

To: All Media

Att: News Editor

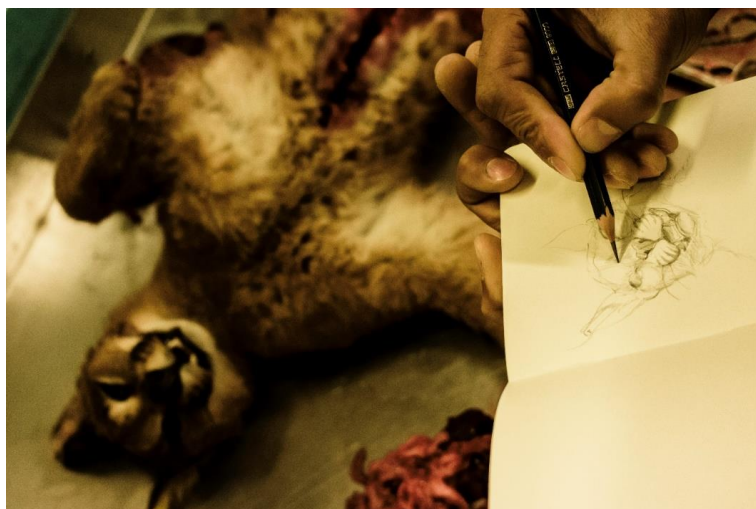
For Immediate Release

9 March 2020

The South African Science Lens® Competition uses photography to bring together art and science

The South African Science Lens® competition celebrates the wonder of science through photography, and shows how science and art can be seamless allies in communicating about the world around us. The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA), a business unit of the National Research Foundation, and its partner in the 11th round of the SA Science Lens® competition, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), are pleased to announce the winners of the latest round of the competition.

Mr Kervin Prayag, with his photo entitled “Meoww Muse”, further brought science and art together to take first place in the **Science as Art** category. An autopsy of a deceased caracal at the University of Cape Town was the muse for an artist, Sujay Sanan, putting together an exhibition called “A Place I Know”. The paintings at his exhibit diarised the landscapes, flora, and fauna of the Western Cape, in a unique way. In the artist’s own words, “while these works document what I fear might be lost, they are also filled with optimism”, and give a positive account of the current state of wildlife conservation.



Mr Kervin Prayag's "Meoww Muse" took first place in Science as Art

Prof Bruce Cairncross, from the University of Johannesburg, saw theatrical flare in his winning **Science Close-Up** photo entitled “Happy Faces”. The smiling face that looks like a theatrical mask is actually a picture of different inorganic geological minerals. The white and purple crusts that look like a mask are tiny crystals of fluorite, a calcium fluoride species. The brown background is the mineral goethite, an iron-hydroxide, which is typically dark-brown. This sample of minerals comes from a fluorite mine in the Gauteng.



Prof Bruce Cairncross's "Happy Faces" wins the Science Close-Up category

Science in Action focuses on capturing science as it happens. The winning photo was Thilo Beck's "Small scale surgery", giving us a glimpse into the great efforts of science to help us understand ecosystems. Here a tiny white-browed sparrow weaver (*Plocepasser mahali*) in the Kalahari is undergoing surgery to implant a miniature data logger. To make the procedure easier and less stressful for the birds, scientists catch them in their roosting chambers at night, and anaesthetise them, make a tiny incision, place the data logger in the bird and stitch them closed all within a few minutes. It has only been possible in the last few years to build small enough data loggers to fit them into small birds without constraining them and inhibiting their flight. This study will give valuable information to help to understand a small piece of the Kalahari ecosystem.



Thilo Beck's "Small scale surgery" wins the Science in Action category

The winning entry of the special category for the 2020 competition, ***The Dignity of All South Africans***, showed us that practical science doesn't need to be high tech. Morgan Trimble won with her photo called "Newlands Spring's Community Spirit". Emphasising how important water is to human dignity, she showed us how, in the face of Cape Town's water crisis that threatened dignified access to clean water, a community member created a solution that allowed more users to collect water from Newlands Spring in an efficient manner. The simple pipe system made out of PVC pipe, string, wire, and corks transformed one awkward, muddy access point to 26 points under which to fill water collection jugs. People from different communities came together to cooperate in a shared communal space.



Morgan Trimble's "Newlands Spring's Community Spirit"

In celebration of its 50-year anniversary, the HSRC also selected a special social science photo award, choosing Dhuruti Dheda's "Connecting Worlds". The photo shows a street in the inner-city suburb of Doornfontein in Johannesburg, decorated by giant metallic "flowers" or satellite dishes. This is an impoverished area of immigrants and students, and the multitude of satellite dishes shows the extent of how many people are occupying small apartment spaces. As satellite television generally includes programmes from around the globe, it allows many immigrants to receive entertainment from their home countries, connecting them to their people in a foreign country.



Dhuruti Dheda's "Connecting Worlds" wins the pick of the social science photos

This year was the first time SAASTA and the HSRC teamed up to present the photographic competition, celebrating all natural and social sciences in the 20-year anniversary of the NRF and the 50-year anniversary of the HSRC. Through the SA Science Lens® competition, SAASTA and the HSRC aim to encourage researchers and scientists to invite the public into their world through inspiring curiosity in beautiful, dramatic or interesting photographs of their research. The competition also aims to encourage the public to appreciate and find science in their everyday lives, showing how they can view the world around them from a scientific perspective.

The full results of the competition can be found at www.saasta.ac.za/competitions/sa-science-lens.

Original photos are also available for publication on request.

For more information, contact:

Joanne Riley, Science Editor, Science Communication Division, SAASTA; Tel: 012 392 9349;
Email: joanne@saasta.ac.za

Notes to the Editor

About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programmes within the NRF, please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the National Research Foundation

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programmes within the NRF, please visit www.nrf.ac.za

About the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)

The HSRC was established in 1968 as South Africa's statutory research agency and has grown to become the largest dedicated research institute in the social sciences and humanities on the African continent, doing cutting-edge public research in areas that are crucial to development.

Our mandate is to inform the effective formulation and monitoring of government policy; to evaluate policy implementation; to stimulate public debate through the effective dissemination of research-based data and fact-based research results; to foster research collaboration; and to help build research capacity and infrastructure for the human sciences.

The Council conducts large-scale, policy-relevant, social-scientific research for public sector users, non-governmental organisations and international development agencies. Research activities and structures are closely aligned with South Africa's national development priorities. For more information on the operations and programmes within the HSRC, please visit www.hsrc.ac.za