

Photographic discourse in the *World Press Photo Awards* (1955-2021): technology, politics, and the mass media

El discurso fotográfico en los premios World Press Photo
(1955-2021): tecnología, política y medios

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RESUMEN

Introducción: El vínculo entre periodismo y fotografía es muy fecundo y buena parte del *establishment* fotoperiodístico internacional gira, desde hace décadas, no tanto en torno a los rotativos como en torno a estos premios internacionales. De todos ellos, el más prestigioso es el *World Press Photo*, que en 2021 ha cumplido 66 ediciones. **Metodología:** Nuestra propuesta indaga en la evolución del discurso fotográfico de estos premios a lo largo de los años, y para ello hemos recopilado y filtrado por criterios técnicos las obras ganadoras de todas las ediciones, y las hemos analizado a partir de un sistema basado en ocho variables (algunas de las cuales han requerido de *software*, como la colorimetría y las dominantes de color). **Resultados:** Independientemente de la tecnología y las tendencias estéticas durante estas siete décadas de premios, hay patrones como el tipo de plano, el tipo de posado o los encuadres que se repiten con insistencia, además de una colorimetría muy recurrente. **Discusión:** en un contexto mediático muy tamizado por la tecnología y la reformulación que ésta ha **propiciado** en la fotografía, el discurso fotográfico de los WPP sigue fiel a una visión institucional muy vinculada a la política mundial. **Conclusiones:** Tras el análisis de las 66 piezas ganadoras concluimos que la fidelidad a su discurso visual en el *World Press Photo* –con las implicaciones que esto conlleva– está por encima de la libertad visual y creativa de los fotorreporteros y su adaptación al contexto histórico, político y social en que se fotografió.

PALABRAS CLAVE: fotografía; periodismo gráfico; fotoperiodismo; *World Press Photo*; premios fotográficos; discurso; análisis fotográfico.

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The link between journalism and photography is a fertile one, and for decades a good part of the international photojournalistic establishment has revolved not so much around newspapers as around these international prizes. Of all of them, the most prestigious is the World Press Photo, which in 2021 celebrated its 66th edition. **Methodology:** Our proposal explores the evolution of the photographic discourse of these awards over the years, and to do so we have compiled and filtered by technical criteria the winning works of all the editions and we have analyzed them using a system based on eight variables (some of which have required software, such as colorimetry and color dominants). **Results:** Regardless of the technology and aesthetic trends during these seven decades of awards, there are patterns such as the type of shot, the type of posing or the framing that are repeated with insistence, as well as a very particular colorimetry. **Discussion:** in a media context highly sifted by technology and the reformulation it has brought about in photography, the photographic discourse of the WPPs remains faithful to an institutional vision closely linked to world politics. **Conclusions:**

After analyzing the 66 winning pieces, we conclude that fidelity to their visual discourse in the World Press Photo - with the implications that this entails - is above the visual and creative freedom of the photojournalists, or the adaptation to the historical, political and social context in which they were photographed.

KEYWORDS: photography; photojournalism; World Press Photo; photographic awards; discourse; photographic analysis.

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CONTENT

1. Introduction and literature review. 2. Methodology and objectives. 3. Discussion/Results. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography 6. Curriculum Vitae

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction and literature review

According to the data provided by the organization of the *World Press Photo* (WPP, hereinafter), almost 80,000 photographs, taken by more than 5,000 photojournalists from up to 129 different countries have taken part in this latest edition (2021). Although there is only one winner, 43 professionals are nominated as finalists and several second-place prizes are awarded. Last year, of all the photographers who attended, only 32% were women¹. Despite the apparent visual diversity represented by the several hundred thousand participating pieces over seven decades, our analysis reveals that the winning covers tend to have many common features (colorimetry, composition, theme, and political vision) regardless of the technology and the conflict that is photographed: that is to say, that there is a kind of preponderant photographic discourse in the WPP, which will be the object of the technical analysis that we propose. We are talking about one of the most important photojournalism competitions in the world, which has left us with some of the most remembered images in the history of humanity, putting Latin America in its sights (images such as that of the Chilean Salvador Allende defending, with a rifle in hand, the Palacio de la Moneda in 1973 or the eruption of Nevado del Ruiz in 1985), as well as Asia (the image of the tank in Tiananmen Square in 1989 or that of the children fleeing the bombings in Vietnam in 1972), the heart of old Europe (the pro-Franco coup of 23-F in the Congress of Deputies of Spain in 1981) or the Middle East (the Arab Springs of 2012), among other conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries. Therefore, analyzing the characteristics of the winning photographs of this award means delving into the standard of what is considered photography and mass media in the visual coverage of the events of our world in the current journalistic report in its various aspects, especially the testimonials ones such as war (Baron Pulido, 2020) and towards which visual model photojournalists are tending in recent years. It must be taken into account that the communication sector has undergone a series of changes that model its use, sometimes, radically (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2014; Gómez López, 2019).

Photography, despite its youth as a visual medium (compared to the several thousand years of painting or sculpture, although older than film, TV, or the Internet), is one of the most immediate channels to explain the modern world, and this has been, in part, thanks to journalism and its most varied aspects (Barón Pulido, 2020; Ruiz Rico, 2020) although it is true that there is a lack of clear literacy in the Internet medium for its consumers (Hernández Rubio, 2019). It has been so important that, until the emergence of social media around 2010, our world, and the image we have of it, has been installed in the collective imagination almost exclusively through film in its most varied genres (Jimeno- Aranda and Parras-Parras, 2020) and photography. With the institutionalization of journalism as a tool at the service of democracy in industrialized society, the conviction is reached that the media have profound importance for the functioning of said society (Deuzee and Witschge, 2018), instigators or contributors of historical social changes that entail another stage in the transmission of news (Casero Ripollés, 2021), far from paper (Ruiz Mantilla, 2021), or generator of identity (Muñoz Jiménez, 2019). And besides all this, the social digitization of social networks, which have facilitated all kinds of social

¹ All data extracted from: www.worldpressphoto.org

advances (Barrientos-Báez, 2016), hate speech, and self-interested disinformation (Blanco Pérez and Sánchez-Saus Laserna, 2020), as well as the different stratagems that truth adopts (Carrera, 2018). Current photography is undergoing a complete reformulation and it is, in part, because the image has changed its status, sometimes digitizing spheres, such as family home photography, which were previously unassailable for digitization (Visa Barbosa et al., 2018). Likewise, it is necessary to draw attention to the breaking down of the barrier between photography and film, in a context where sometimes both spheres are even solved with the same photographic equipment, which has caused, guided by the beacon of so many photojournalists who, at the same time, make movies (Robert Frank, Raymond Depardon, and a good part of the younger members of the Magnum agency) the proliferation of film festivals that have photography as a co-star (Cortés Selva et al., 2018).

Photojournalism started as just an illustration of the text in the written press, in the 1920s, in interwar Germany: it was in this historical-cultural context that Kurt Safransky (belonging to the *Berlin Illustrierte Zeitung*) and Stefan Lorant (from the *Muenchner Illustrierte*) began to edit their newspapers introducing more than one photo of a single news item, therefore, as a complementary view of the text, and not just as a *photo illustration* (Sougez, 1996).

Then, reportage photography, in coexistence with other branches such as tourist photography -National Geographic had been founded in 1888- (Caldevilla-Domínguez et al., 2019), experienced a first historical milestone with the FSA (*Farm Security Administration*). Renobell defends that, thanks to the FSA, “a new vision, a hyper-visibility and a hyperreality intended from the limits of reality-fiction-documentary” is born (Renobell, 2005, p. 5). At that time between the wars, the figure of the photojournalist began to gain prominence in Europe:

In the 1930s, cultural momentum and political activity increased the work of reporters. Press photographers had the category of editors, with the qualifier ‘graphic’ as a differentiator of their activity. Long before the Union of Graphic Press Reporters claimed respect for the rights of photojournalists, the large news companies, Prensa Gráfica and Prensa Española among them, had prestigious reporters on their payroll. (Sánchez Vigil and Olivera Zaldua, 2014, p. 50)

The Spanish Civil War will undoubtedly be the first great photojournalistic event in world history. It will be a war to which the best photojournalists of the time will travel. After Franco’s victory, the damage to graphic photojournalism will be severe: foreign photojournalists living in Spain (who had come as correspondents) are exiled, other Spaniards are sent to Nazi camps in Germany (Catalan photojournalist Francisco Boix, among others), and to this rout, it was added:

The exile of some, Franco’s documentary appropriation policy, and the vicissitudes of the immediate Second World War of others causing the existence of *suitcases or red boxes* full of negatives that would have to wait decades to be rescued: those of Agustí Centelles in France, by the way, with negatives revealed in the Campaña studio, that of the German Walter Reuter together with the Spaniard Guillermo F. López Zúñiga, also with contacts from the Tallers street laboratory, or the one defined as ‘Mexican’ by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and ‘Chim’, not to mention the funds of the CNT ‘kidnapped’ at the IISH in Amsterdam with more photos of Campaña. (Blanco Pérez and González i Vilalta, 2020)

After the Spanish civil war, the traumatic World War II will come, which photographically breaks the old barrier that existed between art photography (linked to the avant-garde) and current affairs photography (linked to the press), reconfiguring a visual aesthetic that surpassed the old dichotomies of the interwar period (Blanco Pérez, 2022). The surviving photojournalists of the Spanish war, among others, will travel to the battlefields of World War II. In 1945, with a European terrain devastated by the bloodiest war to date, the armistice was signed. And in this context, in post-war Europe, with the thriving United States and a cold war against the Soviets on the horizon, the WPP international photojournalism awards are born in Amsterdam, which will have great weight in the Western world since culture, in all its dimensions –and the persuasion- of the 20th century are, basically, visual (Caldevilla-Domínguez, 2007). There are works on the WPP, either from the analysis of its recurring themes (Kim and Smith, 2005; Greenwood and Smith, 2007) or from a specific period based on a historical event, the case of the subprime crisis (Martín Núñez et al., 2021) or from its intra-photographic gaze,

as a cultural product (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2000). Our work aims to delve into the discourse of these WPP awards throughout its 66 years (and 63 awards). To establish the corpus of the elements that make up this so-called photographic “discourse” of the WPP, we must reflect on the very definition of the term “discourse”, which is not an easy matter because, as is known, it has a polyhedral dimension that encompasses –and surpasses– the old debate about photography as art versus photography as social science, taking into account the new uses that are conferred on it (Rodríguez-Rosell and Melgarejo-Moreno, 2019). In the first place, it seems irrefutable that the notion of discourse is built on the “reality effect” that characterizes the photographic medium, the basis on which Marzal builds his definition, which, like his proposal for photographic analysis, stems from philological studies:

It would be those effects conducive to creating the “impression of reality”, effects that try to provoke an identification between the audiovisual representation and reality. Some authors such as Arnheim have pointed out the faults presented by the discourse that promotes or encourages this identification, through a rigorous examination of the discourse itself, of the photographic technique and its perceptual effects. (Marzal Felici, 2007, p. 61)

In any case, the common trunk with pragmatics, also derived from philological studies, seems clear. For Greimas and Courtés, “the concept of discourse can be identified with that of the semiotic process, and the totality of semiotic facts located on the syntagmatic axis of language can be considered as belonging to discourse theory” (Greimas and Courtés, 1979, p.102). Therefore, this discourse must start from reality to, from there, interpret it from the perspective of the photojournalist. From another non-opposite but complementary perspective, Nayla Pardo Abril defines discourse as “a social doing-saying that can be grasped in communicative interaction, which has the potential to materialize and mobilize the diversity of ways of presenting reality” (Pardo Abril, 2007, p.39).

It is also necessary to emphasize the role of the different artistic schools and the academy in the implantation of discourse that becomes socially diffused and that entails certain institutional support, from the Bauhaus to the Düsseldorf school, through the WPP awards, or the Pulitzers: “The institution acts as the ‘practical’ or social counterpart of ideologies. This is, as ideologies organize group cognition, institutions and organizations organize social practices and actors” (Van Dijk, 1999, p. 235). Therefore, inevitably, the concept of discourse is inserted into a larger superstructure that politicizes it, that is to say, that makes the aesthetic discourse of the WPPs, therefore, one more piece of the machinery of the Western political apparatus, in general, and American, in particular, through mass media.

There are not many works that specifically analyze the discourse of the WPP but there are analyzes of these awards from other branches of the social sciences. Campbell relates them to a certain anthropological level of neocolonialism by stating that almost all of its images “contrast an adult and superior global North with an infantilized and inferior global South” (Campbell, 2012, p. 84). We could say, as Hagaman suggests, that many photojournalists are “photographs from a repertoire of already known images that illustrate already known stories” (Hagaman, 1993, p. 11). Mendelson clarifies that, although the visual patterns are clearly recognizable among the winners of all years, the photos that do not break with full conventionality (introducing some visual detail or conceptual novelty), will not be seen for a long time by the judges and, therefore, will not win the prize: “photos that do not break with conventionality will not be looked at for long by the judges and, thus, will not win poy awards” (Mendelson, 1999, p. 9). Kjeldsen, for his part, perfectly summarizes the relationship between the institutionalized discourse of the WPP (with a well-known aesthetic canon) and the creative freedom (or not) of photojournalists:

If the winners –as well as the other contestants, and the photographs we encounter every day– tend to present the same thematic and conventionalized content, then novelty must primarily come into effect through the rhetorical style, form, and expression of the photographs. We should not, therefore, underestimate the importance of composition, form, and aesthetics in the choosing of winners in these photo competitions. Despite the apparent importance of novelty in composition, form, and aesthetics, there seems to be a lack of studies about these issues. The very few studies on prize-winning photographs all deal with the content of the pictures, and almost none with the formal aspects. (Kjeldsen, 2013, p. 470)

Therefore, we can conclude that, as Barros states, the discourse (thematic, visual construction, etc.) of the WPPs has recurrent and reiterated characteristics, widely demonstrated:

Se tomarmos as fotografias do World Press Photo como um retrato do mundo na nossa época, o que nos contarão elas? Elas nos mostrarão um lugar muito ruim de viver. A maior parte dessas fotografias está descontextualizada espacialmente e temporalmente, ou seja, sem o auxílio das legendas não é possível determinar em que parte do globo ou em que tempo foram tiradas. Essa generalização converte essas fotografias em sinalizadoras de possibilidades para qualquer povo ou indivíduo. (Barros, 2012, p. 102)

However, the WPP awards have not been immune to the technological ups and downs of the photojournalistic sector over the years. In the early years of the 21st century, Professor Baeza already raised the exhaustion of photojournalistic language, the “media impoverishment of aesthetic criteria and the conceptual contempt for the image as a form of thought” (Baeza, 2001, p. 167). In just a few years, at the end of the 2000s, the new digital work model was introduced (which was applied to the shooting, editing, and dissemination of the entire medium) and the death of analog for professional photojournalism. As we mentioned before, social networks have led to a certain ontological reformulation of photography as a medium in recent years (Blanco Pérez and Parejo Jiménez, 2021) but emerging sectors of graphic journalism have been added to this, such as drones: “Journalism will gradually become more aerial and will force large and interesting reformulations of its ontology as a communicative vehicle binding a code of ethics” (Blanco Pérez, 2020b, p. 97).

Regarding colorimetry, it went through the technical transition in the middle of the 20th century, also in the WPPs, which is why it seemed suggestive to us to also introduce this element in our analysis. Although there is scientific literature developed in English, it is generally based on transversal technical aspects: mainly optics, physics, and mathematics. On the other hand, in Spanish, the bibliography is still limited. Although the color theory was formulated by Goethe in 1791, in controversy with Newton, it was not applied to photographic, cinematographic, and drawing communication, comprehensively, until Wittgenstein (1951). In Spanish, there are approaches from the exact sciences (Capilla, Artigas, and Pujol, 2002) and also approaches to colorimetry in film (Blanco Pérez, 2020a) or design (Falcinelli, 2019). But the results from the color psychology of Heller (2004) and Pastoreau (2018) are especially noteworthy, as well as their application to the world of industrial design (St. Clair, 2017) or visual chromatism (Migliaccio, 2019).

In short, it is pertinent, in our opinion, to reflect on whether the WPP awards have evolved in their photographic discourse and analyze whether this change is, also, derived from the change in the world that they reflect in their images or if, on the contrary, a recognizable discourse, barely permeable in almost seven decades, regardless of what is photographed and when it is photographed, is maintained.

2. Methodology and objectives

Our analysis involved an organized two-step approach. In the first step, we used indexing of the data that generated several coding categories of the winning images of the WPP award in all its editions (although, it must be taken into account that in four of those years the award was not convened). This use is appropriate to minimize the ideological bias that every researcher has and, thus, be able to generate descriptive and representative information blocks of the technical content of the data, creating a large massive corpus that had to be fragmented into categories. Therefore, secondly, eight analysis variables (or categorizations) have been established. We have focused solely on the winning piece of each edition, first because the analysis of all the thousands of nominated and winning photographs over 66 years would exceed, by far, the purposes of this work and, second, because the winning piece harbors an institutional and political weight, and also of meaning, that equates it, being graphic journalism, with the importance of a press cover: the global message with all its implications condensed in a single piece, except for one difference: there are hundreds of daily covers in the innumerable newspapers of the world but winning photographs of the WPP only 66 pieces in history.

Each of the eight variables represents those features that can be analyzed to conclude and, therefore, determine the visual discourse of the WPP. The first three categories are the basics of all cataloging: 1: year, 2: name of the winner, and 3: nationality of the reporter. Category 4: type of individual/group

portrait aims to make a screening among the participants of the photographic action. To determine if it is an individual or group portrait, the following process has been followed: regardless of whether the photograph includes one or more people, if the main action falls on one subject but there are other subjects in the background of the frame, it is understood that these secondary actors are contextual and, therefore, that their presence has not meant a change in the photographic shot. Take, for example, the photograph from 1959, the work of the Czech photojournalist Stanislav Tereba (<https://cutt.ly/Afne8UK>): the image captures the moment in which a goalkeeper, in the middle of a match, is about to kick the ball from the goal. The photo captures in a full-length shot the hard gesture, under heavy rain, of the athlete. In the distance, and diaphragmed (with a shallow depth of field, that is: blurry), behind the rain, the thousands of spectators who watched him in the stands of the stadium can be sensed. This photograph has been tagged as an individual portrait. Instead, and to offer a counterpoint, the winning image from 1962, the work of Venezuelan Héctor Rondón Lovera, (<https://cutt.ly/Pfne7VD>) reflects a shootout between the Venezuelan army and the FALN guerrillas. Specifically, it shows the moment when a Catholic priest picks up a dying government soldier from the ground. Although the action here falls on the figure of the priest, whose portrait is seen clearly, and although the body of the soldier is diaphragmed (shallow depth of field) and slightly out of focus, said portrait is the consequence of the interaction of both characters, for this reason, this piece has been categorized as a group portrait. Therefore, we have categorized as an individual portrait all those photographs in which all the action falls on one subject (although more are perceived in the background, blurred or out of focus) and, on the other hand, we have considered group portraits the images in which, even being an individual portrait, the trigger for the portrait is also present in the visual frame.

Regarding category 5: action/ posed type of portrait, action has been understood as what Henri Cartier-Bresson called the “decisive moment”: “In photography, this *decisive moment* comprises two elements: on the one hand, it must have a significant content, it must bear witness to the human condition; and, on the other, it must be adapted to a rigorous composition” (Chéroux, 2012, p. 99). On the other hand, posed have been understood as those photographs in which the person portrayed is aware that he or she is going to be photographed and, therefore, voluntarily stands for it, while the photographer resolves the technical details (framing, exposure, the composition of the moving objects, lighting, compensation, etc.). For example: the winning piece of 1968, the work of the American Eddie Adams (<https://cutt.ly/Gfnri30>), which reflects the moment in which a policeman executes a Vietcong prisoner in the middle of the street at point-blank range in the Vietnamese city of Saigon, has been categorized as action. On the other hand, it has been understood as posed, for example, the winning piece of 2011, the work of the South African photographer Jodi Bieber, in which she portrays the young Afghan woman, Bibi Aisha, disfigured by her Taliban husband when trying to flee from his house (<https://cutt.ly/mxOSAnp>): In the winning photo, Aisha consciously looks at the camera as the photographer adjusts the technical details of the shot.

Category 6: theme will allow us to analyze, in the section dedicated to analysis, the thematic evolution of the WPP. Several categories have been established whose meaning can be univocal (“war”) but subcategories derived from it have also been established which, for greater accuracy, have been separately classified. They are the categories “conflict”, “political assassination”, and “coup d’état”. The relationship between these categories is close and often they tend to have a cause-effect relationship, for example: some political assassinations are consequences of wars, and some wars are consequences of political assassinations. For this reason, these subcategories were established to try to hone in on that variable.

Regarding the differentiation between “war” and “conflict”, the line that separates them is very subtle and lends itself to misunderstandings since they are often both sides of the same coin when they are not simply the same thing separated by a short time. For this reason, the screening has been done under the existence of the corresponding declaration of war processed by the Foreign Ministry or the Senate of the declaring State. In cases where the conflict, even knowing that it later led to a dispute, did not have a state of war procedure, it has been treated as a “conflict” and not as a “war”. In the case of an internal conflict of a sovereign nation, even though said conflict is violent (civil war), all have been categorized as “conflict” as they lack the aforementioned declaration of war (as, for example, in the winning piece of 1969, work of the German photographer Hanns-Jörg Anders, who reflects the urban guerrilla of the Catholics in Northern Ireland: <https://cutt.ly/HfnroYK>). Sometimes we have found some pieces that could be added to more than one category: in this case, we have chosen to apply the

most reductionist one. In the example of the winning photograph of 2017, the work of the Turkish photojournalist Burhan Ozbilici, which reflects the murder of the Russian ambassador at the hands of a Turkish policeman in Ankara (<https://cutt.ly/ifntac7>), the political act itself could easily be classified as “conflict”, but although it’s true, it is more accurately defined as “political assassination”, which links this winner, thematically speaking, to 1961 (<https://cutt.ly/Ufne4mp>) and 1963 (<https://cutt.ly/6fne54P>). Regarding the topic of “discrimination”, given the disparity of origins and contexts, we have differentiated between that which is for sexual reasons –such as the work of Mads Nissen, 2015 (<https://cutt.ly/Pfntpcy>)– and that which is for racial reasons –such as the work of Douglas Martin, 1957 (<https://cutt.ly/Qfne3Kp>)–.

Category 7: country of the shot, has also included the place where the reporter was working at the time of the shot. Some countries have ceased to exist in these 65 years (such as Yugoslavia); When this has happened, the country of the shot has been named as it existed at the time the photograph was taken. It has been necessary to make some adjustments with the case of the 2019 award, of the American photojournalist John Moore (<https://cutt.ly/Xfntduc>) since the image reflects the moment in which the American border patrols on the border between Mexico and the USA separate children from their parents to detain them separately (sometimes for months). These places of arrest are not revealed by the authorities, nor by the photojournalist, who accepts –as is mandatory– his professional code of ethics not to reveal it. Nor do the Mexican authorities offer any data on which side of the border the immigration department operates on. In that case, “USA/ Mexico” has been indicated.

Lastly, category 8: colorimetry offers a line of research not previously explored in the scientific literature on the WPP awards. For each photograph, its five main colors have been extracted, which are the ones that occupy the largest area of the canvas. For this, Adobe Color software was used, which offers the exact shade of Pantone through its color code (a standard number preceded by the # sign), and which is the same in all the devices used. Furthermore, a final column has been created that links to the photograph that is being talked about and that is hosted on the WPP awards website itself. To shorten the link, the software <https://cutt.ly/es> has been used.

The focus of the study, likewise, is mixed: quantitative in that it collects massive data from almost seven decades of journalistic photo production, and also qualitative in that it ponders on detailed concepts such as: composition, shots, sociopolitical interest, or colorimetry, among others. Our objective, therefore, is to analyze the photographic discourse in the WPP over the years and to see if fashions, trends, genres, technological advances, and/or various political logics have conditioned, or not, this discourse.

3. Discussion/Result

Before proceeding to the detailed analysis of each variable, we summarize in Table 1, the data of each image of the corpus according to each of the 8 variables, besides the link to the original piece on the official website of the WPP.

Table 1: Data of each winning photograph by years

Year	Winner	Nationality of the winner	Individual/group portrait	Action/posed portrait	Theme	Country of the shot	Colorimetry	Web link
1955	Mogens von Haven	Denmark	individual	action	sports	Denmark	BW	https://cutt.ly/wfneME0
1956	Helmuth Pirath	Germany	group	action	war	Germany	BW	https://cutt.ly/Mfne0FE
1957	Douglas Martin	USA	group	action	racial discrimination	USA	BW	https://cutt.ly/Qfne3Kp

1958	Was not convened.							
1959	Stanislav Tereba	Czechoslovakia	group	action	sports (football)	Czechoslovakia	BW	https://cutt.ly/Afne8UK
1960	Was not convened.							
1961	Yasushi Nagao	Japan	group	action	political assassination	Japan	BW	https://cutt.ly/Ufne4mp
1962	Héctor Rondón Lovera	Venezuela	group	action	guerrilla	Venezuela	BW	https://cutt.ly/Pfne7VD
1963	Malcom Browne	USA	individual	action	political assassination	Vietnam	BW	https://cutt.ly/6fne54P
1964	Donald McCullin	United Kingdom	group	action	war	Cyprus	BW	https://cutt.ly/AfnrenI
1965	Kyoichi Sawada	Japan	group	action	war	Vietnam	BW	https://cutt.ly/xfnraub
1966	Kyoichi Sawada	Japan	group	action	war	Vietnam	BW	https://cutt.ly/lfnruan
1967	Co Rentmeester	Netherlands	individual	posed	war	Vietnam	C	https://cutt.ly/pfnrikj
1968	Eddie Adams	USA	group	action	war	Vietnam	BW	https://cutt.ly/Gfnri30
1969	Hanns-Jörg Anders	Germany	individual	posed	turmoil	Northern Ireland	BW	https://cutt.ly/HfnroYK
1970	Was not convened.							
1971	Was not convened.							
1972	Wolfgang Peter Geller	Germany	group	action	robbery	Germany	BW	https://cutt.ly/CfnrfeR
1973	Huynh Cong Út	Vietnam	group	action	war	Vietnam	BW	https://cutt.ly/lfnrf70
1974	Orlando Lagos	Chile	group	action	coup d'état	Chile	BW	https://cutt.ly/FfnrgOg
1975	Ovie Carter	USA	individual	posed	famine	Niger	BW	https://cutt.ly/xfnrha8
1976	Stanley Forman	USA	group	action	fire	USA	BW	https://cutt.ly/FfnrhGn
1977	Françoise Demulder	France	group	action	turmoil	Lebanon	BW	https://cutt.ly/efnrjfr
1978	Leslie Hammond	South Africa	group	action	turmoil	South Africa	BW	https://cutt.ly/2fnrjB3
1979	Sadayuki Mikami	Japan	group	action	turmoil	Japan	BW	https://cutt.ly/pfnrkpi
1980	David Burnett	USA	individual	posed	war	Cambodia	C	https://cutt.ly/vfnrk7H

1981	Mike Wells	United Kingdom	individual	posed	famine	Uganda	C	https://cutt.ly/vfnrxWh
1982	Manuel Pérez Barrionuevo	Spain	individual	action	coup d'état	Spain	BW	https://cutt.ly/wfnrcWd
1983	Robin Moyer	United Kingdom	group	posed	war	Lebanon	C	https://cutt.ly/ffnrvee
1984	Mustafa Bozdemir	Turkey	group	action	earthquake	Turkey	C	https://cutt.ly/HfnrvQ4
1985	Pablo Bartholomew	India	individual	posed	fire	India	C	https://cutt.ly/Zfnrv3i
1986	Frank Fournier	France	individual	posed	earthquake – volcanic eruption	Colombia	C	https://cutt.ly/wfnrbG8
1987	Alon Reiningner	USA	individual	posed	pandemic	USA	C	https://cutt.ly/Ifnrmly
1988	Anthony Suau	USA	individual	posed	turmoil	South Korea	C	https://cutt.ly/ofnrmqo
1989	David Turnley	USA	individual	action	earthquake	Armenia	C	https://cutt.ly/QfnrmFU
1990	Charlie Cole	USA	individual	action	turmoil	China	C	https://cutt.ly/RfnrQks
1991	George Merillon	France	group	posed	war	Kosovo	C	https://cutt.ly/5fnrD9c
1992	David Turnley	Iraq	individual	posed	war	Iraq	C	https://cutt.ly/tfnrFlu
1993	James Nachtwey	USA	individual	posed	famine	Somalia	BW	https://cutt.ly/UfnrGrv
1994	Larry Towell	Palestine	individual	posed	war	Palestine	BW	https://cutt.ly/NfnrGEw
1995	James Nachtwey	USA	individual	posed	war	Rwanda	BW	https://cutt.ly/efnrJrd
1996	Lucian Perkins	USA	individual	posed	war	Chechnya	BW	https://cutt.ly/ffnrKoa
1997	Francesco Zizola	Italy	group	posed	war	Angola	BW	https://cutt.ly/9fnrKCY
1998	Hocine Zaourar	Algeria	individual	posed	war	Algeria	C	https://cutt.ly/2fnrLz1
1999	Dayna Smith	USA	individual	posed	war	Kosovo	BW	https://cutt.ly/efnrZuL
2000	Claus Bjørn Larsen	Denmark	individual	posed	war	Kosovo	BW	https://cutt.ly/1fnrZJm
2001	Lara Jo Regan	USA	individual	posed	immigration	USA (border with Mexico)	C	https://cutt.ly/8fnrMOE
2002	Erik Refner	Denmark	individual	posed	war	Afghanistan	BW	https://cutt.ly/Ffnr18f

2003	Eric Grigorian	Armenia	group	posed	earthquake	Iran	BW	https://cutt.ly/sfnr2yR
2004	Jean-Marc Bouju	France	individual	posed	war	Iraq	C	https://cutt.ly/Xfnr3IK
2005	Arko Datta	India	individual	posed	earthquake	Indonesia	C	https://cutt.ly/Hfnr8TT
2006	Finbarr O'Reilly	Canada	individual	posed	famine	Niger	C	https://cutt.ly/Bfnr4V1
2007	Spenser Platt	USA	group	posed	war	Lebanon	C	https://cutt.ly/sfnr76M
2008	Tim Hetherington	USA	individual	posed	war	Afghanistan	C	https://cutt.ly/Nfnr5Na
2009	Anthony Suau	USA	individual	action	economic crisis	USA	BW	https://cutt.ly/8fnr6CC
2010	Pietro Masturzo	Italy	group	posed	elections	Iran	C	https://cutt.ly/PfntqkA
2011	Jodi Bieber	South Africa	individual	posed	violence against women	Afghanistan	C	https://cutt.ly/vfntyQv
2012	Samuel Aranda	Spain	individual	posed	war	Yemen	C	https://cutt.ly/SfntuR2
2013	Paul Hansen	Sweden	group	action	war	Palestine	C	https://cutt.ly/SfntiJx
2014	John Stanmeyer	USA	group	action	migration	Somalia	C	https://cutt.ly/WfntoQw
2015	Mad Nissen	Denmark	individual	posed	sexual discrimination	Russia	C	https://cutt.ly/Pfntpcy
2016	Warren Richardson	Australia	individual	action	war	Syria	BW	https://cutt.ly/5fntaqQ
2017	Burhan Ozbilici	Turkey	individual	action	political assassination	Turkey	C	https://cutt.ly/ifntac7
2018	Ronaldo Schemidt	Venezuela	individual	action	turmoil	Venezuela	C	https://cutt.ly/efntshw
2019	John Moore	USA	group	posed	migration	Mexico/USA	C	https://cutt.ly/Xfntduc
2020	Yasuyoshi Cjiba	Japan	group	posed	turmoil	Sudan	C	https://cutt.ly/Vfntfpk
2021	Mad Nissen	Denmark	group	posed	pandemic	Brazil	C	https://cutt.ly/NESK7RJ

Source: Own elaboration

4. Analysis

From the analysis of category 1: year, the years in which the contest was not held have been reviewed: 1958, 1960, 1970, and 1971. In category 2: winner, there are only two photojournalists who have won the highest award twice: the legendary David Turnley (1989 and 1992) and James Nachtwey (1993 and 1995), both Americans. Regarding the women who have won the prestigious award, there have been only four in the 65 editions: the French Françoise Demulder (1977), the Americans Dayna Smith

(1999) and Lara Jo Regan (2001), and the South African Jodi Bieber (2011). In category 3: nationality, there is an overwhelming dominance of US reporters (19) over all others. They quadruple the prizes of the second country with the most winners, Japan (5). As can be seen in table 2, proportionality is far from representing the real weight of press photography agencies, any other group, or parity between genders, although throughout history some of the best war reporters have been women (Gerda Taro, Bourke-White, Lee Miller, etc.) even today it remains a predominantly male occupation (just like armies and military commanders).

Table 2: Number of awards by country of birth of the winning photojournalist

Country	n.º of awards
USA	19
Japan, Denmark	5
France	4
Germany, United Kingdom	3
Venezuela, India, South Africa, Spain, Italy, Turkey	2
Sweden, Australia, Canada, Algeria, Palestine, Iraq, Armenia, Chile, Vietnam, Netherlands, Czechoslovakia	1

Source: Own elaboration

In category 4: type of portrait, 35 individual portraits are counted against 27 group portraits, with which it can be said that the personification of conflicts in a single face is widely more successful than group portraits to tell a story.

In category 5: action/ posed, 37 posed photos are counted against 24 action images. Moreover, a change is perceived around the 1980s, in which the trend towards the category “action” declines compared to that of “posed”, although there is a brief upturn in “action” amid the Arab Springs (2011-2014).

In category 6: theme, the majority category is, without a doubt, “war”. As we can see in table 3 and figure 2, the topic “immigration”, despite being one of the most traumatic events of the 20th century and so far in the 21st century, and being a direct consequence of wars, only occupies 4 of the 65 covers. Two of them are on the border between the USA and Mexico, and a third in Somalia (2014), a country that had already occupied the cover of the winning photograph in 1993, the work of the legendary reporter Nachtwey, although that time the theme was “famine”. The fourth will be the image of the Syrian refugees from 2016, the work of Warren Richardson. Although it is not the object of this study, there are valuable contributions regarding the themes of the WPP from a perspective of the female role. On this subject, Bernárdez Rodal and Moreno Segarra point out:

The conservative nature of the selected works is transferred to the gender schemes they represent: a profound “otherness” in female suffering. In the images of men, there is a here and now of war or accidents. In female representations, stories of suffering are stories of relationships with other sufferers. (Bernárdez Rodal and Moreno Segarra, 2017, p. 301)

We are surprised by the little or no attention that, from the award, was given to the decline of the Soviet world. In January 1968, the events that will lead to the so-called Prague spring begin, the Czech riots that caused the first great credibility crisis between the USSR and its European satellites, and, nevertheless, the WPP first-place prize of that year was for the photograph of the Vietnam War, an issue that domestically was causing alarm in American public opinion but that was a minor conflict, at least if we compare it with the threat of the third world war with the Soviet bloc that controlled from Berlin to Beijing. In 1989, the Berlin wall fell with great shock for Europe but the first-place prize went to the snapshot that immortalized an earthquake in Armenia. Or, even more, in 1991, when the Soviet economy was collapsing (and Yeltsin signed the dissolution of the USSR), the matter did not deserve the first-place prize of the WPP, which was for the snapshot of a wake of a murdered in the Kosovo war.

Table 3: Frequency of themes covered in the World Press Photo

Themes	Years	n.º of awards
war	1956, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1973, 1980, 1983, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2016	25
turmoil	1969, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1988, 1990, 2018, 2020	8
earthquake	1984, 1986, 1989, 2003, 2005	5
famine	1975, 1981, 1993, 2006	4
immigration	2001, 2014, 2019	3
political assassination	1961, 1963, 2017	3
fire	1976, 1985	2
coup d'état	1974, 1982	2
sports	1955, 1959	2
sexual discrimination	2015	1
racial discrimination	1957	1
violence against women	2011	1
robbery	1972	1
guerrilla	1962	1
pandemic	1987, 2021	2
economic crisis	2009	1
elections	2010	1

Source: Own elaboration

In the themes, therefore, a predilection for certain wars is observed, which is far from reflecting the real importance of the conflicts that have taken place in the world in the second half of the 20th century. As we can see in Table 3, the Vietnam War (1955-1975) is the context of the winning photographs of five different years, followed by the Kosovo War (1998-1999) which, despite lasting just over a year, accumulates three prizes. On the other hand, the war in Iraq (2003-currently) or the war in Syria (2010-currently) have barely deserved an award each (and not directly in the Syrian war since the photograph portrayed the refugees on European soil). Regarding the war in Afghanistan (2001-2014) there are two winning images, but one of them shows refugees in neighboring Pakistan.

Table 4: Wars (countries) with the most number of prizes won

War (country)	nº of awards	years
Vietnam	5	1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1973
Kosovo	3	1991, 1999, 2000
Iraq	2	1992, 2004
Palestine	2	1994, 2013
Lebanon	2	1977, 2007
Afghanistan	2	2002, 2008
Germany	1	1956
Cyprus	1	1964
Cambodia	1	1980
Rwanda	1	1995
Chechnya	1	1996

Angola	1	1997
Algeria	1	1998
Yemen	1	2012
Syria	1	2016

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding photographic composition, the data that we have analyzed in Table 1 (individual/group, posed/action, colorimetry, etc.) is repeated. The comparison of the winners of the contest from 1980 and 2005 clearly illustrates this, since, in both cases, the image gathers the hand of a visually hungry child in the center of the photo, which functions as a synecdoche of famine. The 1980 winner, Michael Wells, shows the hand of a starving child in the palm of a white missionary, and the 2005 winner, Finbarr O’Reilly, who took it in the drought in Niger, shows a close-up of the face of a mother with the small and thin hand of her son covering her mouth. That is to say, even compositionally, there is a certain meta-photographic level in the WPP, a “discourse that refers to winners of other years of the award, introducing some visual novelty” (Kjeldsen, 2013, p. 468).

Finally, category 8: colorimetry has allowed us to analyze the tonal ranges of the photographs taken in color among the winners. Of the total number of winning photographs over the years, 30 are in black and white (BW) and 31 in color.

Although color photography began to be developed by Maxwell in 1861 (López Mondéjar, 2007), and color film was already widely used in the 1930s in artistic environments, it did not begin to be used in photojournalism until well into the 1980s. In fact, although the first winning color photograph in the history of the WPP is from 1967, they will all continue to be in black and white (BW) until 1980, when they will alternate in successive years, both BW and color, until the irruption of digital photography in professional photojournalism (around 2004), when, digital photography being native to color, and given that the editing rules of the contest are strict regarding the prohibition of retouching or editing, color predominates. However, the winning image of 2016 was in BW. As for the color in the WPP, as can be seen from chart 1, several color shades are insistently repeated, and that, together, give all the winning photographs (from all years) that characteristic shade of ocher (mustard) and earth tones. Chart 1 reflects the colorimetric analysis of the pentatonic composition of the colors of the winning photograph of each year when they are in color.

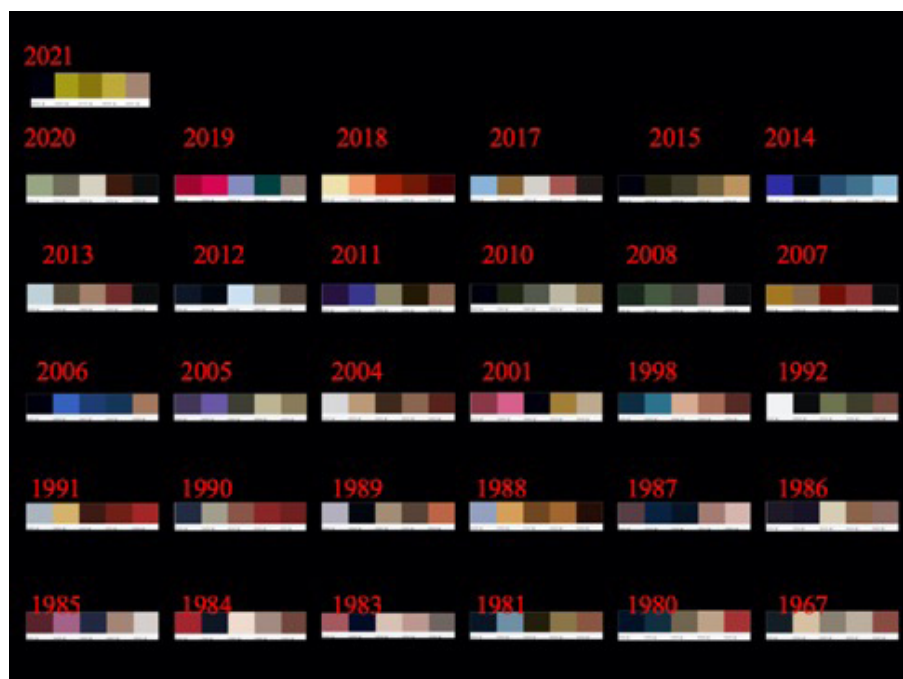


Chart 1: Colorimetric analysis of the winning color photographs

Source: Own elaboration

In chart 2, in turn, we show, in summary, the three colors that are most repeated over the years, together with their approximate name and their exact Pantone code: they are #2E34A6 (leaden blue), #A6691F (mustard yellow ochre), and #A61508 (light burgundy). Although colors are indeed intrinsically conventional (that is to say, that there is no natural and universal relationship between them and their meaning in different cultures), it is no less true that colorimetry works are beginning to follow one another which, with Western logic, explore the connotative and denotative abilities of certain tones in photography, something that had already been explored in film (Tello, 2019) but not so much in graphic journalism.



Chart 2: The three most recurrent colors in the history of the awards

Source: Own elaboration

Dark blue is present in the night skies and sunrises that often serve as a time frame for the stories that are told. Likewise, it is also a frequent color in part of the clothing of African women. Additionally, “indigo is part of the funerary customs of many cultures around the world, from Peru to Indonesia and from Mali to Palestine” (St. Clair, 2017, p. 191). For its part, the mustard-yellow color is the color of the earth, especially of the scorched earth, and of the desert, which is present in many of the winning pieces. Lastly, dark red is the color traditionally associated with war throughout Western culture. “Red gives strength, that’s why warriors were dressed in red or painted in this color. Almost all historical uniforms are red: from those worn by beefeaters in front of Buckingham Palace to the Pope’s Swiss Guard” (Heller, 2004, p. 66). Its origin also seems to suggest a link with *eros* and *Thanatos*:

Artists of all ideologies and styles have relied heavily on shades of red ranging from oxblood to persimmon blossoms, always intending to add drama, eroticism, and depth to their work. (St. Clair, 2017, p. 136)

5. Conclusions

First, apparently, there is a fairly limited range of themes in the award-winning photographs over the years at the WPP. If Greenwood and Smith already suggested that “news photographers employ a limited range of thematic devices to communicate stories” (Greenwood and Smith, 2007, p. 142), the analyzed data reveals that the photograph of a war conflict (25 years being the winning image, in total), is much more frequent than other themes that are no less socially important, such as the consequences of the economic crisis (a single winning photo). There are also more winners with proposals for individual posed portraits versus action and group photographs.

If we understand both the categories “war” (25 awards) and “turmoils” (8 awards), added to the sub-topics that almost always derive from them such as “immigration” (3), “political assassination” (3), and “coup d’état” (2) as a single global theme, this would group 41 winning prizes, that is, 66.1% of the total prizes. In other words, two-thirds of the winning photos of the World Press Photo awards are of war and armed conflicts, regardless of the historical news that occurred in those years, or the citizen interest of different countries for other topics: “So, it seems that photographers might have a significantly higher chance of winning with pictures showing war, conflict, and suffering because these kinds of pictures create a greater emotional impact” (Kjeldsen, 2013, p. 467). The selection of topics, therefore, more than current events or the right to truthful information, is highly political. Already in 1998, the journalist and jury of the World Press Photo, Ana Cecilia Gonzales-Vigil, stated:

‘Of the 36,041 photos from 3,627 photographers who entered the competition, there were only 3 submissions from the Algerian drama. The photographer Hocine goes from house to house hiding to continue living. Press accreditations are not given. And precisely because the situation there is so terrible, we must draw the world’s attention to what is happening. With these words, Ana Cecilia Gonzales-Vigil, image editor of the Lima newspaper *El Comercio*, and one of the nine members of the jury, justified the choice of the award. (Montón, 1998)

Another interesting field that we have analyzed has to do with colorimetry. As we have pointed out, the three colors that are repeated the most in the winning photographs are #2E34A6 (lead blue), #A6691F (mustard ochre), and #A61508 (light burgundy). There is practically no single green that is reminiscent of nature (in any case, a minority military olive green appears), nor white (which represents purity in Western countries) or other primary colors. Usual colors such as the light blue of the sea, or of a clear morning, simply do not exist, and a dense, dark, and murky lead blue predominates in almost all the images, together with mustard (earth, mud) and red (blood, war).

Therefore, we can conclude that the photographic discourse of the World Press Photo has clear coordinates in terms of countries, nationalities, themes, type of conflict, composition, and colorimetry used. The creative freedom of photojournalists is, according to the data, subject to a closeness to the photographic discourse of awards as recognizable as prototypical in their proposal, but which internationally serve as a photographic map of the history of the 20th century and the incipient 21st century.

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