



10 THINGS TO DO THIS WEEK



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PHOTOGRAPHY: CATCHING THE BONES OF LUXEMBOURG



Nikos Zompolas, pictured, lived most of his life in Athens until he moved to Luxembourg in 2006.

Photo: Jess Bauldry

Luxembourg, with its castles and countryside, is a rich source of inspiration for photographers. But you won't find any of the typical postcard clichés among the 51 scenes in photographer Nikos Zompolas' new book (<https://www.nikoszompolas.com/>).

Developed with his mentor and hero, French photographer Jean-Christophe Béchet, “Luxembourg Volume II” tells visual stories about “the real Luxembourg.”

“I like to catch the bones of Luxembourg,” Zompolas says indicating one photo of a single wall from what was once a house, that now almost resembles the ruins of the Parthenon.

“I think this photograph tells the story for someone that lives in Luxembourg [...] They have destroyed everything. And they only left a wall that doesn't look worth living in but it's still there. This is the beauty of Luxembourg, it's a story.”

leaving, but they left it. This is the culture of Luxembourg for me.”

Becoming a Luxembourger

The Greek-Luxembourger, who moved to Luxembourg from Athens for the first time in 2006 for a job at the European Court of Auditors, has been an amateur photographer since childhood. In Luxembourg, he joined photography clubs where he befriended locals and even won the FLPA Coupe du Patrimoine in 2015, the same year he became a Luxembourger.

Zompolas began examining the stories of Luxembourg after he participated in a photography contest on the theme of frontiers. He read Luxembourgish literature to get to grips with the stories of the country and with every free moment he had, he travelled around the country with his camera trying to capture those stories, often returning to the same place more than once.

The photographer confided that for one photo, of a pedestrian bridge in Dudelange, he returned to the place ten times to get the right shot. “This is the way I work. In the beginning I understood there’s the potential for a nice photo but I probably don’t have the talent to get it directly so I want to go and look at different angles,” Zompolas says.

Contradictions

Many of the photos show what seem like contradictions--construction cranes peering out of forests, a portrait of the Grand Ducal family hanging on the wall of a kebab shop and a caravan wrapped in protective groundsheets for winter. People are rarely physically depicted but, as Zompolas says, “I think there are people present.” Indeed there are hints of life everywhere, from the rugs left out to air on the balcony of a big house to the curious cone-like Kahler water tower.

To demonstrate how evocative the photos are, Luxembourg playwright Ian De Toffoli has penned three stories inspired by different photos, which are printed in the book. “A nice thing is that he took these photos in which there are no people and he put people in afterwards. And this is how I would like to function. My focus is to trigger a reaction somehow, to create something else,” the photographer explained.

He does trigger a reaction, and not just from the photos featured, for instance Zompolas explains that there is no physical “Volume I” to precede this second volume. “Volume I’ would have been the book that I produced in the first two or

three years of my staying in Luxembourg, my first impressions if you like,” he says. “Volume II” shows Zompolas’ life after becoming a Luxembourger and engaging with the country’s complex stories.

Identity and inclusion

In many ways, the book is symbolic of the new identity he has developed as a new Luxembourger, through its collaborative nature.

From working with French photographer Béchet, who helped Zompolas select the photos, to the Luxembourg grant which subsidised a small part of the print-run of 600 copies, right down to the book’s presentation at the new national library in Kirchberg, the book has been an enriching experience for him.

At the end of our interview, we discuss our favourite places in Luxembourg. Besides the Moselle, which Zompolas says reminds him of the sea, he is a big fan of the south with its heritage of Italian and Portuguese migration. “I like these people, I like what they bring to Luxembourg and I like the way that Luxembourg has received that,” Zompolas says, adding that he now feels similarly integrated into the landscape. “Whatever I asked for, they gave to me without asking anything. I believe I owe this country.”

“Luxembourg Volume II” by Nikos Zompolas is available in most bookstores in Luxembourg.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE BÉCHET (/D/CATEGORY/JEAN-CHRISTOPHE-BECHET/155839) • NIKOS ZOMPOLAS (/D/CATEGORY/NIKOS-ZOMPOLAS/155840) • IAN DE TOFFOLI (/D/CATEGORY/IAN-DE-TOFFOLI/60072) • LUXEMBOURG (/D/CATEGORY/LUXEMBOURG/51946) • GREECE (/D/CATEGORY/GREECE/51034) • PHOTOGRAPHY (/D/CATEGORY/PHOTOGRAPHY/52682)

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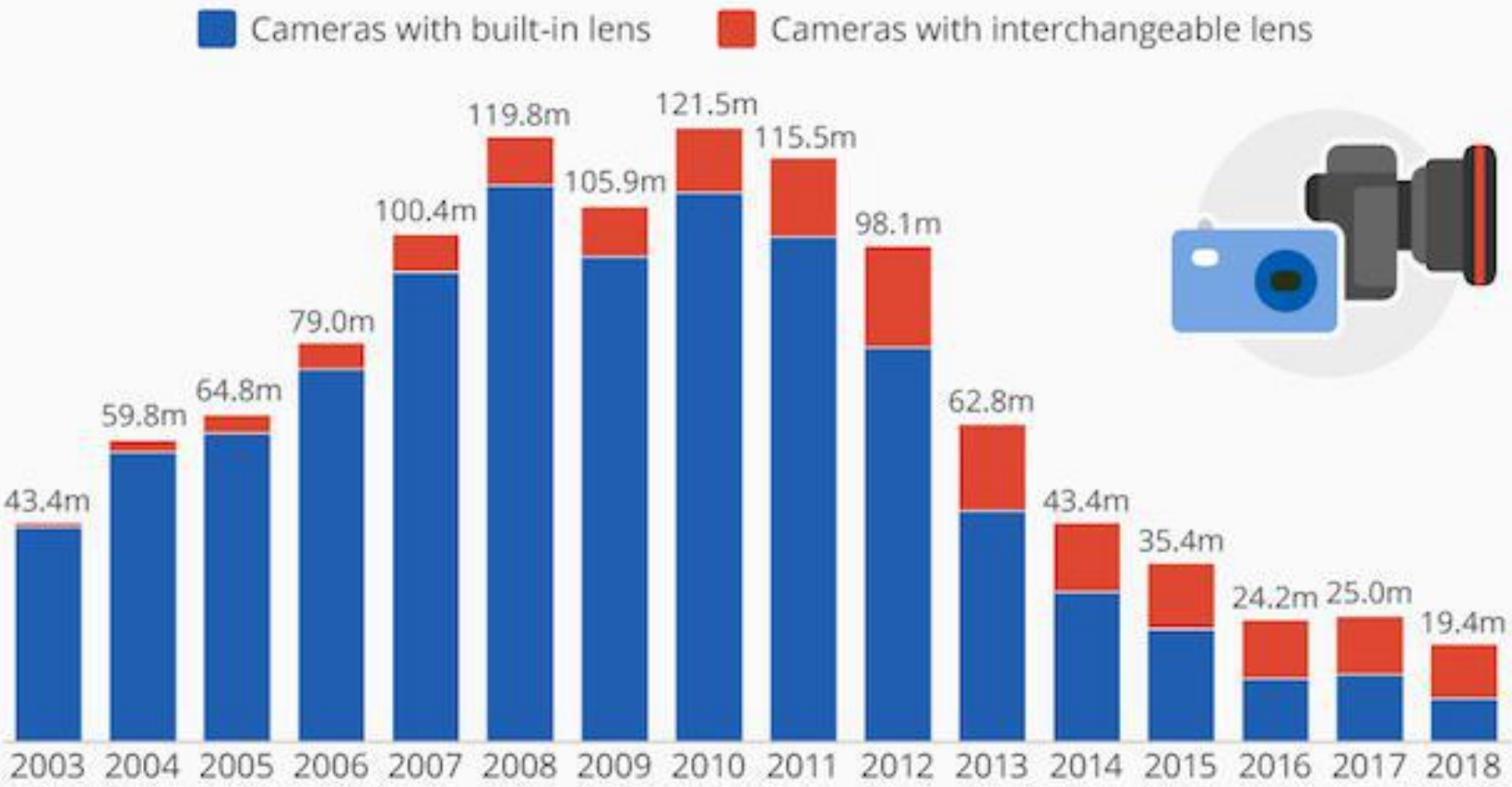
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Worldwide digital camera shipments by CIPA members



Camera & Imaging Products Association (CIPA) is an international industry association. Members include Olympus, Casio, Canon, Kodak, Sony and Nikon among others.
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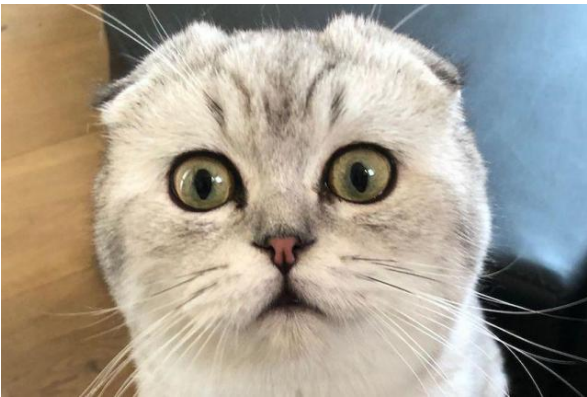


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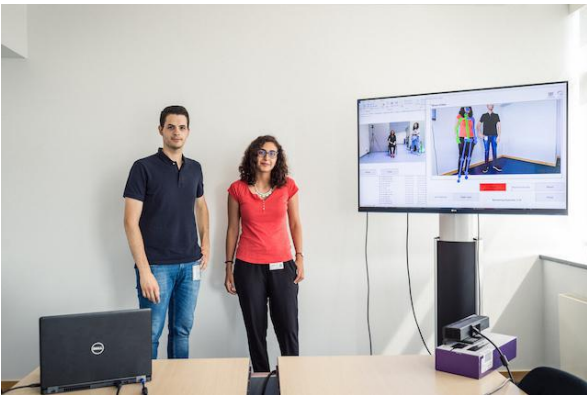
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