

# Snapping up slot in exhibition

**T**HIS VIVID picture of local policemen in Burundi, taken by Newark photographer Tom Martin, is one of two photos by Tom which have been selected from thousands of contenders to be exhibited in a top photographic gallery in Los Angeles.

Tom, 25, has worked extensively in Africa doing travel photography and commissions for the European Union, documenting their aid programmes, but he always has a keen eye for the unusual angle or arresting character. His two photos are among 30 on show throughout April at the 1650 gallery in Echo Park, Los Angeles.

"It's a group exhibition called I'll be Your Mirror. It was open to entrants internationally and they had several thousand applicants," said Tom, who lives on London Road.

"It's a well-known photographic gallery. It is a real honour to be chosen and it will be great to reach an audience Stateside. I like Los Angeles, so it would be nice to have work over there."

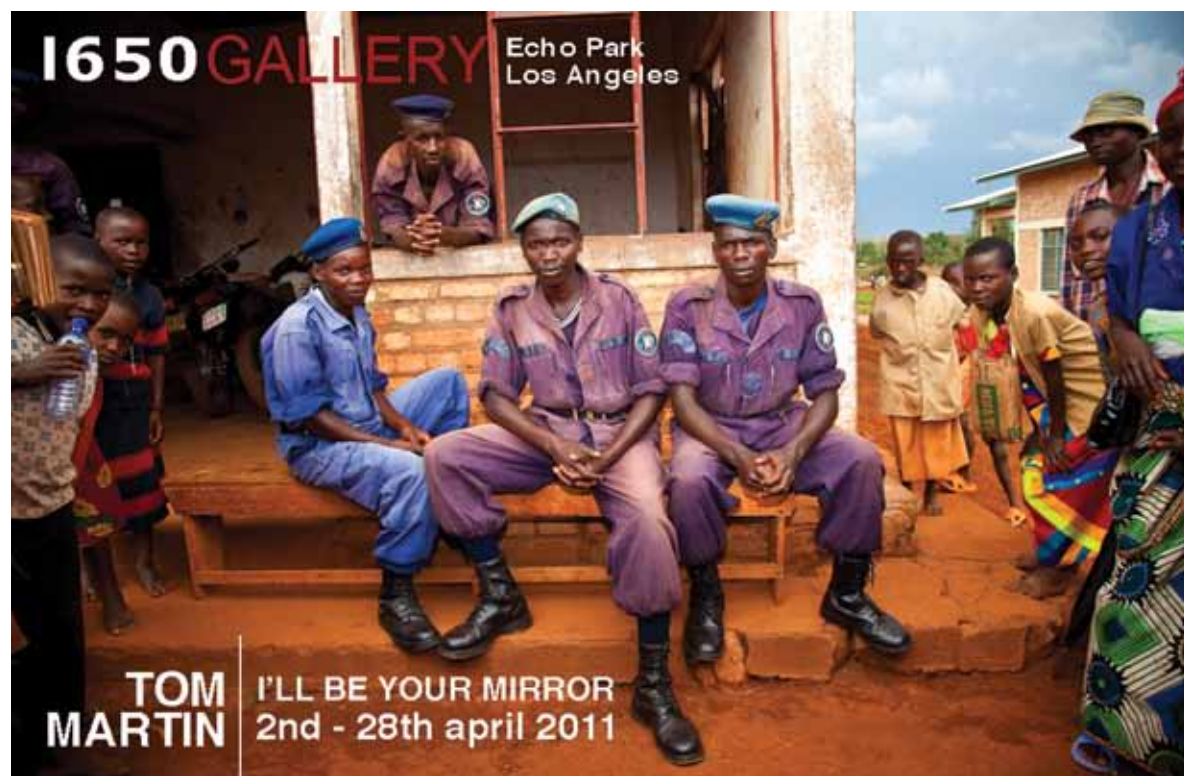
## Photographer has work put on display in Los Angeles

Tom's assignment on the day he took the police picture was to document the opening of a new EU-funded courthouse, but he found other subjects too.

"I was just wandering around taking pictures on the fringe and came across these local policemen.

"The police in Burundi have a pretty gruesome reputation. They often don't get paid for months on end, so they have to resort to bribery and corruption to make a living.

"When I was first living in



Bujumbura, the capital, I wondered why we got pulled over almost every day at about 11.30am. I got a load of grief off the traffic police until a Burundian friend pointed out to me that they were looking to get some money for their lunch. So when you realised all they wanted was about 60p you could just give it to them, but in the beginning you think it's more serious."

"Judges are corrupt as well, so if you're in prison you have to pay a bribe to get a trial, and then you have to bribe again to get a fair trial. Sometimes people have been in prison for four years because their families are poor and they can't afford to bribe judges to get a trial."

The EU has also funded a training programme for police and the judiciary to instill more professional practices.

Tom's second picture is of Adolph, a Rwandan genocide survivor and tour guide, standing amid rows and rows of human skulls, a grim reminder of the genocide the country endured in the 1990s:

"The picture was taken in the crypt of a church where 24,000 people were murdered. People went to the church because they thought it would be a good place to hide, and locked themselves in. But the people committing the genocide just threw grenades inside.

"The church was then used as a

death camp. People were taken from the surrounding villages and killed there. Adolph was a child there and he survived by hiding for a week under the bodies of his family. He is now a tour guide and he shows people around. The bones of his family are in the crypt."

Yet amidst this memorial to these ghastly atrocities, there is still hope for a better future, says Tom:

"Adolph is studying and uses the tour guide job to pay for his tuition – but he also produces hip hop music. He played some to me on his mobile phone. That's one of the things I really love about Rwanda. They live with this past, but they look forward to the possibilities."

**TOM MARTIN**

**I'LL BE YOUR MIRROR**  
2nd - 28th april 2011