



AIR CANADA

[News Releases](#)

Mexican Artist Marco Antonio Cruz Wins \$50,000 Grange Prize

TORONTO and MONTREAL, May 26 /CNW Telbec/ - With over 20,000 votes in a nine-week span, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) and Aeroplan are pleased to announce that Marco Antonio Cruz is the winner of the \$50,000 Grange Prize for 2009. In its second year, the annual Grange Prize is the largest of its kind in Canada and the only prize entirely determined by the public.

The works of finalists' Lynne Cohen from Montreal, Federico Gama from Mexico City, Jin-me Yoon from Vancouver and Marco Antonio Cruz from Mexico City were displayed on the prize's website (www.thegrangeprize.com) for some 60 days and garnered over 53,000 unique visitors by the time voting closed on May 20. Cruz's captivating black-and-white photographic series of the blind in Mexico captured votes from around the world, including Canada, Mexico, the United States, South Korea, France, Spain, Germany, Peru and China.

In addition to online voting, ballots were also cast on-site at exhibitions this year in both countries. The Centro de la Imagen in Mexico City hosted an exhibition from April 8 to May 31, and the AGO has displayed the work of The Grange Prize shortlist since April 1 and will continue to showcase the photographs until June 26.

Over the course of the year, Grange Prize nominees participate in residencies in both Canada and Mexico: Cohen spent over a week in Cancun this past April exploring both public and private spaces of this tourist destination; this fall Yoon will spend a week in Mexico City discovering historically charged sites through video; Gama travels to Toronto this month to create a portrait series of Mexican immigrants; and The Grange Prize winner Marco Antonio Cruz visits various First Nations community groups in Ontario this week, including the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre and Woodland Cultural Centre.

Launched in 2007, The Grange Prize, named in honour of the AGO's historic home, is a partnership between Aeroplan and the AGO that recognizes the best in Canadian and international contemporary photography. Every year, a joint curatorial panel of experts selects candidates from Canada and one other country.

"Photography transcends borders," said Matthew Teitelbaum, the Michael and Sonja Koerner director, and CEO, Art Gallery of Ontario. "The 2009 Grange Prize has successfully captured the imagination of the public in Canada, in Mexico, and around the world. This prize solidifies our commitment to showcasing talent and places the work of the finalists on the international stage."

"Aeroplan is thrilled to be presenting the Grange Prize with the AGO for a second year," said Rupert Duchesne, President and CEO, Groupe Aeroplan Inc. "We have been working together for more than three years now with the goal of raising the profile of photography at home and abroad. We are very proud of how the Grange Prize has evolved and continues to grow."

The Mexico Tourism Board is a supporting sponsor of The Grange Prize along with media sponsors The Globe and Mail and Bravo Television. The Mexican Consulate in Toronto helped to facilitate relationships with the partnering country.

The partnering country for the inaugural Grange Prize was China, and next year's partner will be France.

About Marco Antonio Cruz

Marco Antonio Cruz studied painting in Puebla and later worked in Mexico City as assistant to photographer Héctor García. As he learned more about photography, Cruz was also heavily influenced by the work of Nacho López. Since 1979, Cruz has been published as a photographer in major Mexican newspapers, such as La Jornada, and in magazines - most notably LIFE, which featured one of his well-known images from the 1985 Mexico City earthquake. In 1984, Cruz and a group of colleagues created the photographic agency Imagenlatina. Cruz has participated in numerous individual and collective exhibitions in Mexico and the United States. He has published two books: Cafetaleros (Coffee Workers) (Imagenlatina, 1996), documenting the exploitation of coffee workers in Guatemala; and Contra la Pared (Against the Wall) (Grupo Desea, 1993).

Cruz's series on blind people in Mexico is only one of the many distinguished photo essays he has created during years of work. Cruz lives and works in Distrito Federal and is currently working on a website which aims to document - through photographs, text, and moving images - vast Mexico City, formerly the Mexican capital known as Tenochtitlan.

About Aeroplan

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2009, Aeroplan, Canada's premier loyalty program, is owned by Groupe Aeroplan Inc., a leading international loyalty management corporation.

Aeroplan is a long-standing patron of the Arts, with a history of supporting artists and arts initiatives across Canada. Of particular significance is the company's work, in partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario, to develop The Grange Prize for contemporary photography. Aeroplan is committed to fostering a long-term, international dialogue about this important art form. Aeroplan has also joined the AGO in a three-year partnership as the Signature Partner of the Photography Collection Program, supporting planned AGO activities to engage visitors with photography,

including special lectures and tours.

For more information about Aeroplan, please visit www.groupeaeroplan.com or www.aeroplan.com

About the AGO

With a permanent collection of more than 73,000 works of art, the Art Gallery of Ontario is among the most distinguished art museums in North America. The Gallery began an extraordinary chapter when it launched Transformation AGO in 2002. Multi-faceted in scope, Transformation AGO involved the unprecedented growth of the permanent collection, an innovative architectural expansion by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, and the strengthening of the museum's endowment resources. As the imaginative centre of the city, the transformed AGO dramatically enriches our visitors' experiences and provides greater access to the full vibrancy of the art museum.

For more information visit www.ago.net

The Art Gallery of Ontario is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Culture. Additional operating support is received from the Volunteers of the AGO, the City of Toronto, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts./NOTE TO PHOTO EDITORS: A photo accompanying this release is available on the CNW Photo Network and archived at <http://photos.newswire.ca>.

Additional archived images are also available on the CNW Photo Archive website at <http://photos.newswire.ca>. Images are free to accredited members of the media/

For further information: or visuals: AGO: Antonietta Mirabelli, (416) 979-6660, ext. 454, antonietta_mirabelli@ago.net; Aeroplan: Christa Poole, (416) 352-3745, christa.poole@aeroplan.com

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 