

Judge's Comments Group A

Awards:

1st Place: Nipomo dunes.

These sensuous lines and deep blacks make this a stunning image however it's the ability to see into the blacks ever so slightly that sets it apart. The tiny flying wedge of medium gray in the upper right puts an exclamation point on the entire photo. Beautifully executed.

2nd Place: Scotty's staircase.

The cloud in the open window absolutely makes this image. It is well exposed properly composed and appropriately sharp. The right-hand shutter matches the hatch at the top further tying the image together. Well done.

3rd Place: Lights on the Golden Gate Bridge.

Very interesting composition, with the image split nearly in half along the vertical fence. A great range of tones, and a wonderfully esoteric perspective. I might consider removing the lamp post in the background.

HM: Underside of Mushroom.

Successful not only because of its design but because it is critically sharp and has a nice range of tones. My suggestion would be to present this image turned 90° counter-clockwise so that the stem runs out the bottom right-hand corner.

HM: Sonja.

Very professional portrait. The use of light tones, and an almost high key approach, suit the model well. The eyes are appropriately sharp, and hence the focal point of the image. Nicely done.

HM: Prayer Beads.

Wonderful texture in the hand. I would crop in the right so that the edge of the little finger exits the lower right-hand corner. Bring the top down to just touch the bracelet. And crop in just a bit on the left-hand side for balance. Because we are dealing with skin, I would have hoped to open up the blacks in the palm of the hand a bit.

HM: The Forgotten Underwood.

The intentional imbalance completely makes this image. It is sharp and well exposed. The offset carriage may even hint at the sudden explosion of new technology. A very satisfactory photograph.

HM: Remnants of Bodie.

I particularly appreciate the photographer's choice of perspective shooting through the windshield of the car speaks of arrival many decades ago. On the other hand, perhaps this is a lament for lost opportunity. In either case I am chagrined to admit that I missed this photo in my many trips to Bodie California.

Judge's Comments:

Steps And Narrow Street Paris France

Very well composed; the curving steps sinuously lead the eye directly down the street. The white outlines around the buildings as they meet the sky indicate a bit of over sharpening, and I would instead have enhanced midrange contrast to bring out the texture and detail.

Old Church and Modern Art Paris France

An amusing scene this image suffers from compressed tones. I'd think it could be improved in Photoshop with the curves layer bringing down the dark tones and up the middle and lighter tones. The cropping and composition seem fine to me.

Cottonwood In The Narrows

Good eye. Well suited to black and white, this image could be made much stronger by cropping in from the right hand edge so that the trunk of the sapling falls about a third of the way in. The stones at the bottom of the image could easily be removed as well.

Ceramic Bowl at Scotty's Castle

Well positioned within the frame considering the shadow it casts. Pleasing tones and shades of gray. Its solitude speaks for itself, but as a still life, part of me yearns for

something else in the image; perhaps something to indicate human use. Nice shot.

The Path

I like the textures in this slot canyon photo but overall it feels a bit busy and a bit contrasty, or harsh. For me, an image of the slot canyon is about grace and flow and a simple elegance, in this image has a bit too much going on for my tastes.

The lone photographer

This photograph is appropriately crisp and would have failed if it were not. I understand the statement of the broad expanse of sky and the photographer between it and the earth, but I took this image into Photoshop (as I did with many of the images) and cropped the top way down so that the edge of the ridge on the right-hand side exited the upper right-hand corner, and found that I preferred the image that way. I suppose one could do the inverse of that and crop the bottom up so that the left-hand edge of the ridge exited the lower left-hand corner. I would suggest the photographer try both ways and see which one he likes. Perhaps it will be neither of my suggestions.

Sundial Bridge.

This would have been a successful image and likely have landed in my upper selections if it were in focus. Good lines; good tones; interesting structure; appropriately simple; this image has everything it needs except focus.

Shadows and Foam, and Shadows and Foam2.

Both of these images are stronger to me when the black lines at the top are cropped out so that the upper edge of the way is at the upper edge of the photograph the stronger of the two images is Shadows and Foam.

Sand dunes.

This image to become stronger when cropping out the horizon and in fact lowering the top crop to within the dunes themselves. This presents the viewer with an infinity of waves rather than specifying where they quit, and consequently makes the image more interesting. Additionally the images strengthened considerably by cropping the left-hand side so that the shadow exits the lower left corner.

Rough Surf.

I quite like this image the way it is although I am somewhat distracted by the darker water that proceeds upwards from the lower right-hand corner. All it does serve to point directly to the rock, I might consider using Photoshop to make that dark area somewhat lighter. Nice photo.

Rain on the Seattle waterfront.

I find this image stronger if the dark doorway on the left is cropped out. Perhaps a bit of cropping on the top, but the main help is to remove that left-hand edge.

Pelicans and sailboat.

Very nice photograph sharp and active. The problem for me is that the sailboat is too sharp. I would be tempted to take this into Photoshop and defocus the sailboat and background from there on so that the eye is not conflicted between the boat and the pelicans.

Mt. Fuji Reflected in Tanukiko

The problem with cameras is that they record what is there, not what we see. This would be Mount Fuji reflected in a lake if the lake was calm. As it is not, Mt Fuji seems to get lost in this image. The great thing about Mount Fuji is its horizontal extent, and I would therefore modify this photograph to emphasize that, by cropping out the lower two thirds of the water. I tried this in Photoshop and it produced a very strong horizontal image of the mountain.

Intake Towers at Hoover Dam

From the standpoint of architectural photography, this is a nice image. There is a bit too much sky above the mountain for my tastes and I think the image becomes stronger if about two thirds of that is cropped out.

He left without saying goodbye.

This somewhat improbable image makes an interesting still life which could be strengthened by cropping in from the left so that the edge of the suitcase has an equal amount of space between it and the frame as the upper edge of the chair has between it and the frame. Interesting as the peeling wallpaper is above the chair it does not add to the message or the image which becomes stronger if it is cropped to the point of balance with the bottom of the photo.

Columns in Napoleon's Tomb Paris France

This image almost works for me. It does seem to cry out for something to indicate human scale. Cropping in from the left and right about half the width of each of those columns succeeds in bringing the main column more strongly to the foreground, and changing the weight of the picture.

Brass, silver and wood.

Nice still life. Very professional. The only enhancement I see immediately would be to see a little further into the bells which are now essentially pure black.

2331 Elegant flight.

Perhaps using a higher ISO value would have allowed freezing the wings, and thus an overall sharper image. Using automatic iso along with continuous focus tracking when shooting wildlife will help you capture more images.

Young cowboy.

A little too much leftover space on the left hand edge; I would crop out half of it. I might also tone down some of the whites in the background to help bring the young man forward.

Wooden stairs.

Nice documentary shot. I appreciate being able to see into the shadows. I would crop off just a bit of the top and a small amount of the right-hand edge.

Sur riverbed sunlight.

A wonderful light and ethereal image. There are however two spectral highlight areas of equal value in the image, and human nature expects the sun to be the brightest of the two. Therefore I would knock down the white at the curve of the road near the center of the image just a bit so that the sun becomes the appropriately brightest source in the photograph.

Sharpening wheel.

This is a photograph of an object, and as such would be better served by concentrating the viewer on the object itself. The uniform space on the upper left adds nothing to the image so I would crop down from the top significantly; in from the left so that the leg is just within the frame and a bit from the right perhaps to the lip or near the lip of the shovel. This results in a stronger image.

Sail and sun.

Overly sharpened, and a bit too much HDR for my taste.

Point sur.

Overly sharpened; the rock has a white line all the way around its upper surface. I'm not sure that the beach sand at the bottom serves any purpose and I would crop out almost all of it leaving only a fine dark line at the bottom to help balance the line of the wave. This is essentially a horizontal image, but I was not able to crop it to emphasize that enough for my own tastes. If the photographer is comfortable in Photoshop I might suggest cropping in from the left hand side to the little pole on the access route and then extending the right-hand side by twice or more so that the horizontal lines occupy the full right-hand third of the image. Just a thought.

Pelicans and surf

I believe this image could benefit from cropping the bottom up about halfway into the rocks and some enhanced tones in the upper rock wouldn't hurt.

Long forgotten.

The image needs to be straightened so that the windmill is vertical and the horizon horizontal. Some more contrast and structure would not hurt. I would play in Photoshop to see if I could make the sky more dramatic as well.

Little boy.

Cute shot of what we used to call an "urchin." The main thing I would do with this image is put a bit of sparkle in the eyes.

Let's play.

As a pool player myself, I've seen that perspective a million times. My only suggestion for this image would be to darken the background behind the person who is racking the balls.

Iron dragons face off.

This image needs less space around it. One could crop out half of the sky above the bridge and half of the water below it. In the left a little less than half of the space; and in the right just enough to get rid of the barely visible support. Nicely captured.

Ginza after dark.

Nice detail without appearing to have been over sharpened. The spectral lights are just a bit too white for me, and while I realize it is the Ginza, taking them down just a tiny bit might improve the image. Nice composition.

Feather strokes.

Tough subject to shoot, this image fails due to camera motion. Here again the use of a higher ISO; and image stabilization (if handheld) might have achieved more satisfactory results.

Fallen limb.

Cropping in from the right and down from the top would strengthen this image. It would be nice if the background trees were a bit lighter, thus receding them into the distance, but I'm not sure that the effort involved would be worth it.

El Capitan.

Nice tones capture the rocks of El Capitan very well, this image would be stronger if it were cropped in from the left hand side to the point where the Mountain meets the tree, or nearly so.

Caleb.

I think I would crop off a bit of the right hand side so that Caleb is seen entering the image not balanced in the middle of it.

Badwater sunset.

This image would be improved if the sharpening halo along the outline of the mountains was removed and if the mountain on the left were receded a bit by lightening its tone. Further, the "flying saucer" in the sky on the upper right needs to be spotted out.

Alone on the Prairie.

Its image to sufferers from over sharpening problems, particularly in the windmill. The sharpening in the body of the house is fine and directs the eye to it. As an experiment I would suggest the photographer drop this image into Photoshop, add a curves layer, and hit the automatic button. Soing so may be a little bit much, but it pops the house. Some work making the skies more dramatic would benefit the images well. I preferred this image to "long forgotten."

All smiles.

Nice image. I would just tone down that bar in the background.

All aboard Disney Limited!.

This image is much too over sharpened for my tastes. It appears to be a tone mapped HDR, a fashionable technique to which I am unable to adjust. To my way of thinking, the

use of HDR should be nearly invisible, serving only to enhance the image, rather than change it.

A window into the past.

The vignetting is a bit too strong for my tastes in this image, and I think I would prefer it if the vertical lines were vertical. This image is well exposed, and reaches inside the building.