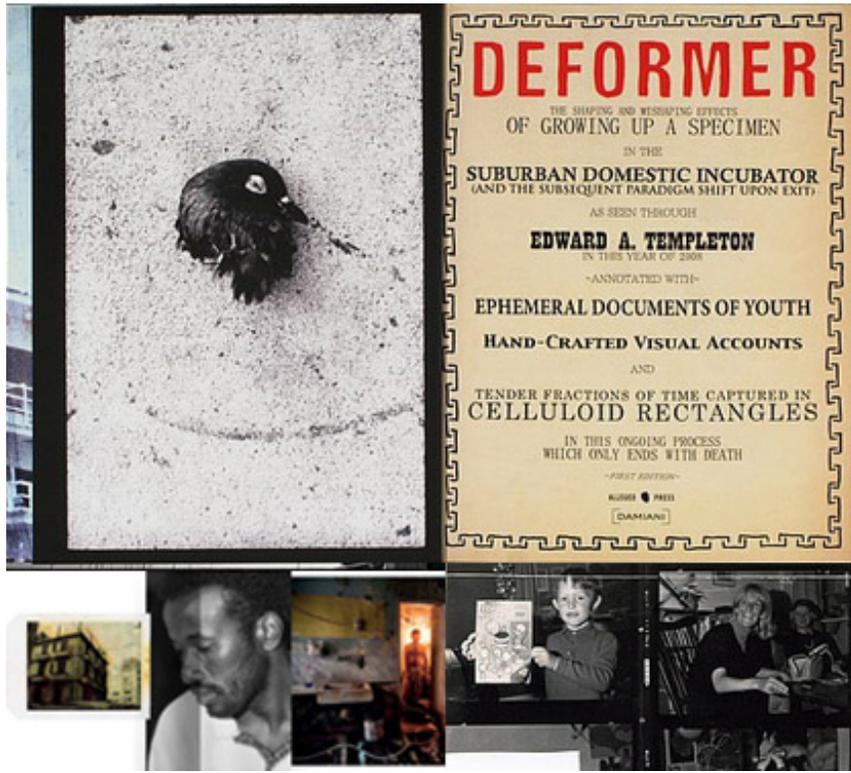


FotoGrafia--Fotofestival Internazionale di Roma Book Prize

Posted At : June 17, 2009 1:44 PM | Posted By : Melanie McWhorter

Related Categories: Melanie McWhorter, Book Prize



Shown from top, clockwise: *Deformer*, *Elisabeth- I want to eat*, and *Open See*.

In May 2009, FotoGrafia- Fotofestival Internazionale di Roma celebrated its fifth year under the direction of photographer and publisher [Marco Delogu](#) of [Punctum Books](#). The festival hosted a mix of lectures and exhibitions by photographers such as [Nan Goldin](#), [Rinko Kawauchi](#) and [Don McCullin](#). Other special events included a slide exhibition featuring the work of [Gus Powell](#) and [Juliana Beasley](#), and the Premio FotoGrafia Libro Award for the best Italian and International photobooks.

The jury for this year's Premio FotoGrafia Libro Award was comprised of myself; Benedetta Cestelli Guidi of [S.T. Foto Libreria Galleria](#); curator Marta Dahó; Erik Kessels of [KesselsKramer](#); and Michele Smargiassi of [la Repubblica](#). We judged over 180 books in the second Italian and first International book award of [Fotofestival di Roma](#). Each judge selected 5 to 10 books from the books on display and all the votes were tallied. The Damiani book [Deformer](#) by Ed Templeton was unanimously selected for the Italian Book Award. Steidl's book [Open See](#) by Jim Goldberg was selected in the first round of voting for the International Gold Metal Award. Then the jury had to revisit all books with 2 or 3 votes.

After some espresso, pastries and a vigorous hand-washing, the jury was ready to tackle the final list of six books for the second place winner: Episode Books' [Baghdad Calling](#), Postcard's *Non si avrà ragione di me: Poeti del Novecento per Dino Campana*, Contrasto's *Oltrenero*, Hysteric Glamour's *Hokkaido*, plus the self-published books [101 Billionaires](#) by Rob Hornstra and [Elisabeth- I want to eat](#) by Mariken Wessels. Each judge was allowed as much time as needed to decide on the Silver Award winner for the International Prize. After a brief time of deliberation the jury came to a consensus on young Dutch photographer Mariken Wessel's book Elisabeth.

Benedetta Cestelli Guidi questioned whether the books were too similar in content to be on the final list. After some thought on the topic all of the judges agreed that "all the books selected by the jury are finished works in their own right, greater than an exhibition of their parts. The narrative characteristics normally associated with the nature of a journal are present in all the final selections."

The judging of the book prize was a wonderful and rewarding experience. Italian printing, and particularly photobook printing, has a reputation for being the best in the world while Rome is a mecca for many photographers to shoot and study at higher schools of learning such as the American Academy, British School, Academie de France or Czech Cultural Institute, all located in the city. The festival's motivation is to establish Italian photography's place in the world by showcasing Italian-made works and bringing international photographers to Roman audiences. It was a world-class festival and I was honored to be involved in their first International Book Prize.