

## 2020 BANFF MOUNTAIN PHOTO ESSAY COMPETITION



*Shadows of Kurdistan, Murat Yazar*

### *Grand Prize: Shadows of Kurdistan by Murat Yazar*

"In 1916, The Sykes-Picot agreement separated Kurdistan into four parts. This division still exists for almost 30 million Kurds today. I was born in a Kurdish village in southeastern Turkey and, like millions of Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, I have encountered problems while trying to express my Kurdish identity and culture. We live in our land like shadows, without colour, which is why I decided to call this project Shadows of Kurdistan. I wanted to include images of daily life, alongside work that addresses the political situation in our cities and villages. It was also important to me that the vibrancy of Kurdish culture shone through. Ultimately, I hope to create an archive of my culture and homeland, uniting the four parts of Kurdistan."

#### **Biography:**

Originally from a small Kurdish village near the Euphrates River, in Turkish Kurdistan, Murat Yazar was educated in Turkey and Cyprus. Murat Yazar began working as a photojournalist in

2011 when Syrian refugees started flowing to his hometown of Urfa near the border with Syria. This experience has informed all of his subsequent projects, including those on refugees in Croatia in 2016 and Bulgaria in 2020, and walking with Paul Salopek for 1,200 kilometers through Anatolia and Georgia on his Out of Eden project in 2014.

Yazar's photography questions whether imposed borders or boundaries are the mark of our humanity. His photographic projects seek to bring people together, with details and differences celebrated in a single publication or exhibition room.

Now based in Rome, Italy, Yazar has exhibited his work in Paris, Milan, Rome and Barcelona. His work has been featured at the Zoom Photo Festival Saguenay in Canada in 2018 and initial work in the ongoing Shadows of Kurdistan project was recognized by the 2020 Sony World Photography Awards on the Shortlist of the Discovery Category in the Professional Competition. His photos have been published in the *National Geographic Magazine*, *Now Magazine*, *The Times of London*, *IZ Magazine*, *Le Courrier*, and *The New York Times*.

Follow Murat Yazar on:

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The 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Competition is sponsored by Nikon.

#### **Jury Comments:**

"Murat's essay captured a sense of the people and places he was documenting through a visually striking set of images that could belong in the top publications and exhibitions out there today."

– 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Jury, Pat Kane

"Murat's sense of composition is unique and dynamic. I am instantly captivated by his photographic style and the culture in which he is immersed. I am left wanting to see more of his images." – 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Jury, Robin O'Neill





*Special Jury Mention: The Last Shepherd by Mauro Cironi*



"In a rough and wild territory lives Domenico, one of the last true shepherds. At 75 he lives most of his life with only the company of his animals in a cave at 1800m above sea level. Domenico is considered one of the last shepherds in Europe to lead a pastoral life in all respects and certainly one of those who lives more isolated. Despite every summer Domenico saying it will be the last working season, he continues to return each year to his cave to guard the valley."

**Biography:**

Mauro Cironi has been in love with nature, especially with wild animals, since a very young age. After his first experiences in the mountains, he never stopped looking for the most fascinating and wild places both in his home land of Abruzzo, the green region of Europe and around the world. After traveling through different natural wonders in Europe and America, Cironi rediscovered that the areas of the Gran Sasso, Majella and Parco d'Abruzzo are comparable to the most beautiful places around the world and retain an authentic tradition hardly found in other parts of the world. Cironi's continuous exploration of the lesser known places in Abruzzo helped him change how he saw photography, from being a way just to capture an image that is an end to itself, to being a way to tell and retain stories and moments.

Cironi experiences nature and the mountains with the same curiosity that he had as a child. He doesn't define himself as a photographer, guide or sportsman, but simply a man in love with the earth and its nature. Currently Cironi is working on two projects for the protection of endemic species in Abruzzo: the European "Life Coornata" project for the protection of the Apennine Chamois; and with the Salviamo l'Orso Association for the protection of the Marsican brown bear, the most endangered bear species in the world.



## Jury Comments

"Mauro's story was beautiful and poignant, and it really made me want to learn more about this man and his life."

– 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Jury, Pat Kane

"I really enjoyed the topic Mauro's chose to explore; digging into the life and passion of one of the last true shepherds. The photographs have a cohesive style and mood that brings me right into the story. Amazing work from a photographer who considers himself an amateur."

– 2020 Banff Mountain Photo Essay Jury, Robin O'Neill





