

| Number | Image #1 Title                              | Grading          | Comments  |
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| 1      | AO Crane flies Mating                       | Highly Commended | I found this macro photograph compelling. The level of detail is extraordinary. The two flies are just contained within the frame. I did find that the bright green stems tended to draw my eye away from the main subject and would suggest darkening the one on the right and down near the bottom a little. I believe such a selective darkening if done while it still looks natural would also be acceptable post-processing for a nature competition, and is certainly allowable for an open competition. If there are more available uncluttered pixels from the original capture, I also think that it would be good to have a bit more space on the left for the flies to "look into". Great use of depth of field with everything on the flies sharp.   |
| 2      | AO El Paso                                  | Merit            | Dahlias are beautiful flowers, and this is a beautiful capture of what I assume is the "El Paso" variety, with a feeling to me of early morning after some overnight rain, leaving refreshing drops all over the flower. The sharpest part of the image appears to be in the centre, with the focus looking softer as we go out to the edges of the flower. That can be an artistic choice, to call attention to the flower heart, though I did find myself wondering how it would have looked with a larger depth of field so I could enjoy more of the beautiful textures and the water drops. The flower is cut off at top and bottom - again - this is a perfectly valid choice for the overall framing, and I noted that a couple of petals at top and bottom look like they were positioned just on the edge of the frame. I also wondered, though, how it would have looked if the entire beautiful flower had been included within the frame. I liked the way there is a bit more space on the left for the flower to "look into". Overall a very good image, with a clean green defocussed background. |
| 3      | AO European Flesh Flies Jantia crassipalpis | Merit            | My initial reaction to this was "ugh, but there is no doubt this is another striking macro photograph, with good detail. The flies look nice and sharp at the front, though a lot softer further back. I think this would have worked better with a greater depth of field for more sharpness overall. There's some areas of the surface they are standing on that looks a wee bit overexposed to me - I think the image would benefit from some selective darkening down of those areas to reduce the distraction. I think the overall composition is great, with a triangular shape to the pair, and room on the left for them to look into. A good if gruesome image, and I can't stop looking at the feet of the top fly pushing down on the bottom fly's eyes!   |
| 4      | AO Watch out Wal                            | Merit            | This made me laugh, with the sheep appearing to look right at me. It's a great example, I think, of the street photography genre of finding an interesting location and then waiting for someone to walk into it to complete the picture. In this case the woman is located nicely on the right third, mid-stride with her rear foot up, and Wal and the sheep on the left third. I also appreciate what looks like attention to detail in the photograph, with the building elements all perfectly horizontal and vertical. And exposure and detail is great. What was missing, for me at least, was any sense of interaction or commonality between the woman, who looks urban to me, and the rural setting implied by Wal and the sheep. She also does not appear to be taking any notice of the mosaic, as the title of "Watch Out Wal" might imply. Still a great setup and very good technical capture.   |

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| 5 | AS A forgotten Era    | Highly Commended | I get a sense of history and abandonment from this, telling a story of past industry now surrendered to the elements. The use of muted tones enhances the vintage feel, connecting the viewer with the historical context of the machinery. I really like the layered composition, with my eye starting at the foreground machine, then working its way back in zigzag fashion to other machinery in the rear. I think there's also lovely commonality in the tones and textures of the wood in the machines, and in the grasses and foliage on the trees. It's a pity to me that the sky is all white and featureless - a bit of grey cloudy texture might have helped complete the scene. Everything is nice and sharp, and in this instance, I also think the colour of the matt suits the subject.   |
| 6 | AS End of the Line    | Merit            | Based on the appearance and a possible hint from the title, these could be rusted iron spikes on a railway sleeper. Whatever they are, they clearly fit the bill as old and rusting and decayed. With the sharpest focus on the end of the top rusty spike, that is my natural centre of attention for the image, and I enjoy the rusty colours and textures there. Some of the wood is also in focus, and I would have liked to see more sharpness of the wood and the other spike, with a slightly larger depth of field. There's a brighter short stick or something at the top which tends to draw my eye away. I do like the overall composition with the lines of the wood and the triangular arrangement of the two spikes, and the rocky background providing some context.  |
| 7 | AS Junk Yard sally    | Merit            | The cheerful lady - presumably Sally - makes this image for me, and is the clear focus of attention. Then I explore all the other interesting details surrounding her - including the bizarre skull at top left, and the intriguing letters SPHO. I like the use of perspective, with my eye also led down to the right to some sort of towers, though it feels to me like there could be a bit more space there. Maybe the photo could have been taken from a position slightly to the right (if possible) to show more of that side of the vehicle, and of the interesting looking wheels. I think the image would work a bit better for me, too, if the area around Sally was lifted a little in brightness to reveal more of the shadow detail, while the brighter area on the left, which distracts me a little, was toned down a bit. An intriguing object with a touch of humour and human touch provided by Sally. |
| 8 | AS Limestone Cottages | Highly Commended | What a lovely scene this is, mostly composed of greens and browns, with a blue and white sky. It's beautifully exposed, with everything nice and sharp as well. My eye naturally follows along the line of cottages and the road, to end up at the cottage roof on the right since to me this area, including the foliage at bottom right, feels a bit brighter. For me, a better ending point might be the interesting cottage on the other side of the road with the tree out front. This could be encouraged by darkening down a little the bottom right foliage and particularly the roof of the far right cottage, and then that cottage roof might act as more of another leading line pointing us to the rewards of the cottage with the tree. I really did enjoy exploring this lovely scene, including even a few colourful flowers at the left.  |

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| 9  | AS Mussel shell washed ashore              | Acceptance       | Measured in mussel years, I guess these can count as "Old", although that is belied by the freshness of the colourful nature of the shells. My eye naturally goes to the main shell - positioned in a strong place in the composition, and having the sharpest focus. I would have preferred sharper focus throughout this image, as in my view there really is no need to use a narrow depth of field to highlight any particular object, and there are lost of interesting textures that I would have enjoyed more if they were sharper. I like the overall composition with the lines of seaweed leading me to the main shell, and the second shell providing a kind of reverse echo of the main one. The framing felt a little cramped at the top for me - a bit more space would be good. The framing on the other three sides looks fine. I think the photographer did well to notice this scene and make this image, and with a few enhancements it could be even better.   |
| 10 | AS Old inkcaps                             | Merit            | This is a moment of old age that is quite striking, with a nice contrast between the decaying inkcaps and the background thriving vegetation, reminding me of the life cycle of nature. I have yet to see, or notice, inkcaps in real life, although there is an image of them used for the judge training workshops. I like the clear focus on the closest inkcap, including the fragments inside it. I think it's a pity that the bottom left is cut off - for me this is a bit like cutting off a limb - so close and yet so far. I also think it would have been good to maintain a separation between the two inkcaps - the small amount of overlap makes it look a bit like they are joined. Or maybe I could interpret this as an larger inkcap reaching out to comfort a smaller sibling in their time of decay. A slightly larger depth of focus would have retained more sharpness on that second inkcap. A small point .. I would have preferred a uniform width of the inner matt border. A very interesting image, showcasing the photographer's ability to find beauty in decay. |
| 11 | AS Old Pop Cat Stevens. Bowl of Brooklands | Acceptance       | I've been to a few similar Bowl of Brooklands concerts myself, including Paul Simon with Sting in 2015. It's a fantastic venue. I recall that we weren't allowed to take in "real cameras" so were a bit restricted on getting close-up shots. This shows a rather wide overview of the scene, including the nice foliage in the back. Although there are interesting stage details on the left side of this print, there are some strange looking (to me) colours and textures in the roof above that, and Cat Stevens is quite central in the composition. So I'd suggest cropping in from the left and maybe darkening down that area so it is less confusing and distracting. Some of the shadows in the area on the right could also be lifted to reveal more of the backing band there. I quite liked seeing some of the audience at the bottom, including the guy on the right presumably "excuse me"-ing himself down the row of people with his food after standing in line for a while. This will be a nice memory of the occasion.  |
| 12 | AS Once Was                                | Highly Commended | This clearly fits the set theme, with the building looking rather abandoned. There's a definite painterly feel for me, enhanced by it appearing almost two-dimensional - perhaps through the use of a long lens which compressed perspective, and the lack of shadows to reveal three-dimensional features. So it's almost a series of geometric 2D figures with different colours and textures. My eye keeps coming back to the corrugated iron leading on the wall as a place to rest because of its position in the frame and contrast with the white paint. I do wonder whether that has enough interest to explore to be that focal point, and on balance decided that for me it did. In my view the grass along the bottom is a touch on the bright side, and could be darkened down so it acts as more of a solid foundation for the image than a brighter distraction. I think this is a very thoughtful composition, with the two dark entrances balancing each other, and offering a hint that there could be more to explore inside.  |

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| 13 | AS Once Was           | Merit      | It's clearly been a while since this chandelier was turned on. I like the use of side-lighting to bring out some of the three-dimensional details of the chandelier, and to help illuminate the spider webs. I think the background detail above helps to show that this may be under some old corrugated iron roof, which provides further context. I found the details lower down to be distracting - especially that small bright vertical at bottom left. Perhaps the lower background details could be cloned out. The print didn't seem very sharp to me. Overall I think it's a nice example of finding beauty in the forsaken.   |
| 14 | AS Paint Appeal       | Honours    | The side-lighting produces shadows here with a very real three-dimensional effect, so that I feel like I can almost reach out and peel some of that paint away. And yes, I get the pun. There's a very "raw" and "what you see is what you get" vibe here for me. All the blemishes and dirt on the window are shown, rather than trying to clean any of it up in post processing. And I find the compositional symmetry interesting, including what I think are two patches of reflected blue sky above. The major non-symmetric note of the rusty metal bar just adds more interest. The darker wood at the bottom provides a nice base to this. It's sharp, well-exposed, and well considered.  |
| 15 | AS Return To The Past | Merit      | What a taonga the Waimarie is, and this catches it in a nice position in the composition, facing towards us with the line of the wake leading my eye around the bend in the river to it. The background shows riverbank buildings and farmlands beyond, with grey textured clouds above. The monochrome treatment and the burnt border edge contribute to the feel of history for me. There are two areas where I think this could have been improved. The darker areas including trees on the left seem quite dark to me, and I would like to see the shadows lifted there to show more detail. The other thing is a pure matter of timing. I could be wrong, but that great puff of steam looks like it must have gone away from the paddle steamer many seconds ago, and is now quite disconnected, almost like a patch of low cloud or mist in the riverbank trees. I think that's a shame because for me the image would have been much better if the steam was closer and still connected to the paddle steamer. Still, it's an evocative scene and a great memory of rides on the boat. |
| 16 | AS Still Worth Fixing | Acceptance | This captures a moment of concentration and effort as the woman engages with the task of repairing a what looks like a woven seat of this old chair. The focus on the chair in the foreground and the figure's expression convey a story of perseverance and care. This story is supported by the placement of the subject, with the woman's gaze drawing my attention back down to the seat of the chair. I find the crop quite close, so that the woman's hand is cut off at the top, and that might have provided more contextual information about the repair process. The print itself looks very noisy to me, with some sort of coarse grain. It's hard to know whether this was intentional. The print is also not correctly aligned in the matt - with some of the unprinted paper showing at the bottom. The story is strong enough for me to just accept this.   |
| 17 | AS Ten Minutes        | Honours    | I really enjoyed the humour in this, with the obvious implication that the three people also had to limit their waiting time. The image appears to have been very carefully constructed, with buildings framing left and right, the road forming a base, and roof lines leading down to our three subjects. Everything is sharp and well exposed. All the verticals are vertical. Even the three people appear to be engaged in conversation rather than just saying cheese for the camera. The wide view, rather than just zooming in on the people and the sign, provides I think a very good context including the signs. Well seen and constructed, though I do think it was a bit harsh to call those people old. 😊   |

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| 18 | AS The Last Summer Tomatoes        | Merit      | Looks like these last summer tomatoes should have been picked a little earlier. I think it was a good choice to use monochrome, to highlight the wrinkled textures rather than being diverted too much by colour. I also like the use of a clean back background, and the way the tomatoes are contained well within the frame with ample space around them. I would suggest toning down the brightness on the two smaller tomatoes at the right - these tend to draw my eye, and I think the print would be more compelling with a focus on the two larger ones on the left. I think the photographer did well to choose this as a subject for Old.   |
| 19 | AS Them Boots Were Made For Walkin | Acceptance | These boots sure look like they have done a fair bit of walking, but judging by the cobwebs around them may not have been used for a while. The boots are nicely contained within the frame, and have interesting textures with mostly good exposure, although parts of the shadows are blocked out with no detail. For me, the background of a red framed window doesn't add much to the story and is if anything a distraction, since it is also in sharp focus. It might have been worth moving the boots to somewhere with a plainer background and where they could become more of a main subject. It also appears to me that the print has an overall greenish cast, which is accentuated by the choice of a green matt. This may have been deliberate, but for subjects like this I think it works better for the colour to be more natural. I think the photographer has chosen a subject with great potential - old, worn items with lots of character, and encourage them to do more in this vein.   |
| 20 | AS Weathered Tokaanu jetty         | Acceptance | What a lovely old jetty, all covered in lichen, with a very distinct line leading my eye off into the distance. It's good to see a level horizon, and what I think is about the right amount of sky above. Nice use of repeated elements and rhythm with all the triangular elements. The print doesn't appear particularly sharp to me, and I do wonder whether it could do with a bit more contrast and "punch" - the lichen almost looks a bit washed out to me. So far as the composition goes, I do find that after rapidly following along the leading line of the jetty I arrive in the corner of the print and then tend to leave the frame. I feel this might have worked better if there was more room on the left of the print and more interest to explore off the end of the strong leading line, before my attention returned over to the trees on the right, and then back to the beginning. I can only just see that the jetty makes a right hand turn at that end, which could lead my eye around to the right, but it really is only just a sliver. It was possible - and I know it often isn't - might make that more obvious. Beautiful reflections. Looks like a magic spot and I'd encourage a return visit to explore the potential here. |

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| 21 | AS Weta An Ancient Insect | Acceptance       | Fair enough to call a weta "old", even though I imagine this creepy crawly is in the prime of its life. I think the body of the insect itself is positioned well in the frame, looking into space to the left. It's antennae are cut off at top left, although they are quite long so it's a moot point whether that is a problem. It looks like there may be another weta behind it with its antenna and foreleg intruding somewhat distractingly into the frame. For a non-nature competition like this, it might have been preferable to clone those out. The weta itself looks reasonably, though not perfectly sharp. I find the bright twigs around it to be very distracting, especially since they have the same colour as the weta's legs, which caused me initial confusion in what I was seeing. I highly recommend that the brighter twigs and the foliage at bottom right be selectively darkened to bring the full attention of the viewer back to the weta. In general I think the image may be a little overexposed, with parts of the weta's head and foreleg that look completely bright and lack detail. Perhaps this may have come from reflection of a flash to light the subject in a dim environment - I'm not sure. Macro photographs of insects like this are a great subject, and I encourage the photographer to do more of this, while paying attention to lighting, and minimising distractions. |
| 22 | AS Whanganui Streetlamps  | Merit            | What lovely old streetlamps these are - I wonder if they were originally gas lamps. They are beautifully detailed, and I like the use of a narrower depth of field to soften the colourful background. For me, images like this are all about symmetry and regularity. This image looks very symmetrical in terms of the background, with the same amount and space left and right of the strips of red. The lamps are positioned right of centre though, and not in a central position compared to the background or the overall frame. I also have a feeling that the top horizontal is tilted down to the right. In software such as Lightroom you can use tools to make sure that all the verticals are vertical and the horizontals are also horizontal. I really don't know whether it would be possible to re-shoot this from a slightly different position so that the lamps are truly in the centre of everything, but recommend the photographer try this. What is a good image could be a great image, in my view.   |
| 23 | BO Summers Past           | Honours          | I love this. It speaks to me of the transient nature of life, with the beautiful delicate veins of the decaying leaf. The pure black background sets it off beautifully. Having the leaf vertical and central conveys a sense of stability and peace to me, whereas a more diagonal composition would have been a bit more dynamic and I don't think would have worked as well. There's a small white blemish on the left side of the leaf, that tends to draw my eye - which is fine because in a sense that can be a place to rest, so I'm glad it was left in rather than cloning it out. And, even in death, nothing is perfect. Beautiful. [This was is in the Open section but could just as easily have been a Set Subject]  |
| 24 | BO Wary                   | Highly Commended | There's a strong sense of character and place for me in this - perhaps in a market square in South America. If it was indeed a market square, the photographer has done well to have just a clean paved background. It's a very tricky lighting situation, with her hat shading much of her face from the bright sun above. Judging by how dark the shadow is under her chin, I think the photographer may have lifted the shadows on her face a little to reveal more detail. While I would have liked to see more there, I think any brighter and it would have started to look unnatural. However, it might be worth pulling down the highlights a little, or just darkening the paving stones a little, so her face isn't quite so dark compared to the rest of the image. Because of the story, and the wariness and expression I find this a compelling portrait.   |

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| 25 | BS Long Forgotten        | Highly Commended | What a poignant scene. The old piano, with decaying keys that seem to get worse from left to right. Peeling wallpaper. What looks like a well-considered composition, featuring two main rectangles in the piano and the window. There's just enough detail through the window to hint at what is outside, and a peekaboo view of it through what I think is a break in the window. It all looks nice and sharp, and monochrome suits the subject in my view. There's one suggestion I have that could lift this image even more. The bottom right corner is very dark - perhaps partly because of a vignette - and I think this print would be improved by lifting the shadows there in post processing to show more detail. Well done to the photographer. [ If submitted to a national competition I also recommend having a uniform border to the matt, but this wasn't a factor in my assessment.]   |
| 26 | BS Old Rusty             | Highly Commended | There's a tangible contrast between the sleek, once-careful engineering of this vehicle and the unrestrained wildness of the grass surrounding it, symbolizing a return to nature. I think black and white is always a good choice for a subject like this, to minimise colour distractions and to concentrate on the feeling of aging and the interesting textures. Still, I wonder how it would have looked in colour and I do miss seeing the colours of the rust alluded to in the title. The image appears sharp and well exposed. The crop is quite tight, with the vehicle feeling almost too close to all the edges of the frame for me, though going wider on the left for instance might risk bringing in some more of what could be a distracting background. Overall, a great portrait of an aging Ford.  |
| 27 | BS Old Tin Mill Cornwall | Acceptance       | First - thanks, because this image caused me to look up a bit of the history of tin mining in Cornwall. I gather this is the Wheal Owles pumping engine house, and featured in the Poldark TV series. I think it was used to pump water out of the tin mines way below ground. This print shows how close to the sea the workings were, and the structure almost seems to blend into the rocks behind. The print doesn't seem particularly high resolution to me and may have been a bit oversharpened, with a lack of fine detail and signs of haloing around the edges of the chimney. Such haloing can come about from overuse of clarity or similar, and can also be cleaned up to some extent in tools such as Photoshop. The composition also appears a bit cramped to me - with the chimney almost reaching the top of the frame, and the foreground stone wall cutting through the bottom of the frame. I think it could do with a bit more space around the mill, to show more of the context. This will be a great memory of a visit, no doubt. |
| 28 | BS Oldie But Goodie      | Merit            | So is it the car or the man who is the Goodie? Either way, it's an amusing informal portrait of the man nonchalantly leaning on one of the vintage cars and enjoying an ice-cream, caught mid-bite. With him gazing away I don't feel any particular connection to him. The cropping is very tight but in this case I think it works, and appears to have been carefully planned to be just outside various features on the cars left and right and top. The aspect ratio is very tall which in my view helps emphasise the tallness of the man. It's sharp and well exposed, and in my view merits a step above acceptance.  |

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| 29 | BS Once Loved       | Merit            | This abandoned old house is set in lovely fields and with an old stone wall going off into the distance on the right. I quite like this composition, with enough context for the old building. There's a hint to me of haloing along the hill horizon and around the chimney - this can arise if too much clarity or similar is applied, and can be corrected in post-processing sometime. It feels to me as if the left-hand side of the building is leaning over, rather than being vertical. I think this may be due to wide-angle lens perspective, and suggest using tools in Lightroom or similar to straighten it up. The doorway on the right looks vertical. Exposure looks good, with plenty of details on the house. Generally I think this is a competent record of the scene and perhaps a nice memory of a visit to the area.  |
| 30 | BS Rust             | Highly Commended | This image almost has a tactile feel to it, with just enough light coming from the side to give it a bit of three-dimensionality. I love the use of repetition and rhythm with the bolts across the top appearing to be the source of a dripping-down of yellow corrosion. I think it would be worth considering a crop in from the right so that the top right bolt has some space to the right of it. There's really interesting textures in the yellow, and the unexpected small bit of vegetation on bottom left that contrasts with the decaying man-made material. The print appears nice and sharp in the middle but is much softer on the sides - perhaps a greater depth of field could have been used. Overall a very nice almost abstract depiction of rusty corrosion.   |
| 31 | BS Seen Better Days | Acceptance       | The word that comes to mind on viewing this is ramshackle. Not only is the building falling apart, but there are fallen trees and old sawn off stumps. It's a bit of a mess. I think there's even a cow or two grazing on the far left. The dark forest on the left almost looks malevolent, like it wants to take over. The print appears a bit fuzzy and out of focus to me. I'm not sure whether that is perhaps because of using a slower shutter speed and there is some camera shake, or it wasn't focussed correctly. I think there is a need to draw more attention to the building by comparison with the surrounding environment. While the roof is quite bright, it perhaps needs increased contrast and clarity or texture to highlight its decay, while the front of the building could be a tad brighter, and the surrounding green grass in front and left darkened down to avoid drawing attention away from the building. I think the photographer has done well to notice this scene, and with a few different approaches to it could make an impactful photo. |
|    | 3                   | Honours          |  |
|    | 8                   | Highly Commended |  |
|    | 12                  | Merit            |  |
|    | 8                   | Acceptance       |  |
|    | 0                   | Not Accepted     |  |