

Ripe bunch. Open

A Christmas delight for some!

The photographer has filled the frame with these cherries, keeping the size of the fruit in proportion, documenting their ripeness and some of their imperfections.

The lighting has been well handled to avoid any blowouts from what appears to be windows to the left, and even though the shadows are dark, it is in keeping with the richness of the colour in this fruit giving us an impression that what we see is just the top of a big bowl of them.

With no main point of interest, the photographer might consider using a slight vignette around the outside of the image to help keep the viewer from following the stems out of the frame.

Highly commended.

Common robber fly. Open

Wow! Talk about up close and personal. The photographer has selected well with their aperture here, to be able to have such good detail in the eyes as well as his face and legs, with focus falling away towards the back of the fly. The surface he is on is of a similar colour palette, so compliments the fly well. A superb macro image.

Honours.

Decay. Open

Is it a boat? Perhaps. The image is divided into three sections, with plenty of decay apparent in each level.

In my opinion, the middle section would reveal many more textures if we could see more into the shadows, so the photographer may like to consider raising the shadows in that area. The different textures in the whole image could be further accentuated with a little more contrast.

Merit.

Lost opportunity. Open.

At first glance I wondered what the lost opportunity was, and then I saw the berry!

The berry is nice and sharp, as is the bird...we can even see his tongue! The catchlight in his eye and his ruffled feathers also add to his personality.

The tree is quite 'busy' with lots of leaves, sticks and pods, which threaten to take our attention away from the bird, but once our eyes land on the bird and his dilemma, I personally feel no need to look elsewhere.

Honours.

Male Chaffinch. Open

This little guy looks to be singing his way through his day. Perhaps hoping to attract one of his less colourful female counterparts!

I like the way the photographer has used a depth of field that has given a muted foreground and background, although the background does show some strong, distracting highlights. I can see that there is some movement in the top half of the bird, perhaps caused by his chirping and the resulting vibrations in his throat.

Merit.

Wear and Ngata. Open.

I wonder what this object is? The photographer has roused my curiosity here, by showing just a part of it. The square crop suits the rounded shapes within, and the positioning has been carefully and precisely managed to have the curves both entering and leaving from the left hand corners. There are various interesting textures in this image, and a little more light on the dark black part would, I believe, show even more.

Highly commended.

A good drying day. Set

Nothing like a lovely sunny day with a bit of a breeze to get a some washing dry. These tea towels blend nicely with the colour of the tree in the background, and stand out well against the deep blue of the sky. However, in my opinion, there is a slight blue tinge to the whites, so suggest the photographer check the white balance.

The alternating colours of the towels make for a well composed image, but wonder what the photographer thinks about cloning out the shadow of the other washing line.

Accepted.

Always ready. Set

And we are so grateful to them for manning our beaches.

The concept of this image is appealing, with the close up view we are given of the life saver, balanced and supported by the boat on the water heading out to work. Our boy is ready to go in the next boat if needed. I feel it would be nice to see some detail in the black arm (presumably a wetsuit?) and in the boys eyes, which are obscured by the shadow from his helmet. Although I believe there is some detail there if the shadows on his face were slightly lifted, the better option would be to have had him slightly lift his face to eradicate some of the shadow altogether.

The photographer may like to look at the horizon. I believe it is higher on the right of the image.

Merit.

At the beach. Set

This image puts me in mind of an evening swim at the beach when we were caravanning as kids. A quick dip as the sun went down was a great way to encourage a good nights sleep! With their camera pointed directly towards the sun, the photographer here has managed to minimise the blow out that can so easily occur in these types of images. Well done! The use of black and white takes away any distracting colours that might overpower the image, and we are left with the shallows foaming gently in the foreground while the swimmers wander in, under a cloudy sky. The vignette around the outside ensures our attention is kept within the frame.

A striking image.

Honours.

At the café. Set

This little girl looks a bit restless while she waits for her adult buddy to finish up at the cafe, but the bottle seems to be occupying her attention while she waits. With the sun coming into where the pair are sitting, the photographer has captured some nice rim lighting, highlighting

the delicate features of the wee girl along with her companions red hair. Whilst it might not be intentional, the fact that the girl has turned herself toward the camera, gives us a bit more detail to add to the story, rather than if she was sitting straight up to the table. The darkened edges to this image also help to hold our attention on the single story the photographer wants us to see within an obviously busy cafe.

Merit.

Bathers. Set

A lovely sunny day at the beach, with whanau keeping watch and playing with the young ones in the ocean. Most of this group seem to have their backs to us, which means no one in particular stands out, apart from the group on the left, who also have some reflections in the foreshore. With so many of the bathers wearing black, the photographer may like to experiment with raising the shadows slightly to gain a little more detail in those dark areas, and perhaps desaturating the blue just a little.

Compositionally, the image has good space around the bathers, with a nice amount of foreground to lead us into the main scene. It suits the 16:9 ratio, which removes any unnecessary negative space, strengthening the viewers focus on the bathers. It also has a nice sharp horizon.

Merit.

Christchurch morning. Set

A beautiful day in Christchurch, with a smattering of people out and about.

The photographer has composed this scene well, with the tables on both sides leading us through this relatively busy image, giving us a sense of a relaxed summertime outing.

It's obviously a warm day as the tables in the sun are still empty. Whilst there is enough detail in both the lights and the darks for us to see what's going on, the shaded side of the street has a lot of noise evident throughout, which I find it quite distracting, particularly on the gentleman's face.

I do however appreciate the straight lines on the edges of this image.

Merit.

Citroen. Set

What a cutie! And so bright and fresh. I bet the occupants are enjoying their day out, despite their serious looks. We can see it's a sunny day with the reflections of the light on the shiny red car. The photographer has done well to maintain the feeling of brightness, without having any of the highlights blow out. For me though, I would prefer to see all of the wheels of the car, with it grounded and a little more room for it to move forwards into the frame.

Merit.

Cool in the shade. Set

An interesting piece of street photography.

With such a vast contrast between light and shade here, our attention is initially drawn to the man and his dog on the left, who have the sun shining on them. The light is also reflecting off

the dogs chain and the white parts of the man's tee shirt, as well as the Vespa. It takes a moment to work into the shade and find the couple under the big striped umbrella.

I bet they are very cool in the shade!

From the man through to the right hand edge, everything in the image is linked or touching, so the photographer might like to reduce the negative space on the left of the man. Using some lens correction in their editing programme to straighten that edge of the building, would, in my opinion, also help to improve this image.

Accepted.

Into the sun. Set.

The people and their dogs on this beach look to be enjoying their walk, and it seems others have enjoyed the beach with their vehicles too. The linear composition of this landscape combines the strips of the seas and sky, with the two darker strips of sand and hills. The wheelie marks provide some interest to the foreground, and somehow mimic the shape of the mountains in the background.

The photographer has created some silhouette-ish shapes by shooting into the sun, but I feel the flatness of the sky lets the image down. If they have lightroom, they might like to experiment with the graduated filter, to try and inject some life into the sky. And perhaps have a look at it in black and white.

The 16:9 ratio lends itself well to this landscape shot, as I believe it frames the strongest components of this image without unnecessary space.

Accepted.

Just thank you. Set

With the title of this image, I can imagine myself underneath this view with my arms outstretched saying 'thank you' too!

The capture of the sun is ideally placed in the frame with the rays filtering down through the leaves, mimicking the line of the branches. The lighting has been very well handled with a broad range of tones and evident detail in the darks, but nothing too blown out in the lights. Perhaps the one lighter green leaf could be toned down on the right, but otherwise, I wouldn't change a thing.

Honours.

Laundry Day for delicates. Set

Wouldn't you just love to be a kid and able to swing on that clothes line....but only while Mum wasn't watching! This is a great concept.

The photographer has balanced the washing in the way it's hung out, and the piece that partially obscures the sun is in a perfect position to hide the majority of that blown out orb, while still allowing us to see the roundness of the sun. A larger item of clothing may have been preferable, to obscure more of the whiteness.

I love the landscape behind, with the mist in the hills, suggesting this lady has got her washing out nice and early in the day.

To me, the colouring feels a little over saturated, and the strong contrast in the image is at odds with the 'delicates'. The photographer might like to experiment with the image without the

bottom third, where the shadows, the path and the pot threaten to distract us from the main subject – the clothesline, and the wonderful view beyond.

Merit.

Mid morning. Set

We are led into this delightful landscape image through the fence line and road from the bottom left corner, taking us on a journey to the silhouetted tree. We could carry on up the road, to the signpost, but for me the dark tree and its contrast with the bright sun star stopped me in my tracks.

The tree is striking in its shape, well suited to a silhouette.

The photographer has also produced an appealing sun star, breaking up the otherwise blown out area of the sun. However, the f/16 or above aperture, required for such a star has left the foreground unnaturally shadowed in my opinion. Perhaps they might like to look at raising the shadows, to give us a little more detail in the land.

Highly commended.

Mystery Girls. Set

What a colourful group! This group of girls have been layered and positioned well on three different levels, emulating the shape of a triangle with the angle of the leg on the front girl, leading us into the group. However, in these types of shots, I believe it would be preferable to see all of the hands and feet, rather than have the edges cropped off. If limbs do need to be cropped off, it's a good idea to try and do this midway between the joints.

With such a bright day, the direct sunlight on their faces has sadly resulted in some harsh contrast which, in my opinion, detracts from the image.

Accepted.

Out for a stroll. Set

I love the juxtaposition in this image. The photographer has caught Mr and Mrs Average in the background both looking at these two as they stroll down the street, with what seems to be some purpose, and little concern for the attention they are drawing.

Our attention is held where it needs to be with the main couple in the left third, walking into the image. The background is shadowed, but we can still see it is a sunny day with the dappled light on her parasol, and the reflections on her glasses.....not to mention the sun tan lines!

If the photographer has more room with the original image, they may be able to straighten the image without losing any off the top of the parasol, which would mean they could lose the light section in the top left corner. In my opinion this would be an improvement, and make it a great entry for a street photography topic elsewhere.

Highly commended.

Pippa at Lake Pukaki. Set

A magnificent backdrop. Pippa is positioned nicely on the right hand third, facing into the image. Her seat is almost framed by the boulders below, and enveloped by the mountains beyond, so the image gives me a good natural feel. If the photographer has the ability within

their editing software, I would suggest lifting the shadows slightly on Pippa and the boulders beneath her, bringing a little more detail to the dark patches. I would also like the photographer to relook at the horizon on this image. It falls away to the left, which I find quite distracting.

Merit.

Smooth Waters. Set

I love the composition and execution of this image, and appreciate the challenge the photographer would have had photographing this scene, while meeting the set topic. It would have been far easier to take this image on an overcast day.

The smooth, soft and fluffy waters contrast with the harshness and detail in the rocks. My eyes flow against the current, starting in the bottom left corner and following the trail up to the waterfall in the top right, and then back down again. The only suggestion I can make to improve this image would be for the photographer to check the level. To my eye, the greenish still water would be the level spot, and it seems to be higher on the left, sloping to the right. Rectifying this would also lose the white blob of water bottom left. In my opinion, this small but significant alteration, would make this image next level for this set topic..

Highly commended.

South Beach. Set

Even though the sky is blue, this image makes me think there is a cool breeze blowing, and walking along that path may leave me a bit exposed to it!

Having never been to this beach, I am intrigued as to what the section on the left is. Whatever it is, I would say it's man made, as is the path of blocks and, I believe, the break water we see in the distance. It makes me think more about the lengths man goes to, to try and control or at least redirect nature.

The rocks have some good detail showing, with no harsh shadows and provide an interesting foreground against the increasing wildness of the sea.

Merit.

Stymied. Set

I wonder where this herd is travelling to. They aren't in a hurry, so 'stymied' makes for a good title and puts the viewer in the space behind them, wondering if they will ever get to their destination.

Compositionally I like the way the straggling cows lead us up the road, past the letterbox and round the bend. We are left wondering what is around the bend and indeed how many more cows?

I wonder if this image is a still photo taken off a video camera 📹. It makes for a nice painterly look in the background.

From our view from behind, the photographer has also included what appears to be the windscreen of their vehicle, complete with splash and dribble. In my opinion, this is not obvious enough to be of benefit and becomes more of a distraction once seen.

Merit.

Summer, Lundo Park. Set

These two chaps seem to have the park to themselves, almost making me feel like an intruder. This image is thoughtfully composed, with the concrete expanse and the fence line leading us into the darker, but very attractive sky. With the horizon being in the bottom third, the sky becomes the main feature, which is fitting for this subject. However, the reflection of the sun on the concrete below has caused some blow out in the lighter areas, meaning we can't make out the graffiti which I find slightly frustrating. The fringing around the grass and fence posts is also unfortunate.

Perhaps the photographer might like to see what the image looks like if it were all sky, which has been so well presented.

Accepted.

Sunflower. Set

I was amazed at how big these plants can grow in such a short time! This specimen looks like a fine example, and the bees are obviously enjoying what it produces. Photographing flowers in the shade will always provide more opportunity for detail, but for this subject the photographer has managed to minimise the strong highlights, on such a sunny day, and we can see some detail in the petals.

I feel that a consistent background would have shown the sunflower off better...either all sky, or all shrubbery. The mixture is quite distracting, although the square crop minimizes the impact. The inclusion of the bee adds interest too.

Merit.

Sunny Eventide. Set

Oh my! I love everything about this image!

The golden colours from the sky reflected so well through the water and the waves. And the three birds on the right add a little extra interest.

Beautiful tones throughout. Nothing else to say!

Honours.

Surfers. Set

You can almost feel the spray coming off this water. With the horizon above half way, the top third is dominated by the island, which provides a backdrop to these two lads paddling out for a surf, and also a third dark element, making a triangle with the boys. The story is all about the boys heading out into these seas to catch some waves. Their body language tells me that the older boy on the left is a bit more confident, and his younger brother (?) isn't quite so sure, but won't be left behind. There is detail in the water, and the matching lighter colours of the boys shirts helps them to stand out in the shadows.

Honours.

Taking the Leap. Set.

Oh my word! This lady is braver than I would be! With the expanse of the waterfall behind her, the photographer has made sure we know just how brave this woman is! The story is all

there.....even down to her mate waiting in the water for her. I'm guessing they've already taken the leap!

Most of the water is in direct sunlight, very white and static. I wonder if this lady would be prepared to return when the light was more even, so the photographer could better manage those bright highlights. .

However, there's not a lot you can do about only some of the water being in the shade, and even though it causes some undesirable contrast, the composition of this story almost negates it.

Highly commended

Tongaporutu and Taranaki.

Aren't we lucky to live in such a gorgeous country! There's not too many places in the world where you can stand on the beach and see snow.

The photographer has lined this shot up nicely to show the three eroding rocks in declining sizes from left to right and Mt Taranaki staged in between them and the mainland. With the horizon just below half way, we are treated to the reflections of the rocks in the wet sand, and the expanse of blue sky above the silhouetted hills. The only suggestion I have for the photographer would be to check the edges, and perhaps to lose the left most piece of land, as the reflection seems to disrupt an otherwise clear edge of beach.

Honours.

Wellington waterfront. Set.

There's nothing like the Wellington waterfront on a nice day. There's also nothing like it on a windy day, but I digress!

This image has been well composed. With the three people of interest well spaced and lined up. They are not relating with each other, but we, as viewers can relate to all three. The photographers choice of a panoramic crop is ideal for keeping all the attention on the people, and the aperture has blurred the background sufficiently to highlight the foreground whilst still having enough detail so we know what the background is.

Honours.

Wanganui airport. Set

A nice aerial view of the airport and its surrounds. It's an interesting image to poke around in and I enjoyed the contrast between the winding road leading us in, and the straight runway on the right of the buildings.

With the water in the background on one side, and hay bales on the other, it gives us the feeling of a small country airport, so I was surprised to learn that here is also a commercial pilot academy in Wanganui.

The academy, for me, is the main point of focus with its expansive white roof, with the other buildings forming a line of construction through the middle of the countryside and the image.

Highly commended.

Kotuku. Open

How lovely to have this beautiful bird pose so nicely for you. This kotuku has wisely settled with the sun on his back which, whilst ideal for his resting time, can provide a challenge for the photographer. The photographer has, however, managed to keep some detail in the lighter feathers, although a slight reduction in some selected highlights may bring out even more detail.

The birds eye is sharp, and the aperture used keeps the bird as the main point of focus, with the surrounding debris blurred and not too intrusive.

Honours.

A perfect day in Paris. Set

This image makes me feel like I too am under the Eiffel Tower! The photographer has been helped by unobtrusive clothing choices, with so many people there at the same time, to have them all blend together and have no one particularly stand out. This helps give the feeling of being part of the crowd. The cropping has been well handled to include complete people on the edges, but I would suggest removing the two shadows on the left.

The iconic building has enough included to be recognisable, with its shadow giving us a leading line into the image, and a reminder of its sheer size! The arc frames the distance for us, which clearly shows the city basking in a sunny day.

Highly commended.

Anchored. Set

I'm assuming this is the top of an anchor with the bottom part embedded in the concrete that we can see the rim of at the bottom of the image?

The central crop works well, and the portrait landscape fits with the height of the dominant feature against the horizontal strips of differing background...going from concrete, to grass, to sand to sea and then sky. The photographer has balanced all these elements, with no one element overpowering the others, and kept detail in the lighter parts of the anchor where the sun is touching it. They may like to return to this spot when the sun is directly behind them, in order to try and get a bit more detail in what is currently shaded. I would also suggest that the photographer check the horizon. To me, it appears to fall toward the left.

Accepted.

Basking Lilly lads. Set.

Taken on a sunny day, this wide angle shot of the garden has many different areas of interest; the basking lily pads only being one of them.

From the shadows we see beneath the Lillies, it seems the sun is high in the sky when this image was taken and because of that the light is quite harsh on the flowers, whilst leaving some of the shadows in the surrounding background without any detail.

Whilst the Lily pads are on an intersection of a third, for me the visual weight is with the water feature in the centre of the image.

The photographer may be able to crop in to just the water Lillies, or perhaps revisit at a different time of day (early morning or late afternoon), for another landscape shot. However, be mindful of cropping the tips off anything- in this case the palm tree in the rear.

Accepted.

Catching a wave. Set.

A good play on words in this title, as the light catches this wave, that a surfer might otherwise look to catch.

The wave, coming in from the left is being whipped up to a spray as it breaks and rolls.

The skill of the photographer is evident with the capture of golden light through the frozen spray above the wave.

Honours.

Concentration. Set

Great title! We can see the concentration on this boys face! And the tongue sticking out just adds weight to that.

The shutter speed used here has frozen the actions of the boy and the water, but also leaves us in no doubt as to the movement that's happening. Whilst the square crop puts the boy in the centre, I believe it works well, as he still has some room to move in front of him. The different shades of blue within the image are complimented by the yellow shorts, and the lighting is superb, with no blow outs and a good range of tones from light to dark, with detail evident in both extremes.

Honours.

Dancing in the sunlight. Set

This wee flower does look like it's dancing. By using a well selected aperture, the photographer has successfully distanced the flower from the background, whilst achieving good detail in the flower itself and the surrounding buds. It can be difficult to maintain the whiteness in parts of flowers in full sun but this has been well handled, and nothing is blown out.

With the flower falling between two buds, it would have been ideal if the photographer had been able to declutter the bottom left corner. There is a glimpse of a stem along the bottom that could be removed in post, but the curved one over the corner would have been best dealt with at the time, due to all those hairs. I'm not suggesting hurting the plant....just moving it out of the way while you take the shot.

Highly commended.

Hadrian wall art instillation. Set

I had to google this! What an impressive temporary edifice.

With the sunlight shining directly on to the front, the shadow that falls on the right hand side helps to obscure the tourists that are on the balcony. The colours are vibrant, at odds with the old stone wall in the front.

I like the way the photographer has kept some of the wall in view, so we can see the juxtaposition between the 1900 year old blocks and the modern, colourful architecture above. However, photographing someone else's artwork can be tricky for evaluations, without the photographer adding their own artistic flair. In my opinion this image is a direct reflection of what was on display last year without anything added, so I feel it may be the artwork itself that

I am impressed with rather than the skill of the photographer, although this record shot is well executed.

Merit.

Hang gliding, Wollongong. Set

Wow! What a view! The 16:9 ratio works well with this type of landscape shot, and the photographer has placed the main subject perfectly on the right hand third, with room for him to move in towards that piece of land.

The light has been well handled for the hang glider with the sun bouncing off his sail, emphasising that he is the main subject of this image amongst all the glorious scenery. It is unfortunate that the horizon on this image is not straight. The image falls away to the left, but could easily be rectified in your editing programme.

Merit.

Moving toward the light. Set.

The use of an infrared filter here has produced an ethereal scene, fitting with the content of the image, and a clever play on words with the title. Compositionally, I like the way the church is centred in the image, surrounded by the white trees and gravestones with the 'light' coming in from behind the church. However, there is significant banding in the top right hand corner, which is distracting.

A clever use of this technique, which could be developed further.

Highly Commended.

Pomegranates. Set.

These young fruits have been well captured on a sunny day, with the light just kissing the fruit. The aperture chosen by the photographer highlights the fruit against a blurred background, which seems to be made up of garden sheds, the fence and perhaps a shade house, with the light of the sun contrasting with the shaded areas.

To keep our attention on the well exposed fruit, which is the main subject, the photographer may like to revisit this spot in their garden, and try for a more uniform background - perhaps the fence alone, or even standing on a stool to get above the fruit, losing the bright sky.

Merit.

Summer days. Set.

This looks like a great bridge/ pier to photograph. The vanishing point aspect of the white railings makes for a striking image. The photographer has planned this photo well, and taken the time to compose the pier centrally. I feel that if the highlights were toned down slightly the image would lose the blown out sections, but I would also suggest the photographer look to the lampposts for a straightening guide. By lining the nearest post up with a straight line guide, the image would also be more equal at the bottom where the pier starts. The photographer may also like to clone out the dust spots and check their lens and sensor.

Merit.

Summer Wine. Set

There's nothing quite like a refreshing glass of wine at the end of a sunny day. This is obviously a sunny day as we can clearly see the sun reflecting through the glass, and the hint of blue sky beyond.

I like how the photographer has aligned the glass here, with the second glass reflected in a central point of its stem. Compositionally, I would prefer that centralisation to be carried through to the overall image, rather than the glass being slightly to the right.

The background is nicely muted. However whilst the edge of the main glass has a sharp outline, I feel that the focus should extend to the contents of the glass, or the reflection in the stem.....or preferably both.

Accepted.

Waverider Set

The delight on this young lady's face is the highlight of this image in my opinion. She is obviously enjoying herself, even though the waves might not be supplying too much excitement.

The image has a good range of tones, and nice even light, without any harsh shadows or contrast.

Compositionally, however, I feel that this image would be improved if the board had some more room in front of it, putting the girls face back closer to the third than the centre, and leaving some space for her to travel, before heading out of the frame.

Highly Commended.

Whisp of cloud. Set.

As clouds often have shapes and stories that we can see, I spent quite some time looking at this image, while it poured with rain outside! Thank you for the reminder of what a summer cloud looks like!

In the end, I felt that this cloud is more about the texture than the shape, reminding me of something like soft cashmere wool. The wispieness has been well captured, and the light handled well, with the detail retained in the feathers as well as the heart of the cloud, so I can almost feel the softness.

For me though the image leaves me wanting more. For example, if I could see more of the sky.....to know if this was this the only cloud on an otherwise cloudless day, or if there were other shapes up there.

Merit.

Whitebait Kapiti. Set

This must be a popular spot! I hope they all got something to take home! With the water acting as a leading line, we (as viewers) are led into this image from the left and see a variety of blokes using various fishing apparatus to get their catch. The hills in the background and the brilliant blue sky help to contain our interest in the bottom third, where the action is, whilst also providing some environmental context to the scene.

Because all the action is happening in the bottom third, I would enjoy seeing more detail in the people which the photographer might achieve by experimenting with the gradient filter in lightroom, if they can.

Merit.