

# L'ŒIL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

## Format Festival : A window on our environment

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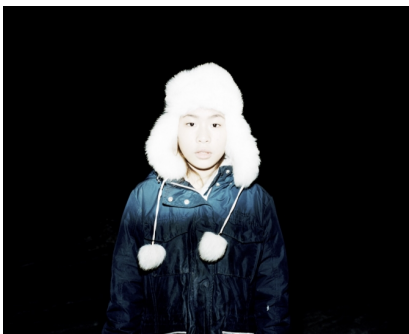
April 6, 2017



From 'The Gold Coast' © Ying Ang



From the series 'This is not real life' © Dominika  
Gęsicka



From the series 'This is not real life' © Dominika  
Gęsicka



Circus, from the series 'Flying Houses' © Laurent  
Chehere



Sujit Kumar, (The Chicken Boy). Fiji, 1978 from the series 'Feral Children' © Julia Fullerton-Batten



The Potato Picker from the series 'Appleseed necklace' © Alexey Shlyk



From the series 'Magic Party Place (Dreaming of a New Town Utopia)' © C J Clarke and Christopher Ian Smith



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08, 2013 from the series 'Project Cleansweep' ©  
Dara McGrath, 2013



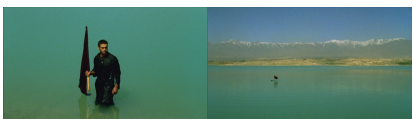
From 'STRATA commissioned by FORMAT in  
connection with First Art and Flaneur © Discipula



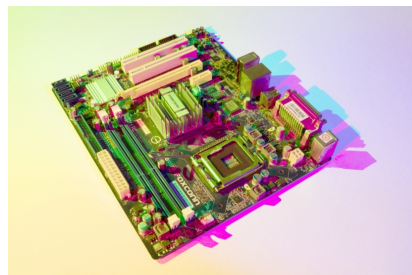
'The Poetic Impossibility to Manage the Infinite,  
2014' © Edgar Martins



Buckshot from the series 'Night Vision, selections  
from Unbidden' (2008-16) © Lee Deigaard



Still from 'What we have overlooked' © Lida Abdul



CUP from 'The Fox and the Rooster', from the  
series "The Canary and the Hammer" © Lisa  
Barnard



From 'Breathing Brass', commissioned by  
FORMAT in connection with First Art and Flaneur  
© Liz Hingley



From the series 'New Europeans' from the  
exhibition 'Balkan Trails' © Matej Povse



Member of Derby Rowing Club in his rowing attire,  
c 1900 © W.W.Winter Ltd



Saraswati, 16, Nepal, from the series 'A Ritual of  
Exile: Blood speaks' © Poloumi Basu / Magnum  
Emergency Fund



Part I: Redo © Sadie Wechsler



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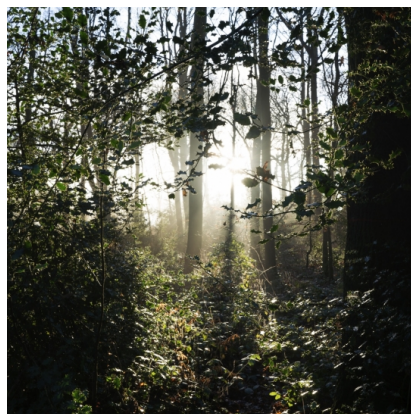
Nanjing Underwater World, China, 2015 from the series 'White Bear' © Sheng-Wen Lo



From the series 'The song of sparrows in a hundred days of summer' © Sohrab Hura / Magnum



From 'Flaneur in the ancient landscape' commissioned by FORMAT © Tom Hunter



From 'Flaneur in the ancient landscape' commissioned by FORMAT © Tom Hunter



From 'The Gold Coast' © Ying Ang



From the series 'This is not real life' © Dominika Gęsicka

**Over two hundred international artists, video artists, and photographers, thirty exhibitions, and one key question: how to represent our relationship to natural and social space? We're off to the town of Derby for the 8th edition of FORMAT International Photography Festival.**

The theme of "Habitat," which frames this edition of the festival, is vast and multilayered.

Encapsulating both our everyday life and that of our planet, the representation of our ecosystem reveals numerous points of ambivalence. The relationship between humans and their environment is deeply problematic, ranging from admiration to exploitation, from domestication to preservation. The works on display vary in terms of subject and technique, from analog photography to virtual reality. The Habitat theme takes stock of the way we relate today to nature and urban environment, landscapes whose vague contours are fluctuating and breaking down.

The featured artists, some well-established, others emerging, display their works all around this charming town. Among FORMAT's many treasures, visitors will have the opportunity to discover Laurent Chéhère's "Flying Houses." Shown at Déda, these images are veritable poetic satires of social classes. Detached from their foundations, the dilapidated buildings soar majestically.

The recent works by Sohrab Hura, on view at the Quad Arts Centre, offer, in turn, prophetic snippets. Photographed at the heart of the hottest region in India, the landscapes and human bodies seem to be burning up. The dry, stifling air is a foretoken of humankind's likely destiny.

Human domination, nature in distress, and habitat migration are the core concerns of many artists, a sign of global awareness. At the Quad, Ester Vonplon is exhibiting photographs of thermal blankets used to protect glaciers in Switzerland. Seen in closeup, these covers resemble diseased skin, cracking and flaking, marred with cuts and scrapes.

Taking flight and motion-blurred, the animals photographed by Lee Deigaard, on display at Pearson's, seem reduced to ghostly presences. A veritable hunt, these images capture and corroborate the destruction of our natural landscapes, forests and fields.

Is nature doomed to becoming just a human construct? This question is raised by one of my personal favorites, Stephanie Rushton, exhibiting at Pearson's. Using exotic plants and digital creations, the artist constructs a natural environment that appears shrunk, as if enclosed in a bell jar. Utopian and cynical, the cultivation of this artificial greenery is apposite to the fractured walls of the building housing the exhibition. Fissured and faded, the structure likewise seems to be succumbing to decay.

Taking place at the heart of the Midlands, FORMAT is the largest UK photo festival. The events and exhibitions are held at institutions central to the life of the town of Derby. The venues include the Quad cinema and arts center; the historical Pearson Building and formerly a public school; the Déda Centre for Dance, Contemporary Circus and Outdoor Work; as well as the Cathedral and the University of Derby. The works displayed in the different locations dialog with each other's subjects and contents, with the cultural heritage, and with the town as a whole. A *flâneur*, the visitor will enjoy strolling from one place to the next, growing aware of their own relationship to the environment and their own responsibility for it.

### **Julie Bonzon**

*Julie Bonzon is a Ph.D. student in Art History at the University College London (UCL).*

**FORMAT17 Festival – Habitat**

March 24 to April 23, 2017

Various locations

Derby, UK

<http://www.formatfestival.com/>

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[Julie Bonzon](#)

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