



the cameratruck project

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The world's biggest travelling camera comes to PHotoEspaña.

After four weeks capturing the wilderness of Spain in a series of gigantic photographs, the cameratruck arrives in Madrid to be exhibited at the country's leading photography festival.



The story in brief

American photographer Shaun Irving and English Art Director Richard Browse have created what they believe to be the world's largest mobile camera. Designed in America and constructed in Spain, the cameratruck is a simple box camera built right inside a standard delivery truck. Measuring 5 metres long, 2 metres wide and 2 metres high, the gigantic camera is capable of taking pictures almost 3 metres across. It's the perfect camera to capture a subject as vast as Nature, the photographic theme for this year's PHotoEspaña, where the cameratruck will be on display along with the photographs taken during its four week journey across Spain.



The project

Nature is a huge, constantly moving, constantly changing subject for a photographer. To truly understand her and capture her many different faces, it is necessary to have a camera that is as much like her as possible. A camera that is huge and always moving. But since a camera like this does not exist, it had to be built. This camera is the cameratruck. And the project that will be presented at PHotoEspaña in June is the story of its extraordinary journey to find Nature and bring it back in huge pictures.



The camera

The cameratruck binds the story together. It serves as transportation, shelter, darkroom and of course giant camera. And though it sounds like a hi-tech marvel, the camera itself is as simple as can be: just a light-tight box with a hole in it. It's like the very first pinhole cameras ever used, but with two important differences: the cameratruck uses a lens to focus the giant image inside the box, and unlike any other camera in the world, the photographer stands inside the camera to take the picture. This makes the cameratruck a fantastic educational tool, especially in this digital age when the magic of photography is rapidly disappearing. As Shaun himself says, "Photography is so much easier to understand when you stand inside a camera and see it happening all around you."



The photographers



Shaun Irving, 31, studied photography at Hampden-Sydney college in Virginia. In 2002 he spent his life savings of \$5000 on a mail truck he found on eBay to create the very first cameratruck called Peanut. Shaun's dream was to take Peanut across America to create a series of giant prints, but the project fell through and Peanut had to be sold. Four years later, whilst searching for "giant cameras" on the internet, Shaun's story was discovered by Art Director Richard Browse, 38, working at the Barcelona advertising agency SCPF. The idea of bringing Shaun to Spain to resurrect the cameratruck idea rapidly took shape and the project was presented to PHotoEspaña, with the backing of Toni Segarra, Exectutive Creative Director of SCPF and Rafa Montilla founder of the AGOSTO production company.



The rest of the team



It soon became clear that this crazy dream of two foreigners, to drive across Spain in a giant four-wheeled camera, had certain parallels to the story of Don Quixote. Perhaps it is for that reason that Pablo Berastegui at PHotoEspaña loved the idea. But in order to prevent the project from ending in a similar fashion to Cervantes' famous tale, four other important figures entered the story. Clara Balaguer, 26, joined SCPF from the Philippines, with the kind of no nonsense attitude necessary to take charge of the project as producer. To coordinate the cameratruck tour and the activities centred in Madrid, the team enlisted the help of Pablo Nolla Director of the production company BUS. Also brought in were Andres Duque, 32, a young documentary filmmaker, charged with recording the whole adventure on film, and Bea Maristany, 24, a production assistant from BUS to head the support team on the tour.



The cameratruck tour

On a grey Saturday in April at 8.00 am, the cameratruck set off from the SCPF car park in Barcelona on its four-week journey across Spain to reach its final destination at The Matadero in Madrid. The tour was designed to take the giant camera through every one of the 15 provinces of mainland Spain, and to as many different locations as possible. In a true test of fire, the cameratruck travelled over 9,000 km through all weathers and some of the most difficult yet spectacular terrain of Spain. From the highest mountains of the Sierra Nevada, to the deepest valleys of Leon; from the furthest point east at Cap de Creus, to the furthest point west at Finisterre; from the semi-deserts of Almeria, to the glacial lakes of the Pyrenees and to hundreds of locations in between, in search of the true, sometimes ravaged face of nature; the real Spain hiding from the glossy travel guides and picture postcard holiday brochures. Many photos escaped. Many times Nature just wouldn't play ball; battering the truck with storms, trapping it in the mud, shaking it and the images out of focus with a sudden gust of wind, or simply hiding the sun behind a cloud when the exposure was made. But these disasters are part of the cameratruck story too. They remind us that Nature is restless, surprising, violent, playful, but always to be respected.



The photographs

Taking a huge photo with a 5 metre camera is where the magic of the cameratruck starts. But developing the negative and resulting positive prints is what moves the work of Shaun Irving from photography into art. The size of the negatives, about 2.5 metres wide by 1 metre high, make them impossible to develop in a standard developing bath, so Shaun has to work in the dark, sponging on the chemicals by hand from a bucket. The smell is nauseating, but slowly the image begins to appear on the huge sheets of photographic paper. And not just the image: there are streaks where the developer missed, swirls and bubbles where the sponge paints its way across the surface of the paper. You might even see Shaun's handprints in there somewhere. Every negative is developed by hand and every print made from it is unique.



The exhibition

Of the 80 or so images taken during the tour, 16 have been selected for the cameratruck exhibit at PHotoEspaña. More than just representations of Nature, the work attempts to express man's complex and varied relationship with her, from the way we live alongside her, to the way we work and use Nature for our own ends. The images and the cameratruck itself will be on display as part of PHotoEspaña In the Street, to be held in The Matadero of Madrid from 03 June until 02 July.



The documentary

A picture paints a thousand words, but in the case of the cameratruck project, there are words that escape even the biggest pictures. For this reason the story of the entire project - the construction of the camera, the four-week tour of Spain and opening of the exhibit in Madrid - has been recorded in an hour-long documentary by Andres Duque. It is hoped that this film will also be shown during PhotoEspaña to give a unique insight into this amazing story. Excerpts from this film can be provided on request.



Further information

Images from the cameratruck tour are available on request. If you require any further information or would like to arrange an interview, please contact Clara Balaguer or Richard Browse using the contact details below.

**The cameratruck project,
c/Calatrava 71,
08017 Barcelona,
Spain**

Tel: +34 934 34 34 34

Fax: +34 934 34 34 35

cameratruck@gmail.com

www.cameratruck.es