

JUDGES REPORT

2025 – January - Monochrome

Richard Foord - Cairns

Image Title	Comments	Score
Theatre Mask	A simple and well executed image. The subject and the shot show good technique. The image itself lacks drama and that wow-factor. This can be overcome by starting with this viewpoint and then slowly adding some more elements – a light feather etc. to create an image that has a more dynamic feel, or a stronger story line to it.	6
Unusual Bush Flower	Unusual flower and well attempted with the lighting. Key parts of the subject are out of focus that means the image is not having the impact you are after. Make use of focus stacking or a tighter aperture but this may have been a challenge given the lens you used for this shot at 300mm will always compress the depth of field.	5
Japanese Garden Cowra	This wide angle shot captures the large extent of the gardens as well as providing room for the sense of the slope down the hill to the hut. The tree on the right has interest, but in monochrome the tree on the left looks a little scraggly, and potentially a crop that removes it may help give strength to the gardens in the centre. With landscape shots it is often useful to take the primary shot and then backup shots to the right and left to enable the development of a panorama if necessary, or selective cropping to help emphasize the interest of the subject.	6
Tourist Trap – Lady Knox Geysers NZ	To get an image to tell the story of a tourist trap you may have needed a slightly lower angle to emphasize the heads in front of the subject or a slightly higher angle to shoot down on the people. As the image itself does not capture the full story you imply in your title, be adventurous when this occurs to you, and shoot for the mood and feel of the situation you are experiencing. Move around and don't be afraid to get in to unusual perspectives that the regular tourists may not see.	5
Dia de Los Muertos Mask	A good interesting subject nicely suited to a monochrome treatment. You have captured the light in a good place in relation to the eyes. The depth of field with the 5.6 aperture is not quite sufficient to get this entire image as sharp as it could be to match the drama of the patterns and feature. Try focus stacking with studio shoots.	6
Mr. Black, in the Kitchen, with the Axe	I like the idea and the use of a derelict house / or a site under construction helps create the idea. You may have benefitted with some additional texturing of the background to give it more structure. A pet peeve of mine with this type of makeup is also	6

	the careful avoidance of the eyes giving the subject a look of having worn goggles rather than the natural feel of the wound running, or irregular finger marks across it. The theme and the subject have humour and story in them. Keep experimenting to get the drama you are after.	
Broken Shell	A simple still life of an interesting subject. Overall the lighting is well done and the use of, what I assume is, black perspex gives a nice but faint reflection. The challenge with this image is that the subject really demands full focus across the entire subject and the lack of focus on the inner shell means the eye wanders away and is not captivated by the full image. Explore the use of focus stacking with this type of subject. Also, as you are using a tripod ensure that any stabilization correction is switched off on your lenses. Also, there is a light reflection on the bottom right that is not strong enough to be of interest but is apparent enough to be a distraction, so may be better if it was cloned out.	5
Nathan St Bridge	I like the way you have composed this image and the long exposure capturing the star effect on the street lights helps as does the relatively strong reflection. There are a number of photoshop techniques you can use to really transform the reflections in to mirrorlike sharp renditions if you want to go in that direction. However, I still like what you have done with a relatively ordinary image highlighting shapes and contrast here under night lighting.	8
Marie's Weekender	The textures in this shot are good. It is well rendered in the monochrome slight sepia wash. Personally the individual in the foreground however detracts from the rustic feature of the image. It may also help to try a number of different angles, getting closer to the edge of the hut – getting a little lower to help emphasize the shadowy lines along the right-hand side deck. Keep experimenting.	5
Spiral Stairs	OK – I get dizzy looking at this. This is well seen and rendered in post, and the image is nicely composed. I feel it may have come across stronger with the camera positioned further to the top of the image. Potentially more drama in the editing (light whites and heavier clarity) may help to give the image a stronger punch	7
Edge of the Rainforest	Monochrome works well here. The three dark ferns reaching up from the foreground help connect the foreground in to the dramatic cloud cover. The sharp contrast and the fortunate odd number of foreground subjects all work to give this image character and interest. Well seen.	7
Hills and Clouds	A nice rolling landscape that is well treated in monochrome. Your composition to give the clouds and sky the dominant percentage of the image helps showcase the dramatic sky underpinned by the rolling hills, with the gap between them nicely centered and the small tree in the foreground giving nice emphasis to the image.	8

Solitude	This is a nice artistic rendering and captures the mood suggested by the title well. This style is worthy of experimenting and capturing in a series to provide a complete story. Keep playing with the high key technique and don't be afraid to blow out the whites if needed.	8
These Bring Back Memories	This is a well composed and lit studio image. The shoes are well composed and the addition of the tie helps ensure that this is more than just a simple product shot. The placement of the laces also helps provide diagonal interest in the image keeping the eye moving around. Good job.	8
Mining Relics	Don't be afraid to crop in situations like this. Sometimes part of a circle or wheel can be more compelling than the entire wheel. Use your feet to zoom around and compose a static subject like this. I would have been very tempted to remove the fence in post processing, as its modern build distracts from the older materials in the foreground.	6
Yesteryear	You have used a versatile lens to get around on this shoot and you have picked an area of interest. With your wide angle, however, your on-camera flash has really placed a hotspot on the front lantern and bowl. With the flash from the front-on you don't have the benefit of shadows or sweeping textures you may get otherwise. If you are interested explore some off-camera flash alternative and you can always get hold of a voice-activate-flash-stand – ie. Another person ☺ to hold your flash off to the side. Similarly a slightly lower angle, closer shot can also add interest to the image.	7
Going All Out to Win	Well caught action of the racers. Your shutter speed has nicely caught the riders in action. The image feels tilted slightly forward giving the impression of the racers running downhill. Sometimes it helps to shoot a bit wider to allow sufficient room for cropping and straightening. Similarly the tonal range across the image is a little light and some higher contrasting and burning in the blacks may provide a greater contrast on the image.	6
Wild Passionfruit Flower	When shooting these flowers with fairly deep focal length it is important to ensure that you get the centre and petals in clear focus. Eyes are drawn to the point of focus, that in this image is emphasized by the water droplets on the bottom left. Using your tripod ensure you take the time to get the aperture and depth you need and potentially focus stacking can help also. Keep practicing and you will end up with strong images that you can truly appreciate.	6
After Wedding Dress Trash	Right place – right time. Great choice. Your monochrome editing is nice and sharp, and the blacks are not too deep and have nice detail on them with the highlights not blown out. It's a good story well told.	9
Having a drink with his Mates	You have captured some good sharpness around the facial features of the man and the clarity of the clothing is good. The timing of the pose is also good. Your editing emphasis of the contrast and isolation of the subject with the heavy burning in of	7

	his surroundings to make it much darker appears a little over done with the viewer that curious on the nature of the surrounds when there would be a natural transition of the light across the image.	
Downhill Skater	Well captured action shot. It is good that the rider's face is visible inside the helmet. Your editing has got the balance between highlights and shadow nicely with good clarity across the primary subject.	8
Heading Into the Straight	A good capture of the image with good contrast and a nice range or tones with strong black and lighter areas giving the image depth.	7
Feather Soft	A very challenging subject but an interesting pattern and texture. Overall your lighting and editing is of a good quality. The light temperature on the left is quite different to that on the right. Well shot	7
Looking a Bit Snaky	A pleasant capture of this bird portrait. The eye and head look sharp and the body feathers are in focus before dropping off in to the foreground. Explore editing options to help highlight the characteristics to make these bird images pop.	7
Mounted Police	You have captured the expressions of these police and the action of the pointing seems to really capture some sort of story. The challenge here is that the depth of field has left the front policeman's face out of focus and as he is a part of the basic subject this has softens the impact somewhat. Similarly the tonal range is a little flat so improved structure and contrast may have also helped.	6
Pied Butcherbird	The bird portrait has captured the subject sharply. It also looks like you were able to take it from a slightly lower angle to help give the image strength rather than just shooting over the top. The eye and body are nicely sharp with the focus dropping off well in the background.	7
Flooded	I am expecting this shot was quite drab in full colour but here in monochrome with the backlit tree skeletons and the reflection off the water provides a strong and spooky image. For me the empty gloom on the right side of the image works nicely as the brightness on the left keeps bringing the eye back across the image. There is a minor distraction in the top left with hanging leaves from another branch that might be useful to clone out if wanting to get a stronger art print.	8
I'm Serious	Good studio capture of the young lady with strong connection to the camera through the eyes. A small reflector at the back to put a very small amount of detail in the back of the hair on the right would help this along. Keep playing with poses, head tilts and expressions. Good job and interesting subject. Most importantly, make sure you keep that piercing eye capture in to the lens.	8

Image of the Month

Image Title	Reason for Placing
After Wedding Dress Trash	The sharpness of the frozen image, the well-balanced tonal range across the image, the interest of the moment and the story, the detail in the blacks and avoiding overblown highlights. (Brian Dean)