



Tomorrow's people

The Magenta Foundation's *Flash Forward* contest rewards the best emerging photographers in Canada, the US and the UK, and this year found some extraordinary talent. We profile the winner and the best of the rest

Above: *Proto Bees*, from the series, *The Miniature Aviary* © Adam Makarenko, which won the 'Bright Spark' award in this year's *Flash Forward* contest run by the Magenta Foundation.

'Here's a great example of a photographer working within a current trend – the miniature set – but who displays a unique vision and freshness that raises it above other images using the same methodology,' says Debra Klomp Ching, commenting on Adam Makarenko's work, which has just won the Magenta Foundation's *Flash Forward* prize. 'His work stands proud because it's highly conceived, the subject is different and the production values are excellent. And when have you ever seen bees photographed like that?'

Makarenko is Canadian, and so is Magenta, but for the past

three years the prize has also been open to photographers based in Britain and the US. By coincidence each of the three countries has provided a winner so far, Brighton-based Simon Roberts collecting the 'Bright Spark' in 2006, and American Heather Culp taking last year's top honours. A selection of the winners, along with around 35 shortlisted runners-up and honourable mentions per country, will be showcased in a book published by *Magenta* later this year, along with exhibitions in Toronto and New York.

'A competition like this has the potential to make a significant

difference to a young photographer's early career,' says Klomp Ching, one of the judges this year, a former West Midlands Arts officer who moved to the US to marry a New Yorker, then opened a gallery in Brooklyn's burgeoning DUMBO district. 'The combination of the exhibitions and publication make the work visible to an international audience. I certainly use the publications of past award years as a reference - I like to keep an eye on photographers and see how they progress. They're on my radar because of the competition, and the publication itself is attractive with good production values.'

Think different

'I think it is important to stress that a large number of the entries could stand up as satisfying individual exhibitions or magazine features,' adds Paul Herman of Redeye, who along with Paul Wombell from Hereford Photo Festival and *BJP* editor Simon Bainbridge, represented the UK judges. 'There was some very good work that didn't even make it to the second round. If you want to win this kind of competition, you have to work out how you can stand out from the crowd. It helps to put yourself in the position of the jurors, who are looking at thousands of

photos quite small on screen. So the first thing, as [Nottingham Trent University photography programme leader] Cary Welling once said, is to make sure your photographs pass 'the icon test'. Your idea, what you're trying to say visually, has got to jump out at 500 pixels across; the idea has got to be clear and it's got to be interesting.'

'I found looking at so much work that patterns start to emerge,' he adds. 'There are a few themes that seem to attract people when they first get serious about photography – empty cities at night, derelict interiors, rubbish on the streets, out-of-touch towns and villages – which kept recurring in the entries, often beautifully done; but if you're going to do that in a competition, you need a new twist, or something very special.'

Klomp Ching adds another theme. 'There's a glut of work around imaging family – photographers turning the camera in on themselves, but using either direct family or family groups as subjects. There's so much of this that projects really need to push the boundaries in some way, in order to stand out. The market is saturated.'

And, says Herman, it seems that lots of photographers are making work that looks very similar to that of other contemporaries: 'Lots of Dijkstras, Manns, Darwells, Shores and Crewdsons. I find it more interesting when photographers look a bit wider for their influences and ideas; to other arts, society, history, politics – or perhaps even beekeeping.'

Among the bees

Adam Makarenko grew up in the Northern Ontario wilderness, in a former mining town called Aitkokan. He won American Photo magazine's Photographer of the Year earlier this year, and was named the overall winner of the Magenta Foundation's Flash Forward competition this month. His project, The Miniature Aviary, is based on a loose narrative about an imaginary place called the Langstroth Range. It was shot using a small model of Langstroth that he built over the past year.

'I wanted to create a miniature world so that I could control it. When you shoot in miniature you can do anything, although building a model still takes time and money. The model was created

for the images, so it's not completely refined. It just works for the photographs.'

'It was hard to shoot the project because the model is so small. I used a point-and-shoot to get the feeling of a wide micro lens, but I chose a Nikon Coolpix because of its eight million pixel resolution and I wanted to be able to make large prints. I also had to light the model professionally and do a lot of Photoshop manipulation. It was tricky.'

'There are other photographers who shoot miniatures but I wasn't aware of them when I started the project. My initial idea was just to create the scenes I wanted to capture, and I got that idea from Gregory Crewdson. I'm very interested in his work, and would love to create similarly large-scale, life-size scenes.'

'I entered *Flash Forward* because I thought it would be good exposure and because I really like *Magenta's* magazine and publications. I don't enter every competition, just the ones I think are good, so it's been great to win both this and the *American Photo* contest. The publicity has helped me pay for what I do and give up the day job. Photography is all I want to do.'

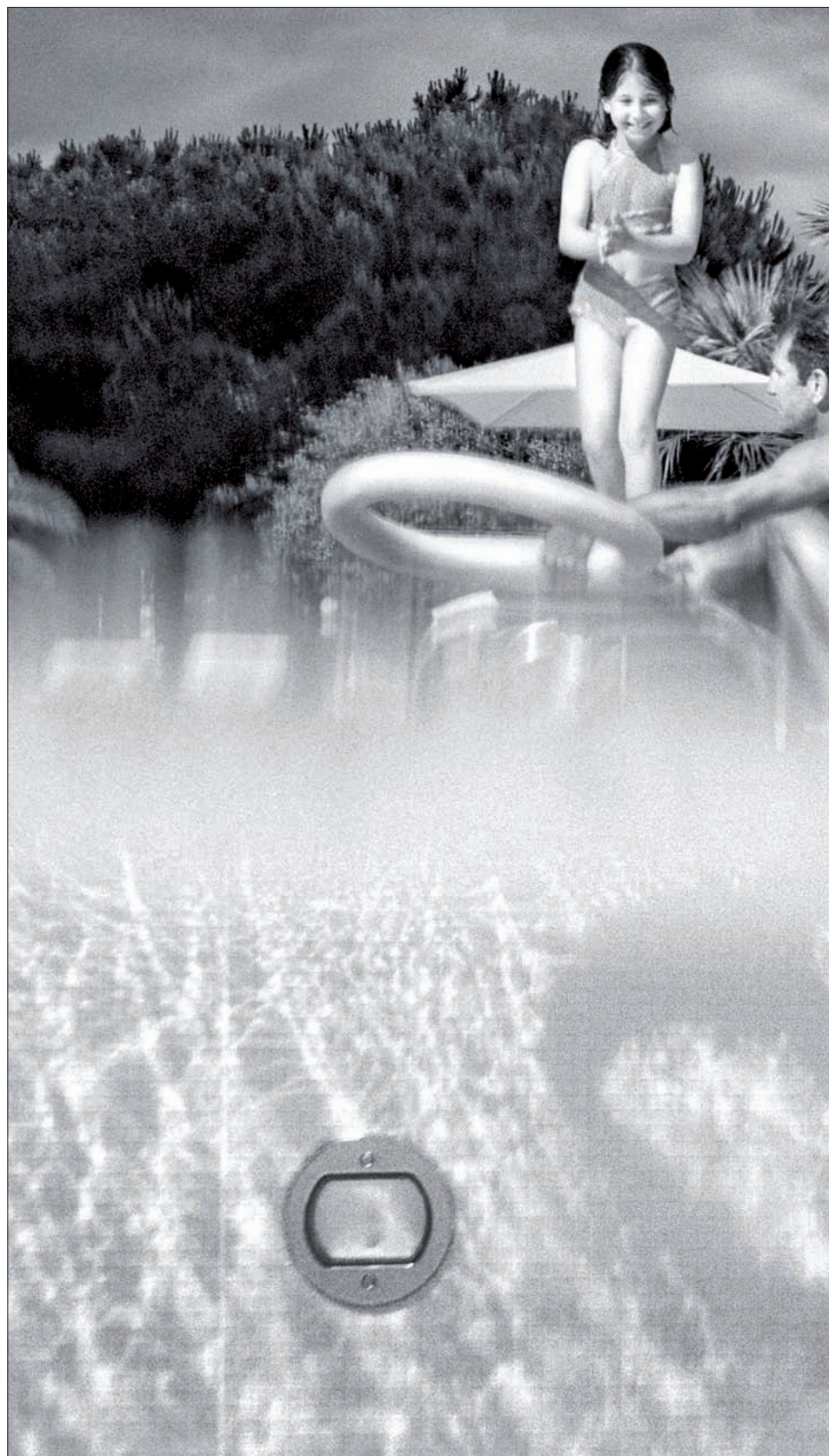
Bottom up

Damion Berger was born in London in 1978. He assisted Helmut Newton for one year while still at school, then moved to New York to study a BFA in photography at Parsons School of Design. He has also interned at Magnum Photos and shown work at the Perpignan and Arles photo festivals. His project, In The Deep End, was shot in – and often from the bottom of – public swimming pools in the Mediterranean.

'I had to be very surreptitious, especially in France – it's bad enough taking pictures of children without doing so when they're half naked in a pool. I had to get swimming trunks the same colour as the camera, hold the camera in front of them and jump into the water in a very particular way.'

'Once underwater I swam with the camera between my legs and whipped it out when I saw something interesting. I had to learn to anticipate the kind of moment that could happen, and get myself into position to capture it. Sometimes that would be when I was almost bursting for air.'

'I used two different types of camera, both Nikonos [35mm

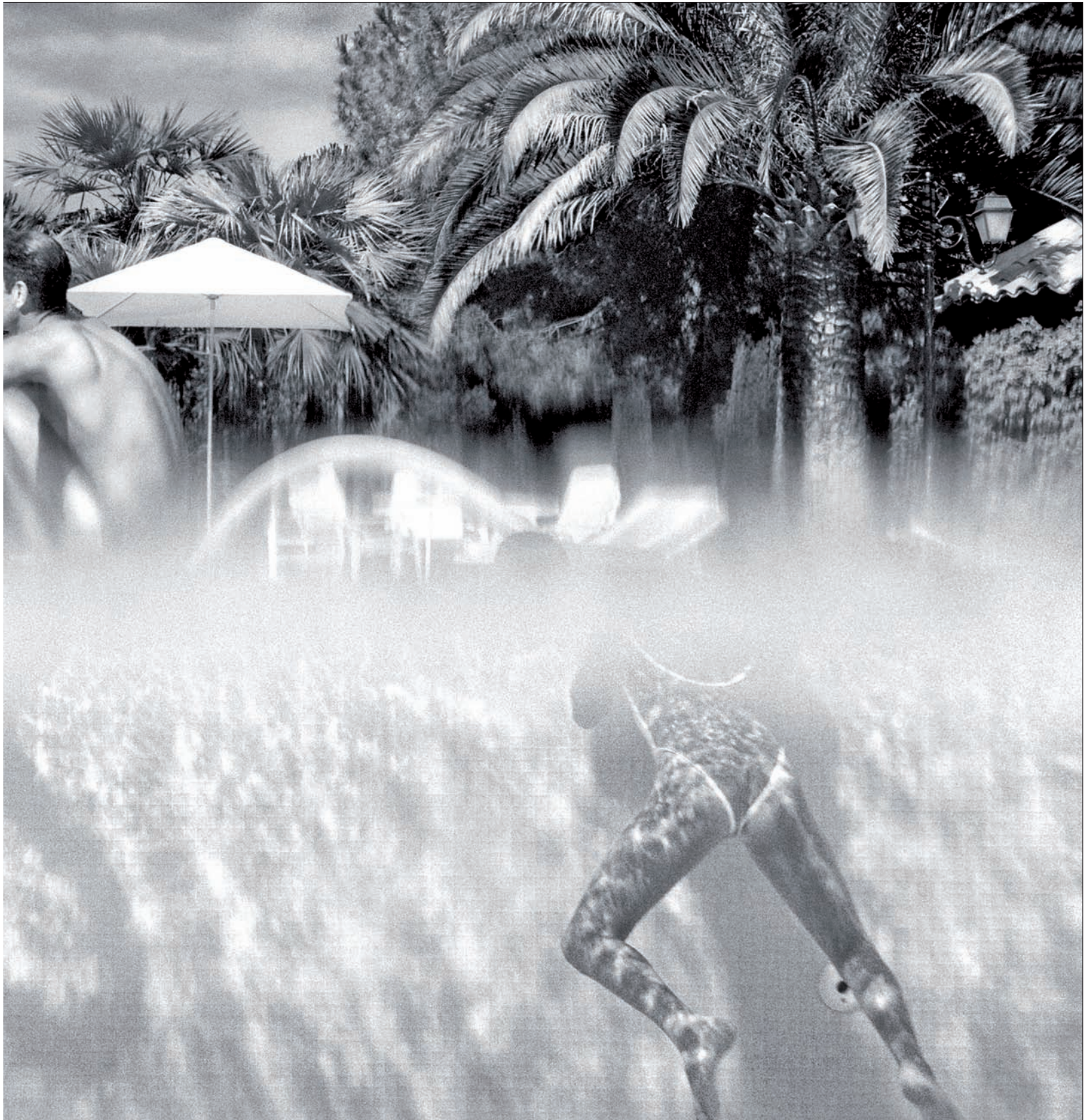


Above: Above & Below, from the series *In The Deep End* © Damion Berger, shot in Mediterranean pools

cameras developed by Nikon for underwater use]. The first was a Nikonos 5, which I bought specially for this project. I couldn't see exactly what I was taking, as the viewfinder gives a different perspective to the lens, and had to estimate the focus distance, which is also distorted by the water.'

'The other camera featured

automatic focus, which was great, but it was a much bigger beast. That was useful in saltwater pools, as it helped weigh me down, but it also meant the camera was much harder to hide. Even so, I had the same hit rate as I would have for any other kind of photography. I wasn't shooting from the hip, I was just taking fewer photographs.'



In the wild

Lucas Foglia was born in the US in 1983 and grew up on a small family farm on Long Island. Mentored in his late teens by Arnold Newman, he went on to study Art Semiotics at Brown University, and has since received numerous grants and awards for his work. Foglia's images are held in permanent museum collections

across the States, and his work created something of a buzz at this year's Houston FotoFest, bringing him to the attention of a more international audience. He is going to Yale this autumn to study photography with Tod Papageorge. The project he entered into Flash Forward depicts people across Southeastern America who live off the land.

'Everyone included in this project is a family friend, or friend of a friend. My parents started out in the mainstream but chose to leave to live on a farm, and I wanted to photograph others who had made the same decision.

'Despite this connection, it wasn't always easy to get permission to shoot. I showed each family other photographs I'd

'I had to learn to anticipate the moment and get myself into position to capture it – sometimes when I was almost bursting for air.' *Damion Berger*

Right: *Rita and Cora Aiming, Linden, Tennessee, from the series, Re-Wilding*
© Lucas Foglia.





taken, and gave them prints of the shots I took of them. They could see I was respectful. I also stayed with each family for a long time. I fixed up a van with a bed and just took off. Most people let me stay as long as I wanted to, as long as I helped out on the farm.

'I used a Hasselblad with a digital back to shoot the project. I wanted to combine the older aesthetic of the people with modern technology to avoid nostalgia, or images that just looked old.

'The US is one of the few developed countries in which there is still a wilderness you can retreat to. Land prices have made it difficult to buy enough land to be self sufficient, but it is still possible. But it's changing. When I was growing up there was a horse farm next door to our farm. Now there are two malls and supermarkets all over the place.'

Interior universe

Sam Kemp was born in the UK in 1981, and graduated from Middlesex University in 2003 with a Fine Art degree. In 2006 he was included in Creative Review's Photography Annual, and also exhibited work at the Liverpool Biennial. His project, Home Constellations, considers the small standby lights that are now ubiquitous in most Western homes, part of an ongoing investigation into artificial modern light.

'I was just at home one evening when I noticed all the little lights on my TV and digital top box. All electrical items have these standby lights, which use a considerable amount of energy. Then I noticed my phone charger and a couple of other lights, and thought how much they looked like constellations. I spent the next couple of months shooting tiny little lights.

'The different images represent different households – a three-bedroom house, a one-bed flat, a studio. Some of the elements I photographed together, for example the TV, video and DVD set-ups, but other lights I photographed on their own. I montaged everything together as otherwise you wouldn't get the underlying idea – some of the images just showed one tiny light in darkness.

'I shot everything on medium format because I'm used to film and I know how it works, particularly in low light situations. Makers have started withdrawing tungsten films though, which has

Right: *Home Constellation 5* © Sam Kemp.

Below: *Gathering of the Satmar community on Hewes Street in Williamsburg, New York for the last night of the Sukkos holiday* © Clemence de Limburg.



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made it more difficult, and in retrospect it might have been easier to shoot this particular project on digital.

'I'm interested in shooting modern phenomena. I'm always looking out for things that are contemporary.'

City island

Clemence de Limburg was born in Belgium in 1980. After studying Illustration and Sociology, she moved to

New York in 2007 to study at the International Center of Photography. Later that year she was invited to the 14th Rencontres Internationales de la Jeune Photographie for a Residency in Niort, with Philip Blenkinsopp. In 2008 she received first prize in the CCNY Award, which was selected for the Joop Swart Masterclass. The project she submitted to Flash Forward

explores the Satmar community of Williamsburg, New York, one of the most ultra-orthodox movements in contemporary Hassidic Judaism.

'Access was very difficult and limited. I spent a lot of time walking around in the neighbourhood, assisted a wedding photographer and eventually met some people who showed me around.'

'The strict separation between men and women in the community really fascinated me. For

example, in one photograph I show myself in a mirror and a man across the hall in a doorway. We are actually both in a wedding hall, but he's standing in the men's entrance and I am in the women's.

'In the photograph of Purim, which shows men drinking around the table, I was standing across the room in the kitchen. I was with the women, who aren't allowed to go inside the men's room. I am very grateful to this family who let me into their house and shared their culture with me.'

'That's what interests me about photography, and documentary photography in particular. It allows me to explore other peoples' worlds and understand them better.' **BJP**

Online

For further details about Magenta Foundation's Flash Forward competition, visit magenta.foundation.org.