Padre Trails Camera Club

Black and White Portraits

Group AAA   Dec 29, 2014

01.Man and his horse.jpg   - **2nd prize**

Technically excellent job, with rich, strong blacks and whites.   Also, I'm drawn to the strong communion between horse and rider.   Curve and light of his hat brim is well-placed, pulling horse and man together.   You can unify several subjects this way, by having them overlap or touch - done here with the hat.   Nothing is extraneous - tight cropping works well, and your strong vignette on horse's ear kept it from being distracting.   Also like your border - it draws me into textures on the horsehair, man's hair and beard, and even his hatband feather.   Would like to see that one hair taken out between man's glasses and horse's eyebrow.   Otherwise terrific!

02. Andrew.jpg

You did well to capture the variety of textures here - hatband, beard, shirt, eyelashes and eyes.   A good, sharp image, and you did well to throw the background out of focus.   I wish he had been looking more at the photographer, to get a better sense of those gorgeously clear eyes.   He also has a nose that I would avoid photographing from the side, but that's just me.

03. Freedom Is Not Free 1.jpg

Photographer did reasonably OK under very difficult lighting conditions.   Personally, I avoid mid-day bright light like the plague!   Unfortunately you lost details in the helmet and on his shoulder.   Of course, you were probably on vacation, and standing there hoping a little cloud would float by!   I like that you threw the background out of focus, and kept enough light and detail in background to keep it interesting.   And, I like that you kept him off-centered, looking into the photograph.   I think, though, that I would like to have seen more of him.   Including only the essentials is one of the most important keys to good composition.   If something doesn't add to the subject, not detracts from it.   Like a poem.   However, there are times when showing the subject in its environment tells the story better.   This may be one of those times.   This leaves me wondering … was he was carrying a rifle, or leaning on something …

04. Freedom Is Not Free 2.jpg

I guess this is a photograph of a print or pencil drawing?   The textures are beautiful, and you got all the details this time.   Again I feel a bit unsure of what I'm looking at (like people in the background in lower right), so wish I could see more.

05. Georgette.jpg

Very cute little girl, and you caught a wispy little moment.   And I like her "Love" jacket.   Kids are kids, and sometimes you're doing well just capturing them not moving!   This would've have been helped if the sun hadn't hit her nose and chin.   You could possibly have stepped a bit to the right to shoot.   Or you or someone could hold an object over that splash of sunlight   -- doesn't

have to be anything fancy - just a hand, or another small object.   Or, better yet, if anyone was standing around with a white paper or notebook, you could block that blotch and also kick in a little more light into her shadowy face, sparkling up those pretty little eyes (eyes being the "windows to the soul").

06. Heads Up First Time.jpg - **3rd Prize**

Love the lighting, and how you warmed this up!   And, I love that you used such a small depth-of-field that you caught the eyes dead sharp, and let everything else go.   If this truly was one of baby's first shots, you did a wonderful job!   You might want to try darkening the very top of the foreground blanket, so that it would blend better and draw less attention.

07. India-folk dancer.jpg

You've caught an interesting moment!   Relatively flat lighting lets us see all the details.   The portrait photographer in me wants to get in and soften her skin tones and blemishes, but I think just going to a warmer, more sepia-like tone would serve you well here, too.

08. Just One More Round.jpg - **Honorable Mention**

This lighting is just downright gorgeous, as are the props, textures, and the thought behind them.   And though it's gorgeous, I think a bit different cropping would help it.   It's a bit too 2-sided to me, but maybe that's what the maker intended.   A line that goes from edge to edge, like this vertically running window sill, has the effect of creating two competing pictures.   Personally, I would crop out the window frame on the far left, and a bit from the top.   And, sorry but I wish there was a bit more foreground.   Finally and most importantly, I would've put that whisky bottle more towards the window, about at the end of his elbow.   The line of his shoulder would draw you right down into the bottle there, and light coming thru it would look great, too.

09. Rosie Junior.jpg

This is another nice little portrait.   I like that she has her face turned , and that her eyes are following that direction.   Also like the light hitting her topknot.   A little vignetting would help this, I think, and be careful about those blotches of light coming in where you don't want them -- here on her neck and ear.   My attention goes to the lightest part of the print, and it's there, which is not what you want.   You might also try less depth of field.

10. Silver haired cowgirl.jpg - **1st prize**

Well, I really love this whole print, but especially the hat brim and very, very, very subtle and tranquil background lines!   What a statement this makes!   As a horizontal composition, it's more passive and serene than if it were vertical.   And again I like the scratchy border, which pulls me into her wispy hair.   Those background lines hold my interest, and keep me coming back in under her hat and to her face.   I might like to see her eye a wee bit lighter, but I'm not

even sure if I would like that!   Would have to try it and see.   Great job!

11. T.W.jpg

You captured a nice guy, with good light in his eyes.   I like the detail in the jacket!   Next time try to avoid such a "hot" background as this, where you've "blown out" the background and part of his face.   Careful of distractions right on the edge of the frame, like the one on bottom on his arm.

12. Twirling Good Old Days.jpg

Sparkles, textures, a great smile and deep blacks make this photo work.   And the baton.   Strong sunlight was a killer, though, and the lack of sharpness.   Good job on capturing the spirit of the moment, however.

13. Untitled Portrait.jpg

This is really interesting.   A bit unsettling to me, but interesting.   The gentle hands are nice, but they contrast dramatically with the tearing/torn/damaged feel I get from the rest of the print. Leaves me a bit confused, but again, that edginess may be exactly what the maker intended. Just not my cup of tea, but I do appreciate the venture into uniqueness.

14. Young unmarried man.jpg

A nice character study, and it comes with a full range of blacks and whites that are richly done. Again that overhead sun makes it nearly impossible not to "blow out" those whites such as happened on his shoulder.   Also makes it nearly impossible not to get squinting and those deep shadows under the eyebrows.   Still, it's nicely presented.