



# Winners take all!

Jason Banbury's success at the Master Photographer Association (MPA) awards over recent years has been nothing short of phenomenal. He has won International Master Photographer of the Year and UK Master Photographer of the Year for the last two successive years.

Add to that already impressive haul his wins in the Fashion & Beauty, under 5's, MPA Welsh Photographer of the Year and Welsh Pet & Animal Photographer of the Year categories and you start to get a picture of an extremely talented and versatile photographer. "The Fashion and Beauty category is our real love and the Under Fives category is our main business as we are primarily children's photographers", explains Jason.

He began working as a full-time photographer in 2007, transitioning from a career in IT and initially concentrated on architectural and motorsports photography. Jason says that the decision to change his working life came about following something of an epiphany. "It was a moment when I realised that life can be about combining a passion with a career. I have a strong determination not to grow old with 'what ifs' and this drove me to make the move".

In 2010, Jason's wife, Lorna, joined him in the business, based in St Clears, Carmarthenshire. The main focus of their work shifted to portraiture, predominantly with children and families – a field that this talented couple find both challenging and rewarding.

"The range of our work goes from babies to ballet; families to fantasy", says Jason. "Lorna's background in art and design brought an additional creativity to the business and together we have developed a strong commercial style", he explains. "Our main passion lies with our fashion and beauty work and we embrace this as an opportunity to showcase and nurture our creativity."

## STEPHEN POWER ASKS AWARD WINNING PHOTOGRAPHERS WHAT DIFFERENCE THE TITLES AND PRESENTATIONS HAVE MADE TO LIFE



Left – child photography from Jason, at its best. Above, a 2015 award success.

Jason's decision to follow his passion into photography ten years ago has been justified and rewarded many times over, not only with a busy and successful photography career but also a string of major awards and prizes to his name.

His collection of period costume portraits entitled "1645" not only gained Jason Associateship of the MPA, but achieved the highest accolade of "Associate Panel of the Year" for 2016. "We enter awards not necessarily to win them, but rather to test ourselves against our peers", says Jason.

There were some challenges inherent in taking the banquetting shot (*the first larger image overleaf*), including keeping the public out of the frame as this was during a live event. "I was there in an official capacity on the day, and so the central spot in the seating arrangement was allocated to me. However, members of the public were milling around the sides of the frame, and it was quite amusing", explains Jason. "I knew what I wanted, compositionally speaking, and I waited until the moment certain things happened, to get the right shot".

An additional pressure was that the scene is only re-enacted once a year, so there was no opportunity to re-shoot it.

The other portraits in his Associate panel submission seen on the next spread were taken over a period of six months, with Jason and Lorna making around eight separate trips to the venue. Most of the images were taken with natural light, with strobes being used for a few others. The painterly, olde-worlde look to the images was reinforced with judicious use of post processing, including texture overlays, different blend modes and temperature adjustments in *Photoshop*, as Jason was determined that he didn't want a modern look to the images.

In terms of his awards success to date, Jason feels that it has given him much more confidence in his abilities. "For me, the awards are a golden opportunity for personal development and a reassurance that the work I am creating is 'en pointe'. Recognition at a high level is a fantastic confidence boost and of course, it's great for our clients to know that they are commissioning an accredited, award winning photographer."

Jason is already working on a new concept for a possible MPA Fellowship panel submission in 2017. So, what advice would he offer to other photographers preparing images for major awards?

"For me, it was all about personal development" he says. I took the opportunity when creating my Associateship Panel for the MPA to challenge myself by moving out of the proverbial comfort zone. It was a gamble, but I feel strongly that qualifications are designed to push the photographer, to aspire to new genres and build skills. Investing the time for my 'A' panel has certainly made me a better photographer and this is reflected in my day to day commercial work."

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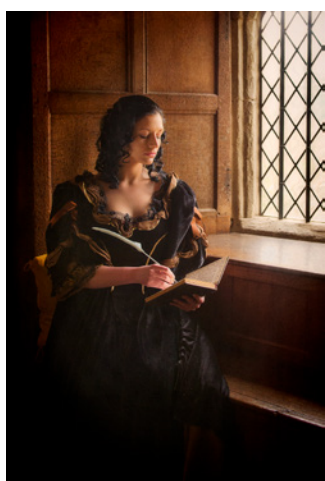






# JASON BANBURY

*The entire 1645 series which gained Jason 'Best Associateship of the Year' from the MPA in 2016. The original prints show superbly matched tone and colours throughout.*



The photographs in Jason's Associateship submission were based on the year 1645, the fourth year of the English Civil War and a time in which King Charles I was touring the country trying to draw up support for his campaign, following defeat at the battle of Naseby on the 14th June of that year. Jason's images depict the arrival of the king and his entourage at Llancaiach Fawr, a fortified manor house situated in the Welsh Borders, home to Colonel Edward Pritchard and his family in August 1645.

The models for the set of images were all actors or historical re-enactors: the depiction of the King dining at a large table laden with food and surrounded by servants and small children was taken during a live performance of the scene for visitors to the manor house.





Given that Adriaan van Heerden has been a serious photographer for only around ten years, he has done remarkably well in terms of his record of awards and competition successes.

His awards include: First Prize in the ArtGemini 2015 international Art competition (Photography) and being shortlisted in the 2016 version of that award; finalist in the 2015 Black and White Charles Dodgson Award; finalist in the 2015 and 2014 BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year Award; Highly Commended in the 2014 USA Landscape Photographer of the year competition; shortlisted for the 2014 East West Arts Awards and Runner-Up (2nd Prize) in the 2014 Art Has No Borders international arts competition – to name but a few.

When Adriaan moved from his home in South Africa to study for a PhD in Philosophy at King's College, Cambridge, he was not planning a long-term career in photography. His original plan was to become an academic in his specialist field of existential ethics. When that did not happen in the way he had hoped, he found work in the NHS.

Adriaan bought his first DSLR around 2006. He had owned an old Pentax film stock camera prior to that in South Africa but it was stolen. However, he used for long enough to be able to shoot many images that he was pleased with enough to show around, including a set taken on Safari in Kenya. The feedback he received was very encouraging but, as Adriaan explains, “it all got cut off when the camera was stolen” and his photographic career was side-lined for some considerable time after his move to the UK.

“I was looking for a creative outlet. I imagined myself to be a writer; either an academic one or a writer of novels. I also dabbled in poetry, reading my poetry at a club in London for a while. The novel was just too time-consuming, so I came back to photography and found it suited me well. I was able to pick up the camera and put it down whenever I wished, and still get satisfying results.”

# ADRIAAN VAN HEERDEN



Above, 'Ode to Mortality' – a perfect image from a philosophy student, especially if a judging process includes Japanese jurors.

Adriaan enjoyed “the whole photographic process” immensely and began to “take it more seriously” as time went on and particularly following a move to Carshalton in Surrey where his new neighbours, who were artists, gave him feedback on his work and they eventually collaborated with Adriaan on an exhibition.

The feedback on the joint exhibition was very positive and encouraged Adriaan to embark on what he refers to as “a journey of artistic expression”. This led to more recognition of his work and a diploma from the Photography Institute (an online teaching organisation) and masterclasses with internationally renowned photographers including Andy Rouse, David Noton and Danny Green. “I learned a lot from them all”, says Adriaan, “but what I ultimately want to do is very different from their work. However, I

have been learning and absorbing things all along my journey.”

Photographically speaking, Adriaan admits to “trying to do everything” in the early stages of his career, including weddings, portraits, wildlife, travel and landscapes. “I have now narrowed my focus and settled on wildlife and landscape photography, with travel as a part of that, because the travel element is different from the other two fields.” He is also now starting to work more in still life photography although “that is still in the early stages”.

His initial involvement with awards and competitions began when Adriaan was a member of Cheam Camera Club, in Surrey, many years ago. “The club experience was generally positive, although I found the competition judging process quite stultifying and I often felt that the judges didn't get what I was trying to put

across”, he explains. This was something of a turning point for Adriaan and, perhaps paradoxically, to his decision to enter international photography competitions. “I felt that if I was going to fail with my work, I would rather do so at the top – macro – level rather be successful at the micro level.” Adriaan also felt that this approach might be a useful way of gaining recognition and attracting attention to his work. He believes that given the highly competitive nature of the industry it “can't do any harm” to be able to say that you are an award-winning photographer.

His first real success came around 2013 when he had an image selected for the Cork Street (London) Open Art competition. “It's a highly competitive exhibition open to artists working in all media, which has some outstanding up-and-coming and established artists submitting work” he explains. “To be selected for it and to receive good feedback was a major boost for my self-belief.”

Success, however, did not come immediately for Adriaan and there are some competitions where he has yet to achieve as much success as he would like. “There have been some disappointments along the way, and there is a certain amount of fear factor”, he says. A psychological ploy Adriaan used at times, was to deliberately *not* submit what he considered to be his very best for a competition. If the entry did not win an award, he was then able to console himself by thinking... “well, my very best work might have been good enough to win”.

He now sees the folly in that strategy and firmly believes that only his best work should be submitted. “You have to enter your best work to have a chance”, he says. “You have to be brave and gird your loins and whatever else you need to do and put yourself out there.”

Being able to sort the wheat from the chaff and know your best work when you see it, is a dilemma that many photographers

struggle with and Adriaan is no exception. “There are things you can do about that though, such as having portfolio reviews with experts or have a circle of friends you trust to give you honest feedback. The thing you don't want is for people just to say ‘that's lovely’. You need people with artistic sense, you respect, who can talk intelligently about why they don't like a picture or why something else appeals to them more.”

Adriaan only enters paid competitions and works within a pre-determined budget set aside for entry fees. He also recommends reading publications such as the *Photoshelter Photographers' Guide to Photo Contests*, which gives tips on how to choose the right competitions and how to improve your chances of winning them. “There are lots of cowboys out there ready to take your money, and the chances of winning some competitions are so remote that it's akin to winning the national lottery.” He also does not enter voted competitions, only



Above: Santa Fé mountains, New Mexico. Below, stag and hind at sunrise in Richmond Park.

juried ones, as he does not have a large social media following, which is often a pre-requisite for winning ‘people's choice’ style competitions.

One major achievement for Adriaan that has emanated from

his competitions wins is that he signed with a major fine art gallery at the end of 2016. “It was another step on the journey of where I want to be”, says Adriaan. “What does count a lot is who you know and who is talking you up to

the right kind of people.” It seems very likely that this talented photographer is going to have a lot of people talking for a long time.

[www.adriaanvanbeerden.com](http://www.adriaanvanbeerden.com)





# JODI BIEBER

Jodi Bieber is a South African photographer with numerous awards and an outstanding body of work to show for her prestigious 22-year career, so far. Her many accolades include: Finalist in The Women of the Year in the Media Awards, South Africa (2011); winner of the SAJA Award (2011) for the outstanding photograph about South Asia, or the worldwide South Asians diaspora, and overall winner of the 2010 World Press Photo of the Year for her breath-stopping image of Bibi Aisha, an 18-year-old woman from the southern Afghan province of Oruzgan.

Bibi was the victim of horrendous facial disfigurement at the hands of her husband and brother-in-law, as a punishment meted out by her village elders for daring to escape from years of torment and abuse in her marital home. The remarkable image that Jodi captured is both challenging and compelling; forcing the viewer to witness the horrors that human beings can inflict on each other.

It is interesting to note that Bieber might not have taken this photograph in the same way, at the start of her career. “Who I was, photographically speaking, 15 or 20 years ago is different to who I am, photographically, now” says Jodi. “The essence is the same, but I probably wouldn’t have taken the picture with her looking directly at the camera. I may have created a picture that showed her as being more vulnerable, perhaps looking down. It may also have been in black and white, rather than colour.”

The photograph was lit with natural light from the right-hand side, and an assistant (a university student) used a reflector to bounce back just enough on the opposite side of Bibi Aisha’s face. “I don’t carry lighting, ever” she says. “No flash, nothing. I don’t even own a flash, my brain hasn’t figured it out yet”.

Jodi believes that photography has shifted over the years, but also that she has shifted, as a photographer. “How can you just



Bibi Aisha, 2010

*In 2009 Bibi Aisha, an 18-year-old from the southern Afghan province of Oruzgan fled her husband's house, complaining of beatings, maltreatment and a life that amounted to abject slavery. She had been given to her husband when she was 12, as payment to settle a dispute – a practice in Afghanistan that goes by the fitting name of "baad".*

*Having endured six years of torment and abuse, she escaped to the only place she could go, back to her family home. It was here that the village court leaders arrived one night and demanded that the girl be handed over to face justice. She was taken away to a mountain clearing, where the local commander issued his verdict. She was then held down by her brother-in-law, while her husband first sliced off her ears and then cut off her nose. Aisha passed out from the pain but soon awoke choking on her blood.*

*With the help of the American military, aid workers took her to a women's refuge in Kabul run by an Afghan-American organisation, Women for Afghan Women (WAW). There she remained, under the care of trained social workers, until August 2010.*

*She was then flown to California to undergo reconstructive surgery at the Grossman Burn Centre in California. However, following psychological assessment, the medical staff at the foundation decided that Aisha required more counselling and therapy before she could give her informed consent to the gruelling series of operations that surgery would entail.*

*In November 2010 she was moved to New York, she later moved to an Afghan American family in the US and she has received reconstructive surgery at The Walter Reed Hospital.*



*From the series 'Soweto' – Orlando West Swimming Pool, Orlando West, 19 December 2009. Featured in **Soweto**, published by Jacana Media in partnership with the Goethe Institut – South Africa, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-77009-806-0.*

take the same photographs again and again?”, she asks, rhetorically. “You grow as a photographer, and what you photograph informs and matures you, in a way. This may not be the same for every photographer, but this is what’s happened, for me.”

Bieber feels strongly that the

best place to start in photography is at the bottom, in order that the trainee can work their way up. “I find that a lot of young people can move quicker now, perhaps because of the internet, which has allowed things to happen faster. I was a workhorse, I worked hard to get where I am.”

Jodi got her first break in photography from Ken Oosterbroek was a member of the famed Bang Bang Club, a group of photographers and photojournalists that was active within the townships of South Africa. “I started off as a trainee for 3 months loading film in the darkroom and making

prints for other photographers. I would then hear that something was happening and go and photograph it. On the 3rd day there, I got my first front page.”

This was followed by about three years at *The Star* newspaper which Jodi remembers as an incredible learning experience.



“One minute I would have to be with Nelson Mandela and the next minute in a poor environment photographing someone suffering with HIV and AIDS” Jodi explains that this way of working produced its own technical challenges. “At that time, we were shooting black and white film stock and transparencies at the same time. So, I learned to think about the light as I had to get them both equally good, so I had that kind of discipline.”

Creating her own photographic projects in her free time lead to Jodi participating in the World Press masterclass in Amsterdam, a very prestigious platform for up-and-coming photographers. Jodi then travelled further overseas, meeting agents, editors, and publishers whose doors were opening to her. While promoting her work and securing assignments and commissions, Jodi continued to work on her own personal projects, which resulted in many successful exhibitions.

Jodi is very passionate about her personal project work and feels strongly that she should be allowed to do it in her own way, rather than have an assignment dictated to her by an editor or publisher. What she has found, is that her success in winning awards for her projects has opened the door for other project work. “My name became known through winning awards and so I kept getting more assignments” she explains. However, Jodi has taken the decision to enter for photographic awards no longer, although she does apply for grants and bursaries to help support her personal projects.

Although she works in an undoubtedly male-dominated arena, Jodi does not feel excluded or that she has been victimised in any way. “I’ve always been so clear about what I want to do and how I want to do it that gender issues have never interfered in my work” she says.

What advice would this remarkable and highly successful photographer have for other photographers who aspire to work on similar projects and perhaps win awards and have their work exhibited internationally?



From the series *Real Beauty*, 'Marie 2008'.

"I think there is a distinct South African look. People would say the small waist and the big butt and the big hips are a Southern African look, but that exists in other places too. And also within South Africa there are many different kind of figures and figures are also changing with time in terms of diet and I think that teenage girls of today are skinnier than, like teenage black girls of the past.

"I think there is a global look kind of being pushed and I have a problem with it that what's beautiful is to be very thin and that has not always been aesthetic, even in Europe and especially in Africa more recently, but that's changing. What we see in our magazines and what we see on television and what we see now-a-days is pushed of what's beautiful is a more skinny-malinky kind of look, but I think South African women all hold themselves with pride. People who are curvaceous are proud of themselves and are considered sexy."

*Real Beauty* published by Pagina Verlag GmbH, 2014 ISBN-10: 3944146115, ISBN-13: 978-3944146119.



Caster Semenya, 2016: I photographed Caster Semenya in collaboration with Nike and Elle Magazine South Africa. It ran over 8 pages December 2016 to launch the Nike Beautiful x Powerful Collection.

Mokgadi Caster Semenya Bronze OIB (born 7 January 1991) is a South African middle-distance runner and 2016 Olympic gold medallist. Semenya won gold in the women's 800 metres at the 2009 World Championships with a time of 1:55.45 in the final. Semenya also won silver medals at the 2011 World Championships and the 2012 Summer Olympics, both in the 800 metres. She was the winner of the gold medal in the 800 metre event at the 2016 Summer Olympics.

Following her victory at the 2009 World Championships, it was announced that she had been subjected to gender testing. She was withdrawn from international competition until 6 July 2010 when the IAAF cleared her to return to competition. New Statesman magazine included Semenya in a list of 50 People That Matter 2010.

“The first thing is, you have to have the work” Jodi explains. “Don’t let the motivation be the award”. You need to have work in place, for the year, and you got through your best work and edit it properly. I’ve been a member of award juries and seen a lot of bad work. Much of the time award submissions are unsuccessful because photographers are not editing properly. You may have an outstanding image and you think ‘wow, this is going to be great’. But, the next one in your submission is terrible and the one after that is good, but overall the standard of the submission is inconsistent. Be true to yourself, if you don’t have consistently great work, don’t enter. It’s a waste of time. It’s hard for me to press the button when I feel the image is wrong.”

See: [www.jodibieber.com](http://www.jodibieber.com)



## DARRIN ZAMMIT LUPI

Darrin Zammit Lupi's career as a photojournalist and documentary photographer began in his home country of Malta in 1992 and included 20 years as a staff photographer with the *Times of Malta* and being a stringer for Reuters since 1997. His book and on-going exhibition project *Isle Landers*, which covers a decade's work on irregular immigration and asylum seekers in the Mediterranean is highly

acclaimed (*featured in this magazine, September/October 2015*) and continues to be exhibited internationally.

The image below of people walking around Valletta's City Gate in Malta, that won the 'Street Photographer of the Year' trophy and saw Darrin named as 'Photographer of the Year 2016' at The Societies' Awards ceremony in London recently, was submitted on a whim. "I was just playing

around with my iPhone" he says. "I thought I'd enter it for the monthly competition and then it was nominated in the top three, for the Street Photography of the year award". Because the awards were announced in reverse order Darrin had been given a short time to consider the possibility that he might win this category, and to compose him for the inevitable announcement.

It was the 'Photographer of the

Year 2016' award, that caused the biggest surprise for this experienced and very modest press photographer. "I would not have expected it in a million years" he says. "I'm told I practically fell out of my seat, turned as white as a sheet and staggered onto the stage in a daze. I don't know what the judges were smoking when they were looking at the pictures, but I want some of it. I'm expecting to wake up soon and realise it





was all a vivid dream”. There was, Darrin says, so much “amazing stuff” winning the other categories that he didn’t consider that he would make the final three “let alone the top spot”.

There had been some disappointment for Darrin prior to the main award being announced, as he was not nominated for a prize the Documentary Photography category, the field in which he believes he does his strongest work. “I was really looking at the street photography nomination as a fluke”, he explains. “I do street photography; it’s a part of photojournalism, but perhaps I didn’t take the image seriously because it was captured with my iPhone, plus some post processing using *Contrast by Hornbeck* a black and white high contrast-producing digital imaging app”.

In terms of the knock-on effect that this award might have for Darrin, he feels that it may be different from that of previous awards he has won in his home country of Malta, which have not significantly changed the way he has worked. “This is from an organisation that has links with



Above: a migrant prays on the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) ship *Topaz Responder* after being rescued around 20 nautical miles off the coast of Libya, June 23, 2016. Below: a migrant eats a biscuit on the *Topaz Responder* after the same rescue. Both images: REUTERS/Darrin Zammit Lupi

major commercial clients and it is known on an international scale”, he says.

The timing of the award could not have been better, as he had just resigned from the *Times of Malta*, to work freelance. “I have been a freelance photographer for only the last three weeks. My main work from now on will be for Reuters, corporate clients, and NGOs”, Darrin explained. “This award is definitely going to raise my profile a bit further and to

help publicise the fact that I am available for work as a freelance photographer on commissions and assignments”. He was also looking forward to being interviewed by the Maltese press, radio and TV which should also help to promote his work and his availability as a working photographer – “what a way to start the year!”.

Darrin believes that there is a value to photography awards even for those working, as he does, at the high end of photojournalism.

“I have been taking part in World Press Photo and the Sony Awards and others for years”, he says. “I do it knowing that the chances of winning are fairly remote, because there is a lot of excellent work out there. But one thing that winning The Societies award has shown me, is that you just never know. You shouldn’t enter a picture if you don’t think it’s strong, but it might resonate with the judges in a way that you didn’t consider possible.”

However, Darrin is uncertain about the long-term practical effects of winning once the limelight has faded. “I know some people who have won major awards in the past, and it was good for them, but in the long-term, they don’t feel that it helped their careers in any big way. They perhaps didn’t see a significant increase in client commissions and assignments. On the other hand, it has worked in that way for others, so overall, it’s hard to tell if will make a difference to your career or not”.

He feels that a picture editor will often decide to use a photographer based on what the photographer has produced in the

past, which helps them to know that the photographer can get the shots. It’s also very important for the photographer to be able to come up with their own suggestions for story ideas.

Darrin points out that that there is more to photojournalism than producing strong images. “The photography is only a small part of what will be required when you take on a job. For documentary photography, for example, you need to have the stamina and know-how to survive in hostile environments and the experience to handle various, difficult situations. You have to shoot video, interview people and generally know how to talk to people. There are a multitude of skills that you must bring to the job, not just photography”.

His advice for anyone thinking of becoming a full-time photojournalist is clear. “I’d tell them to try to find something better to do”, he says emphatically. “The money is not very good and the amount of available work is constantly decreasing. But, if someone is determined to become a photojournalist they need to brush up on their photography and multimedia skills and they need to know a lot about the world; what makes news and what doesn’t”.



Both images on this page: faces through a train window as migranys and refugees wait departure to Slovenia on their journey to western Europe, at a refugee transit camp in Slavonski Brod, Croatia, February 10, 2016. REUTERS/Darrin Zammit Lupi

Preparing for life as documentary photography requires, says Darrin, far more than skills as a photographer. “If someone is planning to study photography at college, I would tell them to study something else instead, such as politics or economics or anthropology or languages. These are all things that will help you to understand the stories you are working on in the field. If you’ve got a portfolio show it people, if you have a website, make sure it works”.

One final, essential tip for would-be photojournalists is

to start in your own backyard. “Don’t think that you have to travel to exotic or dangerous places to make an impact. Talk to the local newspaper and build on it as you go along. I would never advise anyone starting out to take themselves off to Syria, for example. It’s a very dangerous and irresponsible thing to do. So much so, that many agencies and newspapers will refuse imagery from freelance photographers working without the backing of a recognised organisation”.

With that, this modest Photographer of the Year from

Malta prepared to leave London for Luxembourg to hang photographs for another exhibition of his *Isle Landers* project.

[www.darrinzammitlupi.com](http://www.darrinzammitlupi.com)

Associate Editor Stephen Power, who prepared these interviews, is hosting one-day and longer residential photography courses on Valentia Island, County Kerry, Ireland in 2017. See: [www.stephenpowerphotos.com](http://www.stephenpowerphotos.com) (Residential Courses link) for more information

