

WAR Vs WILDLIFE

CONFLICTS OF MAN AND WONDERS OF NATURE ARE SEEN THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS AT TWO EXHIBITIONS – THIS IS WAR! AT THE BARBICAN, AND THE WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR AT THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM.
CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN TAKES A LOOK

“HUNDREDS and hundreds of thousands have I seen flee thus... I am afraid that hundreds and hundreds of thousands more, who in other countries perhaps are still living comfortable lives, may soon find themselves enduring the same fate.”

Robert Capa wrote this text when photographing refugees at a transit centre in Barcelona, January 15, 1939.

The Spanish Civil War had been raging for three years and in nearby Germany a restless Adolf Hitler was on course to change the lives of millions of comfortable families.

Born in Budapest in 1913, Capa became one of the world's most celebrated war photographers.

The glamour was unrivalled. He rode on the tanks which liberated Paris on August 22, 1944; he founded the photo agency Magnum with friends



such as Henri Cartier-Bresson; he enjoyed an affair with Hollywood actress Ingrid Bergman.

But the darkness was equal in its measure.

In order to be taken seriously as an international photographer Capa had to create a fraudulent identity.

His Jewish, Austro-Hungarian birth-name changed from Endre Friedman, as did the name of the love of his life, the German refugee Gerda Pohorylle, when they met in Paris at the age of 21.

Rebranding themselves as Robert Capa and Gerda Taro, they went on to form one of the most formidable couples of the last century.

Armed with Leica cameras, they dedicated themselves to fighting fascism with photographs of devastating beauty.

Gerda lost her life, hit by a tank while fleeing Madrid when not yet 27 years old, and Robert continued without her – unable to marry Bergman or any other suitor – until he met his fate, stepping on a Vietnamese antipersonnel mine in 1954.

The faces that line the walls of the Barbican exhibition tell the tale better than words and are also accompanied by intriguing contemporary reconsiderations of war reportage by artists such as Omer Fast.

Once you've had enough of humans and our heart-breaking ways, there's no better way to digest the pain than the Wildlife



Photographer of the Year exhibition over at the Natural History Museum.

Still riddled with tough questions on how we treat our environment, the glance of a busy beaver or a curious whale are enough to make you grateful for what's left.

Age groups from 10 upwards do equal justice to some of nature's most surprising moments, submitted by 35,000 entrants world-over. And what's more, there's no snobby secrecy about the pictures. All are clarified by the most minute details of the camera, its settings and the equipment that captured the best our planet has to offer.

EYE ON NATURE: (Left) First encounter, by Brian Skerry, USA; (above) Deadlock, by David Maitland, United Kingdom; (below) Eye of the beaver, by Laurent Piechegut, France

DON'T MISS THEM!

- **THE WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR** is at the Natural History Museum until April 26. £7, £3.50 concessions, £18 family ticket (two adults, three children). See www.nhm.ac.uk
- **THIS IS WAR!** Robert Capa/ Gerda Taro is at the Barbican until January 25. £8/6 if booking online. See www.barbican.org.uk



TAKING AIM: (Top) Republican militiaman training on the beach, outside Barcelona, August 1936, by Gerda Taro, (c) International Center of Photography; (above) Gerda Taro and Robert Capa, by Fred Stein, Paris 1935, (c) Fred Stein International Center of Photography; (right) Young girl at refugee transit center Barcelona, January 15, 1939, by Robert Capa, (c) Cornell Capa/Magnum International Center of Photography; (far right) American soldier landing on Omaha Beach, D-Day, by Robert Capa, Normandy, France, June 6, 1944, (c) Cornell Capa/Magnum International Center of Photography