

## AAC Photo Competition – Judges Notes for the Newsletter

Having undertaken the administration of the Photo Competition for the last 12 years it was an interesting experience having to do the judging. Once a judge has decided that a picture is sharp where it needs to be sharp and correctly exposed what is it that lifts a picture from being a pleasant shot to an award winner? I was looking for (1) a composition where the elements converged on a point of interest or a composition where the elements balanced each other (2) interesting or dramatic lighting (3) in a landscape an interesting or dramatic cloudscape can really lift a picture (4) the photographers use of cropping where intrusive or boring elements have been eliminated and the composition thereby enhanced (5) an appropriate title.

It should be noted that each judge is different and that an image that grabs the attention of one judge may be regarded as merely OK by another; so just because I did not give an award to your picture does not necessarily mean that it was a poor picture: the standard of photography in the General Section was particularly high and there were many good pictures that just missed the cut for an award.

### General Category

It was the French photographer Cartier Bresson who coined the term “the decisive moment” and this term is particularly apposite with the **Overall Winner and General Category Winner** “Balance by Santiago Jimenez”; the solitary figure is placed at the intersection of the horizon and the right and slope. Santiago would have had to get himself into exactly the right position to align the figure with that intersection – without that figure the picture would have been a good landscape: the figure gives it that extra lift to make it a winner.

The **Landscape Award** went to Paul Winder on the NNW Ridge of the Weisshorn by a new entrant Nick Hurndall Smith who also received the **First Time Entrant Award** for this image: The tracks in the snow and rope leading to the figure and the ridge beyond make an excellent composition: the mist and clouds add to the atmosphere.

There were three pictures in the frame for the **Best Portrait/People Image**: Two Smokers by Andrey Golovchev, Nick King on Liskamm by Derek Buckle and Vertigo by Julia Jimenez. All three are excellent however I picked Two Smokers because I could clearly see the expression on the climber’s face: what is he thinking about? – the climb just finished or the one about to begin. The other two were Highly Commended: in Derek’s picture the situation is stunning however if there had been a little more light on the face it may have won: in Julia’s picture the falling youth is pin sharp.

The other two Highly Commended pictures also demonstrate originality. John Hardwick’s Eiger Reflection with John reflected in someone’s ski goggles and Pablo Jimenez’s Starred Hotel with lit tent brilliantly situated at the end of the Milky Way.

The eight **Commended** images again demonstrated skilled photography.

Blake Nore Point by last year’s Judge Peter Anderson has the silhouette of the beacon balancing the sun on the right horizon and his Crux Move Trod Pip is another good action shot.

Camel Train, Erg Chebbi by Malcolm Imhoff (another former judge) takes the interesting indirect approach by photographing the shadow instead of the camel train itself.

There are two images by Nick Hurndall Smith: Chombu, Sikkim a classic landscape and Shaqsha Descent: the two figures on the right hand slope really lift it to a higher level.

Jeremy Leading Us Home by Nick Shearer, which was also **Commended as First Time Entrant**, and Theatre of Silence by Andrey Golovchev are both excellent and are again lifted by having the figures to give scale and interest.

Casual High Altitude Bouldering by Julia Jimenez clearly shows someone focussing on not falling off – note the concentration on the climbers face. The colour of his clothes also helps to focus the viewer on the subject who is clearly out in the wilds: good title.

### **Nature Category**

In the Nature Category I was looking for pictures clearly taken in the wild: pictures of pets, domestic animals, animals in a zoo and people are a total no-no. Ideally each image should have a title that correctly identifies the subject and cute titles should be avoided.

The **Nature Category Award** went to Peter Anderson for his photograph of a Waxwing; the picture is nicely composed with the bird placed in the top left hand third of the image; furthermore the feather detail is pin sharp.

The **Runner Up Award** went to Ice Floes by Stephen Gibbs who was also **commended as a first time entrant**: the image is sharp from front to back and the group of 5 seals on the ice floes are the key feature that raised it to second place.

The clearly identified image of Hydrophobic Iris Latifolia by Santiago Jimenez was **Highly Commended**: the pin sharp water droplets gave the image that extra magic.

There were 4 **Commended** images:

Pyrenean Iris by Andy Smith: A good sharp well exposed image; I would have been tempted to crop out some of the right hand side of the image in order to remove some uninteresting vegetation thus moving the main subject off the centre point.

Marmot by Julia Jimenez: The marmot is well exposed and sharp however I would have cropped out some of the rock above which is out of focus.

Yin and Yang by Andrey Golovchev: this is a super picture which would have had a higher placing if the title had been more informative. E.g species of bear and location.

New Generation, Endangered Tatra Chamois by Pawel Roczniak: a nice picture of a tricky subject; skittish animals taken in a natural setting.

### **Typical Austria**

This is the most difficult section to provide picture for and for the judge to review: what does typical Austria really mean? What is Austria apart from general Alpine? Once you have considered Austrian traditional clothing, carving, wall murals, food and churches what can you take that is different? There were just 17 entries for this section and I selected the following.

**The Winner**, Hat Shop Window – Salzburg by John Hardwick, is clearly taken in Austria and the approach is a bit different.

**Runner Up**: Cows at Steiner Hochalm, Adlerweg by Elizabeth Moore: I liked the atmosphere with typical Austrian cows outside a hut.

**Commended**: Fortress Hohersalzburg by John Hardwick: again clearly taken in Austria with pleasant composition and lighting.

### **The Sketch Competition**

There were 12 entries of which 10 were digital copies and 2 original paintings or sketches.

**Winner**, Snowgums Recovering From Bushfire Mount Cope by Alistair Macdonald was well drawn, I particularly liked the treatment of the sky.

**The Runner Up**, Climbers Chapel by Pamela Long, was a well executed drawing giving plenty of detail.

I would like to thank the photographers for entering the competitions; congratulations to those who have received an award and commiserations to those who missed out. We look forward to your entries next year and hope that the relaxation of Covid regulations will give you the opportunity to get to the mountains to take new pictures.

Phil Nixon