



Press release
May 20, 2020

BMW Art & Culture announces photographer Almudena Romero as the 10th jury-selected winner of the BMW Residency at GOBELINS School of Visual Arts in Paris.

Almudena Romero will begin her residency in September under the guidance of artistic director, François Cheval. The BMW Residency will be organized to take account of the public health situation.

Paris. Almudena Romero was selected as the winner of the BMW Residency by a jury composed of Nathalie Berriat, Director of the GOBELINS School of Visual Arts; Hervé Digne, Collector; Chantal Nedjib, Founder of l'image par l'image; Sam Stourdé, Director of Rencontres d'Arles; and Christoph Wiesner, Paris Photo Artistic Director.

Seven emerging photographers were initially shortlisted for an interview by video link. This enabled the jury to immerse itself in the artists' projects before making its final decision on May 12, 2020, **unanimously selecting Almudena Romero as winner** on the strength of **her project "The Pigment Change"**.

The interviewed candidates were chosen from 151 applicants who submitted portfolios comprising a note of intent regarding their project for the BMW Residency and images of their previous work.

The submitted applications revealed highly diverse profiles and projects. There was gender parity among the applicants (52% of whom were women), with 86% of candidates from Europe (of which 62% were French) and 14% from Asia, Africa or the Americas. These figures reveal the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, since previous years have seen a larger contingent of international photographic artists, with the French accounting for only a third of applications. Moreover, 171 applicants did not see their applications through, presumably due to concerns that they would be unable to travel to France in September. This demonstrates how important it is for sponsors like the BMW Group to continue supporting emerging creative talent in these unusual times.

Key themes included perspectives on the current crisis and issues such as isolation and disability. The environment, diversity, and the role of women in society were also addressed.

Vincent Salimon, CEO of BMW Group France welcomed the jury's decision: "This project stood out for its holistic approach. Almudena Romero applies original experimental and scientific methods and examines the relationship between the environment and production from a place of conviction. Her research on pigment changes is not only technical, but also extremely visually striking. Her work is completely in phase with the BMW Group's vision of innovation and production, which should always be sustainable and respect the environment."

Communications and Public Relations

Nathalie Berriat, Gobelins Director, expressed her delight: "Almudena Romero is an artist who is both engaging and passionate. Her project, whose focus is on ecological and political photography, uses technology that has not yet been explored. I'm sure our students and teaching staff will be excited by her contemporary take on traditional techniques.

Her work fits in well with Gobelins educational objectives whose constant focus is on combining technical know-how with a search for meaning in images. Having already shown great generosity when interviewed by the jury, Almudena Romero has also expressed her eagerness to share her experience with our young people – I am sure she will benefit fully from this residency!"

Jury members' comments on this nomination and Almudena Romero's reactions can all be found in the video on the BMW Art & Culture Instagram page:

https://www.instagram.com/bmwgroupculture_fr/

THE WINNER OF THE 2020 Gobelins School of Visual Arts BMW Residency

Almudena Romero is a plastic artist who was born in the United Kingdom in 1986. She is a professor at Stanford University, a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Art, Design and Communication and an MA in Photography from the University of the Arts London.

Her project **The Pigment Change for the BMW Residency** seeks to experiment with and explore the medium of photography through pigment changes due to light variations, which are viewed as works of photographic art.

François Cheval, Artistic Director of the BMW Residency welcomed the jury's decision: "In Almudena Romero's work, the use of traditional and modern photographic processes is more than just a clever technique – it is a comment on the complex relationship between photography, society and nature. With her keen interest in the first techniques used to print photographs, including cyanotype and wet-plate collodion, she combines old and new, producing striking images, particularly those printed on plants. This return to traditional techniques is by no means nostalgic. Such methods are used alongside digitization and 3D printing and raise questions about our modern world (identity, social memory, etc.).

The BMW Residency will allow her to experiment with photographic techniques that have no impact on our environment and yet still enable reproduction, that unique feature of the medium!"

Since 2015, exhibitions of her work have been held at the Tate Modern, Tate Britain, The Photographer's Gallery, London Art Fair, Brighton Photo Biennale, Tsinghua Art Museum, 104 Paris, University of the Arts London, Unseen Amsterdam and Fundacion Mapfre. Her works feature in various collections, notably including: the Stephan Loewentheil Collection, the Penumbra Foundation, the Gabriela Cendoya-Bergareche Collection, Jerome Kohler - The Philanthropic Lab, the University of the Arts London Photography Archive and Research Centre, the Bow Arts Trust, the Lucy Art Residency and BBC Four. She has also received commissions from Team London Bridge, Southwark Council, Emergency Exit Artist, the Wellcome Trust + University College London, and the Bow Arts Trust for the London Festival of Architecture.

2020 BMW RESIDENCY JURY SHORTLIST

Isabelle Chapuis, Guillaume Martial, Daniel Mayrit, Haley Morris-Cafiero, Anna Niskanen, Almudena Romero and Kateryna Snizhko were shortlisted by a preliminary jury composed of Maryse Bataillard, BMW Head of BMW France cultural engagement, François Cheval, Artistic Director of the BMW Residency, Charlotte Flossaut, Founder of Photo Doc, Karin Hemar, Artistic Director, Jérôme Jéhel, Professor at Gobelins, and Chantal Nedjib, Founder of l'image par l'image.

THE BMW RESIDENCY

BMW Group France presents the winner with an €8,000 scholarship. The company finances photographic research and creation during the residency and individual exhibitions at Rencontres d'Arles and Paris Photo.

François Cheval, Artistic Director, assists winners with their research, ensures that the necessary equipment is provided and is the curator for exhibitions.

The Gobelins School of Visual Arts coordinates the project on a human and technical level. Winners are assisted by the teaching staff and an assistant/third-year photography student. They may use Gobelins' technical equipment for their projects.

Since BMW and Gobelins are both committed to transmitting and sharing artistic techniques, BMW supports Gobelins' equal opportunities program and provides a scholarship for two photography students.

The BMW Residency was set up in 2011 to develop contemporary photographic techniques, new means of expression and photographic pathways.

For the first six years, the BMW Residency was held at the Nicéphore Niépce Museum and then at Gobelins. The residency develops artistic talent, provides its winners with a place where they can express their art freely, assists them with their artistic output, and opens the door to exceptional visibility among photography professionals and amateurs.

BMW Group France's sponsorship is part of BMW Group's global sponsorship policy which was created almost 50 years ago. The Group supports over 100 cultural projects throughout the world, in modern and contemporary art, music, architecture and design. As such, it contributes to the dissemination of knowledge and the arts.

For 15 years, BMW Group France has supported photography, in line with its core business of innovation and aesthetics. This commitment first came to fruition at the 2003 Paris Photo fair. This dedication to photography was subsequently extended with the Rencontres d'Arles partnership for eleven years before being further developed with the creation of the BMW Residency in 2011.