

Community's Cultural Life in Public Space

A selection of entries

**Silk Cities
International
Competition 2023
photography and
videography**

Silk Cities is an independent professional and academic initiative for knowledge exchange, research, engagement and raising awareness on under-explored contextual and global challenges and opportunities. Its initial geographic focus was on those countries along the Silk Roads in the Middle East and Central Asia. This region is the home of long-lasting urbanism and civilisations, therefore enjoys rich tangible and intangible heritage built over millenniums and centuries of history. However, the region also suffers from contextual and global challenges affecting societies and cities. Additionally, it has suffered from a variety of destructive incidents especially in recent decades, ranging from natural hazards to human induced origins, from earthquakes to wars.

Fostering international dialogue and knowledge sharing, the geographic coverage of Silk Cities reaches out further to other cities, regions and countries which are prone to similar issues and global challenges.

With a vision to improve the quality of cities and urban life, Silk Cities bridges the gap between local and global efforts, between younger and experienced generations of diverse urban stakeholders, and brings together academia and practice. It has a growing network of individuals and organisations both in the region and internationally.

Book and E-book Publications:

Historic Cities in the Face of Disasters

Book edited by Arefian F.F., Ryser, J., Hopkins, A., MacKee, J. Springer, 2021

Prerequisites for Post-Disaster Regeneration of Historic Cities

E-book edited by Ryser, J., Arefian, F.F., 2021, Silk Cities

Urban Heritage Along the Silk Roads

Book edited by Arefian F.F., and Moeini S.H.I., 2019, Springer

Organising Post-Disaster Reconstruction Processes

Book authored by Arefian, F.F., 2018, Springer

Urban Change in Iran

Book edited by Arefian F.F. and Moeini S.H.I., 2016, Springer

Website

Contact

Mailing list

silk-cities.org

info@silkcities.org

silk-cities.org/join-our-email-list

Media

© Contributors and creators, 2024

Layout & design

Ali Puya Khani

Cover design

Diba Deihim

Published by

Silk Cities

November 2024

ISBN:978-1-838625-2-2



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Participants of the competition certified that they are the copyright holders of their submission. Creators continue to remain the copyright holders of their creative work., expressed or implied, with respect to the accuracy of information contained in this ePublication and cannot accept legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that maybe made.

Silk Cities International Competition 2023
photography and videography

Community's Cultural Life in Public Space

A selection of entries



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Overview</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>Thematic and geographic diversity</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>Jurors</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Statement by jurors</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Selection process</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>Exhibition</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Winners photography</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Winners videography</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>Runners-up</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>A selection of entries</u>	<u>46</u>

OVERVIEW

The first Silk Cities International Competition on '[Community's Cultural Life in Public Spaces](#)' aimed to explore the cultural exchanges transpiring in urban public spaces across the globe through the medium of photography, and to reach out to a broader audience including practitioners, artists and cultural creatives. Starting in 2022, the competition was initiated as an experiment to visually explore urban matters from the perspective of a broader community interested in subject matter, beyond academic language.

Cities and urban spaces are transformed from time to time when communities practice their cultural traditions and express their cultural identities. From yearly preparations and celebrations of the New Year, festivals, and rituals to more frequent cultural activities in public spaces a community's cultural life interacts with public spaces. Those cultural

legacies, whether to be ritual preparations, celebrations, music, food and more, describe intangible heritage. The competition therefore offered an exploratory visual tool offering new perspectives and insights, highlighting relations between various types of intangible heritage performed by communities and urban spaces.

We conceptualised the competition in a way to be relevant to the 4th Silk Cities International Conference on '[Intangible Heritages, Cities and Communities, along the Silk Roads and Beyond](#)', and to some extent broader. Together, the international competition and the conference bring multiple artistic expressions and research-based global knowledge and insights which are rooted in local diversity on relations between communities' cultural practices as integral parts of urban culture and spatiality of cities and public environments.

This competition welcomed individuals from diverse backgrounds and professions to participate in the exhibition of their creative talent, encompassing the realms of photography and short-form videography. It was open to the public, whether amateur or professional photographers and videographers. This international competition encouraged visual exploration of the relation between a community's cultural activities and public spaces.

The competition covered both historical and contemporary traditions and practices belonging to communities' culture, both in so called normal situations and during or after cities and communities face disasters, conflicts, and revolutions

Importantly, many of these intangible cultural legacies and communities' traditions are not bound to the current geographic borders; instead, they spread along territories beyond political borders. Understanding and recognising many cultural practices and communities'

cultural lives as reference points aim to assist the understanding of intangible heritages as uniting elements between local, regional, and global communities.

The competition was concluded in May 2023 and the winner announcement event took place in a hybrid format on 31st July 2023 at UCL in London, UK. Many congratulations to the winners and runner ups for their achievement!

Running a successful international competition requires collective effort. The Silk Cities team engaged in the competition project at various stages, from the inception of the idea to the announcement of winners. Our distinguished jurors generously supported the competition with their expert skills and insights and chose the winners. Many of Silk Cities friends supported us for translating the competition poster to 16 languages which was crucial for a great outreach proven from the great geographical diversity of submitted photos and videos. Also, the DPU friends hosted the winner announcement event. Many thanks to all for make the competition a success! They are acknowledged in alphabetical order.

SILK CITIES TEAM

Ali Puya Khani

Diba Deihim

Ehsan Fatehi Far

Farnaz Arefian

Maithilee Gotpagar

Maryam Eftekhari Dadkhah

Sanjoli Mathur

SILK CITIES' FRIENDS WHO TRANSLATED THE COMPETITION POSTER INTO 16 LANGUAGES.

Abhishek Jain
Dr. Avar Almukhtar
Prof. Andrew James Hopkins
Baber Mumtaz
Dr. Madina Junussova
Dr. Miwako Kitamura
Dr. Isabel Carvalho
Dr. Rahaf Orabi
Dr. Rui Pang, and
Prof. Yves Cabannes.

THE WINNER ANNOUNCEMENT EVENT

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit at University College London (DPU-UCL), London, generously hosted the winning announcement event on 31st July 2023.

Prof. Michael Walls
Prof. Julio D Davila
Alexander Macfarlane

THEMATIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIVERSITY

Submitted photos and videos addressed multiple scales and underlying themes, showing a range of cultural activities which interact with public spaces whether to influence or being influenced by it, and contribute to communities' sense of identity and wellbeing, and resilience and social recovery in adversities. They ranged from everyday activities to religious rituals, celebrations and more covering both normal and disastrous situations. Participants impressed the jurors with technical skills, creativity, and originality as well as the geographic diversity of subject areas.

Entries came from diverse cultures and countries as the creators were based in 16 countries while the subject locations covered 18 countries from four continents, Asia, Europe, Americas, and Africa.



JURORS

The multidisciplinary jury panel consisted of established and award-winning artists and experts.
(in alphabetical order)



[Ali Ettehad](#)

Director, writer, visual
and performing artist



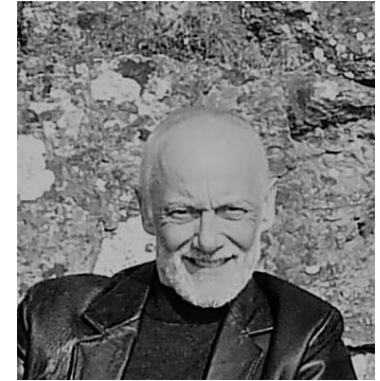
[Samer Mohdad](#)

Photographer and
photojournalist



[Etinosa Yvonne](#)

Photographer and
visual artist



[John Mullin](#)

Academician at
Academy of Urbanism

STATEMENT BY JURORS

John Mullin

When I was asked to help judge the Silk Cities Photographic competition, I had reservations, for what do I know of Silk Cities? I only have dim memories of learning about the Silk Road many years ago at school, and a quick check on Google Earth confirmed that I had not visited any of the cities along the route from Xian to Istanbul. On the other hand, I do know quite a lot about competition in general, having been a teacher charged with assessing students' artwork for over forty years, and about photographic competitions in particular, having organised them on behalf of Architecture for Children and the Academy of Urbanism.

When I had the opportunity to see and study the wonderful images submitted to the competition, my reservations were forgotten. Many of the photographs and videos were beautiful, many were technically brilliant, but

more importantly all the entrants approached the brief in a considered and intelligent manner, and all the work illuminated the concept of community life in public spaces in thought provoking ways.

What I should like to say to the entrants is that whether you have won the competition or not, you take home the prize of becoming part of a supra-national community of creative people who can show the world that whether you live in the cities on the ancient Silk Road, or on cities connected by modern sea and air trade routes, or indeed any community of whatever size, we are all connected by our common humanity - all woven into a fabric as strong, as resilient, as beautiful as silk.

STATEMENT BY JURORS

Ali Ettehad

I deeply believe that art cannot be judged. I have been saying this for years, and if I am invited as a judge to art competitions, my default assumption is that it is impossible to judge a work of art by itself. My purpose for attending as a judge is only to create a new possibility for new artists.

The title and criteria of the Silk Cities competition were sufficiently motivating for me that I could not resist this offer, and now it is time to tell the qualities that made me choose the winners of the festival.

The obvious is that a piece of visual art must be visually impressive; Composition, colours, movement, stillness, etc. However, if I don't find a story in the layers of visual elements, that piece has not yet turned into a work of art. This story should present the possibility of various

interpretations to the audience, and if it is not, that image is propaganda content or educational material, or scientific observational evidence. Whatever it is, it is not a work of art.

The works that won in the first year of this festival have all these characteristics and I hope that the selected artists will be recognised with brilliant works soon.

SELECTION PROCESS

The selection process took place in two stages starting with anonymous individual scoring by jurors and followed by jurors group discussion. A threshold of minimum score was also set.

WINNERS

(photography category)

1st Place: *The street of Dhaka*
by Sandipani Chattopadhyay

2nd Place: *Ramadan meals among the ruins of Idlib*
by Mouneb Taim

3rd Place: *Celebrating prosperity*
by Amar Habeeb

WINNERS

(short-video category)

1st Place: *The village above the clouds*
by Liling Cui

2nd Place: *Souq of passion: a world cup spectacle*
by Hamed Goharipour, Soheil Goharipour, Zhila Pezeshkpoor

RUNNERS-UP

(in alphabetical order)

Floating villages, by Aung Chan Thar

Night life, by Goran Erfani

Fascinated by Lights, by Goran Erfani

Bubbles and bass, by Max Marienko

Untitled, by Reza Masoudi Nejad

The little listener, by SR Hossain

Untitled, by Zifan Zhang

A SELECTION OF ENTRIES

(in alphabetical order)

Celebrating heritage by Aung Chan Thar

Diablos by Magda Gibelli

Tribal dance by SR Hossain

Untitled by Darren Lehane

Malmö by Polina Mikhnova

Distortion - The meeting by Albert Mørk

Untitled by Maedeh Ojaghloo

Shadows of New York's early steel years by
Julien Schoener

Rain invoking community fishing by Alino Sumi

Untitled by Aida Varshoei

A birthday fit for a goddess by Li Zhang

EXHIBITION

During the 4th Silk Cities International Conference on '[Intangible Heritages, Cities and Communities, along the Silk Roads and Beyond](#)', an exhibition at Kheireddin Palace – a public gallery and listed building - offered a visual exploration of the winners and entries of competitions to engagement of conference attendees with artworks of local artists that also were exhibited in the gallery.



winners.

photography.

WINNER

The street of Dhaka

Sandipani Chattopadhyay

@sandipanichattopadhyay

This photo depicts Friday prayer on the Dhaka Street during Ijtema festival. Ijtema is one of the major Islamic religious gatherings which happens every year in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This event is the annual three-day congregation, and it has a strong appeal to South Asian Muslims and its diaspora. Millions of Muslim people visit Dhaka during this ceremony. Friday prayer during this event is very much essential for the Muslims. Dedicated prayer ground is not enough to handle this huge number people during the prayer time, so large number of people come to the main street of Dhaka. Muslims believe that the blessings of the almighty will be bestowed upon them as its consequence. All the ground transportation & other people movement is suspended during that time.



SECOND PLACE

Ramadan meals among the ruins in Idlib

Mouneb Taim

@mouneb_taim

After the Syrian regime's campaign in the countryside of Idlib and the withdrawal of its forces from the city of Nayrab, the residents returned to find all their homes destroyed. This devastation occurred during Ramadan in May 2020, specifically on the 7th of the month. Despite the war and destruction, the people were not deterred from continuing their tradition of a communal iftar, an important custom during Ramadan. Their determination led them to organize a group breakfast together amidst the rubble.



THIRD PLACE

Celebrating Prosperity

Amar Habeeb

@amarhabeeb



A group of men play the traditional music and dance to its tunes during the National Day celebration of UAE at the capital of the country Abu Dhabi. The community have advanced from a simple and humble life to one of the most well developed and advanced country. Even though country gone through modernisation, the history of the country is well remembered and traditions are well followed. From this photo I want to convey this same message. The modern buildings at the background shows the prosperity of the nation and these men represents the culture and values of the place which is well respected and carried on.



winners.

videography.

FIRST PLACE

The village above the clouds

Liling Cui

This visual project documents the simple and authentic pastoral life of Tibetan herdsman villages located on Himalayan culture. Due to modern culture intervention, this simple and real way of life is slowly becoming a thing of the past. More and more young people are moving to the city to live. The local culture that evolved from Himalayan culture is slowly being lost. The majority of people are not aware of the need to preserve culture. Along with the abandoned houses, the herdsman's songs, the operas performed by the old entertainers, and some myths and stories were slowly lost. There are many people who choose to sell their yak and go to the city to buy a house for a more modern life, but some choose to stay because they cannot leave their yak.



Click on the image or use the following link to watch this entry.

<https://vimeo.com/853491388>

SECOND PLACE

Souq of passion: a world cup spectacle

Soheil Goharipour, Hamed Goharipour and Zhila Pezeshkpoor

@soheil.gp, @goharipour_hamed, @zhilaaaaa



This video project documents 20 days of fieldwork in Doha during the 2022 FIFA World Cup, capturing the essence of fleeting and emotional encounters in the lively public life of Souq Waqif. Amidst the organisers' attempts to commercialize Al Bidda Park into a temporary fan festival exclusively for ticket holders, Souq Waqif stood out as a place where culturally different populations met and coexisted, where inclusiveness and sociability were the defining characteristics of public life. Despite the absence of official FIFA-sponsored activities and giant monitors, fans instinctively gravitated towards the historic heart of Doha, claiming the bustling bazaar as their own gathering ground. Here, they freely interacted with one another, embracing the authentic World Cup spirit. With its rich cultural heritage, Souq Waqif became a spontaneous hub where the genuine sense of celebration found a home.



Click on the image or use the following link
to watch this entry.

<https://vimeo.com/853491761>

runners-up. *(in alphabetical order)*

Floating villages

Aung Chan Thar

@aungchantharmyanmar

Inle Lake, renowned for its floating houses and villages, offers a captivating sight of human habitation in the middle of the water. Small boats navigate the channels, weaving between these unique dwellings, creating a scene that harmonises with the concept of Silk Cities. These resilient communities showcase their daily lives, while the gentle ripples on the lake reflect the artistry of silk weavings. Inle Lake emerges as a contemporary silk city, where tradition, innovation, and the serene waters intertwine in a mesmerising display of human ingenuity and natural beauty.



Nightlife

Goran Erfani

@goran_erfani

Jemaa el-Fnaa is a square market in the heart (medina) of Marrakesh, Morocco. The square is not just a tourist attraction, but it is also a vital hub for the local community's cultural life. During the day, the square is filled with a bustling market where vendors sell everything from spices and textiles to traditional Moroccan handicrafts. At dusk, Jemaa el-Fnaa transforms into a lively open-air theatre, with street performers, snake charmers, henna tattoo artists, and musicians entertaining crowds of visitors. Food stalls are set up, offering a range of traditional Moroccan dishes such as tagine and couscous, as well as freshly squeezed orange juice and sweet mint tea. To me, Jemaa el-Fnaa's cultural life is an integral part of Marrakesh's identity, and the square plays a crucial role in promoting and preserving Moroccan culture and traditions for future generations.



Fascinated by illuminations

Goran Erfani

@goran_erfani

This photograph is from the Durham Lumiere, a light biennial festival produced by a UK-based company called Artichoke. Every two years, using light technology and installation arts, a temporary urban landscape (only for four days) is created in different parts of the medieval city of Durham. The light festival brings many people together who are fascinated by illuminations. The festival has gained popularity over the last couple of years and has become means to attract tourism and local communities and attention to cities where they take place.



Bubbles and bass

Max Marienko

@max_m_ph

The Coney Island celebration of summer.



Untitled

Reza Masoudi Nejad

For the annual Muharram ritual in the old city of Mumbai in 2010, the members of Bohra community travelled from all over the world for the annual commemoration of tragic martyrdom of grandson of the prophet Muhammad. The gathering transformed the old city into a rituals arena, producing solidarity among the members of community who were dispersed all over the world during the colonial era. A pilgrimage is a journey to a holy place, such as the old temple wall in Jerusalem or Buddha's footprint. However, this image captures a pilgrimage that is defined not by arrival at a holy place but by a sacred annual sermon. The Dawoodi Bohras would travel to wherever their spiritual leader chooses to deliver his Muharram sermons that is not continually held at the same place, it would be in Mumbai, Zanzibar or elsewhere.



The little listener

S R Hossain

@srhossain_photography

A Baul Singer is performing a Baul song to a little girl in the countryside of West Bengal in India. Baul or Bauls are a group of mystic minstrels from Bengal, living in Rural West Bengal, India and Bangladesh. Their music and way of life have influenced a large segment of Bengali culture and Baul music had a great influence on Rabindranath Tagore's poetry and on his music the Nobel prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore's poetry and on his music known as Rabindra Sangeet.



Untitled

Zifan Zhang

@zifanzh

A monk meditates in front of a Buddha statue in Feilaifeng's limestone peak in the city of Hangzhou in China. There are more than 300 statues from the Five Dynasties (907-960 AD) to the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368 AD) among the stones. The earliest carvings of the three Buddha statues, including Maitreya, Guanyin, and Da Shizhi, were built in the caves of Feilaifeng and the cliffs along the creek in 951 AD.



a selection of entries. *(in alphabetical order)*

Celebrating heritage

by Aung Chan Thar

Bagan, once the capital of Burma and now an ancient city adorned with stupas, is the heart of Myanmar. Amidst the temple-dotted plains, children gather to celebrate the Burmese traditional water festival. Their laughter fills the air as they engage in playful water fights, carrying vessels filled with scented water. Dressed in vibrant silk garments, their joyous energy intertwines with the rich cultural heritage of Myanmar. Against the backdrop of Bagan's majestic stupas, children embody the enduring spirit of the Burmese people, where history, tradition, and mirthful celebrations converge.



Diablos

by Magda Gibelli

The devils are dancing in Chuao, a place on the Nord coast of Venezuela, to celebrate de Corpus Christi. The Catholic events of Dancing Devils of Corpus Christi have a mixture of influences from indigenous people of the Carib ethnic group and African slaves and now is celebrated in 11 regions. In the photo a devil kid is in the middle of the forest of cocoa plants, he is surrounded by masks of the dancing devils. The celebration has been in practice for around 400 years in Chuao, Aragua, Venezuela.



Tribal dance

by SR Hossain

A group of tribal people are dancing in a forest in Birbhum District of West Bengal. Generally, the tribal people like to dance together, and men play instruments while women dance to the beat. The tribal dance is an important part of their culture. The folk music and dances create a rhythm, through which tribal people try to present their very old culture and community to others.



Untitled

by Darren Lehane

London's Chinatown is turned into a dazzling public space decorated with lanterns to celebrate Chinese New Year. This popular tourist area shares traditional celebratory values alongside the lighthearted fun of visitors. Here tourists are entertained by a street busker using a traffic cone to "play" music. A perfect combination of cultural traditions cohabiting alongside contemporary society.



The philosophy of "Lagom,,

by Polina Mikhnova

This photo was taken in Malmö, Sweden, during the 2019 festival, which took place from August 9 to 16. The festival programme included music, art, and entertainment. The main squares, streets, and waterfronts had attractions, stages, and food outlets. All of this created a lot of noise and movement and attracted many people. It was clear that there was a festival in the city. At the same time, miniature creative studios were set up on quiet pedestrian streets, without disturbing the usual rhythm of life. It was in such inconspicuous "points" that the national ideology of "Lagom" was revealed.

In the photo, in the background of the extreme carousel, there is a workshop-kiosk for creating new things from old jeans: girls together with the craftsman create a new thing, and women are watching the work with interest. On the outside, a mom and child try weaving a carpet.

The workshop-kiosk itself is a simple structure with a back wall, podium and roof. It was almost invisible, did not interfere with the movement of pedestrians, did not make noise, but everyone passing by with interest looked inside, watching the work. People brought old denim items, socialised, and created new things made with their own hands. Denim items are the most popular clothes for many people, it is better not to throw away the tired thing, but to give it a second life through the creative process.

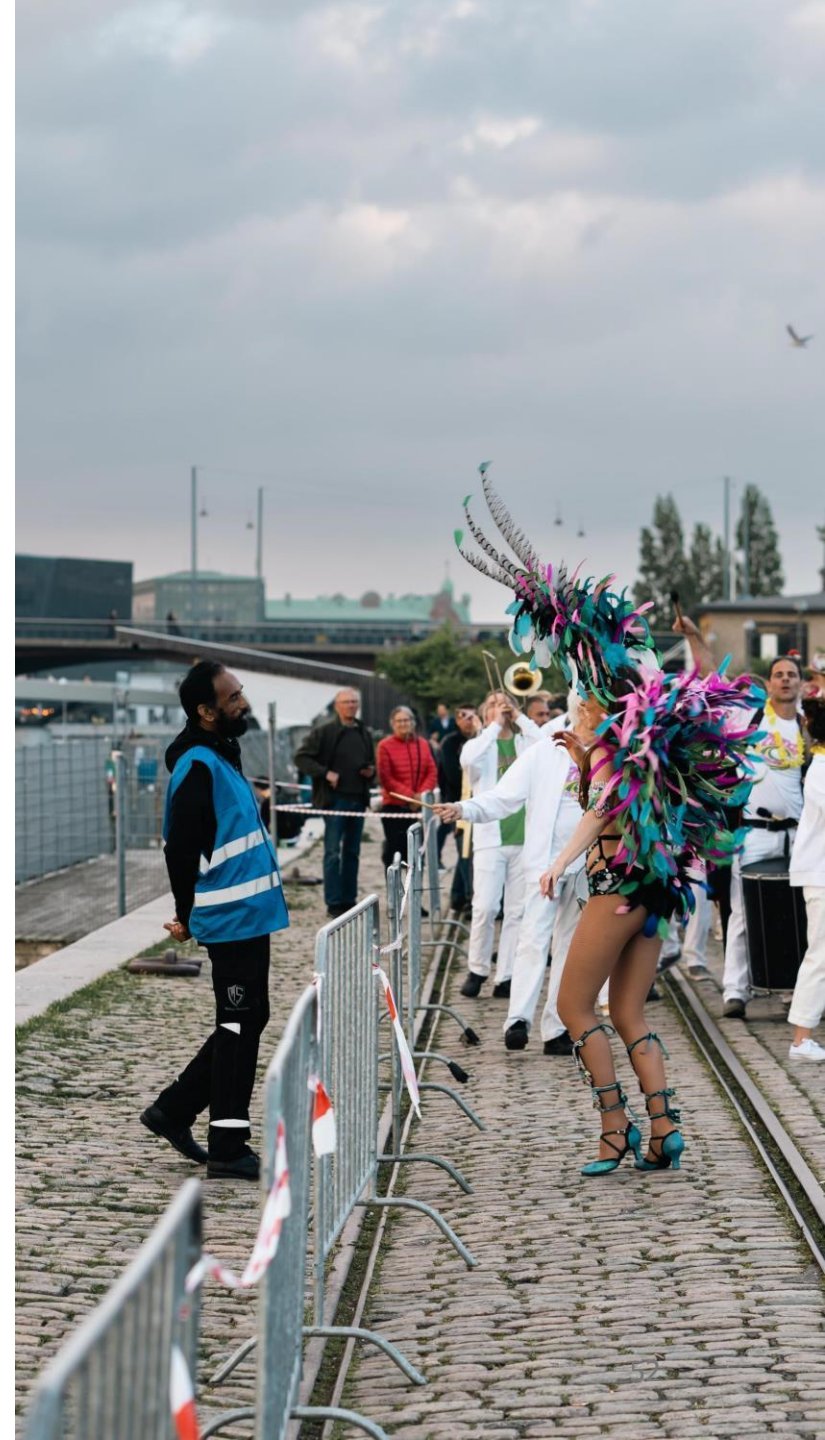
It is all a manifestation of the Lagom philosophy: a sense of balance, equality, sensible consumption, and recycling.



Distortion - The meeting

by Albert Mørk

The festival "Distortion" is a giant street party, which moves to different sections of Copenhagen each day. Bringing the city together for a giant party, it is divided into a lot of smaller parties. This photo is from the carnival part, in which a dancer and a volunteer briefly meet.



Untitled

by Maedeh Ojaghloo

In 2020, Iran faced a turbulent year. International sanctions and high inflation caused gas prices to rise, leading to protests and loss of life. The crash of a Ukrainian plane disrupted the internet, compounding the difficulties. To make matters worse, COVID-19 hit hard, resulting in significant losses for Iran. During this time, visiting the Tajrish Bazaar, a traditionally busy and buzzing commercial hub in the North Tehran revealed an isolated and somber atmosphere due to the pandemic.



Shadows of New York's early steel years

by Julien Schoener

The sun came out in the morning and these beautiful shadows appeared telling their different story of space, time and dimension. The illusion resembles the first black and white photographs of New York during the era of steel buildings of skyscrapers. Yet, this photo was taken in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.



Rain invoking community fishing

by Alino Sumi

It is nonviable to describe the processes of agriculture in Naga hills (Nagaland) without touching on the festivals and ceremonies connected with them. The photograph shows a community fishing festival after rain for a good agricultural year. The Indigenous Nagas depend on agriculture and their collective effort to “manipulate rain” is indisputable in their rain-invoking rituals. The scarce or excess rain affects crop yields, and this directly affects their way of life.



Untitled

by Aida Varshoei

Many reasons make a performance successful, but the most important part of a ritual is its audience. We always try our best to capture the performers, forgetting ourselves and the cross-watchers, nevertheless, we often miss an important moment in a performance. This photo was taken during Nowruz, Persian New Year, in Varzaghan, Iran, 6 months after a deadly earthquake in August 2012. Women and kids who survived that deadly event - the audience - are deep into a musical performance aimed bringing them to better moments.



A birthday fit for a goddess
by Lai Zi Cheng



*Click here for more information about **The fourth Silk Cities International Conference: Intangible Heritage, Cities and Communities***

*Click here for more information about **Interactive Then & Now**, a project which aims to raise awareness heritage properties.*

*Here is more information about our **Training Programme**.*

*Here is more information about the **International Competition**, also the related **photo** and **video gallery**.*



Then & Now

silk-cities.org

info@silkcities.org

ISBN:978-1-838625-2-2

