

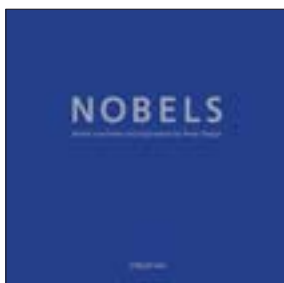
Book review: *Nobel Laureates photographed by Peter Badge.*

Meeting the Masterminds

Wiley-VCH has published a unique photographic record of all 305 living Nobel laureates.

The weighty coffee table book is not worth reading but its captivating photos plug the gap.

They are all inside. Beginning on page 3 with the Russian physics laureate of 2003, Alexei Abrikosov, and ending with Switzerland's Rolf Zinkernagel (Nobel prize for physiology or medicine in 1996) on page 611, science publisher Wiley-VCH has released a huge tome with black-and-white portraits of all living (and some recently deceased) Nobel laureates. *Nobels* is literally a coffee table book. It is weighty (your *Lab Times* reviewer's copy weighed in at 7.3 kg on the bathroom scales), it is oversized (with dimensions of 33.5 x 32.5 cm), is of good quality (with hardcover binding and strong high-gloss paper), and is reasonably priced. The illustrated book is delivered with a deep blue book-jacket and in a protective cardboard case of the same colour. Given its noble appearance, *Nobels* is an apt title indeed.



Funded by a charity foundation

What is to be said about the author? Peter Badge is a hitherto fameless portrait photographer from Hamburg, concentrating on portraits of noted personalities such as rock musicians and actors. He was nobly funded by a charitable foundation for the Nobels project. The pictures were mostly taken at the laureates' homes and thus reflect a relaxed ambience. Each laureate has a double page spread, with uninspiring biographical and scientific background information on the left hand side and a large monochrome photograph on the right.

All the famous names are here: writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Nadine Gordimer; the politicians Mikhail Gorbachev, Henry Kissinger and Al Gore; peace activists Desmond Tutu, Kofi Annan and the Dalai Lama; and all the other, lesser-known laureates. Most of those portrayed are, however, scientists.

The book contains a rare photo of double laureate Fred Sanger, sitting on a wooden bench and smiling impishly at the spectator.

The accompanying text informs the reader that Sanger retired in 1983 to spend more time in his garden and "messing about in boats". Some dozen pages before, the longest-living Nobel laureate, now aged 100, can be admired. The dignified Italian Rita Levi-Montalcini could almost be a 16th century aristocratic princess, with her distinguished features, lost in reverie. Another female scientist, the German developmental biologist Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, who celebrated her 66th birthday not so long ago, looks startlingly youthful. Badge has captured her looking like a woman of no more than 35 or 40.

Many of the portraits are pretty pedestrian, but every ten pages or so the viewer finds an impressive pic peeking out. The wacky PCR inventor Kary Mullis looks pretty normal by his standards. In contrast, 1997 physics laureate Steven Chu creates the im-

pression of being a whimsical (but likeable) high-performance swimmer, wearing comical goggles over his eyes. Badge met him after his daily swim. The Russian literature laureate, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, however, is shocking, with an unbelievably haggard face.

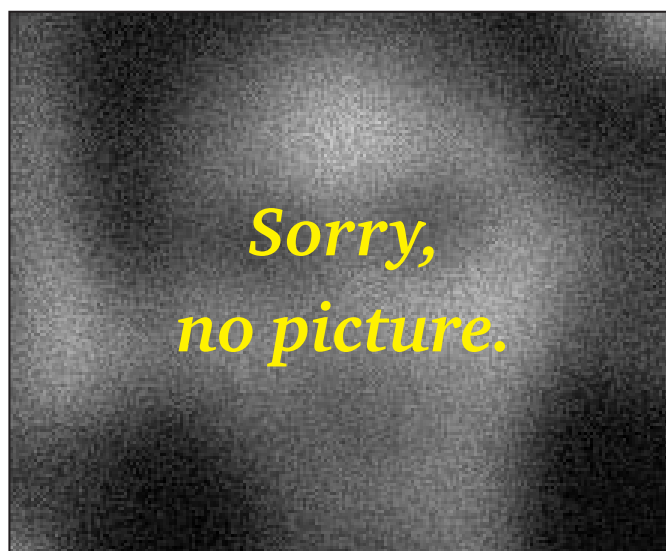
Freaky economic laureates

Some faces in the book recall characters from famous films, for example the features of Czeslaw Milosz, the deceased literature laureate of 1980. Milosz looks as striking as Mafia boss Don Vito Corleone in Francis Ford Coppola's film *The Godfather* – and Craig Mello, who got the prize in 2006 for his RNA interference findings, could be Don Vito's son Michael Corleone (played by Al Pacino).

But by far the freakiest guys appear to be the economics laureates. Vernon Lomax Smith, who got the prize for, "having established laboratory experiments as a tool in empirical economic analysis", looks as if he walked straight off the set of a monster movie, with his hippie pigtail and those bulky metal rings on each finger. Thomas Schelling is posing with a framed image of a, well, sandwich; Paul Samuelson has settled in for the photo on page 473 with a hairy mammoth of a dog; the Norwegian, Finn Kydland is disguised as a motorbike racing driver with race suit and helmet; and the white-bearded Robert Aumann has the knobby habit of a friendly Alm-Öhi/Catweazle hybrid.

The reviewer's personal favorite is a shot of the critically ill chemist Bruce Merrifield, who is holding a photo of himself into Badge's lens, thus masking his unfortunate current state. An impressive shot.

WEANÉE KIMBLEWOOD



We planned to put one of Peter Badge's *Nobels* photos here. But, whether our review is positive or negative, *Lab Times* will not pay authors for photos to accompany it. Under other circumstances we are happy to pay for photos. But for free publicity? No. Most authors understand this. One doesn't. So no photo here. Sorry, Mr Badge.

Nobels. Nobel Laureates photographed by Peter Badge. Wiley-VCH, 2008. 622 pages, 304 black-and-white images, €139.--.