Nelson Mandela Foundation South Africa

During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.

-Nelson Mandela

In order to mark Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday, the South African Embassy is presenting, in conjunction with the Political Forum of the Confederation and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, an exhibition about his life and times. This exhibition traces Nelson Mandela's life in 9 chapters and incorporating historical photographs and documents, comic drawings, films, slideshows, symbolic objects, garments and a replica of Mandela's cell on Robben Island, the exhibition gives the narrator's voice to Mandela himself the majority of the text is quoted from his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom.



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National Geographic All Roads

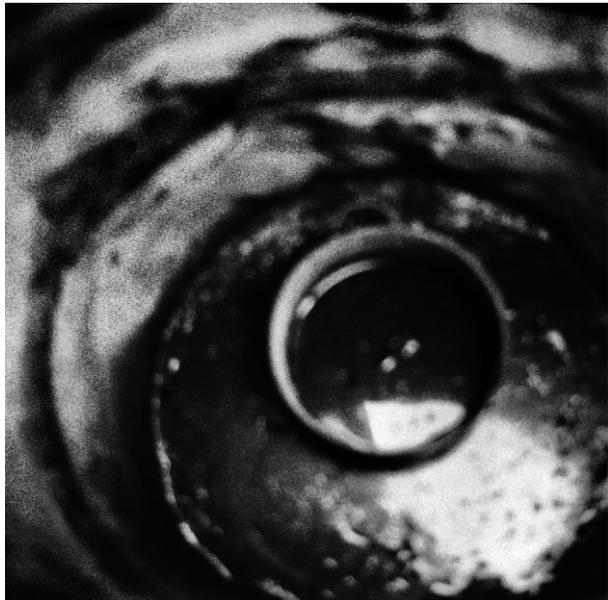
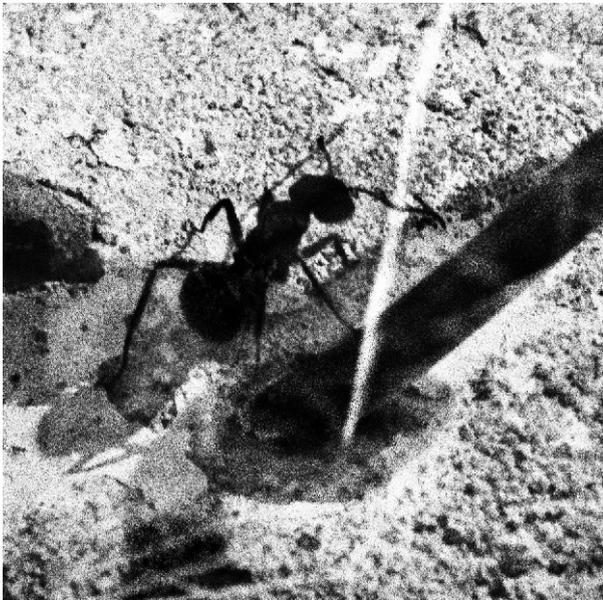
Photographer: Group

The National Geographic All Roads Film Project recognizes and supports talented indigenous and underrepresented minority-culture photographers from around the globe who are documenting their changing worlds.



©RENA EFFENDI

Alejandro Chaskielberg of Argentina photographs local and Paraguayan inhabitants in the islands near Buenos Aires, capturing the new culture that is forming there. Afghan photographer Farzana Wahidy offers a rare glimpse into the lives of Afghan women and the view of the world through a veil. Bangladeshi Khaled Hasan intimately captures the hard-working community of Jaflong's stone crushing industry what these workers must do to survive is also destroying their environment. Azerbaijan's Rena Effendi vividly captures the vanishing way of life in Khinaliq, a small village whose unique culture is threatened by the construction of luxurious ski resort nearby.



The Wailing of the Walls

Photographer: Paula Luttringer

Argentina

In the 16th and 17th centuries it was not unusual to see in Cabinets de curiosités (Cabinets of curiosities) stones on which strange patterns could be observed. It was thought that these patterns were created when the stones absorbed imprints of the violence that had taken place nearby.

I have a collection of these stones because they provide me with a metaphor for the marks which I feel are inscribed in my own body and in the bodies of

other Argentine women who, like me, suffered enforced disappearance and torture during Argentina's Dirty War 30 years ago.

We lived through a storm of history that changed our lives. We have built our lives on the scars of that trauma, scars that left recognizable patterns on our lives and the lives of our children and loved ones. Since 2000, I have been going back to Argentina, returning to the Secret Detention Centers and photographing walls that still bear witness to the violence enacted on our bodies, searching for other women who lived through enforced disappearance, asking them to talk with me about memories that have lasted for thirty years. My project, *El Lamento de los Muros* (The Wailing of the Walls), is the result.



A People War

Photographer: Group

Nepal

Nepal has just emerged from a decade-long war. The conflict ruined the country and tore its social fabric apart. In these 10 years, nearly 15,000 people were killed, tens of thousands were widowed, orphaned or bereaved. Millions more were forced to flee from their homes. Through all these odds, the citizens struggled for peace and democracy - and won.

The pictures have been selected from the pictorial book "A People War - Images of Nepal Conflict 1996-2006", authored by journalist Kunda Dixit and published by nepa~laya. The book and exhibit was designed by Navin Joshi. The exhibition has travelled to more than 30 venues in Nepal, and has been viewed by more than 350,000 people, making it Nepal's largest traveling exhibition.

It is presented at Chobi Mela by photo circle, a photography collective based in Kathmandu, Nepal.





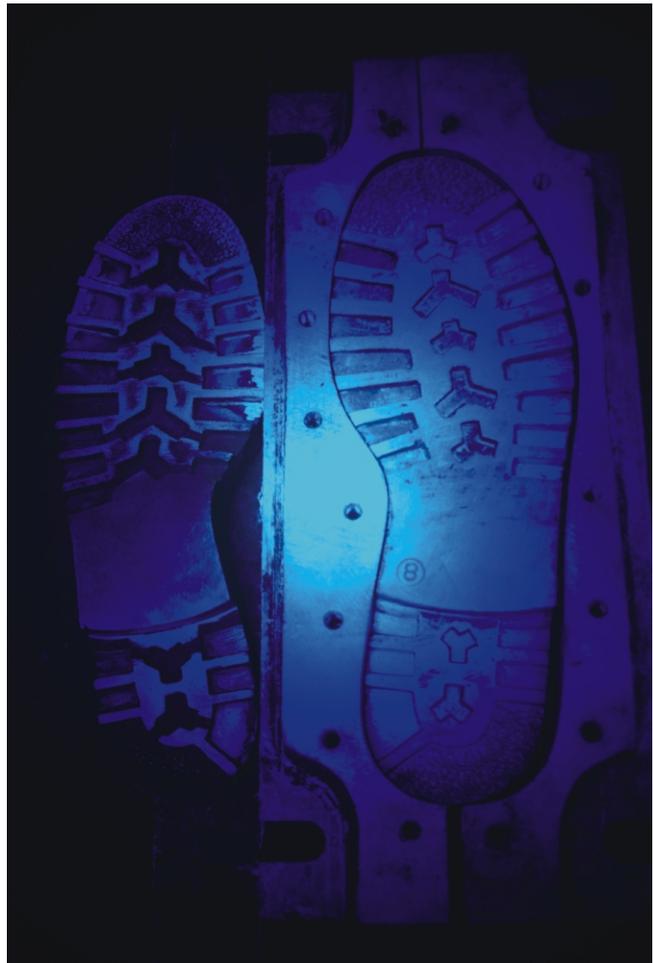
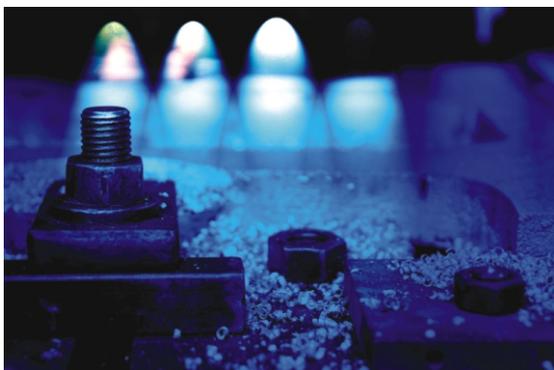
Play with Light

Photographer: Md. Rashed Kibria Palash Bangladesh

When I didn't know photography, I used to play with my torchlight and my table lamp. Then, light became a favourite play item of mine. The size of my study room was eight by twelve feet, in which I could easily spend my days playing by creating shimmering warm colours by reflecting light.

This collection is of the local industry that creates moulds for army boots. This Bangladeshi product is completely handmade, and I am proud of its longevity compared to foreign goods.

I've always dreamt to weave my dreams with light and colours, and I believe I may have begun to do that.





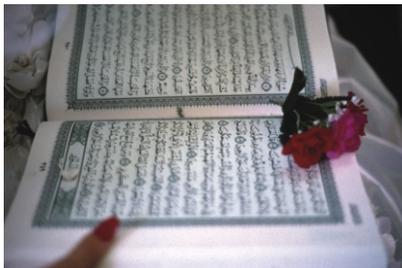
Women, More Than a Veil

Photographer: Isabelle Eshraghi

Argentina

For ten years, I have been working, as a photojournalist, on visual investigations on the situation of women in different Muslim countries: Morocco, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Niger.

The Westerner's vision often reduces their life to the veil, arranged weddings, violence, and terrorism. The urge of the news doesn't give us time to understand the reality of Muslim societies. Because of prejudices and common pictures of Islamic countries, we make all women tarred with the same mediatic brush. Beyond countries' borders, I hope my pictures will invite you to discover those women within Islam, in their diversity and their likeness.



Tabula Rasa – A Sweep of the Past

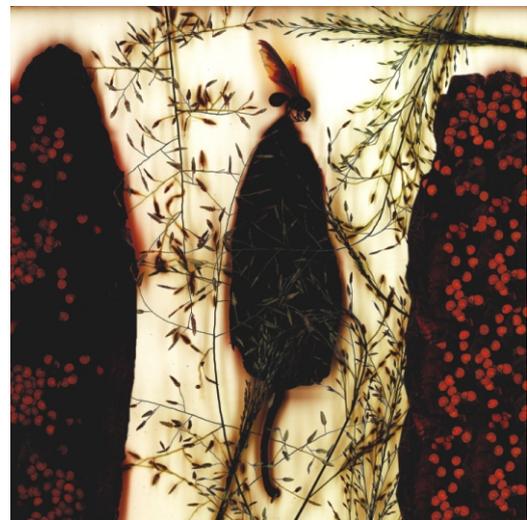
Photographer: Boris Svartzman

France-Argentina

The dismantling of traditional Chinese neighbourhoods and the new urban settings erected in their place go together with the reconfiguration of the socialist government in a market economy. It is through this link, acting as a metaphor of the transformation of a power and the concrete realisation of a new framework of life, that I approach the urbanisation of China, focusing on a humane vision of this country that ignores the will of its population.

In 20 years of modernisation, China, a traditionally rural empire, has become an urban country for the first time in its history. By focusing on the daily life in the traditional neighbourhoods, he tries to show how impossible it is to influence decisions made because of modernisation and in the name of wealth for the community.





GERADO MONTIEL KLINT	KENIA NREZ
NADIA BARAM	YOLANDA ANDRADE
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About Freedom

Photographer: Group

Mexico

In the end, freedom means so many things to so many different people around the globe that we will never be able to come up with one single definition of what freedom stands for.

This exhibition, started out with the premise of free choice for each artist to express their understanding of freedom according to his or her own imagination. There is no Mexican point-of-view for the word freedom in this collection, other than the fact that all the photographers are from Mexico.

You can be sure that there is no wrong or right way to interpret these pictures. After all, who is to say that your interpretation - even if at variance with what the author intended - is not as valid as that of the author?

All that matters is that you see yourself represented in these images, with your own ideas of freedom.