

MCC Monthly Competition Results April 2023 - Jacques

Alias	Star	Title	First	Last	Score	Award	Comment
AS	2	Duzi splash	Jan	Lens	9	Silver	The idea was good. The author chose a promising position, selected an appropriate shutter speed and focal point, with a suitable depth-of-field aperture. Unfortunately the timing was unkind and such was the volume of spray that even the redeeming eye of the paddler is compromised by a water droplet. In such situations one might try taking a burst of shots on high-speed continuous in the reasonable expectation that one of them will deliver that <u>essential clarity on the face.</u>
AS	3	123 Hold your Breath	Cornelia	Appel	11	Gold	Good composition and depth of field that establishes the context of the action, with that action dominating the foreground. Timing the shutter release has left the faces of the paddlers free of any obscuring by the paddles, but those faces might do with a little more light since they convey the anxiety of the moment captured. Because the water throws up such strong, contrasting light, it would be helpful and perfectly legitimate in this category to select the two faces and either use levels or brightness to lift the shadows and enable them to dominate the ambient light reflected off the water. Noise reduction would improve the final result.
AS	3	Getting Back in the water	Cornelia	Appel	10	Gold	Of the three elements in the image, paddle held upright, man entering the water and canoe being launched, the most interesting feature which is the man's face, is lost in shadow. A further distracting factor is that paddle blade hovering at head height on the right. To record the necessary action that the category requires, the author might have taken more images and selected one less static .Focus and colour have been well executed but there is not <u>enough in the image to provoke a spontaneous "Wow!"</u> .
AS	5	Duzi 2023 - Mission Rapids 8609	Terry	Burne	13	Merit	The tight crop, vibrant colours and the position of the paddles create a strong base for the many promises this images delivers. Against a suitably diffused background (clever choice of aperture), the hands and faces are in sharp focus. Shadows have been lifted from the faces to reveal the tense anxiety in their expressions, allowing the viewer to share vicariously the turmoil so clearly shown in the water bouncing off the front of the canoe. Little details, , like the clarity of the word "Dusi" on the raised paddle, conspire to make this a fine image in the <u>category of sporting events.</u>
AS	5	Im Winning	Roger	Fanner	11	Gold	It's a pretty image with several strong points: the bright colours, the acute focus on the front car that is winning, the compositional flow from the slightly diffused back car to the detail of the one in front, the more diffused context of the track behind the cars and the anchoring frame of the old tyres at the base of the image. Would this image not be better if it were not so static? Slight panning with a slower shutter speed would let the viewer know that they are actually moving and one could share in the presumed exhilaration of the one who is winning. When helmet visors mask faces to extinction, the riders take on the character of little robots. With less opaque visors it is often possible (quite legitimately) to use light (exposure or brightness) to reveal a semblance of a face behind that window of the visor. In this case it appears impossible through no fault of the photographer.
AS	5	The Master in Action	Leon	Heyes	14	Merit	This is an exquisite image that flawlessly captures action in its purest form. Although the action is frozen to highlight every little detail of muscle, dust, sinew, harness facial expression and bodily stress, the sense of sustained movement is nevertheless overpowering. Horse and rider blend into a single unit of awesome thrust as their eyes lock on to the same target and their bodies lean in dangerous unison to meet the challenge they face as one . Perfection would have been shutter release a split second earlier to avoid that white pole running <u>through the horse's face. Speak of knit-picking.....</u>
AS	5	Through the rapids	Des	van Tonder	13	Merit	A well-composed image that gives the canoeists space into which to plunge and a fine impression of the waters awaiting them. Timing has kept the paddles suitably positioned with the sponsor's name sending the message of a competitive event. Apart from good colour balance and satisfying tones in what appear to be overcast conditions, the expressions on the faces of the two participants are prominently recorded . Since that is where the essence of the message lies, a little more light on the expressions would give more immediate impact to the <u>image.</u>

AS	5	Water polo Maritzburg College 4185	Terry	Burne	11	Gold	The moment holds promise with several engaging features, such as the bright ball flying out of reach, the two competing hands with fingers outstretched crossing in the centre and the closed eyes of the player in the water seemingly closed in prayer. Unfortunately the combined result comes across as just a little too messy to deliver a collective promise of visual impact. With all those things in the background, particularly the horizontal bars running across the image, the eye cannot rest comfortably on the action. While the face of the player on the right is in sharp focus, that of the one on the left is less so. Taking water polo shots from this angle will probably require repetitive trials to discover the most appropriate aperture setting.
N	1	2 Birds - CB	Craig	Backhouse	12	Gold	At the one-star level the author deserves credit for spotting the opportunity, successfully addressing a dark object against a bright sky and delivering the bird on the left with sharp focus, clarity and commendable feather detail. The clean lines of the beak and the bright eye capture the viewer's attention. As one moves up the ranks, experience will teach more about composition and the fact that if one can change one's position, it might be possible to avoid the little yellow intrusion of the second bird's beak or perhaps even the second bird altogether. But you will also find that birds can be annoyingly insensitive to photographers' composition preferences.
N	1	Dragon Fly - CB	Craig	Backhouse	12	Gold	A challenging subject that has been recorded impressively. Placing the subject on the diagonal is generally pleasing and in this instance it is complemented by excellent lighting and detail on the head of the dragonfly. The eye then travels to the wings where the gossamer texture is finely recorded with excellent focus and shutter speed. I presume that white patch under the tail is a reflection off water. Within the restrictions placed on manipulation, you might try to dilute its visibility with the dodge and burn tool but be careful not to eliminate it completely in breach of the rules. The generous negative space around the dragonfly might be cropped slightly to focus attention more immediately on the subject.
N	1	Manikin 2	wynand	lens	11	Gold	A brave attempt considering all the foliage between the subject and the camera. But the composition that invites the eye to travel from left to right is good, especially since it climaxes in the head of the bird turning to engage the photographer. The detail on the visible feathers, the sharp eye, the morsel of food in the beak and the effective colouring are all strengthening factors. The obscuring surrounds do not affect the great promise this photographer has in addressing challenging opportunities.
N	1	Water Lily - CB	Craig	Backhouse	11	Gold	At the one-star level this image is heading in the right direction. Although house flies crawling over a water lily do not make for a pretty picture, the author has addressed the reality and recorded it. While the composition is not adventurous, it adequately serves the prominence of the flies. Would the image have had more aesthetic impact if the depth of field had extended beyond the yellow centre and dwelt on the detail implicit in that profusion of white petals successfully set against the dark background.?
N	2	Battle armor	Jan	Lens	9	Silver	A nice idea that calls for a far more delicate treatment in the processing. As presented here, the image is too dark, too harsh in its contrasts and rather lacking in the engaging detail which is likely to be there, just waiting to be extracted. While the principal subject is the grasshopper, the crop might also be less tight, to allow the viewer a greater appreciation of the environment in which the subject finds itself. The focus and detail on the head and the collar immediately behind it are commendable.
N	3	Bloody good snack	Marna	Roelofse	11	Gold	The image comes across as a well-focused point-the-camera-and-shoot picture. The message of predation is conveyed by the blood on the mouth while the expression of distant detachment in the eyes suggests the after-dinner, lip-licking satisfaction the author has suggested in the title.. I wonder whether the mauve/magenta prominence of the background should not be reduced and the subject placed less centrally in the front. Does enough impact not result from a tighter crop to just the head instead of a body that ends in that funny little bobble of an amputated tail?

N	3	Growling Caracal	Marna	Roelofse	11	Gold	The strength in this image lies in the sharp focus on the face of the cat and the detail that has been captured. Perhaps detracting from it are the over-powering background with its harsh light and the heavy application of contrast to the whole image, which leads to a harshness in the fur of the animal while it should present as soft and cuddly in comparison to the menacing teeth and rough tongue so cleverly detailed in the image. The composition is good as is the inclusion of the ears. Would a different camera angle have reduced the harshness of the background light? Less contrast would have been helpful.
N	3	Here is looking at you JUNIOR WINNER	Magda	Bezuidenhout	13	Merit	This is a nicely-balanced, clear, sharp image with the green context in which the owl is presented being suitably diffused to establish its presence without being obtrusive. The colour saturation is well controlled and discreet to enhance the delicacy of the feathers which are sharp and detailed. The author has placed those captivating eyes and beak on an upper third of this portrait image, creating an arresting focal point that holds the viewer's interest in admiration.
N	3	Say Ahhhhh	Marna	Roelofse	11	Gold	A moment worth waiting for that has captured, in sharp focus with appropriate detail, areas that will engage the viewer's attention. The very bright back lighting presents a challenge and the result has been a loss of colour, texture and tone on the greater area of the lion's head. In such situations of back lighting, you might try Aperture setting and a minus EV as low as -1.5. That ought to reduce the bright light behind but you may still legitimately use shadows and highlights to restore the detail in the areas where you want it. Although placed dead centre, the relevant part of the image dominates successfully. I wonder what moving it slightly to the left would have produced?
N	3	the green point	Cornelia	Appel	10	Gold	Although the image does not achieve the impact intended, the author deserves credit for the idea that provoked it. The image suggests transience in Nature with the eye travelling from the out-of-focus full blooms that have reached maturity to the sharply-focused point of new growth and regeneration. Is the impact of that "green point" sufficiently strong to convey the intended message? Also, with all that out-of-focus green foliage around it, the impact of the "green POINT" is further diluted. The image should make its statement visually without the benefit of a title. In this case it does not quite do so.
N	4	Tree mushroom	Tracey	Rhodes	12	Gold	The image has been well composed with the principal subject filling the frame in interesting levels of substance and focus. As a close-up rather than a macro of the mushroom, the author's use of a dark surround has the effect of drawing the eye to the precise centre where the delicacy of the fine veins in the construction of the mushroom can be appreciated. Noticeable is the interesting depth of field with the left edge of the front mushroom matching the focus on the bark of the tree trunk in the righthand background. Would the application of LEVELS in the processing further enhance the image?
N	4	Waking up	Tracey	Rhodes	13	Merit	The immediate impact of the image results from the sharp focus on its detail set against a contrasting black background. Fine control of the lighting presents the water droplets in exquisite detail while the astutely-chosen depth of field further enhances the visual effect by slightly diffusing the green stem as a precursor to the petals in the background that have been rendered in a muted grey. The saturation of the gentle mauve colour completes the enchantment of the image.
N	5	Baboon spider 4057	Rob	Hart	12	Gold	The strength of the image lies in the exquisite focus, detail and colour of the spider's head. As a macro image it is flawless in what it invites the eye to rest on at that point. Less engaging are all those limbs in their varying degrees of diffused focus and interruptive positioning, particularly the prominent one in the righthand foreground. While the out-of-focus body of the spider behind its head seems acceptable, I wonder what the effect would be of narrowing the image down to its central point and divesting it of some of the surrounding, unfortunately amputated limbs.
N	5	Dikkop covers chicks	Rob	Hart	13	Merit	Although one needs the title to know that it is covering chicks, that information is not necessary to acknowledge the photographic excellence of the image. In terms of composition, the angle of approach is clever. It offers more than a head-on approach would. The result is that the eye and beak are important focal points in the detail they offer the viewer. Complementing those features is the exceptional feather detail sustained throughout the bird. A final touch of excellence is the level of diffusion in the green background whose strong colour sets off the delicate tones in the contrasting colours of the bird's feathers.

N	5	Found In The Pumpkin Patch	Maxi	Holder	14	Merit	A most impressive image whose subtly contrasted colours and exceptional clarity immediatel invite the eye to wander around it and absorb all the information it offers. The composition is clever. That long body acts as a compelling, lead-in line from left to right. The placement of the sharply detailed head of the Mantis with its prey on the right third creates a lovely balance to the image. Nothing is amputated, everything is sharp and the yellow flower with its vortex centre forms such an appropriate context for the insect, with its potentail victims scattered around below. The relativity of life is messaged in such brutal predation by such a small, seemingly benign insect!
N	5	Framed	Des	van Tonder	12	Gold	This engaging image with its colourful contrasts has been cleverly presented. It demonstrates just how small this species of bird is in relation to the environment it frequents. Since these birds are both rare and elusive, it seems mean to expect the photogpraher to assume an angle of approach that does not amputate the tail. but achieving that would elevate this image to the next level. The accurate colouring and bright eye are commendable. Quite legitimately in this category, the knit-pickers might have reduced the glare on the beak of the bird to allow the colur intensity to match that of the rest of the subject.
N	5	Little Ashy Flycatcher	Maxi	Holder	13	Merit	This modestly-coloured little bird has been recorded and presented with flawless photogrpahic skill.The diagonal presentation and detail of the tree branch on which it is sitting is the first of several iimpressive factors. The background complements the image in both its degree of diffusion and muted colours. Feather detail has been achieved with an obvious understanding of the natrual light that falls on the back of the bird.. The final element of achievemnt is that slightly turned head with its prominence of a bright, catch-lit eye.
N	5	Nothing Goes To Waste	Maxi	Holder	13	Merit	A pleasing image in bold colour that conveys the message of predation in a harsh enviroment where jackals are compelled to snatch doves from the air for survival. Sharp focus on the subject provides impressive detail on both the jackal's fur and the feathers in its mouth. The diffusion and contrasting colours of the background amplify the visual impact of the image. Would it improve the image if it were not placed so squarely in the middle of the frame? To elevate this fine image to the next level it would need it to be less static. A mixture of luck and the patience of Job might deliver one of those iconic moments where jackal and dove are both airborne in their respective modes of pursuit and escape.
N	5	Owl portrait	Heidi	Taylor	14	Merit	The immediate impact of this excellent image derives from the exceptional feather detail and the control of the whites that abound in the crucial areas of the bird's face. Not only are the whites well controlled but the chosen exposure has allowed them to appear in various shades that blend into grey tones. The depth of field accommodates both the beak and eyes while allowing the less important areas to recede gently from prominence. Would a little more light in the eyes and adjacent feathers rob the image of some of its inscrutable mystery or would it enhance the character portrayed?
N	5	Pied yellow foot	Rob	Hart	10	Gold	This tempting subject would present some formidable challenges to the most gifted photographer with the finest range of equipment. It may be relatively easy to focus on the head of the insect and capture, with the commendable sharpness and detail shown here, all the intrigue of those features that suggest an alien immigrant from another planet. Less simple is the task of including with the same detail the willing embrace of those extended arms. The Pied yellow feet of the title have lost their detail in a blur. While the head deserves credit, the white predeominance of the body is blown and the perch on which the spider is seated promises nice colour but disturbing intrusion. Perhaps try cropping the image down to that cute little head?
OP	3	Delicate	Meleney	Naik	10	Gold	Delicacy there certainly is, in abundance. Some of it, however, seems to have been lost in the mono presentation. As offered to the viewer, the image seems rather flat, lacking in defnition that is there and failing to reveal the very interesting contrasts between light and shade. The tight crop is persuasive and the focus good, but playing with LEVELS and SHADOWS/HIGHLIGHTS over the image might deliver the more rewarding result the author has reason to expect.

OP	3	Orange and Navy Drops	Meleney	Naik	12	Gold	The judges' course tells us: "If you don't know, say you don't know." That is precisely my dilemma in this case. I see clean, well-focused lines in predominantly circular shapes. Their assembly has a commendable flow between the respective sizes. If the title had not suggested "drops", I would not have looked for any of the liquid kind. But the overall artistic design within the image is pleasing and the blend of the colours navy into orange has been cleverly executed. In searching for the message, I have decided the image could happily translate into a large canvas to grace the walls of a modern room where the furnishings are in friendly symbiosis with this image.
OP	4	beans beans the musical fruit	Liesl	Couperthwaite	11	Gold	In terms of content, focus and colour this is a competent record of a sidewalk food stall. In the OPEN category one can choose to focus on just the dishes or to include the context of the street in which the stall is. The present crop does neither and the image might be improved in the processing by reducing or removing bits of motorcycle wheels that draw the eye away from the trays of food items. The dish in the corner might also benefit from having its entirety included in the image.
OP	4	river eating	Liesl	Couperthwaite	11	Gold	The charm of the image lies in those cheerful, soft pastel colours of the umbrellas with their circular shapes set against the squared, military precision of the tables. While some of the surrounding areas do provide context for this outdoor eatery, the top left area of amputated tree trunks and a profusion of decaying banana leaves could be reduced for greater focus on the stream whose effect is well-revealed in the destruction visible in the distant righthand corner of the image.
OP	4	symmetrical floor tiles	Liesl	Couperthwaite	10	Gold	Tempting subject matter for a photographer that possibly holds more promise than is realised in this image. Would a removal of the conflicting designs at the top of the image not emphasise more successfully the "symmetry" that attracted the photographer's attention? Also, the tiles of principal interest seem to call for a little more colour and definition to allow them to create impact rather than just awareness.
OP	4	The Last Autumn Leaf	Doug	Couperthwaite	12	Gold	The image derives impact from composition, lighting and detail. The composition uses a strong, diagonal line to bring the eye down to the end on the major beam and the area where the leaf rests. Light has cleverly been allowed to backlight the leaf without reducing detail on the areas of the context in front of it. The contrasting red of the leaf is enhanced by the fine texture and many nuances of yellow and muted white found in the detailed rendition of the wood.
OP	5	Dripping curls	Heidi	Taylor	10	Gold	The author deserves credit for spotting the opportunity and for composing the image on that diagonal that runs from the dominant base to the delicate extremity of the plant. The effect of the receding circles is also effective but what seems less successful is the focus throughout in an image that calls for definitive detail on both the curls and the drops. There seems to be a strange inconsistency with some very small areas threatening sharp focus while others seem to suffer from insufficient depth of field.
OP	5	fantailed cisticola	Stephen	Pryke	11	Gold	Some superb moments in attitude and on the detail of the bird's feathers and claw. The eye is well positioned and sharp even if the adjacent white feathers test the boundaries of being blown out. In this category one is free to manipulate and it would be relatively easy (and effective) to remove much of the distracting vertical lines that run through the image and diminish the impact of the bird itself. For example, that white stalk appearing to grow from the bird's head would not be missed if it were removed. But the cuteness of the pose has strong appeal.
OP	5	Frosty Midlands Morning	Stephen	Pryke	12	Gold	The charm of the image lies in the bottom two thirds of what has been presented. The acute detail of little things, the stark contrasts of black and white in the silhouette effect of the trees and the subtle transition to the mists above them, are all impressive. Less satisfying is that heavy, black mountain with the halo running along its edge. The birds in silhouette are a nice touch. I thought of cutting out the mountain as an improvement but it did not work. If there were more foreground the image might be strengthened or if you are really adventurous a replacement sky might redeem the mountain. But now I am treading on dangerous ground.....

OP	5	Half a wish	Ronelle	van den Heever	13	Merit	A delicate image that has immediate impact and charm. The central white focal point preserves all the subtle detail without blowing out any of the components. From there it fans out symmetrically to engage the nuances of green in their varying depths of field , which adds an important element of depth to the image. The darkened surround creates an appropriate context which forces the eye of the viewer back to that immaculate centre. While the diffused yellow item in the bottom righthand corner is not obtrusive, less so it that whitish splotch at the top left. A gentle brushing over it might improve an already fine image.
OP	5	Master Climber	Ronelle	van den Heever	11	Gold	The strength of the image lies in its portrayal of the cat. Lighting, detail and textures are all well handled. Particularly arresting are the eyes that signal the cat's intention and direction of climb. A pity that the very dominant tree trunk takes up half the image with its little white bobble at its lower edge. Aslo, in this category all those invasive white light traps could be reduced or even removed to allow the eye of the viewer to dedicate itself to all the implicit charms the author has generated in the face of the cat.
OP	5	St Marys Lighthouse Newcastle 8885	Terry	Burne	13	Merit	A strong image with immediate impact as a result of its fine composition. The path leads up to the dominant element in the image while not skimping on the details around it that form its base. That presents an interesting contrast of circles and straight lines, The clever introduction of muted colour to the lighthouse emphasises its function as it stands sentinel to the vista of distant ocean whose shipping it protects. The strong, foreboding clouds in the sky add a further dimension to the threats of Nature that justify this man-made element of protection. <u>The detail throughout is compelling.</u>
OP	5	Transvaal daizies	Ronelle	van den Heever	11	Gold	The use of the zoom surround is commendably adventurous but I wonder wheher it does not diminish the presentation of the flowers that are the central subject. In comparison to the almost electric vibrance of the zoom effect, the daisies themselves seem dull and insufficiently lit up to display their detail. The image may engage the viewer's interest and hold it more effectively on the flowers if that whoooooosh of the frame were not quite so competitive. Could the symmetrical balance of the three green stems be more sensitively aligned?
PA	5	Arum Whispers	Leon	Heyes	15	Merit	A flawless work of Art, inspired and inspiring in both the photographic capture and the treatment it received in the processing department. The acute focus on the flower is complemented by the immaculate control of the various nuances of white in its structure. The green stem serves as a strong lead-in line for the eye to follow until it gradually dissolves into those ever-diminishing, smokey wisps that suggest the ephemeral nature of the flower as its substance will soon wilt into oblivion. Apart from the stark black background creating the contrast that gives prominence to the flower, the progressive disappearance of those eerie white wisps into darkness add to the mystery of where all living things are destined to go.
PA	5	End of the line	Stephen	Pryke	11	Gold	The image very cleverly generates a tension of expectation and consequence in the idea that it presents. There is something delectably sinister about that monster machine coming into view with its fate balanced on the comparatively delicate rail that, in their dissembled state, promise disaster. The receding focus from the small stones in the foreground to the less defined but monstrous railway engine about to crash on them, is clever. I wonder if the pending drama would not be intensified by a stronger conversion to mono with more definition rather than just suggestion about the vital components of the image.
PA	6	The Black Swan	Vicki	Street	10	Gold	The delicacy and charm that is the visual essence of Swan Lake does not announce itself in this image. Although the malignant conspiracy of the Black Swan in the story may justify a dominant darkness, those harsh black straps across the dancer's back and the unflattering emphasis on the back of her head, with its starkly detailed ear, are a bold intrusion into the delicacy of the pose. The flow of the limbs would be a redeeming feature if that left hand did not seem rather careless in its attention to detail. More mistiness and less harsh contrast might elevate this image to a higher level because the author obviously has a sensitivity for composition and lines.

PA	6	The Jump	Vicki	Street	11	Gold	Credit for the idea and the and the timing of its execution. The dust particles stirred up by the spinning feet have been presented persuasively. Less attractive is the stage floor receding from stark white to uncertain grey with an inclusion of disturbing blotches that could be removed in this category. The spinning shoes, particularly on the point and left side, are edged with a dominant halo. Least attractive is the unwashed look and harsh black lines of both the shoes and the feet. The excellent idea and its competent depiction of movement deserves to be revisited with more emphasis on the delicacy, the finesse and the fastidious visual hygiene that one expects to see at a performance of the ballet.
PJ	4	Phuket Street Scene 4022	Doug	Couperthwaite	12	Gold	The image has impact with its colourful portrayal of Third World urban congestion. The sharp detail invites the eye to travel around the image to contemplate the confluence of mechanical profusion and human endurance. In that sense, the human elements are vital. Does lighting up the darker areas to reveal more of the people not intensify the message of the photograph?
PO	1	Googley eyes	Marisan	Victor	11	Gold	A lovely, spontaneous image with excellent timing that captures that engaging smile. With so much movement in the subject's face, a high shutter speed is needed to ensure perfect sharpness. Also ask yourself whether the image would be improved if the background were more diffused and if the charm of the smile did not have to compete with three separate half-items in the foreground. If the message is that coffee and cigarettes inspire the ecstasy, they should be a feature and the hand should not have its fingers amputated.
PO	2	Chill Time	Mags	Vosloo	12	Gold	A well-constructed image blending the feminine allure of the girl with the masculine allure of fighter planes. The provocative sensuality (of both in this context) is emphasised by the tilt of the head and those eyes peering just over the pilot's shades. I would have preferred a more acute sharpness on the hair of the lady but the skin tones are well handled in the prevailing light conditions.
PO	2	Hot Rods	Mags	Vosloo	12	Gold	Excellent angle of approach in a flawless mono rendition of beauty and the beast, The sultry expression complemented by those menacing boots, blend well with the uncompromising strength of the mean machines. Given the messy background on the hillside behind and the beautifully clean area to the right, would a slight move to the left by the camera not have improved the image? Always be conscious of what is behind the subject when composing a picture.
PO	2	How about a Spin	Mags	Vosloo	11	Gold	The model is effectively linked to the metallic indifference of the aircraft by her accessories of tattoos, nasal implants and pearls at a rakish angle to expose the metal clasp. The flimsy green wrap accentuates the feminine-masculinity divide and despite the overcast conditions, the skin tones have been well recorded.. The idea is excellent but the execution might have avoided that flap intersecting with her elbow while a small adjustment of approach would have avoided that strong blue horizon line cutting through the model..
PO	2	I see you	Jan	Lens	11	Gold	An image in challenging light conditions that nevertheless arrests the viewer with the dominant position of the owl's beak and its large eye looking into the image with space to contemplate. The clever use of predominant darkness reminds us that these are nocturnal birds. Since manipulation is allowed in this category, it may be worth subduing or even removing that dsitracting white bar across the bottom of the image and those green splotches that are so suddenly intrusive in the mysterious darkness..
PO	3	Gen and the Aeronca Chief	Meleney	Naik	11	Gold	The sharp focus on the model draws the viewer's eye while the red cosmetic tones successfully link her to the aircraft. The blend of masculine attire and feminine allure in the context of a robust sporting activity are compelling. If the model were placed on the left third her shapely posterior curve would not compete with that rather squat black wheel of the plane and its metal chock.
PO	3	Victoria	Magda	Bezuidenhout	12	Gold	Victoria appears as a a competently executed portrait with sharp focus and effective lighting complementing the ambience of feminine gentility. The tones of the skin and hair have been skilfully recorded while the contrasts in the background might be a little more subdued. Would a crop of the image just below the right sleeve still retain the portrait format but reduce the slight competition between the arms and the face for the viewer's attention?

PO	6	Abbi	Vicki	Street	15	Merit	The work of a Master, revealing an understanding of the light and shadow techniques that hallmarked the works of Europe's most celebrated 17th Century artists. The viewer's eye is immediately drawn to the face, sharply focused and so subtly lit in its statement of angelic innocence. The foreground textures of the flimsy dress material, the gently coloured flowers and the cherubic hands holding them, create an appropriate ambience as they lead the viewer to that wistful look in the eyes. The subtle nuances of colour in that free-flowing red hair that intensifies the same range of colour found in the lips, climaxes as a frame to this exquisite image of <u>innocence and purity.</u>
SC	1	Cape Point	wynand	lens	13	Merit	The image shows a fine sense of composition with the eye being able to travel in a semicircle from the lighthouse to the distant rock, embracing the beautifully detailed texture and colour of the water with its well-controlled white patches preventing visual monotony. The lighthouse is placed as a solid anchor from which to view the scene while definition and the colour range of the rocks is pleasing. Would the image not be improved if the foreground were not quite so abruptly cut. If the original contained it and it was cropped away, try putting it back. If the full image was taken like this, that lighthouse deserves another visit for a more generous <u>accommodation of the foreground</u>
SC	4	Goegap Flowers	Denise	Harvey	11	Gold	It seems as if time of day has resulted in a rather flat colour palette for this image. Its strength lies in the sharp focus throughout and the comprehensive substance it has gathered, including that bird on top of the tree. While the author might just not have been able to be there at a kinder "golden hour" moment, I wonder whether exploring different angles of composition might not have made more of the commendable road leading in on the left while the flowers could have been included without having the tree quite so dead centre? If one is given to daring experiments and has accumulated one's own file of various clouds, this special moment in Nature might lend itself to interesting variations with some clouds in that bland sky.
SC	4	Peaceful stroll	Tracey	Rhodes	13	Merit	The image has immediate and pleasing impact. This results from an interesting perspective of lines converging to that sunlit but muted green foliage at the distant climax to the peaceful stroll. Light and shade have been expertly handled throughout the avenue of trees, providing detail and appropriate colour. Three items balance the image: the bench on the right, the sunlit clump of flowers on the left and then the figure stressing the focal point of the image and its story with the use of contrasting whites.
SC	4	Tropical Sunset 4199	Doug	Couperthwaite	11	Gold	As a silhouette this image is successful. As a scape, I am not sure that it achieves the same level of appeal. That black mound on the left dominates and with all the black bobbles in front of it almost begs to be a picture on its own. The transition from the very bright areas to the dark ones is good, but the detail that one craves in a scape is just not there. The detail and profiles of the two figures have been commendably achieved but they do perhaps deserve to have their feet rescued from the darkness that appears just a little too dominant. For a different category, have you thought of cropping the image to the two figures and the immediate context of a partial <u>scape?</u>
SC	5	Glorius Kenmo	Des	van Tonder	11	Gold	A n image whose composition and colours immediately please the eye. That white bench placed on the central horizontal draws attention to the balance between the reality and the reflection whose detail and Autumn shades are strong elements in the persuasion of Natural beauty. Is the area to the left of the tree trunk not inclined to split the image in two with its brightness and messiness detracting somewhat from the pristine delicacy and colour of the other trees with their reflections so clear in the water? Try a crop that the camera may have elected to include at the time of taking the image and consider whether it appeals more. Demonstrating the effect by extending the image with a "content-aware" expansion gives one an idea but with many repeated pixels having to be ignored in the experiment.

SC	5	In the foothills	Heidi	Taylor	12	Gold	The image has been well composed to emphasise the vastness of the natural "scape" in which Man's humble little dwelling is comparatively dwarfed in size and significance. The barren red earth of the foreground forms a strong base for the image before it introduces the viewer to the frugal modesty of the dwelling on a lower third. Focus and detail are good throughout with the grey roof of the cottage signalling through its colour just how diminutive it is to the hillside in a similar grey hue. The message of isolation comes through strongly while the cars around the house suggest that Man has the ability to flee from this remoteness to return to the city with its greater sense of human interaction that is missing here.
W	1	Chillin	wynand	lens	11	Gold	The image meets the criteria for one-star success and the author deserves to be complimented for achieving such detail on the head of the monitor in a wildlife situation. While the title given suggests that the whole body of the reptile is necessary to suggest its repose, would a crop to the head, removing all the extraneous and rather unattractive dark areas, not perhaps improve the photographic quality of the image? Tilting the image in the cropping process (which is a legitimate manipulation in this category) would reduce that dominant black hole on the bottom-left corner of the image.
W	2	Bhubesi - DB	Diane	Backhouse	12	Gold	Excellent image with immediate impact as a result of acute focus, fine detail and engaging rapport between the subject and the photographer, as seen in the eyes of the lion. The use of an elliptical filter to darken the surrounding area and subdue that area of nothingness in the bottom righthand corner might bring even more attention to the lion's face. A slight crop of the righthand side of the image would further achieve that.
W	2	Female Weaver - DB	Diane	Backhouse	13	Merit	Capturing this bird on the diagonal and in such fine detail creates immediate impact. That is further enhanced by the turned head, the immaculate focus on the eye and the lighting on the beak linking it to the light on the tail feathers. The muted colours of the diffused background are complementary, collectively creating a pleasing ambience. Would a little more light on the back of the bird perhaps reveal more of that very fine feather detail?
W	2	Weaver - DB	Diane	Backhouse	12	Gold	Another fine image of a weaver perfectly positioned in reeds that can present challenges of interference with the main subject. The light from the front has been well balanced with the suitably diffused background while the prominence of the eye and the beak on the upper third enhance the impact of the image. The detail and colour control on the claws are impressive and were the image slightly less static, the level of interest it generates would increase. Closer to perfection, that leaf behind the bird's head would be less obtrusive but one either has to wait long enough for the position to change or for the manipulation tools to be legitimised.
W	3	Lazy Days	Magda	Bezuidenhout	13	Merit	At first glance the kneejerk reaction might be "too busy -give it an 11". However, the author has captured a strong message of the way in which the leopard blends physically and visually with its environment. Both are very beautiful and the depth of field (aperture chosen) has very cleverly accommodated the vital features of the leopard blending in with its tree while the soft tones and textures emphasise the notion of Nature's camouflage. The tail, the visible paws and the penetrating eyes are special features of this engaging image. That white splash in the bottom righthand corner needs to be softened.
W	3	Two Sticks and a Frog Nest	Jake	Alletson	9	Silver	I respect the photographer's persuasion that this scene held some promise when it was first observed and contemplated. But as it is presented here, it fails to convince as either its title suggests it should (frog's nest), or as a visually satisfying composition of two sticks in water. Perhaps it is in the processing that the water lacks persuasive force, that the two sticks are not convincing as an Art form and that the frog's nest itself (Wildlife category) lacks definition of being such. Perhaps a tele lens isolating the frothy nest could have delivered something more rewarding?

W	4	My paint is all smudged	Denise	Harvey	10	Gold	It's cute, but if the message is "My paint is all smudged", I would not have got it from the image. The crop and the placing of the head in the frame are both competent, but beyond that there is little that offers inspiration. The focus is sharp and the detail commendable. Less so are the textures and colours of the zebra's hide while the green background does not enhance the aesthetics of the image. Would it help to smudge up that paint quiet vigorously and create a real wotk of Art for another category?
W	4	Wild Dog Watching	Denise	Harvey	10	Gold	The message of canine alertness comes across strongly with the positioning of the dog's head and the detailed sharpness with which it is presented. In the context of the image as presented, the dog is rather too dark with a blue to indigo cast that robs it of detail. At the same time, the background is erratically contrasted with blotches of white that are too prominent, accentuating the darkness shrouding the detail of the dog. The eye is compelling and the author has captured the ears in a position that amplifies the sense of alertness. An image like this presents several temptations in the categories of free Art.
W	5	The Mating Game	Leon	Heyes	14	Merit	A rare moment beautifully captured in the departments of timing, light, focus, detail, colour and action. The background, despite being faintly noisy, is suitably diffused while the light on the birds, with both their eyes visible, adds to the impact of the image. The shutter speed chosen allows the sharpness of the static areas (the birds' beaks and eyes) to be complemented by the faint sense of movement in the extended wing of the male. This capture is a once-in-a-lifetime delicacy.