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PRESS RELEASE
- for immediate release -
July 18, 2011

**The MANUEL RIVERA-ORTIZ Foundation for International Photography
2011 Grant Program Recipient Announced**

The President and the Board of Trustees of The Manuel Rivera-Ortiz Foundation for International Photography are proud to announce our 2011 Photography Grant Program recipient:

MADS NISSEN of Denmark

Danish photographer Mads Nissen, 31, our 2011 Grant Recipient, was also First Prize winner in multimedia earlier this year at the Danish Press Photo of the Year award. At the same event last year he was awarded Best Photographer of the Year. Most recently Mr. Nissen became the recipient of a World Press Photo award for his story of an 18-month-old Nepalese orphan with hydrocephalus.

Mr. Nissen's proposal to our foundation titled "No Shelter from Fear," proved to us not only an uncommon creative enterprise in the way photographic stories are told, but also a very intimate understanding by Mr. Nissen of the real lives of people. "No Shelter from Fear" aims to place focus on Colombia's internally displaced. The project is based on the story of Colombian refugee Leidy Viviana Rendon, whom Mr. Nissen personally met while photographing in the slums of Bogotá one year ago. Mr. Nissen's compelling story proposal, coupled with an extraordinary 15-image B&W portfolio presentation, compelled the unanimous decision to award him with this year's 5,000 USD grant.

"I am extremely grateful for having received the 2011-grant from the Manuel Rivera-Ortiz Foundation for International Photography because it gives me the opportunity to raise more attention to Colombia's millions of internally displaced people, who have for too long been ignored, although the illegal cocaine production targeting Europe and North America is a root cause of the conflict," explains Nissen.

And it is this very humanitarian crisis taking place inside Colombia where "a wide range of armed political groups are fighting a fierce and year-long battle leaving many civilians with no other option than fleeing their farms and homes," says Nissen. "During my previous visits to Colombia I have met several displaced families and seeing their fear and poverty has made it a personal obligation for me to tell their stories."

This year's jury of three which met in London at the Gherkin offices of Swiss Re, included foundation President & Founder Mr. Manuel Rivera-Ortiz, Mr. Jon Levy Director & Founder of FOTO8, London, and Mr. Marc Prüst, Paris-based Executive Director of this foundation.

Mr. Jon Levy, honorary judging committee chair, says that it was the storytelling approach of each of the ten project proposals, which was most fascinating to him.

"Having seen the ten nominated works that we looked at," he explains, "[for me] it came down to the way that the photography made me feel — which became so much a part of the judging process. Each project elicited a different type of emotional response especially when it came to the photographers' vision of how they went about trying to tell their stories. With Mads," he continues, "there was something deeply disturbing about his pictures that made them stand out. I felt that his approach had the necessary part to it on how to properly tell stories that do not hide behind the facade of 'good picture.' How he uses photography could only be judged by his deep-seated knowledge of the topic. It was a bit sad that we had to reduce all of the entries to just one; they each had intrigue and compelling emotional content to make one want to know more. In the end, only one proposal could be awarded."

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For Mr. Rivera-Ortiz this year's competition yielded a much better crop of submissions than envisioned for a first year prize.

"On proposal alone, many of the entries merited funding," he says. "Many of the topics were heart wrenching. Topics ranged from prison life in Central and South America, to refugees in Azerbaijan; war victims in Afghanistan, to people working coalmines in India. Judging this years top ten was simply not easy. The proposals that made it through the month-long judging to a semifinalists 'short list' of ten were all terrific projects. In London that list of ten was painstakingly brought down to only three! The judging for the last three became even more grueling and detailed; these were judged even more meticulously on image quality, project merit, execution, journalistic standards, storytelling techniques and much more. The difficulty of selecting one recipient prompted a second day of discussions, rereads and image re-reviews. In the end, Mr. Nissen's presentation showed an uncanny attention to photojournalism, and a creative photographic approach that told stories in a way that is uncommon to the genre through singular moments which together build a palatable, cohesive, approachable and very human poetry of life and the living!"

The call for submissions for the initial grant program by The Manuel Rivera-Ortiz Foundation for International Photography led to 182 submissions representing 45 countries in just a few months. The shortlist of 10 projects was deliberated upon earlier this month in London. All entries were judged anonymously.

Mr. Nissen will receive the grant of 5,000 USD to photograph in Columbia, a project to be completed before the end of 2011.

*Please contact us at +917.720.5769 for more information.
Or visit our website at www.mrofoundation.org.
You may also contact **Mr. Marc Prüst**,
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