

Balazs Gardi Grant Recipient, September 2005

Winning Project: The “Roma” Community

The Gypsies or “Roma” as they widely call themselves are Europe’s stateless people. At least eight million Roma are scattered throughout Central and Eastern Europe. For many centuries, the Roma have been despised and seen as alien, thieving sub-humans with no allegiance to any country or law.

While half a million Roma died in the Holocaust, they remain the one culture in the modern, democratic Europe for whom persecution is largely acceptable. The Roma culture, combined with discrimination from the general public, has produced a cycle of poverty, lack of education, bad health care and increased unemployment. These factors have contributed to rising crime rates, isolation and a fear and suspicion of outsiders.

With the benefit of the Getty Images grant, Gardi will document the hidden life of the Roma, visiting small communities that had previously remained closed, mysterious and consequently suspicious to even the most socially sensitive. He will use his experience as a photojournalist to bring focus and attention to the invisible, still virulent prejudice and mistreatment of the Roma to initiate change and redefine their role in today’s society.

Biography

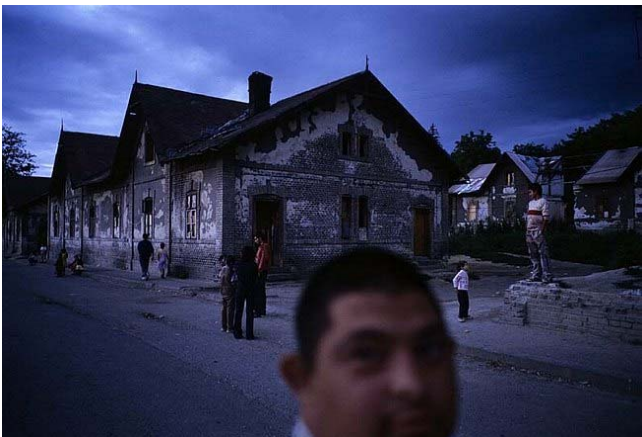
Balazs Gardi was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1975. He studied at the School of Photography, Hungary and later at the School of Photojournalism of the Association of Hungarian Journalists. After graduating in 1996, Gardi worked for Népszabadság, the largest Hungarian political daily newspaper, prior to becoming a freelance photographer in 2003 and documenting the everyday life of the Eastern European Roma community.

Gardi has received numerous awards for excellence in photojournalism, including being named Photographer of the Year three times in Hungary since 1998. He has won numerous prizes in the Hungarian Press Photo Contest including the Márton Munkácsi Prize for the best collection. In 2000, he was chosen for a World Press Photo ‘Joop Swart Masterclass’ in Rotterdam, The Netherlands and in the same year was chosen as a finalist for the W. Eugene Smith Award.

Gardi received First Place in the Sports Stories category in the 2002 World Press Photo contest. In 2004, he won two prizes in the 61st Annual Pictures of the Year International competition: Award of Excellence in General Division/Science/Natural History Picture Story and Second Place in Magazine Division/Feature Picture Story; and in the same year, he was also selected for Photo District News’ ‘30 under 30’.

With a grant he received from the Reuters Foundation in 2002, he spent a term at Cardiff University’s School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies in Wales

Gardi is a member of the Association of Hungarian Journalists and the Association of Hungarian Photographic Arts and currently serves as a board member of the Association of Hungarian Press Photographers.



Portfolio Images Courtesy of Balazs Gardi