



06 May 2021

The Best Photography Festivals Open this May

CONTACT Photography Festival (Canada), Les Boutographies (France), and Fotografia Europea (Italy) are among the highlights on the calendar this May. Learn all about their exhibition programs and supporting events.

[CONTACT Photography Festival](#) / Toronto, Canada / 1 - 31 May



© Esmaa Mohamoud, from the exhibition *The Brotherhood FUBU (For Us, By Us)*

2021 marks CONTACT's 25th anniversary. Traditionally, throughout the entire month of May, the festival transforms Toronto into a stage for contemporary photography, showcasing exhibitions and supporting events that present a broad spectrum of both physically and conceptually engaging forms of visual storytelling. This year is a little different, though, as the curatorial team recognises the vital importance of adapting schedules to maintain public safety protocols and keep artists, partners, and audiences safe.

With respect to ongoing restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, all indoor exhibitions planned for the Core program in May at artist-run-centres, galleries, and museums will open later in the year. In keeping with the festival's customary May launch, outdoor installations will be on view in public spaces across the city (dates to be confirmed, pending government lockdown guidelines), featuring **compelling works by exceptional artists whose practices reflect the intense upheaval of the present day**, and global awakenings that have inspired hopeful futures. Issues addressed include the perception of Black bodies in contemporary and colonial paradigms; Indigenous perspectives on land, culture, sovereignty, and colonialism; intersectional experiences of queer artists; representations of women's bodies as sites of power that challenge history; the state of the environment and the impact of human activity on climate change; and isolation, survival, and courage during times of the pandemic.

Away from the exhibitions, CONTACT is also offering some **new ways of engaging**



Written by Simon Hall

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with content virtually on their redesigned website, with conversations, live presentations, video screenings, and photo essays rolling out throughout May, and beyond. For the first time, their website will feature brief audio talks about each public installation, providing unique insights into the projects as described by the artist(s) and/or curators. QR codes posted at selected installation sites will connect visitors directly to these audio tracks, making them accessible both on location and from home. To find out more about the full program, visit scotiabankcontactphoto.com.

[Les Boutographies](#) / Montpellier, France / 19 May - 30 June



© Natalia Kepesz, from the exhibition *Niewybuch*

Every year since 2001, spring in Montpellier, France has become synonymous with Les Boutographies. This small but compelling festival has, from its very inception, been based on the simple principle of **discovering and promoting the latest proposals of contemporary image-making from Europe**. The Artistic Director this year, Christian Maccotta, has placed a particular focus on narratives surrounding acute questions of identity. "The term mutation, which has often been used to characterise the contemporary, is now taking on a new and especially critical perceptiveness", he writes. "Accelerated biological phenomena, on the scale of the entire planet, remind us of the fragility of our human, social and economic organisms. These upheavals, which follow on from one another with a speed never before experienced, cover slower movements that continue uninterrupted. The photographers of the 2021 selection, immersed in a world that is intensely their own."

The 13 official exhibitions this year cover a wide range of photographic expression within that concept. They include **Fernando Marante's** exploration into the mechanisms for representation within photography and the ideas of visibility which only the "grammar" of the medium can provide for us; **Agata Wiczorek's** video-based project that introduces a prevalent yet surprisingly popular worldwide Masking fetish subculture; **Marco Marzocchi's** visual diary that searches for the cause of a childhood profoundly disturbed by his environment; **Natalia Kepesz's** examination of how patriotism and military summer camps have developed into a major part of elementary school education in Poland; and **Jagoda Wisniewska's** investigation into the power and powerlessness that bonds so deeply within the mother-child relationship.

The highlight of the supporting events comes in the form of a juried screening comprised of work by Alex Llovet, Alexandra Dautel, Alexis Pazoumian, Alexandre Silberman, Ambre Husson, Corentin Fohlen, Didier Bizet, Irina Shkoda, Lilly Urbat, and Tamara Eckhardt, among many others. A collection of workshops and artists talks round up the program. More information can be found at boutographies.com.

Fotografia Europea / Reggio Emilia, Italy / 21 May - 4 July



© Donovan Wylie, from the exhibition *The Tower Series*

Featuring over 15 exhibitions, Fotografia Europea returns this May to transform the charming northern Italian town of Reggio Emilia into a space dedicated to the celebration of contemporary photography. After the forced pause that led to the cancellation of last year's events, Fotografia Europea 2021 starts from a verse by Gianni Rodari – Sulla Luna e sulla Terra / fate largo ai sognatori! (On the Moon and on Earth / make way for dreamers!) to **highlight the importance of imagination, in its creative meaning, in generating meanings, and visions.** "The past year has profoundly changed our way of life, making us all discover ourselves as more fragile humans and perhaps even more human", say the team in charge of artistic direction. "What are the new paths to take as such? Are there any old paths we had forgotten? Fotografia Europea 2021 questions the role of images and visual culture in this particular moment, focusing on their complex and multifaceted nature which makes any unique definition difficult."

The exhibitions on display will be held in various cultural venues across the city, both public and private, formal and informal. The highlights include **Donovan Wylie's** examination of mostly invisible architectural structures that weave the presence of conflict into the fabric of daily life; **Lebohang Kganye's** deep and philosophical exploration of the materiality of photography as a tool in the (re)construction of collective memory; **Alex Majoli's** reflection upon the relationship between the theatre and the city and its possible interconnections; **Antoine d'Agata's** thermal images taken in hospital resuscitation wards and uninhabited public spaces in France during the country's first lockdown; and **Noémie Goudal's** site-specific installation that brings real and theoretical geographies together to create a space between reality and its mental representation.

Elsewhere, in the festival's partner exhibitions, **Guido Guidi** showcases images from his three-decade photographic journey on the theme of the Moon along with all its entourage of philosophical and mythological meanings; **Collezione Maramotti** introduces an exhibition comprised of paintings by Enoc Perez and photographs by Bridget Schindler and Carlo Mollino; and **Luca Nostrì** presents a set of four photographic series revolving around a number of courtyards in the territory of Lugo, Italy, the photographer's hometown, and of the surrounding countryside, in various historical moments. Go to fotografiaeuropea.it/en to find out more.

[Ci.CLO Bienal Fotografia do Porto](#) / Porto, Portugal / 14 May – 27 June



© Poulomi Basu, from the exhibition *Centralia*

Moving into its second edition, Ci.CLO Bienal Fotografia is built around the idea of **challenging existing cultural, environmental, political, and economic contradictions in our contemporary world**. "When we defined the binomial theme *Adaptation and Transition* for the festival in 2019 we were aware of the urgency and topicality of its meaning", explain the curators. "Now, two years later, facing a pandemic that has transformed every aspect of our lives, it is even more pressing to seek ways to proactively adapt and transition. With the fragility of our systems radically exposed, we are forced to experience how deeply intertwined these systems are, and how vulnerable and impermanent life is." The works on display this year look to respond to this notion and together reflect on and interrogate what constitutes interdependence between natural and human systems; considered within a complex global matrix of cultural, social, and political relationships that have determined this point of ecological fragility.

In the line-up, a dual show showcasing the works of **Susan Meiselas** and **Alfredo Jaar** draws attention to the aftermath of Portuguese colonialism in different geographies, Porto and Angola; **Nuno Cera** investigates the spatial qualities of three architectural complexes in a video installation that creates an ephemeral landscape in which three times and geographies coexist; **James Newitt** merges found material and animation to reimagine the sea as a space of extraterritoriality; and **Álvaro Domingues** questions the concept of landscape as a code for the recognition of the territory.

to the student's work, a series of images depicting a landscape with a person in the foreground

in other standout events, a group show comprised of photographers **Lisa Barnard**, **Poulomi Basu**, **Nancy Burson**, **Maxime Matthys**, **Gideon Mendel**, **Simon Roberts**, **Salvatore Vitale**, and **Stanley Wolukau-Wanambwa** takes the symbiotic nature of society, politics, and ecology as the basis to explore how modern humans have reached a crossroads. A second group exhibition featuring **Alice dos Reis**, **Cláudia Varejão**, **Elsbeth Diederix**, **Francisca Rocha Gonçalves**, and **Mandy Barker** focuses on the exploitation of water and of its associated resources. To discover what else is on, visit bienalfotografiaporto.pt/en.

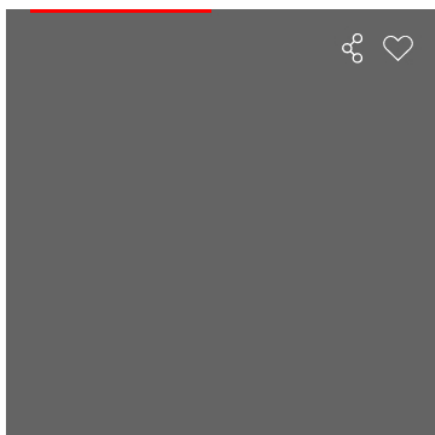
Check out our [festivals page](#) to get a complete view of what's coming up on the photography calendar over the next few months.

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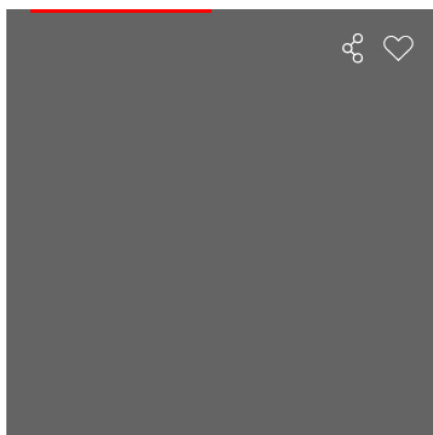
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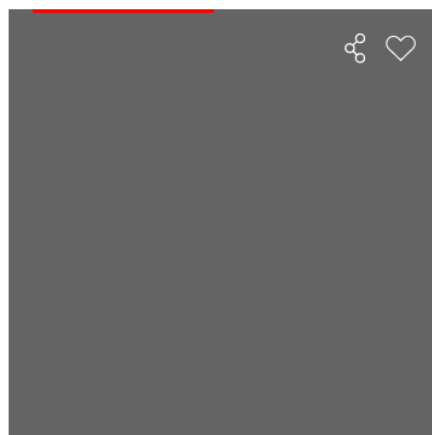
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