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The Luis Ferreira Alves Award Celebrates The Connection Between Architecture And Photography

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The Luis Ferreira Alves International Photography Competition is a biennial program honoring Luis Ferreira's work by fostering dialogue between architecture and photography, and offering financial recognition with prizes summing up to €15,500.

Luis Ferreira Alves possessed a rare talent — his photography captured architecture with exceptional precision and a deeply personal perspective, transcending mere visual appeal. Throughout his career, he documented the works of some of Portugal's most distinguished architects, including Pritzker Prize laureates Álvaro Siza Vieira and Eduardo Souto de Moura.

The Luis Ferreira Alves Competition, open for applications until 25 April, invites participants to embrace this philosophy by creating a cohesive series that presents a single, or a series of architectural works. Each submission should be accompanied by an explanatory text that articulates the conceptual and visual intentions behind the project. Architect Pedro Leão Neto explains the submission criteria, giving insights to prospective applicants:

"We aim to receive photographic series that effectively convey an architectural work or ensemble, promoting architecture through photography by presenting a cohesive and poetic visual narrative, demonstrating technical and artistic excellence, and offering original perspectives that reveal the essence of the space."

The award is open to all individuals worldwide, including university students, researchers, and professionals in architecture, photography, and related fields. Applicants are encouraged to explore the conceptual and sensory dimensions of architecture, forming meaningful connections between images, emphasizing key architectural principles, and capturing unique viewpoints that enhance spatial interpretation.

Moreover, the initiative values projects that humanize architecture, emphasizing its dynamic nature, transformative potential, and the relationship between built spaces and human presence. Participants stand to gain significant recognition, with awards of €10,000, €4,000, and a €1,500 photography equipment voucher for the top three projects. Additionally, the winners' works will be showcased in the project's exhibition and featured in an exclusive catalog.

This year's jury of the competition includes Portuguese architect and Pritzker Prize laureate Eduardo Souto de Moura, Lisbon-based photographer and researcher Paulo Catrica, and London-based Swiss-French photographer Hélène Binet.

"In an era of excessive mediatization, architecture risks being reduced to a consumable image, detached from its broader socio-cultural and historical contexts."

Photography and architecture have always been inextricably linked. From the modernist avant-garde to today's contemporary practices, photographers have expanded their role, moving beyond simple representation. In this context, architecture is not merely seen but experienced. Yet, as the representation of architecture becomes ubiquitous in media, its deeper significance often gets lost in favor of surface-level images. "In an era of excessive mediatization, architecture risks being reduced to a consumable image, detached from its broader sociocultural and historical contexts", explains Leão Neto.

Ultimately, architectural photography must evolve beyond its role as a mere illustration. It should serve as a critical tool for exploration, a means of thinking through and reflecting on the nature of space.

"Through the works of figures like Bas Princen and Paolo Rosselli, we see how photography can offer fresh perspectives, transcending static documentation to create layered, interpretative narratives of space."

Submissions for The Luis Ferreira Alves Competition are accepted until 25 April. Find out more on their website.

