



**Poulomi Basu and François-Xavier Gbré,
two winners tied for the Louis Roederer Discovery Award Jury Prize 2020**

For the fourth year, the Louis Roederer Foundation supports the Rencontres d'Arles and shares their will to promote photography and all its actors.

Despite this extraordinary pandemic year, the Louis Roederer Discovery Award 2020 has been maintained. For the sake of fairness, in this unprecedented context, the endowment of €15,000 is being divided to the ten projects of 11 photographers and their galleries.



The jury met online today and two laureates exceptionally received the Louis Roederer Discovery Award Jury Prize: **Poulomi Basu** presented by New Art Exchange in Nottingham and Autograph in London, as well as **François-Xavier Gbré** presented by the gallery Cécile Fakhoury in Abidjan, Dakar and Paris.

Poulomi Basu, presented by New Art Exchange in Nottingham and Autograph in London, was born in 1982, in Calcutta, India. She lives and works in Calcutta and London.

She is an Indian transmedia artist, photographer and activist. Her work explores the way in which the formation of identity becomes entwined with geopolitics, revealing the hidden power structures buried deep within our societies. For the Louis Roederer Discovery Award 2020, the photographer and her galleries presented *Centralia*.



From the *Centralia* series, 2010 – present. Courtesy of the artist.

Centralia exposes hidden crimes of war deep within the forests of central India where an under reported conflict between indigenous tribal people and the government slowly simmers.

Bringing together myriad perspectives in this oscillating journey, Poulomi Basu explores the unsteady relationship between reality and fiction and how our perceptions of truth are manipulated. The works reflect on an invisible conflict between a guerrilla army, native communities and the Indian state all of which are associated with wider issues of environmental justice and climate change.

Over a ten-year period, Basu collated documentary evidence presented in the form of video reports by local reporters, police investigations, biographies gathered from the guerrilla forces documenting the stories of women combatants killed; juxtaposed with photographs taken by the artist through the course of this decade long conflict.

The consequence is a clash of perspectives.

Centralia eschews specificity and is deliberately disjointed, stripping images of clichéd visual cues that often simplify complex geopolitical realities. This obfuscated narrative further emphasizes the ever-shifting alliances and identity where truth is expedient. As such, the work becomes a cipher to understand the assault on the rights of indigenous communities throughout the world and the conflict that inevitably follows.

In this cautionary tale, the rule of law is always backed up by brute force and in the fragmented reality of this insurrection, this reality is revealed, in all its horror and splendor.

François-Xavier Gbré, presented by the gallery Cécile Fakhoury, was born in Lille in 1978. He lives and works in France and Côte d'Ivoire.

While engaging with time and geography, Gbré's work invokes the language of architecture as a witness to memory and social change. From colonial remnants to landscapes reshaped by current events, he explores territories and revisits history. The artist's ongoing dialogue with his surrounding environment is rendered in meticulous installations that are veritable investigations of territory, and by in-situ presentations that make photography felt through a physical relationship to the audience. For the Louis Roederer Discovery Award 2020, the photographer and his gallery presented *Emergence, Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 2013-2020*.



Cité Sinacaci #1, Akouédo, Cocody, Abidjan, 2013.
Courtesy of the artist and the Galerie Cécile Fakhoury (Abidjan, Dakar, Paris).

"Emergence, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 2013-2020" is an installation of 57 small-format photographs made in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire's economic capital.

Gbré documents the evolution of the city and its inhabitants by capturing details of an in-depth investigation of urban territory. Looking through the prism of time, nature or architecture, he recomposes a landscape and a horizon and sketches the experience of Abidjan's people with a certain amount of restraint.

Since 2011 and the end of the post-electoral crisis, all of Côte d'Ivoire has been rebuilt with spectacular infrastructure. The individual and collective landscape has been reshaped. Gbré chronicled a new chapter in the country's social history by documenting the clearance of shantytowns and the construction of real estate projects intended for a growing middle class.

"Under French colonialism, Abidjan was the economic capital of Francophone West Africa. Following the independence of Côte d'Ivoire from France in 1960, Abidjan burnished its cosmopolitan reputation as the "Paris of Africa." Gleaming hotels and modern skyscrapers characterized the skyline of Le Plateau, and upper-class residents settled in the attractive Cocody district. After a prolonged decline in the 1980s, civil conflicts in the early 2000s, and an election crisis from 2010 to 2011, contemporary Abidjan is again experiencing surges of growth and development. The landscape is primed for change...

The photographs of Abidjan that Gbré has made since 2013, including his images of humble structures and soaring towers, provide a circumspect appraisal. Insofar as 'renewal' is a polite term for gentrification, Gbré suggests that the markers of progress evident in the landscape, so easily heralded by local government, are underscored by population displacement and expedient design." *Brendan Wattenberg*, excerpt from *The Past is a Foreign Country*, 2015

The 2020 Louis Roederer Discovery Award Jury:

- Damarice Amao (Centre Pompidou),
- Quentin Bajac (Jeu de Paume),
- Emilie Villez (Kadist),
- Christoph Wiesner (Rencontres d'Arles),
- Marie-Ann Yemsi (independent curator).

About the Louis Roederer Foundation

The Louis Roederer Foundation was founded in 2011 with the purpose of creating a permanent and well-structured sponsorship programme. It builds on the policy that Louis Roederer has implemented since 2003 with the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and opens it up to new projects, while continuing to support artistic creativity and make it accessible to the public. The Foundation, which has become Major Patron of Culture and Arts, today continues its commitment through its sponsorship of the Grand Palais and its proactive partnership with the Palais de Tokyo.

But, in all the creative and artistic endeavours that it sponsors in these iconic places of culture and intelligence, whether through the Bibliothèque nationale de France Photographic Research Grant, the Louis Roederer Foundation Rising Star Award at La Semaine de la Critique in Cannes, the Louis Roederer Foundation Revelation Prize at the Deauville American Film Festival, and the Discovery Award at the Rencontres d'Arles, the Louis Roederer Foundation plays its favourite role in supporting and nurturing the great artists of tomorrow.

<https://www.louis-roederer.com/en/foundation>

About Louis Roederer

Founded in 1776 in Reims, Louis Roederer is an independent family-run champagne house directed by Frédéric Rouzaud. In addition to producing Louis Roederer and Cristal champagnes, Louis Roederer also owns Deutz champagne, Château Pichon Longueville Comtesse de Lalande (a Pauillac Grand cru classé), Château de Pez (Saint-Estèphe) and Maison Descaves, in Bordeaux, Domaines Ott* in Provence, Delas Frères in the Rhône valley, Porto Ramos Pinto in Portugal, and, in California, Roederer Estate, Scharffenberger Cellars, Domaine Anderson, Merry Edwards Winery and Diamond Creek Vineyards.

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