

COMMUNITY, CREATIVE

BLOG, CADRE DE PROMOTION POUR LA FORMATION EN PHOTOGRAPHIE, COMMERCE & CULTURE, DANISH CENTER FOR CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT, DANISH EMBASSY, DCCD, FLICKR, FLICKR SELECT, MALI, MALIAN STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY, MORTEN NILSSON, STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY, THOMAS DAMGAARD

Malian Photographers, Welcome to Our Creative Community

by Guy Merrill on Sep 22, 2011 - 1 Comment



Getty Images, 108672506, CommerceandCultureStock/Flickr Select

Photographers and Getty Images contributors Morten Nilsson and Thomas Damgaard contacted me over a year ago to discuss a novel idea. How would we like regional, model-released imagery from a part of the world where we have never had content from before? And how would we like it if this content was shot locally – by the people who live there – with the potential to nurture their talent and make an impact in these budding photographers' lives?

Regionalized imagery has been a key focus for Getty Images for the past few years –and this idea was perfectly in line. But what, exactly, was the proposal?

Morten and Thomas were talking about a project they'd been working on with a photography school in Bamako, Mali – [Cadre de Promotion pour la Formation en Photographie \(CFP\)](#). The collaboration with CFP was initiated to find ways for the school to become self-sustainable and was funded and supported by Danish Center for Culture and Development (DCCD) and the Danish Embassy in Mali and Helvetas.

The predicament was that there was very little possibility to make a decent living from photography in Mali – regardless of talent. With hundreds of small wedding and ID studios in Bamako alone, the competition was high, and consequently photographers were making very little. As it stood there was simply no market for photography outside Bamako. But how could this be changed? Could the virtual marketplace provide an alternative? And more specifically, could stock photography be this alternative?

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The first team of photographers to enroll in the Commerce & Culture stock program. Photo courtesy of CFP.

From these discussions, **Commerce & Culture** was born – with the mission of connecting creative people from the least developed countries to a global market through Getty Images. Funded by DCCD and the Danish Embassy in Mali and Helvetas, the goal was for Commerce & Culture’s royalties to be shared between the students and the school in order to make the project self-sustainable.

There were several challenges ahead. Photography in Mali was primarily analogue which meant the process of producing imagery was costly, slow and unsuited to the digital world of stock photography. Commerce & Culture’s first task was to address these challenges – bringing new and updated equipment to the school and digitizing the workflow. Also, the first team of photographers enrolled in the program had no experience in producing conceptual imagery – no experience in creating images to illustrate an idea (e.g. friendship, togetherness, connection) as opposed to documenting an event (weddings, baptisms etc.). It was clear that training needed to take place – so educational program was developed and even a ‘stock photography manual’ printed!

After over a year of hard work – organizing, educating and huge amounts of trial and error – Commerce & Culture was on its way and actively submitting imagery to Getty Images through Flickr. With 170 images online and counting, Commerce & Culture is exploring a new way to connect photographers from far corners of the globe to the international marketplace of stock photography and in the process providing content that Getty Images has never offered before.

This feels like the future!



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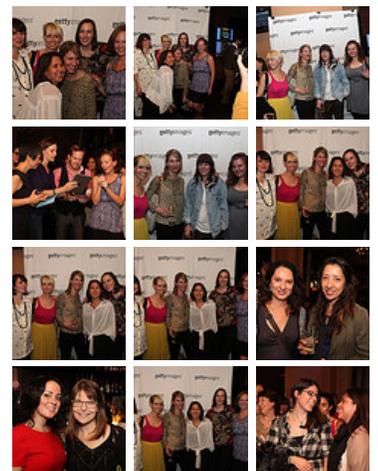


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