



National Geographic Photographer Comes to Ithaca

Friday, February 15, 2013 12:00 AM | Written by Brett Bossard | 

The Community Arts Partnership of Tompkins County (CAP) and The Park School of Communications at Ithaca College will welcome National Geographic photographer Lynn Johnson to Ithaca as part of the Park Award for Photo Activism project. In addition to working with student photographers participating in the project, Johnson will deliver a public presentation of her work on Thursday, February 21 at 7:30 pm in the Park Auditorium at Ithaca College.

Johnson is as well known for her sensitive yet unflinching approach to stories such as 'The Impact of Avian Flu' and 'TIBET: Freedom Denied' as she is for her artful, quiet, depiction of the life of a talented but tortured artist in 'Vincent Van Gogh: Inspired by Light' (all for National Geographic). In addition to travel that has taken her to almost all seven continents and numerous nations, Johnson has had the privilege of photographing the entire Supreme Court and notable celebrities including Tiger Woods and Mikhail Baryshnikov. But when all is said and done, the stories that interest Johnson the most are about ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances—those of everyday life.

Johnson's involvement with Ithaca College (IC) began in 1999 when she joined Professor Janice Levy of the Cinema, Photography and Media Arts Department and Annie O'Neil, a photojournalist with the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, to take a group of IC students to the Dominican Republic. The group travelled there to photograph the work of Global Links, a Pittsburgh based not-for-profit that distributes surplus medical supplies to developing nations. Johnson returned to IC in September 2005 to present 'Hate Kills,' a project that began, in her words, a transition in her personal work from 'observer to advocate.'

Johnson's impressive 35-year career, her passion for telling compelling stories through photography, and her commitment to working with Ithaca College students inspired Levy to choose her to participate in the pilot year of the Park Award for Photo Activism Project.

The project, which is a joint program of Ithaca College's Park School, CAP, and the Park Foundation, was designed to serve as a link between students and the greater Ithaca community. Degree majors with proven photographic skills and a commitment to community activism have been paired with participating non-profits in Tompkins County to provide in-depth visual explorations of the contributions these organizations make to their constituencies and our community. A special credit-bearing documentary photography course led by Professor Levy is underway and will provide students with ongoing guidance and support for these projects. During her stay, Johnson will visit the class and offer feedback on the work completed so far.

Along with other community members and photographers, Johnson will also participate in judging the completed projects. A screening of all work will take place at a downtown Ithaca venue in May. Cash awards will be donated to the non-profit organizations represented in the winning projects as follows: first place-\$1,000; second place-\$500; third place-\$300. These donations will be made in the names of the respective winning students. Organizations participating in the pilot year of the program include the Alcohol & Drug Council of Tompkins County, Better Housing for Tompkins County, Cancer Resource Center of the Finger Lakes, the Child Development Council, Friendship Donations Network, Habitat for Humanity of Tompkins and Cortland Counties, Ithaca Children's Garden, Kids Discover the Trail, the Learning Web, Longview, Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes, Slaterville Ambulance, and the State Theatre of Ithaca.

Lynn Johnson's public program will be held at the Park Auditorium on the Ithaca College Campus at 7:30 pm on Thursday, February 21st. The event is free and open to the public.

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