

PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography

Media release

28 October 2020

PHOTO 2021 brings groundbreaking new art back to the streets and galleries of Melbourne—and beyond

Trailblazing new festival to revive city with work from locally and internationally celebrated artists, established and emerging

In a jubilant celebration of a new COVID normal Victoria, the inaugural PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography will reanimate the streets and galleries of Melbourne and regional Victoria on 18 February – 7 March 2021.

PHOTO 2021 will be one of the first opportunities for art-and-culture-loving Victorians and interstate visitors to come out and experience a festival in the spectacular and imaginative style for which the state—and the city of Melbourne—are renowned.

A completely brand-new festival, PHOTO 2021 is set to reveal a revolutionary vision of post-COVID possibility for the world of photography, art and culture, in Victoria and around the world. Forging a new path for bringing arts, culture, business and academic sectors together—across Australia and overseas—the festival is already creating a global dialogue about the innovative ways in which artists and audiences can present and engage with photography.

First intended to launch in April of this year, the festival was postponed due to the pandemic. But the delay has only served to make PHOTO 2021's February 2021 launch a more exciting, more important and more groundbreaking event for a state that has worked hard to keep its citizens safe.

With a significant proportion of programming being delivered at iconic outdoor sites, PHOTO 2021 is primed to reinvent the way that cultural events are delivered and experienced. As the city of Melbourne and state of Victoria emerge from a 6-month hiatus, PHOTO 2021 will be an artistic celebration of heightened poignancy. The festival will also include an online program, which has the added benefit of making the festival global while keeping local audiences safe and comfortable.

As Australia's largest and most significant photography festival, PHOTO 2021 has commissioned photographers from across the globe to create new, thought-provoking works that explore the critical relationship between photography and 'The Truth'. With 40 free outdoor works and 39 free exhibitions—accompanied by events and an extensive online offering—audiences can expect to bask in powerful imagery displayed at outdoor spaces and venues across the city, and beyond.

Over 120 artists will showcase work at over 65 cultural institutions, museums and galleries and outdoor spaces. This will include new commissions and works from artists including **Zanele Muholi** (South Africa), **Sam Contis** (USA), **Hoda Afshar** (Iran/Australia), **Brook Andrew** (Wiradjuri/Celtic, Australia), **Patrick Waterhouse** (UK), **Daniel Shea** (USA), **Yvonne Todd** (NZ), **Hayley Millar-Baker** (Gunditjmara, Australia), **Atong Atem** (South Sudan/Australia) and many more. The city is set to shine with photography, displayed on billboards and large bespoke structures at iconic locations such as Federation Square, State Library Victoria, the Parliament of Victoria, Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne Garden, the Immigration Museum and Argyle Square on Lygon Street, among others.

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For the first time ever, the Metro Tunnel Creative Program has invited one festival to curate works across all their construction sites. The PHOTO 2021 x Metro Tunnel Creative Program will display over 500 metres of art comprising of new work from **Felicity Hammond** (UK), **Kenta Kobayashi** (Japan), **Ann Shelton** (New Zealand), **James Tylor** (Australia), and more, with most works being specifically commissioned to premiere at the Festival.

Other Australian premieres from international artists include works from **Taiyo Onorato & Nico Krebs** (Switzerland), **Emmanuelle Andrianjafy** (Madagascar), **Broomberg & Chanarin** (South Africa/UK), **Sara Cwynar** (Canada), **Simon Fujiwara** (UK/Japan), **Nanna Heitmann** (Germany/Russia), **Sim Chi Yin** (Singapore), and **Gustavo Germano** (Argentina).

Artistic Director Elias Redstone and the PHOTO 2021 team have created a biennial festival that takes art to the streets, celebrating photography as an artform as well as providing critical support to artists—with over 30 Australian and international artists commissioned to create new work. The original festivals were to run in 2020 and 2022, but will now run in 2021, 2022 and then biennially thereafter.

Redstone said: *“PHOTO 2021 is a truly international celebration held in Melbourne, showcasing new photography and new ideas. We’re commissioning new work and taking it to the streets, while providing space for new voices, perspectives and ideas. Audiences will be able to visit exhibitions and outdoor works for free, while engaging with the ideas, questions and experiments happening at the frontline of contemporary photographic practice. While our international artists and visitors may not be able to fly to Melbourne for the festival, they will be able to participate in many parts of the program online, including the PHOTO LIVE and PHOTO IDEAS public programs as well as being able to experience the outdoor commissions through our Virtual Tour. We are tremendously excited by this opportunity to showcase Melbourne on a national and international stage. After all that the city and state has been through in 2020, we are delighted to be able to bring vibrancy, activity and world-class art back to the cultural capital in 2021.”*

The full public program of events and speakers for the PHOTO IDEAS and PHOTO LIVE series will be announced in early 2021. Audiences who are not able to make it to Melbourne for the festival will be able to experience much of the outdoor program through the PHOTO 2021 Virtual Tour, which will allow audiences to view the works in-situ online, as they have been installed.

PHOTO 2021 aims to create an accessible and democratic festival presenting ideas critical to contemporary, social and photographic discourse. The festival’s central theme, ‘The Truth,’ invites artists, curators, writers and academics to explore the critical relationship between photography and truth. No matter how conscious we are of photography’s intrinsic, infinite subjectivity, the choices photographers make still shape how we view the world. While the veracity of the photographic image has always been contested, today the relationship between what we see and what we believe is more complex than ever.

“There has been no more important time for our society to discuss and debate the issues of finding, sourcing and understanding the truth. Whether it be alternative facts, augmented reality or artificial intelligence our notions, perceptions and encounters of truth are constantly being questioned, eroded and at times attacked. PHOTO 2021 has been established to not only create a world-leading festival of photography, but to also continue to engage with, process and discuss the major issues of our time.” said **Mark Henry, Chair of PHOTO 2021**.

“With the rise of social media, where the traditional barriers to accessing information have been mostly removed, we are now facing a range of different issues that we are yet to understand let alone tackle and manage these as a community. PHOTO 2021 is an opportunity to promote the arts as a vehicle to bring about social change, stimulate discourse and promote a sense of community in our contemporary societies,” continued Henry.

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The full PHOTO 2021 program will be revealed on 17 November at 7pm (AEST) with an online public launch event. Head to photo.org.au for more information.

PHOTO 2021

Thursday 18 February to Sunday 7 March 2021

FREE events taking place across multiple locations across Melbourne and Regional Victoria
photo.org.au

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT PHOTO 2021

PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography is a new major photographic event coming to Melbourne and Regional Victoria. The festival addresses the major issues of our time in a program of free exhibitions, outdoor displays and artist commissions across the city, as well as workshops, education programs and awards. The inaugural festival, PHOTO 2021, runs from Thursday 18 February to Sunday 7 March 2021.

ABOUT THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Elias Redstone is the founder and Artistic Director of PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography. With over 15 years experience within the arts sector, Elias has a track record of initiating and delivering innovative cultural programs in collaboration with leading institutions such as Barbican Art Gallery, MoMA and Storefront for Art and Architecture. He was Curator of the Polish Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Biennale and Senior Curator at the Architecture Foundation, London. He has edited publications for Prestel, Sternberg Press and Bedford Press, and served as Contributing Editor for Arena Homme Plus and GQ Style. His book *Shooting Space: Architecture in Contemporary Photography* is published by Phaidon.

PHOTO 2021 HERO IMAGES

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