



shots

warren bro  
the clown pri

video vision  
joseph ka

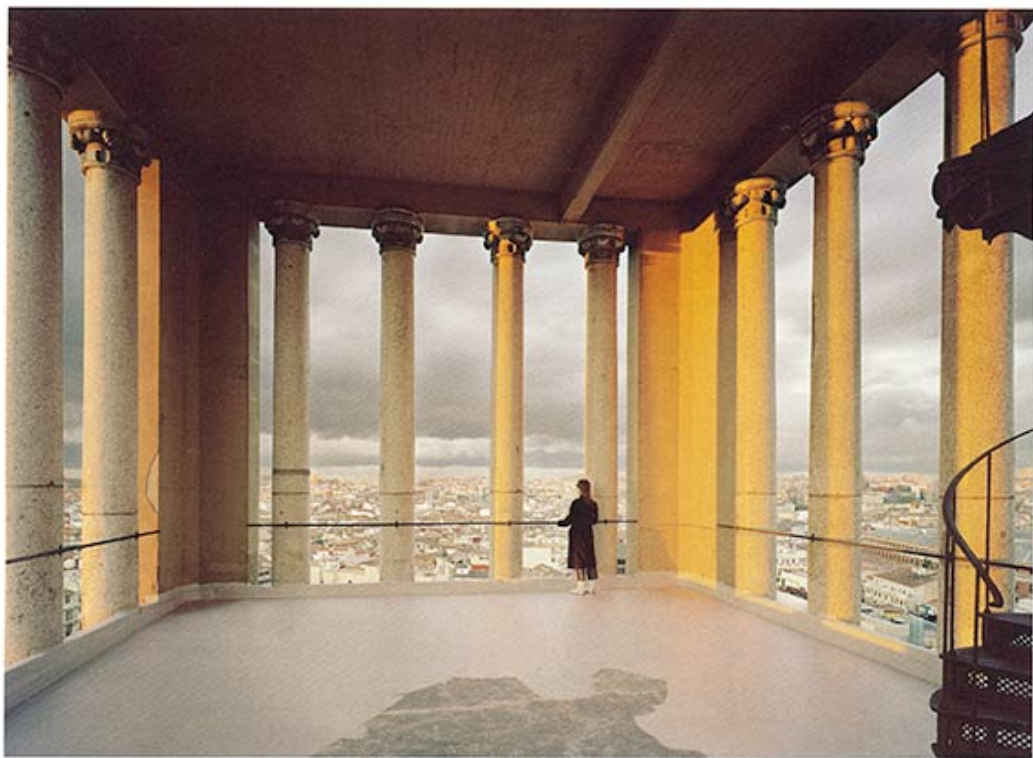
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DECEMBER 2009

# from the sublime...

*If you're not overly familiar with the treatise *On the Sublime* by the ancient Greek poet Longinus, Steve Hare explains the word's true meaning and, as the curator of the shots annual Young Photographers competition, he reveals how this year's entrants nailed the 'sublime' theme with astonishing results*



*(Above) Contemplations, the work of Kalle Katalla placed fourth and (opposite) the shots annual Young Photographers competition winning entry, Archive Revival by Melanie Clark*

Each year we set a different theme for the shots Directory photography competition. As our entrants come from all over the world, it's important to avoid using words with uniquely English shades of meaning. This year's theme was the sublime.

The word is the same in most European languages. But is it fully understood anywhere outside art and literary theory circles these days? It has, as happens so often with words, become debased. A celebrity's hairstyle, a car, a dessert - pretty well anything might get labelled 'sublime' now.

Without delving too deeply into Longinus, Burke and Kant, the sublime is to do with the unattainable, the incomprehensible - anything so vast, terrifying or overwhelming that it resists description or rational explanation. Not, then, your new shoes. Think storms, icebergs, nuclear holocaust, 9/11. The sublime covers pretty much everything that is beyond our normal experience. Plenty there to work with but maybe little that impinges on the everyday life of final-year students. The competition inevitably happens at the last minute - just as the majority of entrants are

preparing their final presentations, so we know that they'll enter the work they're most proud of, which is usually from their graduation show portfolio.

We take technical excellence and the ability to compose a shot for granted; so when judging you are left with little other than how well the work met the theme - how originally it interprets it (even if we collude in ignoring that the fit is more or less accidental). We want to see them take the commission to places we never dreamt of. The winners, some shown here, all featured in the shots Directory 2010, did just that, usually in ways more subtle than a bomb blast or plane crash, and in so many different directions.

Our overall winner, Melanie Clark, uses existing photos, projected onto the space the people, her relations, once inhabited: an internal, personal and emotionally charged sublime that is also the most riveting family album we have ever seen. The other winners have produced such a broad range of stunning work that we feel entirely justified in the choice of theme - for it is all extraordinary and memorable work; work that makes you think; work that rewards a second and longer look; work that transports and inspires. There's a word for that... ☺



(Above) *World Views*  
by Taylor Weidman and  
(right) *Hôtel Réverie*  
from Silvia Noferi

