



MEDIA RELEASE

Yoshi Shimizu focuses on Bolivia

- Intangible Cultural Heritage Photographic Project, sanctioned by UNESCO, opens in Geneva's Cité du Temps

(Geneva, 6 April) – From 7 April to 2 May 2011, leading Japanese photographer Yoshi Shimizu presents a selection of his pictures portraying the Kallawayaya traditional healers from Bolivia. Proclaimed by UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) as an intangible world cultural heritage and Masterpiece of Humanity, this small ethnic group is well known as a secretive caste of traditional herbal practitioners and itinerant healers. Yoshi Shimizu's in-depth photo essay zooms in on the techniques used by the "Kallawayaya doctors" and also shows the vastness of the landscape in which they work.

The photographs on display capture the intriguing combination of the healers' brightly-coloured clothing, the remedies they implement, as well as the vital element of ritual that characterises their approach. In essence, this essay visually interprets a secret language, which is passed down through the generations. Whether Yoshi Shimizu is capturing a ceremonial dance, the reading of coca leaves, or the collection of one of the 900 different plants that make up these healers' medicine repertoire, he succeeds in shedding light on an enigma. In doing so, he also fulfills his ongoing commitment to record and document some of the ninety examples of intangible cultural heritage in the world proclaimed by UNESCO. And since the majority of this heritage has not been written down, photography represents a lifeline in terms of recording and preserving these human treasures.

Yoshi Shimizu spent six weeks travelling all over Bolivia to document the lifestyle of the Kallawayaya people. The search to locate genuine practitioners took him to extremely remote places, often with a mule acting as the only viable means of transport. The photographer and his equipment often faced the additional challenges of heavy rain and intense mountain sun. Yoshi Shimizu sums up his work on this and other assignments related to recording cultural heritage, "It has been my life's passion to travel the world to document the traditional knowledge of indigenous cultures. Studying and understanding

cultures not only strengthens our communication skills; it also widens our personal visions of humanity. I hope to be able to test the boundaries of artistic expression by visually capturing the intangible and bringing it to life, so that we can help protect our cultural heritage for generations to come.”

Born in Japan and now living in France, Yoshi Shimizu has taken photographs for a broad spectrum of international organisations, including the United Nations Children’s Fund, the International Red Cross, the World Wide Fund for Nature International and the World Health Organisation. Over the past decade, a key focus for Yoshi’s photographs has been human suffering. Whilst acknowledging and accepting that suffering constitutes the stern reality of humanity, it has been his long-time desire to apply photography to convey the more positive elements of humanity. His primary aim is to capture rarely seen human dramas and livelihoods, in order to bring them to life and safeguard their future.

The exhibition “Kallawayaya” is open every day from 7 April to 2 May 2011. Opening hours are from 9am to 6pm and admission is free.

The **Pont de la Machine** is at the heart of Geneva and has been one of the city’s landmarks since the 1840s. It was originally built to supply water to new public fountains but through the ages has become a symbol of the city’s industrial development. Since 2005 the building has been in the hands of the Swatch Group and houses the Cité du Temps, a unique, interactive venue for permanent and guest exhibitions.

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