



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Last year's bursary winners tell us about the projects they completed with the financial support of the Society and its partners



KIERAN DODDS

ENVIRONMENTAL
AWARENESS

BURSARY – OVER 30

Offered by the Society and
The Photographic Angle

I'm interested in the way beliefs shape landscape, and wanted to explore the last remaining forests that surround churches in the north of Ethiopia – a country where, in the last 100 years, 95 per cent of the forests have been chopped down.

These churches are run by those who practise the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo religion, a traditional Christian denomination. They view these forests as a kind of miniature garden of Eden, the clothes of the church. It's a communal resource and they try to keep it as pristine as possible.

However, in recent years, there's been an upsurge in grazing cattle and an increase in population, slowly creeping into the centre of these forests. So the people who look after them are trying to take action to prevent this from happening.

In other places I have visited in Africa, conservation is a kind of 'fortress' where locals are thrown out and westerners visit in cars and look at animals, causing a division between conservation and the community.

With this project, I wanted to reconcile traditional beliefs with modern conservation ethics. There's a huge grass-roots desire to look after and preserve these

New life is celebrated with baptism. The church forests are central to all aspects of life within the local communities.

forests in Ethiopia, which are hugely beneficial to the country, but they need financial support. I hope that exhibiting the work in the capital, Addis Ababa, will help raise awareness among those working in development.

I spent a month in Ethiopia, including three weeks in the field in Bahir Dar where most of these forests are. With the photos, I wanted to show the passing of time, and reveal how these people are stewards of the Earth, caring for these trees which will outlive them and benefit future

generations. I thus started using slow exposures to show time passing, but also the spiritual sense of the place. It was a place of daily life, but it also transcended the profane.

The bursary let me go somewhere I'd always wanted to and document a positive conservation story. So much of what we hear in relation to biodiversity is how things are failing, how we're losing stuff.

I feel this story shows that people can look after the environment, and not just in fortress-like national parks.

'I WANTED TO RECONCILE TRADITION WITH MODERN CONSERVATION ETHICS'



ABOVE
Eucalyptus is transported by mule along a major trunk road to Gondar. The trees have little environmental benefit but are vital as biofuel and in construction

ABOVE RIGHT
Richly symbolic icons surround the Holy of Holies at the centre of the church and forest, where an Ark of the covenant is held

RIGHT
Paintings in a church on Lake Tana date back over 400 years and depict the history of Ethiopia, intertwined with floral patterns

OPPOSITE
A young trainee priest prepares to participate in the divine liturgy at Robit church near Bahir Dar







EKATRINA ANCHEVSKAYA AND ALEKSANDAR NIKOLOV

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS
BURSARY – UNDER 30

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Our project looks at the ecological problems of the Black Sea caused by climate change and human activities. Not many people know about eastern Europe, and in particular the Black Sea.

The sea is the main marine body of eastern Europe, which connects it with western Asia. It is bounded by Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Georgia.

We travelled to all six countries and talked to ecologists that live there to find out how people try to solve problems regarding climate change. We also wanted to explore the diverse ecologies in these areas.

Global warming is causing a lot of fish and

plants to die. It's one of the biggest problems that the area's ecology faces.

When you talk about the ecology of the sea, it's not just the water that's a concern, but the coast as well. We therefore have a variety of different kinds of images, including portraits, landscape and industrial photography.

We want the result to be a photobook with lots of information to support the images. It's difficult to just take photos of ecological problems – you need a lot of explanation as well. But we will keep it visually creative and beautiful at the same time.

The bursary helped us finance the project. We would otherwise never have had the chance to travel to these countries.



TOP
Tuapse, Russia. Portrait of a local environmental activist.

MIDDLE
Novorossiysk, Russia. Private constructions on the coast result in its destruction, and landslides.

ABOVE
Novorossiysk. The railway station, which is located right in the centre of the city and transports industrial materials and fuel. Frequently, the transportation results in leaks of industrial waste into the rivers which flow into the Black Sea