

Another Day

In Perpignan, the streets are beautiful, the sun is harsh, and the tap water leaves a bad taste in your mouth. To keep afloat, attendees begin the day on coffee and water (often pétillant), then transition to *demis* and *vin* at the end of the day.

To your health!

Spotlight: Gerd Ludwig—No End in Sight

Gerd Ludwig, the sprightly German photographer with a mischievous glint in his eye, was in remote Newfoundland when news of Chernobyl reached the world. But, ever since he first came in 1993, as part of an assignment for National Geographic on pollution in Russia, he has been fascinated by the spectacle, having come back to tour the reactors and record one of the worst and most avoidable catastrophes in human history.

What is even more fascinating than these ruined sites are the people who have willingly decided to come to this hell on earth: the locals who came back in the early 90s to be on their native soil; the 'stalkers,' the young men who get a thrill out of touring these ethereal ruins; the tourists, allowed from 2010, who take maudlin pleasure in rearranging the dolls and toys in these abandoned sites; the Poles who come from across the border for cheaper alcohol; the Orthodox believers who reclaim a disused church with utter faith in God's protection; the Russian soldiers who dug trenches in irradiated soil in their war against Ukraine. And, of course, the photojournalists.

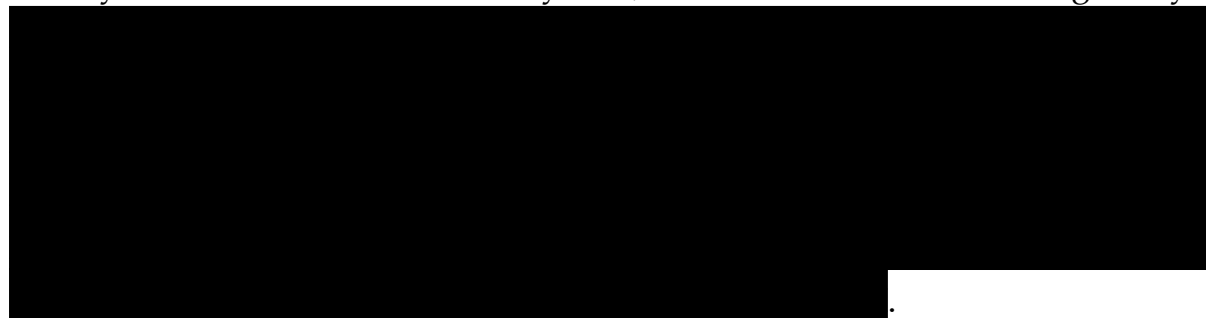
Asked about the fact he is now in a country which relies immensely on nuclear power, he is quick to describe his photographic mission: a warning about technology and mankind's hubris. It's less about the many nuclear power plants in operation across the world—one of which may well have powered the laptop I'm writing on—than the vaulting ambition of man to conquer nature, be it in the form of nuclear fission or artificial intelligence.

What is Visa after all if not a celebration of the ability of old technology—the recorded image, accompanied by the written word—to move audiences and record history?

Spotlight: Michael Yamashita—East Meets West

Over forty years, Michael Yamashita has returned again and again to China, having built a vast archive of photos, showing a nation of beautiful landscapes and beaming faces. A Japanese-American photographer, Yamashita says he is most comfortable in countries with 'rice'; he likes the fact that China lets him blend in, though not to the point that he has learnt the language. Eagle-eyed and Chinese-literate viewers will notice, for example, that a sign in his exhibition labelled as 'the end of the world' should in fact be translated as 'fishing platform.'

When asked about China's history of human rights abuses, its suppression of freedom of speech, its genocidal actions, its mass surveillance, and the sundry cruelties of its totalitarian system, Yamashita had the following to say:



Arte Reportage—Ukraine: Coming Home from Russia & India: Recruits for Putin's War

It was a Ukrainian double feature in the Palais des Congrès auditorium last night: first, a documentary on the lives of former civilian prisoners as they rehabilitate back home, and speak out about the sexual abuse they endured—harrowing, to say the least.

Then, a report on the young Indian men who are recruited under false pretenses for the Russian army, as cannon fodder. With the promise of high wages, these young men are lured far from home so that they can die, like young men from Cameroon and North Korea and other unlucky nations, in Russian trenches. Officially, India is neutral in the conflict; but Pandey, the film's director, makes a painful link between Modi's embrace of Putin and the mothers mourning their sons killed thousands of miles away.

Campo Santo—Encore!

Another evening at Campo Santo, with more tributes to Jean-François and more series from across the globe. For what may have been the first time in the festival's history, the presentation emphasised by the immense impact of the meat industry on global carbon emissions, dovetailing neatly with the work by Selene Magnolia Gatti on factory farming and the harm to both humans and animals wrought by these industrial behemoths of 'food production'—though it made an incongruous pairing with Brent Stirton's series on bullfighting, even if the toreadors were nothing less than resplendent.

The screening soundtrack is apparently being done by a new team this year—your correspondent is reliably informed that there is far less Mahler than usual. Rockabilly tunes worked well for a series on America's homecoming parade; but the most bizarre moment of the night was surely the choice of Kanye West's 'Flashing Lights' for George Steinmetz's series on solar energy in China—it made the series that followed, on sex dolls and the men who own them, look tame by comparison.

Though the Café de la Poste opened its doors last night, it was over-popular and under-staffed, meaning that those of us who were kept late at Campo Santo for the team photo were unable to find a table, and were instead relegated to a nearby bar. But we could still enjoy *demis* and the dulcet tones of Cyndi Lauper and Daft Punk. Will tonight be the night we reclaim la Poste?

À demain!

- FSB

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