

Results_for_May_2024_Monthly

| Category | Star | Title | Firstname | Lastname | SCORE | AWARD | Comment |
|----------|------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|--------|--|
| AS | 1S | Marshall | Sandra | Comrie | 10 | Gold | Pleasing composition with the sweeping, downward background culminating effectively in the principal subject. However, that focal point of interest is the child's face, which is neither sufficiently sharp nor adequately lit. The coloured line at the bottom of the image detracts rather than adds anything and with slight tilting of the crop (permitted) it can be removed. |
| AS | 5S0 | A JAP Chap | Paul | Naude | 11 | Gold | Technically the image has been well-planned, captured and presented in commendable clarity and detail. While it suggests effective panning of the background it might require a little more imaginative treatment in the lighting to give it greater visual impact. The emphasis on speed in action might be amplified by a little more space into which the motorcyclist could be seen to be riding. It is a neat image but craves a more immediate "wow" statement. |
| AS | 5S0 | Look Ma nearly no hands | Paul | Naude | 11 | Gold | Another neat and sharply-focused image where the shutter speed selected has induced a sense of movement in the front wheel of the motorcycle. In this image the use of sunlight has been usefully embraced but the panned background is just a little too bold in colour and effect to allow the principal subject to claim the almost exclusive prominence it deserves. |
| AS | 5S1 | Duzi 2024 - Mission Rapids - 5642 | Terry | Burne | 12 | Gold | Every element associated with the action of the principal subjects has been included against a suitably diffused background that provides context. The position of the paddles effectively frames the two faces whose expressions provide the impact that is immediate in the image. Credit for choosing an aperture that puts both of them in sharp focus. |
| AS | 5S1 | Duzi 2024 - Mission Rapids - 5849 | Terry | Burne | 10 | Gold | While the turbulence of the moment is a legitimate target of the action the photographer seeks to record, it can also reduce the visual impact of the image by appearing a trifle too messy. Somewhere in that canoe are good sharp images with facial expressions amplifying the stress of the action but they need to be more immediate and defined in their presentation. Perhaps a few shots taken earlier or later would be more effective? |
| NB | 4S | On the Lookout | Mags | Vosloo | 12 | Gold | The image has immediate impact in its sharpness, detail and composition. The diffused grasses add an element of context to a subtle background. While the whites have been astutely exposed and processed, a little more light and colour in the darker areas might amplify further the impact this fine picture offers. |
| NB | 4S | Young Robbin | Jan | Lens | 9 | Silver | A beautifully composed image taken from an angle that emphasises the legs, the tail, the body and particularly the eye of the bird. Less attractive is the interruptive background and the rather harsh use of heavy, dark contrasts that do not resonate with the delicacy of the bird. It would seem that either a loss of pixels through cropping or excessive sharpening have reduced the necessary definition of the feathers. |
| NB | 5S3 | Backwards vision | Des | van Tonder | 13 | Merit | This image immediately signals photographic class. Colour balance and the nuance of various shades has conquered the challenge of shooting against the sky. The placement of the focal point on the top-left third gives the bird great distance into which to stare while allowing the viewer to experience that long-sighted gift of the species. At the same time the definition of the eye, the beak and even the tongue, speak of exquisite focus and astute shutter speed. |
| NB | 5S3 | Curiosity | Des | van Tonder | 12 | Gold | The eye is immediately drawn to the bird's head where it can dwell on sharp detail enhanced by an extremely impressive exposition of colour nuances in the blacks and perfect control of the adjacent white area. While the overall impact might be a trifle reduced by the heavy screen of green in the foreground, those gentle, mauve and grey diffusions in the background complete a pleasing image. |
| NB | 5S3 | On the prowl | Des | van Tonder | 10 | Gold | In this image resides a commendable picture of a heron on the prowl with a compelling reflection in the dark water. Diminishing its impact is that over-exposed white area behind it and the endeavour to promote the artistry of the water to its left. A crop to the heron and its reflection is quite persuasive on its own. |
| NB | 5S3 | The Bearded One | Ronelle | van den Heever | 11 | Gold | The impact of this image rests in the exceptional detail and sharp focus on the bird's head and particularly its eye. The exposition of light on the neck and breast feathers shows a fine understanding of this cardinal element in differentiating between the good and the ordinary. Although diffused, the background does not elevate the image any further. |
| NN | 3S | Dragon | wynand | lens | 11 | Gold | The impact of the image derives from the positioning (on a third) of the lizard's head and the precise rendition of its detail. If the depth of field chosen had allowed the right-front leg to enjoy the same definition as its left-front counterpart, the impact might even be stronger. The diffusion of focus along the body of the lizard might also benefit from a less rapid decline into oblivion where we nevertheless gather that the tail has had its end nipped off. But I guess lizards do not generally sit still long enough for all these contemplations to be actioned and yet the image does invite the eye to dwell on it. Moving the camera position to the left could have eliminated that white blob on the left. |

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| NN | 3S | Scar Face | wynand | lens | 9 | Silver | A noble attempt that almost succeeds but which loses quality from principally four elements: heavily over-contrasted processing; insufficient depth of field to accommodate essential detail; a green intrusion on the righthand side of the image that contributes nothing to the principal subject, and an unfortunate amputation of the creature's limbs and feelers. I'm sure practice and critical self-appraisal will develop the author's skills in this challenging field. |
| NN | 4S | The long and the short of it 6757 | Doug | Couperthwaite | 9 | Silver | A tantalising moment in Nature that probably promised more than it could deliver. The contrast of animal size in this context is cute but the positioning of the baby against the mother causes it to lose the definition that would be the essence of the image. The mother's face is also turned away at this moment and one wonders whether a few additional images taken after this one might not have delivered a more captiv-ating result? But credit for spotting the moment and delivering an acceptably sharp image despite the fact that the adult's front leg suggests a modest shutter speed. |
| NN | 5S0 | Jackal portrait | Heidi | Taylor | 11 | Gold | The strong points about this image are its intense and arresting glare at the camera with fine focus on the eyes and the tip of the nose. Two elements invite consideration. Would more light induced at the final stage of processing not reveal much more detail that is actually implicit in the image but which has not been allowed to surface? Those fine hairs in the ears, for example. Also, as a portrait, would the image benefit from cropping some of the body off and bringing attention closer to the jackal's (could it be an English fox) face? I have provided an example of what I had in mind when studying the image. |
| NN | 5S0 | Zebras | Heidi | Taylor | 10 | Gold | The image is pleasing in its composition and detail. The author has chosen, or waited patiently for the exact moment when the two zebras are favourably positioned to mimic each other's stance and attitude. While the background is suitably diffused, one wonders whether the conversion to mono might not have been a little more crisp and delineated with added light and an exploration of what LEVELS and SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS can do to an image like this. |
| NN | 5S1 | Ever Vigilant | Maxi | Holder | 10 | Gold | A commendable image despite little dramatic potential in the bland light from directly above. Since the principal element is the cheetah, one might concentrate more specifically on it in the processing and use cropping to eliminate untidy surrounds that offer little to enhance it. The water has strong claim to being there and if shadows could be lifted somewhat to emphasise the tongue that has been lapping it, the image might draw the viewer's eye more directly to that captivating element in it. |
| NN | 5S1 | Mommy I Need The Loo | Maxi | Holder | 13 | Merit | The image is eloquent in the story it tells. The closed eyes of the adult and the bright, searching eye of the cub suggest the contrast of adult repose and juvenile energy. Tha contrast is further amplified by the cub's extended paw and flicking tail as it appears to whisper its urgency in the mother's ear. The sympathetic lighting, delicate colour tones and a subtle transition from focus to diffusion conspire to make this an image of merit. |
| NN | 5S3 | Curious Cub | Ronelle | van den Heever | 12 | Gold | This appealing image immediately engages the viewer's attention. The sharp focus and compelling detail on the centrally-positioned head of the lion are further enhanced by the intensity of the eyes which arrest and hold the viewer's interest. Although the surrounding grasses mask much of the subject's body with their profusion, the gentle colour tones harmonise with the lion's equally delicate skin tones. The author has astutely left enough space below the lion for the viewer's mind to envisage the legs. |
| NN | 5S3 | When mama throws a temper tantrum | Ronelle | van den Heever | 13 | Merit | The composition that allows the eye to travel from the perfectly-angled subject to its environment is the basis of this excellent image. Added to that are two strong factors. First, the colour ranges throughout the image have been beautifully controlled, delivering exceptional skin tones and detail on the elephant. Secondly, the author has chosen a shutter speed that preserves exquisite sharpness and detail without turning the dynamic action into a dead and statuesque inertia. The sense of movement is preserved and further enhanced by those dust clouds around the feet. Detail is flawlessly held from trunk and teats to that swishing tail. |
| NN | 5S4 | Jumping spider emerges 0095 | Rob | Hart | 11 | Gold | Standing on their own, just the head and two feelers of this spider would deliver a most commendable macro image. The focus is sharp and the control of colour detail is excellent. Less helpful is the surrounding area which dominates and detracts from the detailed focal point. The large area in front of the spider's head overpowers with its visual boldness and strong colour while the progressively extreme diffusion behind the spider has that yellow line on the left running through it. |
| NN | 5S4 | Reed frog 2540 | Rob | Hart | 13 | Merit | The merit of this image lies principally in the sharp focus achieved by having the entire length of the frog in the same focal plane. Placing the subject on a diagonal delivers a pleasing effect while the focal point of that exquisitely-defined eye being on the upper third of the image enhances it even further. Completing the charm of the visual impact are the gentle colour nuances in the detail of the frog's skin and the use of a black background to give it prominence. The framing by the two green leaves, one in sharp focus and the other diffused, completes a fine composition. |

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| NN | 5S4 | Wooly legs 0227 | Rob | Hart | 12 | Gold | The strong impact of this image derives principally from the excellent detail in those furry legs and the competence with which the green-and-white leaf on which they rest, has been presented. A pity the depth of field (or is it mild camera shake?) has not similarly captured that detail in the prominent red feeler emerging from its head. Also, the wings do not share the same impressive detail as the furry legs show. Their texture lacks acute definition and one wonders whether the cause is depth of field or over-sharpening. On close scrutiny, the profusion of tiny colour sprinkles on the wings appears just a little contrived but the overall artistic effect of the image is pleasing. |
| NN | 6S1 | Red Eyed Fly | Leon | Heyes | 14 | Merit | The impact of this image is compelling in the detailed definition and colour of the fly. The focus is so sharp that the fly almost achieves levels of transparency while the bold red eyes, the individual hairs and the subtle colour ranges complete a picture of perfection. What makes this image so doubly competent is the fact that the fly must have been in flight (?) when the picture was taken because its feet, in sharp focus, are in a different focal plane from the cheese, which is not in sharp focus, yet they appear to be resting on it. I'm not sure how the author achieved this effect. |
| NN | 6S1 | Warts and All | Leon | Heyes | 12 | Gold | Credit to the photographer for seeing something the majority would pass by without a second glance and for preserving it with such technical skill. While the fascination with the subject is chiefly botanical of nature, the image has been composed to have an artistic appeal. This has been achieved by the use of the diagonal line, the dark background that gives prominence to the subject in its separation from it, and the subtle transition of colours within the subject itself. The exquisite detail of those "warts" gives the image a surreal ingredient in the exposition of its ulcerous affliction. |
| OP | 1S | Cafe pour | Jean | Lens | 13 | Merit | This image encapsulates a wealth of story-telling material in a sociological context. In its composition, the crop cleverly emphasises the focal point comprising a dark circle of substance set against a diffused background of white. The unkempt beard, the condition of the hands, the tin mug and the simple paper cup speak of a social level in bizarre contrast to the opulence of the wrist watch. The photographer has pressed the shutter at the precise moment that jug and cup are separated, freezing our expectation of seeing the milk flowing into the coffee, rather like the eternally suspended kiss in Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn in the British Museum. |
| OP | 1S | His bebe | Jean | Lens | 12 | Gold | The author has shown an inspired moment of photographic alertness in responding to this scene. It lends itself to mono in the explicit contrasts between light and dark as it tells its gentle story of human love and modest living. However, it begs to explore the licence of manipulation allowed in this category. I have dared to present an alternative option crafted with the use of some elementary editing tools and trust the author will not be offended by the removal of that white line right across the image as well as revealing more of the complementary detail that can be lifted out of the apparently black areas. |
| OP | 1S | Mr T Peak | Jean | Lens | 14 | Merit | At the 1-star level this is an image of exceptional merit. To the basics of sharp focus and good detail, it adds the subtleties of astute exposure, sensitive use of available light, selected depth of field to include detail in the wood grain of the frame, an interesting tilt off the vertical in composition and a captivating concentration in the eyes of the cat. This image demonstrates the difference between a photograph and a snapshot. Note: This picture was moved from Nature No Birds to Open. |
| OP | 1S | Shipwreck | Sandra | Comrie | 13 | Merit | This image discharges all the obligations of the 1-star category and adds considerably more. The dominant position of the wreck creates a composition with immediate impact. The sombre mood of the sea and sky reflect in the dereliction of that heap of rusting metal but the photographer has amplified its impact with exquisite detail and colour rendition. So skilfully has the author processed the metal that one can almost feel its dead weight. The delicate nuances of colour in the rusted metal (symbols of death and decay) contrast ironically with the dull, leaden shades of the ocean and sky that are traditionally the symbols of life and vibrance. Yet it is not the man-made things that survive. |
| OP | 3S | Clogs | Joan | Lindegger | 9 | Silver | For this image to have delivered what it must have promised the naked eye would need a re-think about focal plane, depth of field and lighting. The elements of the promise were probably the texture of the base on which the clogs stand, the lines and curves of their structural composition and finally, their colours. Unfortunately the presentation is too flat without distinguishing light effects. Where two objects together like this comprise the total focal point, both need to be sharper than the front clog is here. Credit for composing the image but it deserves a second visit with more experimentation in the options it offers. |
| OP | 3S | Dew on cabbage | Joan | Lindegger | 9 | Silver | A noble, if daring attempt to capture and hold attention with this image. Credit for interesting lines and shapes in contrasting light and shadow areas, but the main attraction, as the title suggests, are the drops of dew. Four of those at the top of the collection pass the test of quality but those in the lower two-thirds lack the sharpness, lighting and necessary transparency to make the grade. If you look carefully at those lower drops you will see that the focus is more definitive on the thumbprint of the hand that positioned the cabbage than on the drops themselves. Perhaps try another cabbage with a greater depth-of-field setting and a more generous sprinkling of dew drops. |

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| OP | 3S | Eaten away | Joan | Lindegger | 9 | Silver | Technically the author has delivered an image that has impact and leaves little to the imagination. The ravages of insect onslaught are explicitly conveyed and the contrast of white-thread remnants set against their black background is suitably stark. Would the image improve if the depth of field retained that stark sharpness to the extreme edges of the damaged area? Also, do the pieces of two other leaves, included with no perceptible consideration for symmetry or design, both above and below the damaged one, form a defensible frame or serve a purpose of context? Would the damaged leaf tell its story more immediately if they were not there? I have ventured an alternative version of the damaged leaf on its own to consider. |
| OP | 3S | Last moments | wynand | lens | 12 | Gold | The image tells a universal story of life reaching maturity, with demise being the natural road ahead. The mono exposition of white, grey and black is appropriate in this charming ensemble of grey-haired folk waiting for their turn to be called away from this little park with its historic monument, its mature trees and a pathway that leads into a black tunnel shrouded in the dark mysteries of the unknown that are the destiny of Mankind. I'm not convinced that it adds any greater impact to the image but was tempted to try a version in which the left side of the image is slightly darker to direct focus more directly at the human elements and their significance in the composition. |
| OP | 4S | Dahlias1 | JOAN | JUNG | 13 | Merit | A charming and technically competent presentation of flowers. Striking are the colours, rich in their variety and range, with subtle nuances captured in every shade. The even lighting has been well controlled and particularly impressive is the depth of field that has rendered every vestige of every petal in sharp focus from pinnacle to base. The introduction of discreet yellows in the top corners adds appeal while the control of the degrees of white in the principal dahlia is most impressive. |
| OP | 4S | Elegant Droplet | Meleney | Naik | 11 | Gold | The colour range in the image is pleasing but continued scrutiny of its detail raises some questions. For this technique to produce a flawless image, an exquisite sense of timing and probably an element of luck are required. The "elegance" of this droplet is challenged somewhat by its tottering off its central axis while insufficient depth of field has delivered a surrounding base that is not as pristine as it could be. The droplet to the left lacks the conviction of sharp focus while the reflection protruding at the bottom is awkward. I have great admiration for the trial, error and patience required to produce the perfect image in this genre and given the achievement thus far, would encourage the author to pursue the Grail. |
| OP | 4S | FISHERMAN AT VAAL | Cornelia | Appel | 11 | Gold | The immediate impact of this image derives from the sharp contrast between the ethereal, misty, high-key background with its diffused foliage, and the dark, solid substance of the fisherman with his rod and line. Detracting from those key elements are the profusion of all those other rods cutting across the image, the mess on the bank behind the fisherman, his dominant but amputated reflection in the water and the fact that his fishing line disappears out of the image. Moving the camera to the left and cropping the image to just below the feet of the fisherman could have opened a new view of the river with his complete line in the water. Also, if one was of a mind to do so, mono would have allowed one to eliminate the little bits of those offending rods that might still have appeared across the water. |
| OP | 4S | Meditation | Liesl | Couperthwaite | 10 | Gold | Within this image, as it is presented, lies considerable potential waiting to be unlocked by the licence of adjustments that are allowed in the OPEN category. It calls for adjustment of the lighting (the face and adjacent garment need to dominate) while the impact of the background (those relatively brighter green leaves drawing the eye away and stroking the monk's head) needs to be reduced. Light on that profusion of lovely anthiriums in the foreground will do justice to their striking colour range. I have ventured an alternative proposal for the author and friends either to dismiss as adding nothing of value to the image or to acknowledge as revealing more of its inherent merits. |
| OP | 4S | RECORDS | Cornelia | Appel | 9 | Silver | A nice idea. The story value of this image lies in its intention to provoke nostalgia from memories of a bygone era. It does that. It allows the mind to marvel at the monumental reservoirs of talent and skill compressed into that filing-cabinet vault of obsolescent treasures. While the eye is allowed to rest on a particular memory of artistic-operatic greatness, the rest of the collection is too shrouded in darkness to persuade the viewer of the magnitude of the obsolescence and the loss. In its present form, the image could gain from a sharper distinction between the blacks and the whites in the mono conversion. |
| OP | 4S | sitting pretty | Liesl | Couperthwaite | 9 | Silver | Photographic competence is evident in this image. Detail on the vintage motorcycle has been captured with a commendable integrity preserved in the colour renditions ranging through degrees of black to that silver exhaust that shows the effects of heat over the years. While the focus and detail on the darker areas of clothing are good and unaffected by the panning effect created, that white area on the jacket is too dominant and could be softened. What would significantly elevate this image to a higher level is a lifting of the shadows and more particularly those hiding the rider's face. If the "sitting pretty" suggestion of the title could be seen in the face, the image would offer more with the curtains of shadow drawn back to let in more light. |

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| OP | 4S | Spider orchid | Jan | Lens | 13 | Merit | A captivating image showing a fine sense of composition, detail and lighting. The presentation of the near-mirror image of this delicate flower on the diagonal gives it a sense of freedom to float in the frame that surrounds it while the black background adds to its impact. The colour-saturation is disciplined in its restraint, complementing the delicacy of the petals. The depth of field chosen has effectively preserved sharp focus on the flowers while that very slight diffusion on the yellow-green areas and the stem, has rendered them sufficiently discreet not to compete for attention. |
| OP | 4S | VINTAGE THINGS | Cornelia | Appel | 10 | Gold | The initial impact is one of crowdedness and raises the question whether the author might not have achieved the persuasion of "vintage things" with fewer items? The tired pack of cards, the pestal and mortar, the Practica camera set against that library of encyclopaedias that have been replaced by Google - just those items alone would tell the story. The amputated jars in the background and the box camera falling off the image on the right are more of a confusion than a complement. It is a nice idea and the author deserves credit for assembling the items but where one can control the composition of an image, trial and error would probably have led to the cropping off of that light trap at the top of the image. |
| OP | 4S | white temple | Liesl | Couperthwaite | 10 | Gold | The initial impact is one of a rather nice and clear snapshot of a temple taken from above with a pleasing range of colours preserved throughout. Left there, it would qualify for a silver, because the areas around the back of the roof and to its right side are a little untidy. But then the eye travels to the shadows in the foreground and the way the author has used time of day to craft shapes and contrasts that elevate the image. Particularly engaging are the two figures whose relative size, detail, colour of clothing and long afternoon shadows add a dimension of contemplation to the pleasant visual impact of the image. |
| OP | 5S0 | The Colours of Life and Death | Paul | Naude | 10 | Gold | Technically, the image has been competently crafted in terms of the dark background, its focus, its detail and the lighting. Such of the glass vase as is visible, has been well handled. Beyond that, the image presents a fairly substantial bunch of dead material with a lesser bunch of surviving flowers dumped on top of it. Does the image do much more than present contrasting symbols that mutter about life and death? If it is expected to make the announcement more emphatically, those flowers on top would need to be less anaemic in their closeness to demise and flaunt colours of far greater vibrance. But what is there has enough quality to warrant a gold. |
| OP | 5S1 | 2024 DJ Rally - 7546-2 | Terry | Burne | 12 | Gold | A clean and well-presented image that is pleasing in its technical competence. The shutter speed has been selected to present even small items like the cooling fins and the springs of the motorcycle in acute detail while the wheels retain the sense of motion implicit in the panning effect that is basic to the image. The background chosen for the panning moment is appropriate but also unobtrusive while such elements as the shadow on the road and the well-lit, visible expression on the rider's face all speak of fine photographic control. |
| OP | 5S1 | Daddys Little Girl | Maxi | Holder | 13 | Merit | This image has immediate impact. There is the irresistible element of cuteness derived from the comparative sizes of mother and child, since very young birds or animals generally trigger emotional reactions in humans. But the merit of the image derives its distinction from much more than that. The blurring of the roadway ahead, either by aperture or brush, has focused the eye on the principal subjects while subliminally suggesting the unknown future that awaits them. The adult bird's head is suitably turned to suggest her protective vigilance while even the wrinkles on her ankle are visible. A lovely touch in the timing has captured the right feet of both birds delicately poised as they do their ostrich two-step in unison. |
| OP | 5S1 | Protea | Tracey | Rhodes | 12 | Gold | This image earns a gold from its statement of technical perfection. Its stark singularity against a black background places it in the realms of botanical Science rather than those of floral Art. The detail is exquisite, the lighting beautifully graded and the nuances of shade and colour expertly processed. That reduction of focus on the stem of the flower invites the eye to dwell on the fine delineation of the petals and even the fine hairs around their edges. The subtle gradations of focus and light shed on the apex of the flower are further evidence of its fine technical quality. |
| OP | 5S1 | Shapes in the Sky | Stephen | Pryke | 9 | Silver | A brave attempt at a challenging subject. What is presented here, however, suggests that more care and attention to detail would be needed in the processing of the RAW original to give the image the quality that escapes it. The large black section on the left has two untidy colour specks in its centre and chromatic aberrations at its top. Cropping that away and tidying up that interrupted line at the base of the image would allow the viewer to focus more effectively on the "shapes in the sky". In the OPEN category there is much more one can fashion out of the RAW base that Nature provides in an electrical storm. But it is a challenging genre that calls for repetitive practice liberally sprinkled with luck. |

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| OP | 5S1 | Upside Down in the Garden | Stephen | Pryke | 10 | Gold | Presented as a composite panel on the horizontal this image simply does not do justice to the individual elements recorded in it. The effect is too confusing and having to turn one's head to appraise the individual elements is uncomfortable. Yet there is so much quality locked up in the panel that emerges if one examines it elements individually. Just the detail, lighting and colour of the bee gathering pollen are in themselves elements of photographic class that earns gold or more. The chameleon is beautifully sharp in its detail on the horizontal and that curled tail around the branch is a nice touch. The Mantis is equally competent in its macro context. Bundled together in a panel does not multiply the individual qualities by three. |
| OP | 5S1 | Wild Flowers in the West Coast Park | Stephen | Pryke | 11 | Gold | The image has immediate impact as a result of its vast and vibrant colour display. Focus on the flowers is exceptionally sharp, receding at the appropriate point in the image to convey the sense of perspective from the cleverly-chosen low angle of the camera to the rocks at the point where the sky takes over. The colour ranges are intensely communicated but disciplined in their resistance to over-saturation. Given this vast canvas of Nature's beauty, one wonders whether a little more sky would not complement the image with an added sense of a universal context. |
| OP | 5S5 | bottled refraction | Carol | Phillips | 14 | Merit | Although this type of image may not be everyone's proverbial cup of tea, its exposition here is flawless. Just the precision and the clarity of the lines are in themselves breathtaking. The stopper to the bottle demonstrates that. Add to those qualities the delicate colour ranges and gradations in the whites, the blacks and the contrasting pinks. They are so sensitively crafted. And then, adding an element of Art to the mathematical exactitudes of lines and curves, is that touch of focal diffusion in the liquid, warning that reflections do not humble themselves to the dictates of Man's whims and fancies. |
| OP | 5S5 | refracted droplets | Carol | Phillips | 13 | Merit | Another stunning image deriving immediate impact from compelling lines and curves set against an enchanting kaleidoscope of magnificent colours that celebrate the entire spectrum of the colour wheel. Added to this ensemble of visual candy, the sharp focus and detail of the metal shapes with their "refracted droplets" elevates this image into the merit class. |
| OP | 6S1 | The First of Many | Leon | Heyes | 13 | Merit | The mono treatment of whites, greys and blacks works remarkably well in this image and lighting has been expertly used to give it impact. That effect is further amplified by the stem rising out of the bottom-left corner of the image to thrust the incipient cluster of bursting buds into the centre where they will exchange their lurking greyness for the stark white of their prematurely-opened companion. The superb control of light and shade combined with the artistic composition of the image qualify it for a merit rating. |
| PO | 4S | brad | JOAN | JUNG | 10 | Gold | Indisputedly this is a picture of Brad. It is sharp throughout. The skin tones and the colour ranges on the clothing cannot be faulted. The eyes connect with the camera while the five-o'clock shadow and the macho wrist watch, so prominently displayed, say something about personality. Beyond that, the setting belongs more readily to a Home Affairs passport photo than to the art expected from a "portrait". With the licence of manipulation the author could create a diffused background of something that complements the character portrayed. A wild example might be, for instance, the pits at a Formula 1 event. Some relevant background could lift this image into a whole new level of impact. □□□□□□ |
| PO | 4S | luthando 1 | JOAN | JUNG | 13 | Merit | A fine image in which the pose of submissive and benign humility contrasts with a muscular physique that speaks of immense physical strength and a capacity for aggression. Those folded hands across the chest have a Madonna-like quality that emphasises a tranquil soul. Technically they are on the same focal plane as the rest of the body so that nothing protrudes to distort the visual perspective of relative size, such as happens in poses where the feet stick out away from the body and take on a size of their own. The subdued lighting fits the deeply contemplative mood of the subject while perfectly preserving his skin tones and allowing the acute detail of the simple necklace to make a statement without disrupting the flow of lines so beautifully preserved. |
| PO | 4S | Playing Dress Up | Meleney | Naik | 8 | Silver | A cute moment but is it really a portrait? That percentage of the image which can lay claim to the genre is just too limited. Credit must be given for the creation and capturing of the charming situation that has elements of street photography in it. But for the specific category there is just too much distraction in the surrounding of roofs, windows, pathways and stairs that are about a suburban location and not the portrait of a person. Since the small relevant area is not without its charms, how about cropping away the extraneous distractions and focusing on such portraiture as there is. It is worth a try, which I will demonstrate. |

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| PO | 4S | The Macadamia Vendor | Meleney | Naik | 10 | Gold | There is fine detail throughout this image from the lime-coloured sandals to the biscuit-coloured kopdoek. While those all create a happy context for the "portrait", its principal element, which is that smile and the face encompassing it, is relatively far away and craves more prominence in this genre. With the measure of control one has in composing the image, that box of nuts on the left could either have been included (preferable) or excluded, but cut in half it is more of an uncomfortable amputation than an enriching prop. Choosing the black background is clever, but then make it black without all those squiggly white lines trying to say something. Sharpness and detail are strong points and allowing the fabric on the right to end IN the image without being snipped off is good, as is the shadow detail in the stonework below the lady. |
| SC | 1S | Idwala Pool | Dylan | Evans | 13 | Merit | This is an image that immediately pleases the eye. It derives its strength from several features suggesting care taken at the time of composing it. The low camera angle adds to the majesty of the scene, while the aperture of F18 has provided focus throughout and the slow shutter speed of nearly a second has provided just the right level of blurring in the water to create the sense of motion without losing detail and texture in the movement. The side lighting provided by the time of day has created engaging levels of shadow and sunlight that contribute to the overall sense of tranquility in this scene. I have ventured one or two minor tweaks for the author's consideration, such as losing the white patch at the bottom of the image, suggesting more light emphasis (levels) on those vast rock faces and examining the option of a little more sky. |
| SC | 1S | Injisuthi Butress | Dylan | Evans | 12 | Gold | Another pleasing landscape that derives considerable quality from the time-of-day benefits. The early-morning absence of heat haze has allowed us to enjoy the absolute clarity of the rock faces, both near and far, in their gentle colours. The dissipating mists add an ethereal charm to the vast mountain buttresses and the photographer has managed to preserve the most delightful detail in the substantial shadow area from which base the landscape invites the eye to travel to the distant extremes. The extent and controlled blue of the sky complete the majesty of this impressive corner of our natural world. |
| SC | 1S | Sunset | Sandra | Comrie | 9 | Silver | This reveals one of those moments when the naked eye is persuaded of something spectacular just waiting to be photographed, but once the camera is applied to it, a number of challenges emerge that were not immediately evident. First, that vast black area in the foreground interrupting the "sunset" part of the image with trees, a building, a structure made of slats, several lamp-posts sticking up and even a bright, white light begging for attention in the bottom-left corner. Take the camera up on to the roof, leave out all that stuff on the left, and focus on the titled part of the image, the "sunset". Sometimes just moving the camera to a different position and thinking hard about what to focus on and what to EXCLUDE can make a significant difference between the ordinary and the exceptional. |
| SC | 4S | A River Runs through it | Mags | Vosloo | 10 | Gold | The low angle of the camera and the wide angle of the lens have combined to produce the pleasing composition of this landscape. The use of the diffused foliage in the left foreground creates an anchor for the image and despite the lack of light causing a blue cast to dominate, the result is a mood that fits the shades of night descending on the rocks and the river. Instead of a shutter speed of a 200th, something closer to a 25th of a second would have added an attractive silkiness to the water and the 24mm wide angle could have allowed that in a hand-held shot if a tripod were not available. Giving prominence to those vast cathedrals of rock rising in the middle background are a strong feature while more sky might have been considered. |
| SC | 4S | Camera club outing weather | Doug | Couperthwaite | 8 | Silver | The idea is commendable but the execution of it has provided a pictures in two pieces. The foreground is very dark, denying the eye any attractive detail to look at while the upper half offers a bland and undefined sky with only the flock of birds in silhouette to give it character. The expanse of water holds promise and the sharp lines defining the dilutions of the scape, with particularly that little tree in silhouette on the left, are redeeming points. Since editing (manipulation is an inappropriate term here) the original to put light in the shade and life in the sky is permissible, why not revisit the RAW original. I made an attempt to put more light into it as an example but with such a low-resolution, already-edited copy, my endeavour is a disaster. You might do more with the original, even if it just adds some colour to the sky. |
| SC | 4S | Reflections | Mags | Vosloo | 11 | Gold | The impact of this image lies in the author's sensitivity for its composition which allows the focal split in the middle to create an enchanting ensemble of reflections. The inclusion of the ring of ripples in sharp focus earns further credit for anchoring a lead-in line that draws the eye to the centre of the image where the clump of dark trees above and in the reflection below, hold the eye. While the focus and detail all the way to the distant mountains have been secured, the image would improve if the overpowering effect of deep shade were lifted with a bit of sunlight in the processing department. |

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| SC | 4S | Through the arch | Jan | Lens | 10 | Gold | A majestic scene that craves greater experimentation in positioning the camera. Were the camera lower down, the sky would not be orphaned into near extinction and it is such an important element in this majestic display of Nature's vastness and size. Consider the beautiful, revealing light on the side wall and roof of the cavern on the right, and then ask yourself whether the equivalent area on the left, nearly twice the size, gains anything from being in undefining darkness. The little sliver of sky on the horizon not only deserves to be more generously revealed but should bear some resemblance to the sky reflected in the pool of water. This is a lovely landscape opportunity from which a really wide angle lens ought to deliver exceptional impact. |
| SC | 5S0 | Underberg views | Heidi | Taylor | 10 | Gold | This is an image in two parts. The upper two-thirds has superb qualities of photographic control that invite the eye to rove around and absorb the drama of weather patterns in Nature. The bottom third of agricultural-industrial presence revealed in sporadic bursts of light interrupt rather than enhance the impact of the image. If that entire area is deemed appropriate to complete the vision the author had in mind, it would need to be more generously lit. As it appears here, a crop that allows that ploughed field to be the anchor, would allow the viewer to digest and marvel at the beautiful light on the mountains and the excellent control of the whites and adjacent colour tones in the drama of the sky. |
| SC | 5S5 | calm before the storm | Carol | Phillips | 12 | Gold | An excellent image offering immediate impact. The unusually low level of the horizon line invites the viewer to experience a sense of awe and human insignificance under those foreboding clouds that signal the mighty forces of Nature. The subtle colour touches of mauve-pink amplify their grandeur. By using a slow shutter speed the author has created a sense of even the mighty ocean being subdued by the enormous threat hanging over it. As presented, the image has all the charm of tone, colour and mood that Fine Art in oils brings to ordinary scenes in our natural world. |
| | 1S | Mr T Peak | Jean | Lens | 14 | Merit | |
| | 5S5 | bottled refraction | Carol | Phillips | 14 | Merit | |