

Whanganui E.O.Y. Champion Prints

Good evening Whanganui Camera Club. It is an honour to be asked to assess your end of year trophy and I have very much enjoyed looking at your prints. You may or may not know, that I consider the print the final step in making an image – for me it is an essential step. I am not sure if it was Ansel Adams who said words to the effect that “the negative and now the digital file is the score and the print is the performance” – a reference to music.

When evaluating images I look to see what emotion the image evokes in me, what response I have to it. The I like to comment on what the photographer has done which helps this response followed by any suggestions which might make a stronger image – if there are any.

Grade

Bench Support

Great documentary image with so much to look at. You have captured some amazing facial expressions. The background hills look to me as though there is some haloing or chromatic aberration. The haloing occurs in post processing. Chromatic aberration (also known as colour fringing or dispersion) is a common problem in lenses that occurs when colours are incorrectly refracted (bent) by the lens; this results in a mismatch at the focal point where the colours do not combine as they should. It is common when there is a significant and abrupt change in contrast between two areas. It can happen in expensive lenses as well as kit lenses. Software today can usually do a good job of minimising it. The hills in your image have a thin blue line around them. Otherwise the image is very nicely exposed.

Café lunch

I get the feeling that this person is alone for lunch and very likely lonely – and I feel sorry for the person. I enjoy the colourfulness of the image. I do find the very bright areas of the image distracting, especially the one at the top of the right hand border, and the one coming down into the centre of the image from the top middle. The right hand one is easiest to deal with – you could crop it out or use a graduated filter in post processing. Would love to see some evidence of food or drink to enhance the story. Beautifully presented.

Early training

We used to live in Brooklyn, Wellington with a super view of the harbour. Early on still mornings this would be a common sight. This lot look to be pretty hard at work. I would really love to see a bit more detail in their surroundings to give more context. I do realise that this can be challenging in terms of light conditions. Love the position of the subject in the frame,

Fragrant Sweet Peas

Gosh I can almost smell them! They look like the old fashioned coloured ones too which are my favourites. The lighting here looks to me fairly full on frontal – directly on to the scene. There are small areas on many of the petals which have lost detail. I

know lighting is challenging, but it is worthwhile persevering to get your head around it. I really like your composition – flowers slightly off centre, book and glasses equidistant from left and right frames. The dropped petals also add character.

Herding Fish

I remember doing this as a child when we would go netting for flounder in the Ohiwa Harbour in the Bay of Plenty. I like your choice of in camera movement – for me it adds to the sense of dynamism in the activity. I do find the very bright, blown out areas distracting. It looks as though it may have been a very bright sunny day and I know that makes it difficult. Good choice of paper.

Kai Iwi Beach

I do love a deserted beach! This one reminds me a bit of the beach we used to camp on when I was a child. I really like the placement of the various elements in the image – my eye bounces back and forth between the two “vertical” lumps of rock- the foreground large one with the one on the left a similar shape but smaller and further away. I like that you have included foreground interest in the little rock pool. It is sitting very tightly against the bottom frame – as though you have just squeezed it in. A little more space there would, I think be helpful. You have captured great detail in the cliff face on the left.

Lake Ohau

This looks to me like a cool but fresh and sparkling day – great for going for a run or a walk. I like your choice of shutter speed giving a silky texture to the appearance of the water. I enjoy the texture provided by the reeds in the foreground. The cloud formation top left adds interest. Because it is bright it tends to take my eye out of the frame. Perhaps you would consider a subtle vignette which would help “contain” the scene. Nicely printed and presented.

Magnolia Bud After Rain

What a beautifully delicate bud. I like your choice of depth of field with most of the bud in soft focus. The front opening tip of the bud almost looks like a mouth, ready for food. To me, the orange/brown in the middle of the bottom frame is quite distracting. You might consider removing this in post processing or at least toning it down. You might also consider toning down both the hue and saturation of the green background. Whilst it looks healthy and lush, for me it detracts from the beauty and delicacy of the bud. Nicely exposed.

Moria Gate Arch, Oparara Runner up

Wow! Stunning view! The “look through” composition takes my eye right through the image and then I come back to the rock formation with its fascinating textures and shapes. Well exposed and nicely sharp throughout. I definitely want to visit there!

Oriental Parade Morning

There is a lot to explore here with plenty of activity. I like your choice of pano format with the slither of the city at the back of the image. The sea almost looks crunchy to me as though maybe you have over sharpened. I really like the placement of the dominant figure on bottom left and that he appears to me walking. Good choice of black and white.

Pied Shag Family

Wonderful family portrait! I believe that Pied Shags mate for life and the pair share the task of incubating the eggs. The birds are all beautifully sharp. Some of the detail in the black feathers has been lost. The white feathers are well exposed with plenty of detail. Often in photography it is not possible to get everything in a scene with a wide dynamic range, perfectly exposed and so often the photographer needs to make a choice. It seems to me that you have chosen to expose the white feathers correctly and in my view this was an excellent choice, since blown out white areas can be very distracting. Do watch for dust spots – I believe you have one near the centre of the left hand border. Good choice of depth of field.

Pitt Island Shag

Great detail captured in the feathers of this bird. I really like his placement in the frame – on the left vertical third – not that I am a stickler for the thirds – or any other “rules” It looks like you have used a very shallow depth of field to separate the bird from the background. For me, the extreme blur of the background is a little distracting and I would like to see a bit more detail. Shallow depth of field is great to separate subject from background. When it is extreme and obliterates the detail, I think that context is lost. I also think that some lowering of the brightness using for example a graduated filter in post processing would help keep my eye in the frame. Very nicely presented.

Reflections of Stopping and Going

I sense a bit of double meaning here – the actual reflection in the window and perhaps the photographer reflecting on the old time gear stick and brake lever, and perhaps his or her travels in the vehicle. I am curious as to what sort of vehicle and would love to see a bit more information to enlighten me. I really like the subdued colour palette.

Shine Trophy winner

Stunning simplicity! You have beautifully isolated your subject using shallow depth of field. I often think that more detail is needed to provide context and I have said that in my remarks for some images in this salon. In this case the simple beauty of the block and the lighting you have used make this image absolutely shine! I really like the toning.

Smoking Fish

I love the humour! I really like the detail you have captured in the fish head, nicely exposed and nice and sharp. I think that if you were smoking fish it would be more than the head. I would love to see the rest of the fish trailing out of the frame. For me, the emotional appeal is spoiled by seeing the head sort of floating. Nicely printed and presented.

Soft Fluffy Landing

L Love seeing the joy on the young boy's face. You have captured that beautifully. His placement in the frame, in my view is also very good – showing where he has come from with room to move into. In the not so white areas of the clouds there is a lot of noise and pixilation. I find this fairly distracting. Sometimes you can remedy this in post processing. For me it takes away from the outstanding job you have done with the capture of the boy. Nicely printed and presented.

St Paul's 360

What a great idea for presentation. I am really curious as to where this is. I would guess not U.S. or Europe as it seems that they drive on the left. I am definitely guessing here but it looks to me like you photographed four quadrants of view from the same position – as in North, East, South and West. Two of the images have the same river which for me creates a link. The style of architecture and the general feel tells me it is the same place. I would really like to see a landmark in each image which connects one to another. Super presentation.

The Red Shed

This looks to me like a really peaceful rural scene. I see two separate images here. On the left, the mountains with snow, the bridge and reflections in the water. Then for me a completely separate image of the bare tree with branches beautifully fanned out, well balanced by their reflection in the water and then I finally see the red shed. For me it is all on the right hand side. Whilst the left hand side has its own beauty, it does not add to the scene on the right in my opinion. Lovely choice of paper and nicely exposed.

Winter Wonderland Runner up

Gosh it looks cold!! These sorts of scenes so lend themselves to high key imagery. You have done it beautifully. With the tree placed centrally I do wonder if the image would be stronger in a square format – worth thinking about. As it is though, it is stunning.

B Grade

Got it

I really like the timing – not quite landed, food in mouth – the decisive moment! I think you have made a good choice with your depth of field, rendering the background nicely blurred out and you have got a good catch light in the eye. To me the eye and head are not quite sharp. In my view it is OK for the wings, tail and feet to show some movement. I do feel that the head and eyes should be sharp. I would recommend a shutter speed greater than 1/1000th. There is a tiny white speck, bottom left corner which you might consider cloning out. Beautifully printed and presented.

Helenium Runner up

This is a genus of the sunflower family – Asteraceae, native to the Americas. They always make me feel like summer! What a magnificent specimen you have captured here. I love your choice of depth of field with the petals slowly fading out of focus. The very front petal leads my eye to the central part of the flower which I always think of the life centre. On the left hand side of the print is a brighter, bluish area which I keep looking at and wishing it would not distract me from the beauty of the flower. It should be easy to remove in post processing. Well printed and presented.

IR Lake Tekapo Trophy winner

Wow! The infra red certainly creates a mood which seems to me almost apocalyptic. I really enjoy the composition. My eye goes first to the church then up to the snow clad mountains, down to the lake and the people and then to the bare trees in the foreground. Beautifully sharp throughout and excellent exposure. Well done.

Lighting up the Night

This looks to me like a really interesting scene and I am curious as to what is going on. The three largest colourful items are very graphic. I am enjoying the left hand one with the person silhouetted right in the middle of the base. There are four very bright patches just to the right of the first structure. I find these a little distracting and do not think that they contribute anything to your image. They would be very easy to remove in post processing if you wished to. I like the balance of having left and right structures almost equidistant from the left and right edge of frame.

Momiji Runner up

Ooh I think I would love to eat here. For me the choice of monochrome is perfect. I like the balance in the frame – equidistant left and right, top and bottom. Excellent choice of depth of field with items inside still well in focus. In my opinion to take this image up a notch I would love to see a person to the left or right of the door – maybe even looking disappointed that the place was closed. There is a wide dynamic range here and you have done very well with the exposure – no lost detail in either highlights or shadows – well done!

Pure Snowdrop

What a beautiful specimen – it shouts “spring” to me! Well done with your exposure maintaining all the detail in the white of the flower. Good choice of depth of field with the background blurred out. Overall I feel that the flower is not quite sharp anywhere and there appears to be a small amount of haloing on each vertical edge. A large print definitely has impact. I would suggest that for this image perhaps a bit smaller in the same size matt may have more impact. Very nicely printed and presented.

I hope you have found my comments helpful. I have been really impressed with the standard of printing and presentation of all the images.

All images were of a good standard, the trophy winners and runner up images were that little bit better. I was asked to judge to National Exhibition or Regional Salon standard. I have tried to do this. Please bear in mind that it does not guarantee selection – it absolutely depends on who is doing the selection at the time. It is always a subjective exercise.