

BŁAŻEJ MARCZAK

Ottawa, ON

BIOGRAPHY

Błażej Marczak is a documentary photographer of Polish origin living and working in Ottawa since his relocation from Scotland in 2016. He spent over a decade living and creating in the U.K. where he received a Bachelor of Arts in Professional Photography from The University of Abertay Dundee. Marczak has participated in various projects and collective exhibitions in Canada, U.K., Poland, India and Lithuania.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Ottawa series

Since my arrival in Ottawa I have been using photography to discover my new home and decode the semiotics of the new reality I am surrounded by.

My work is a contemplation on the sense of place and landscape as a repository of culture, values, and collective memory. My observations are communicated in the form of modest visual language and I aim to accurately depict supposedly mundane subjects rather than romanticise, idealise and dramatize them.

My form and content are influenced by ideas rooted in *Realism*, *The New Objectivity* and *The New Topographics* movements as opposed to *Romanticism*. I reject nostalgic, exaggerated *Pictorialism* and its modern derivatives and instead focus on documentary qualities of the photographic medium.

I aim to show an Ottawa which is often overlooked yet omnipresent. I strongly believe that, to truly understand a subject matter as complex as the built environment, we need to possess imagery free from stylistic devices intentionally inflicting the feeling of nostalgia upon the viewer or limited to touristy vistas and images created with promotional purposes in mind.

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I am inquisitive about the commonplace rather than the extraordinary. I emphasize recording subjects at risk of disappearing undocumented - the ordinary subjects.

I am curious about how we interact, use and shape our surroundings and how the surroundings shape us. I am looking for manifestations of both historic and contemporary socioeconomic and natural forces, which form the urban environment of Ottawa and influence the way we live. Important transformative ideas can be frequently seen concealed in the urban fabric and seemingly unremarkable places to which I am often attracted. Photographs can help us reflect on our current social circumstances but also reveal a wealth of information about ourselves to future generations.

Transportation infrastructure, mass consumerism, modernist urban planning and architecture greatly influence the character of Ottawa and are some of the many aspects I am currently exploring. I capture activities along the natural and man-made waterways as they have played and continue to play a vital role in the development of the city. These rivers and canals are being tamed, utilised and determine the topography of Ottawa.

Furthermore, I am fascinated by the brute force of the Canadian winter. I am continuing to document Ottawa during this long and harsh season not because of its picturesque attributes but for its ability to transform and even repurpose the landscape. Winter is as integral to my series as it is to life in Canada.

I see myself as an archivist who observes the constantly evolving city and documents those aspects which might soon change their purpose, form, meaning or become no more than a memory. One might say that my images are created for both the contemporary viewer and the one yet to be born.

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CV

EDUCATION

2012 BA Professional Photography, The University of Abertay, Dundee, UK

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *Holding Pattern: 2021 Additions to the City of Ottawa Art Collection*, City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2019 *Signal: 2019 Additions to the City of Ottawa Art Collection*, City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2018 *Nothing Left To Be Saved*, FORT Institute of Photography, Warsaw, Poland
- 2018 *The Grey City*, Flow Photography Festival, Eden Court Theatre, Inverness, UK
- 2018 *Zeitgeist*, Ffotogallery, Penarth, Wales, UK
- 2017 *Ambit: Photographies from Scotland*, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, UK
- 2017 *Winter*, The Art House Cafe, Ottawa, ON
- 2017 *Longevity: 2017 Additions to the City of Ottawa Art Collection*, City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2017 *Artspeaks*, Shepherds of Good Hope, Ottawa City Hall, Ottawa, Canada
- 2017 *Chinatown Remixed*, Little Latin America, Ottawa, Canada
- 2017 *Zeitgeist*, Diffusion: International Festival of Photography, Cardiff, UK
- 2015 *Documenting Britain*, Street Level Photoworks/ Trongate 103, Glasgow, UK
- 2015 *4/4*, Six Foot Gallery, Glasgow, UK
- 2015 *Origins*, PhotoUK- India, British Council, New Delhi, India
- 2014 *Celebrating Europe*, European Prospects, Kaunas Gallery, Kaunas, Lithuania
- 2014 *Frames 2014*, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, UK
- 2014 *Transnational Biographies*, SUI Institute, Strathclyde University, Glasgow, UK
- 2013 *Traverse Fifty*, Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, UK
- 2013 *Quality of Everyday Life*, Summerhall, Edinburgh, UK
- 2013 *Surfing the Don*, Seventeen, Aberdeen, UK
- 2013 *Aberdeen Artists Society Annual Exhibition*, Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, UK
- 2013 *Annual Open Exhibition*, The Society of Scottish Artists, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, UK
- 2012 *Royal Scottish Academy Open Exhibition*, RSA Lower Gallery, Edinburgh, UK

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2017 *Creative CityMakers: Why Ottawa for Arts and Culture?* Public Speaker/Artist. General Assembly, Ottawa, ON
- 2016 *Eastern European Performance in Scotland: The Legacy of Richard Demarco.* Artist and Producer. University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK
- 2015 *Odyssean- Artist Talk.* Public Speaker. Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, UK
- 2015 *Documenting Britain.* Artist talk, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow, UK
- 2015 *Migration Matters.* Artist and Exhibition Producer. Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Edinburgh, UK
- 2014 *Poles Apart?* Producer and Speaker, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK
- 2013 *Photography, Participation and the Politics of Space, Engage & NEPAN Symposium.* Speaker. University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK

AWARDS

- 2018 *Creation and Production Fund for Professional Artist,* Awarded Monetary Grant, City of Ottawa, ON
- 2014 *#DocumentYourWorld,* First Prize, Impressions Gallery, UK
- 2013 *Jill Todd Photographic Award,* Shortlisted, Edinburgh, UK
- 2013 *The Arts Trust Scotland,* Awarded Monetary Grant, Edinburgh UK
- 2013 *Self Portrait Competition,* Third Prize, Theprintspace, London, UK
- 2012 *International Photography Awards,* Two Honourable Mentions, Los Angeles, USA
- 2011 *BIPP Student Awards,* Shortlisted, British Institute of Professional Photography Scotland, Edinburgh, UK

PUBLICATIONS

- 2022 [Nosy Mag.](#) Online Feature, Marianne Brown, Ottawa, ON
- 2019 [aCurator.](#) Online Feature, Julie Grahame, New York, USA
- 2019 [New Landscape Photography.](#) Online Feature, W.Cummer, Syracuse, USA
- 2017 [Drool-](#) Tony Fohse Blog, Online Feature, Ottawa, Canada
- 2017 [Failed Architecture.](#) Online Feature, M. Minkjan, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 2017 *Photomonitor,* Review, C. Samuel, UK & Ireland
- 2017 *The Skinny,* Review of *Ambit* show, A.Benmakhlouf, Glasgow, UK
- 2017 *The Press and Journal,* Feature, Kieran Beattie, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK
- 2016 *Sogo Magazine,* Review, Jack Batchelor, Glasgow, Scotland, UK
- 2015 *Origins,* Catalogue, British Council; PhotoUK- India, New Delhi, India
- 2015 *Chronicles VI,* Photographic zine, The Velvet Cell, Osaka, Japan

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- 2015** *Celebrating Europe*, Exhibition Catalogue, Kaunas Gallery, Kaunas, Lithuania
2014 *Anti-Utopias*, Online feature, Sabin Bors, Bucharest, Romania
2012 *Camera Club*, The Guardian, Review, London, UK

RESIDENCIES

- 2015** *Odyssean- Unusual artist residencies on Orkney*, Wyre, UK

PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

City of Ottawa Art Collection (2017, 2019, 2021)

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