

Aimia Inc.

## Aimia | AGO Photography Prize announces 2014 shortlist

*Jury selects four international finalists; public vote for \$50,000 prize begins today*

TORONTO, Aug. 13, 2014 /CNW Telbec/ - Four extraordinary artists have been shortlisted for the 2014 **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize**. The Prize, co-presented by **Aimia**, a global leader in loyalty management, and the **Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO)**, will award each of the four artists a six-week artist residency in Canada and feature their work in an AGO exhibition opening **Sept. 3, 2014**. The winner of the \$50,000 prize will be chosen by public vote, which begins today at the Prize's [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

The 2014 finalists are:

- **David Hartt** (Canada);
- **Elad Lassry** (Israel/USA);
- **Nandipha Mntambo** (South Africa); and
- **Lisa Oppenheim** (USA).

Together representing the cutting edge of international photography, the four artists engage with broad historical and cultural forces such as war, colonialism, urban planning and advertising. They each have a distinct approach to visualizing the world, creating environments and materials that express diverse and thoughtful ideas about the ways past and present experiences are communicated through images.

**David Hartt** was born in Montreal in 1967 and currently lives and works in Chicago. In his installations, which include photographs, videos and sculptures, Hartt explores how physical spaces reflect the ideas and beliefs of a particular time and place. By investigating the materials, symbols and histories that shape our surroundings, he calls attention to the ways our built environments exist and evolve. After extensive research and site visits, Hartt distills this material into complex and elegant installations. His exhibition *Stray Light*, organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2011) travelled to the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2014), among other galleries. His work is in many public collections including the Art Institute of Chicago, Whitney Museum of American Art and the National Gallery of Canada. He graduated with an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1994.

*"Our understanding of ourselves is deeply rooted in the spaces we occupy."*

- **David Hartt**

**Elad Lassry** was born in Tel Aviv in 1977 and currently lives and works in Los Angeles. At the centre of his work is the question, "What is a picture?" His practice suggests that the photograph is an elusive "unit." Lassry uses multiple aesthetic modes and technologies to create analog images, digital interventions, moving pictures, design applications and applied arts that seem utilitarian but produce complex visual sensations. His ongoing investigation leads him to refer back to and experiment with a variety of visual sources — textbooks, manuals, film stills, marketing materials and science texts — which at turns contradict and play off one another in his work. Lassry uses this dynamic to pinpoint what he calls a "contemporary condition" in which the photograph is a flexible entity, seductively powerful and yet untrustworthy. His work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Kunsthalle Zurich; and Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan. Lassry earned an MFA in 2007 from the University of Southern California.

*"The questions for me are about this very mysterious unit that is the picture. It brings on a set of assumptions and built-in ways of looking with which I am in constant battle."*

- **Elad Lassry**

**Nandipha Mntambo** was born in 1982 in Swaziland and currently lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa. Mntambo's practice includes sculpture, photography, performance and video. Her work investigates such dualities as male/female, attraction/repulsion,

animal/ human, and European/African. Mntambo makes sculptures from cowhide, using her own body to mould the forms. In many of her videos and photographs, she appears wearing her sculptures, suggesting individuals' capacity to shape the world around them, while also highlighting notions of race, gender and history. Mntambo won the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Art in 2011. In 2007 she graduated with an MFA from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town.

*"I'm interested in uncovering that binary - that in-between space that you can't always pinpoint or articulate."*

- **Nandipha Mntambo**

**Lisa Oppenheim** was born in 1975 in New York City, where she lives and works. Oppenheim's photographs and videos are composed of images and materials from the recent and not-so-recent past that she re-processes and transforms through various historical and contemporary techniques. Her process often begins online, where she sources images and objects that she reinterprets photographically using both analogue and digital technologies. Through this approach, the process itself becomes source material, as Oppenheim gives photographic images new forms and new contexts. Recent solo exhibitions include *Forever is Composed of Nows*, Kunsterverin in Hamburg; *From Abigail to Jacob (Works 2004-2014)*, Kunstverein in Graz; and *Heaven Blazing into the Head*, The Approach Gallery, London. Oppenheim graduated with an MFA from The Milton Avery Graduate School for the Arts at Bard College in 2002.

*"I want the viewer to ask, 'What am I looking at? How is it made?'" Somehow, that provides a way of critically reading how images come to all of us through our daily lives."*

- **Lisa Oppenheim**

A jury of three selected the four finalists from a long list of 22 artists. The jury included lead juror **Sophie Hackett**, the AGO's associate curator of photography; **Okwui Enwezor**, Nigerian-born, German-based scholar, curator, writer and director of Haus der Kunst, Munich; and New York-based photo and video-based artist **Laurie Simmons**.

"This year's long list was really impressive - an exciting range of artists from around the world, highlighting such diverse approaches to the photographic image," said Hackett. "We were drawn to the four nominees for the distinctive visual force and rigour of their work, but also for the ways they each address historical and philosophical questions about photography's role today. We are delighted to showcase their work in Toronto for the first time and to award them an opportunity to develop new projects and create new connections through their residencies."

The **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize** is Canada's most significant award for contemporary photography, recognizing photographers from around the world whose work has exhibited extraordinary potential over the preceding five years. It has a total annual prize value of more than \$100,000, with \$50,000 awarded to the winner, \$5,000 awarded to each of the other shortlisted artists and \$25,000 supporting a national scholarship program for students studying photography at select institutions across Canada. The remainder funds six-week residencies for the four shortlisted artists at institutions across Canada.

The winner of the **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize** is chosen entirely by public vote. Online voting opens today at [AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com](http://AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com) and on the Prize's [Facebook page](#) and is open until 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 27, 2014. Visitors to the AGO can also cast a vote inside the **Aimia | AGO Photography Prize 2014 Exhibition**, on view at the AGO from **Sept. 3, 2014 to Jan. 4, 2015**. The winner of the 2014 Aimia | AGO Photography Prize will be announced on **Oct. 29, 2014**.

Previous winners of the Prize include Canada's Erin Shirreff (2013), Britain's Jo Longhurst (2012), Gauri Gill of India (2011), Canadian Kristan Horton (2010), Marco Antonio Cruz of Mexico (2009) and Canadian Sarah Anne Johnson (2008).

For updates on the Prize, further details on the shortlisted artists and additional information, please visit [AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com](http://AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com) and follow [@AimiaAGOPrize](#) on Twitter.

View video interviews with the finalists and continue the conversation at [www.AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com](http://www.AimiaAGOPhotographyPrize.com).

**ABOUT AIMIA**

Aimia, a global leader in loyalty management, has adopted two fundamental principles of loyalty, trust and reciprocity, as the pillars of its global social purpose - to create mutually-beneficial partnerships that leave a lasting impact in our communities. As an enthusiastic patron of the Arts, Aimia supports many Canadian and International arts and culture initiatives through donations, sponsorships and employee volunteer activities. Aimia has supported several Canadian cultural organizations including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Canada Institute, Business for the Arts, Canadian Art Foundation, the Design Exchange, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Canada, Luminato Festival, the Walrus Foundation and Canada's presentation at the International Art and Architecture Venice Biennale since 2006. Aimia is proud to engage in a dialogue around the arts through the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize and scholarship program, and through our office art installations in Montreal and Toronto. Visit us at [www.aimia.com](http://www.aimia.com) to learn more.

## ABOUT THE AGO

With a collection of more than 80,000 works of art, the [Art Gallery of Ontario](#) is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. From the vast body of Group of Seven and signature Canadian works to the African art gallery, from the cutting-edge contemporary art to Peter Paul Rubens' masterpiece *The Massacre of The Innocents*, the AGO offers an incredible art experience with each visit. In 2002 Kenneth Thomson's generous gift of 2,000 remarkable works of Canadian and European art inspired Transformation AGO, an innovative architectural expansion by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry that in 2008 resulted in one of the most critically acclaimed architectural achievements in North America. Highlights include Galleria Italia, a gleaming showcase of wood and glass running the length of an entire city block, and the often-photographed spiral staircase, beckoning visitors to explore. The AGO has an active membership program offering great value, and the AGO's Weston Family Learning Centre offers engaging art and creative programs for children, families, youth and adults. Visit [ago.net](http://ago.net) to find out more about upcoming special exhibitions, to learn about eating and shopping at the AGO, to register for programs and to buy tickets or memberships.

The Art Gallery of Ontario is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Additional operating support is received from the City of Toronto, the Canada Council for the Arts and generous contributions from AGO members, donors and private-sector partners.

The AGO acknowledges the generous support of **Aimia**, Signature Partner of the Photography Collection Program and Founding Partner of the Aimia | AGO Photography Prize.

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