

Taking a shot at a top prize

NICK HACKWORTH | **EVENING STANDARD** | Thursday 7 April 2005 00:00 |



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The Evening Standard



Now in its ninth year, the prize run by the Photographers' Gallery has firmly established itself as one of the leading photographic showcases in the world.

Awarded to any living photographer who has made a significant contribution to the medium in the preceding year, it is international in scope. New sponsorship from Deutsche Börse has increased the award to £30,000 and brought the obligatory name change to the event.

Most famous among the four contenders is the once-precocious American Stephen Shore, 58, whose photos were bought by New York's Museum of Modern Art when he was 14 and who hung out in and documented Warhol's factory in his late teens. The pictures on show are from roadtrips taken through the US in the Seventies but which have only just been published in book form.

The focus of the sometimes beautiful, densely coloured images on the random and the fleeting - Formica tabletops and petrol stations - was radical at the time, but is now so widespread as to deaden the impact of the originals.

German Jörg Sasse, in his forties, dispensed with the idea of originality a decade ago, instead digitally manipulating photographs he found. The images are unsurprisingly very different, from a kids' football match to a bed of reeds, but even after Sasse's interventions they are too everyday to merit special attention.

Less quotidian are the diametrically opposed interests and methods of Swede JH Engström, one-time assistant to Mario Testino and Frenchman Luc Delahaye, a photojournalist who has migrated into the artworld. Engström's work is lyrical, moving and narrative in mood with self-portraits, portraits of friends, landscapes and domestic scenes mixed up like fragments of a story. The images exude an air of faint, urban melancholy.

Delahaye, meanwhile, exhibits panoramic scenes, taken with a large-format camera, of recent historical and political resonance. Here a crowd stands impassively around two bodies on a road near Kabul, the Pope is a small, distant figure during a ceremony in St Peter's and Milosevic looks unemotionally into camera in a fairly empty, office-like courtroom.

With such an interestingly varied line-up, the exhibition should provoke stimulating debate over the differing approaches within contemporary photography.

From tomorrow until 5 June. Information: 020 7831 1772. ■