

# ABOUT ME (Wodonga-Albury CC):

## AN INTRODUCTION

Good evening, thanks to the club for giving me the opportunity to judge and evaluate your images. As I am not there in person, I thank the reader/s tonight for communicating and sharing my thoughts and findings to you.

Hi, my name is John Russo. I'm a member of the Berwick Viewfinders Camera Club. I joined the club in 2023. I commenced judges training with the APJA, in 2024, which I have completed this year.

My main photographic interests are Flowers & Plants, Urban Geometry & Street, ICM, Abstracts, Minimalism and Architecture. I'll have a go at just about anything, that I can get to from my wheelchair.

During the APJA training course last year, and this year, your steward, David Skinner has been in the group. He is an experienced photographer, and you are fortunate to have him. I readily get the vibe from him, and your website, that you are very friendly club. Friendship, photography and fun, is what it's all about. I had a look at the video feature on your website, of the clubs '***Through the Viewfinder Exhibition***', and I have to say what a fabulous collection of stories from your members about their photographic journey.

I appreciate all the images that you have put up for this comp, and the work that's gone into each, and every photo.

This subject, Make-it-Square, is a great subject and an enjoyable one. It encourages us to utilise the benefits of the format in your image making. The Square format has been around since 1929 with the first Rolleiflex medium format camera, and was very much popularised in the 60's and 70's by Kodak. One of the early advantages was that you didn't need to rotate the camera. It is a timeless format, particularly when combined with a monochrome, for that retro look that is now highly valued. The power of the format lies in its even sides. The viewer's eye is not drawn and biased horizontally or vertically as in a 35mm frame. The square format promotes balance, harmony and symmetry, gives power to images with a central composition, aids structure and geometry, and gives a unique voice to various types of images. These especially include portraits and frame within frame views. Minimalist images are enhanced with a balanced negative space to work with. Mood and an impact can be conveyed in an original and unique way. It forces us to simplify our compositions. This the essence of good photography.

Many images tonight display excellent use of the square format using your chosen subject. There is a lot of personality and creativity in the stories created. So well done to the whole group.

During tonight's judging, I will make comments regarding a few considerations to further develop your images.

If I refer to cropping, it is a suggestion, to strengthen your image for impact. If I refer to post processing, I do take the time to check my post-processing suggestions and observations. I do understand that you may, or may not, have access to post processing, or it just may not be your thing - ***and that's ok.***

If I refer to a rotation on a digital file, I have tested it against a grid.

If I make a suggestion, about how you might change orientation of your shot, it is because, often we need to explore the possibilities from other angles or perspectives, to discover how we might add impact and strengthen our images.

Equally, understand that judges do not know *exactly* what you had in mind. Your role as a photographer is to communicate an idea such that the viewer has a good chance of recognising your photographic intention.

I hope to give you constructive feedback that will elevate your images as you pursue the art and joy of making photographs.

And always remember, to have fun doing your photography, and enjoy the journey. And just like life, it does have its ups and downs.

Thank you, and let's get into it!



## Comments report for Advanced EDI Colour - Make it Square

### Alone in Prague by Malcolm Godde - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has captured a scene, of part of the Prague Town Square and Old Town Hall precinct. The orange facade is the visitors' centre, and the building at right is part of the Old Town Hall, which is noted for its famed Astronomical Clock.

What immediately strikes the eye here, is the patterned pavement, which the streets of the area are known for. The eyes are also drawn to the orange facade of the visitors' centre. Compositionally, the elements within the frame have a lot to offer, however too much of the foreground pattern is shown, as it is dominating the image.

The buildings and the inclusion of the figure, needs to be better displayed in your image to give the story you are telling here more impact. To strengthen this image, consider a crop by dragging from the left and right corner up, cropping more of the bottom than at the left and the right. Place the figure on the middle third to bring the scene and the figure closer to the viewer. These adjustments would improve the balance of the image, particularly for the square format.

There is a good diagonal line through the image, that gives power to the image. Aesthetically, the pavement patterns and buildings placed along the diagonal provide a progressive rhythm that entertains the eye. The various shapes and geometry in the image compliment the use of the square format. The decision by the maker to include the figure is a good, as it adds scale and interest. There is a thoughtful mood of being solitary in that historical surrounding.

The exposure is good, and the colour is well saturated. There are interesting details and textures in the building facade. This would be further enhanced by increasing the blacks, clarity and sharpness. Consider adding some light to the figure to create a focal point.

The maker has captured an interesting scene with lots of features that suit the square frame. Keep working on scenes like these and you will improve your photography.

11

### Goblet of Marbles by David Willis - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an inventive image by the photographer. It is one of those images, where the maker has turned an ordinary object into a more thoughtful composition, in a creative way.

Compositionally, the goblet has been well placed within the frame, but could be cropped to properly centre it, as the stem is off balance between left and right.

It only needs a small adjustment. The centring power of the square to convey symmetry, balance and harmony works very well with an image like this.

The rounded marbles' form, and the flowing rhythm of the goblet's shape, also act to aesthetically please and entertain the eye.

The exposure is about right, although it could benefit from a small adjustment in brightness, which would enhance the shape of the goblet and the marbles.

It would also help with the graduations in the scene. The tonal values of the black and white are good, and the colour is bright. There are some striped reflections in the glass that appear to be parts of the room, perhaps a curtain.

Try setting up this shot with a light tent, or experimenting with positioning some black and white cards to cut these reflections off. The inclusion of the marbles by the maker has added something very creative to the scene. It focuses our attention on the structural elements, shapes, and rounded forms. It also, provides for a colour contrast with the tonal range to be found in the image. All this serves to entertain the eye with the unique way which makes the image attractive.

The maker has created an image with strong appeal, with clever thinking. This is good work by the maker. 13

### Morning Walk by Donna Rohrich - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has found a pleasant seaside scene, with the late sun conveying a calm and relaxed mood. The decision by the maker, to capture the scene in this light, adds appeal to the image, and the framing adds to that mood, and to the story the photographer has captured.

Compositionally, the maker has framed the shot well and clearly took care to consider what to include, and what to exclude in the frame. This is a valuable skill in photography. The branch complements the sunburst and frames the top portion well, while the tree roots anchor the scene at the lower left. The scene is layered throughout, and this contributes to a feeling of depth and distance. Care has been taken with the horizon line. The inclusion of the figures adds scale to the deep image and human interest to the pleasant scene. The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of at least half a stop and a lift in the shadows in pp, if that's available to you. Consider an adjustment in contrast, blacks, clarity and sharpness to further enhance this image.

This is a well composed image with a good aesthetic feel; and has many attributes that complement the square framing. This is good work by the maker. 13

---

### another Time by David Skinner - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an intriguing image by the maker that is adventurous. It causes us to delve further than for a pure or more regular representational image. There is a feeling of movement and some thoughts about parts and transition. This is conveyed by the four thematic colours and the shapes suggesting some kind of liquid, be it natural as in some kind of landscape converted to this presentation, or something of more ordinary origin.

Compositionally, the parts are non-regularly arranged with a random-like juxtaposition. The exposure is about right. This presentation would have more punch, if you consider adjusting curves or gamma settings in pp, if that's an option for you. This would especially give more weight to the colour. For an abstract try an arrangement that gives more emphasis to an element that in some way tells the viewer more about the story you are trying to convey. This may have been random or intentional, and that doesn't matter in the final image. It is, as if there is a confused feeling here, which is ok if that's what you are trying to convey. With an abstraction like this, the emotions, and thoughts evoked is what will contribute to impact. Another way of giving this image an interpretation, is that it conveys thoughts of an aerial map, or a geological formation. Consider increasing contrast, clarity and sharpness to bring out all the interesting lines and shapes you have here. The square format enhances those many shapes and outlines within the frame.

Whatever the case of its origin or intention by the photographer, this is an adventurous image. I commend the maker for their creative endeavour. We should see more creative and abstract images in our competitions.

The photographer has conveyed a message that is brave and conceptual. This is an image with appeal, and the maker should be encouraged to keep working on scenes like this. 11

## Chic 2 Chic by Garry Pearce - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a lively and indeed a stylish scene put together by the photographer. The smiles on the faces and the fashion of the well-dressed ladies immediately give the image a fun mood and makes the scene pop.

Compositionally, setting up the scene with the posing structure of being back- to- back, with a tilted head, has been very well done. It takes advantage of the power of the even frame to promote the symmetry created by the maker with a strong midline cue. The outfits, accidental or deliberately so, provide for an entertaining series of contrasts between the alternating rhythms of the skirts, and the sleeveless and sleeved arms. The sunglasses, necklace and pair of bags really add good touches to the scene.

The exposure would benefit from a lift of about 2/3rds of a stop. This would aid the background separation of the figures and give the image more impact. Consider blurring out the background to add mood and isolation around that great pose you have got going here. An adjustment to the head tilt of the lady at the right, may have avoided the glare in her sunglasses. If possible, try another time of day to avoid the distracting background people. As it is, it still a very stylish and appealing shot. This image would make for a good monochrome, which would further focus on those rhythmic elements, and black and white contrasts.

This is an entertaining and very well put together scene.  
This is good work by the maker. 12

---

## Castle Lookout by Pamela Milliken - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: Something different here. This maker has taken the time to find, and make a capture, of what looks to be, a coastal European or Mediterranean town.

The viewpoint is from an old castle lookout. The framing element of the stonework was a good thought, and the ?looking through? opportunity was well spotted by the photographer.

Compositionally, the framing made by the layered stone gives a unique perspective. This technique adds interest to the image. Consider cropping the image by reducing the frame significantly. The framing could be improved by bringing up the bottom and cropping a little at left. Crop more at the top and right side. In each case, leaving some of that fabulous stonework that makes for an excellent framing element. Placing the white tower on the line of the third vertical would help here. These adjustments would bring the tower closer to the viewer, for more impact to the overall scene.

The exposure is about right, although a significant lift in the shadows would help the image. Consider lifting the contrast and saturation to strengthen the colour in pp, if that?s available to you. The details in the image would benefit from an increase in sharpness. This would help to show more of the fabulous texture of the stone, and more particularly, the elements beyond. The maker has done well with keeping the horizon line level and maintaining the perspective of the buildings. This all makes for a pleasant and entertaining scene that suits the square frame.

This is an image with a good concept and appeal.  
Well done to the maker for finding this location and viewpoint. 12

---

## Shiny Black Surface Reflection by Glenn Rose - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an inventive scene captured by the maker. The effect appears to be a reflection in a shiny surface. In any case, this effect noticed by the photographer adds to the image in a creative way, and looking through here was a good concept.

Compositionally, it has been framed well, with the two figures at each side anchoring the middle scene. This is complementary to the make-it-square profile. It works well here to focus the viewer's attention on the central figure, who appears engaged with the staff person in the orange vest. This does evoke a story about what the conversation is that's going on here. The other part of the story is the vision, being through the watery look. This gives an aesthetic of a painterly and impressionistic look. This adds to the mood and feel of the image.

The exposure is about right for this scene, but it would benefit from a small lift in brightness that would improve that painterly look. The bright white hotspots should be dimmed and also the bright shoulders and head of the figure at right. The strong orange and yellow colours are distractions. These adjustments could be made in pp, if that's an option for you. Alternatively, consider stripping the colour by converting to a monochrome image, as this retains focus on the conversation and keeps that shimmery look. To enhance the impressionistic look you've got going, add contrast, clarity and sharpness.

The maker shows a keen eye for some creative vision. Keep working on scenes like these, as they can be very satisfying. 11

---

## Winter by Vicki Cain - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has done well to see this entrancing view and take a capture. There is a strong sense of quiet and calm in this scene. It does evoke that in-the-bush, cold and foggy winter morning feeling.

Compositionally, the scene has been well placed within the frame. The darker tree at right anchors the image, and the other elements are well balanced.

To strengthen this impact, consider cropping a small amount off the top and right side, retaining a gap between the tree and the frame edge. The trail leads into the scene in a sweeping manner, giving the two-dimensional image a sense of depth. Together with the diminishing size of the trees, there is a good progressive rhythm, that entertains the eye. The branches of the tree canopy create a wonderful array of wriggly lines and random rhythms, that add interest.

While the exposure reasonably serves the scene, it would be much enhanced by decreasing the brightness by just under half a stop. As it is, it is a little washed in the fog about the trees, which reduces the contrast around the tree branches. The suggested adjustment in brightness would enrich the colour and enhance the mood. To add further improvement to this image, increase the contrast, clarity and blacks in pp, if that's an option for you.

The maker has well utilised the stability and calmness of the square, to create an image with a sense of harmony and good balance. Well done, this is a fine effort. 13

---

### Square Chair by Geoff Bayes - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a creative image by the photographer, using only a few elements, yet it makes for an attractive scene.

The composition and framing of this scene have been very well done.

The placement of the chair on a leading corner leg, in the centre of the frame with the ring of flowers, has excellent poise and balance. The angle and height of the viewpoint add to the drama. It is a charming arrangement that suggests a happy mood of child's play in the open. It also makes a conceptual statement about its solitude amongst the organic elements. The ring of flowers is akin to a dance of movement around the static chair.

Care needs to be taken with the exposure, as it is too bright. The strong red and yellow colours show some oversaturation and loss of detail. Red is one of those colours that alert us to be careful with our exposure, and our lighting. Our camera sensors are particularly sensitive to this colour.

There are a few suggestions that would help deal with this situation. As the subject isn't moving and in full sun, the shutter speed can be increased. Changing to a higher f stop number will also help. Another option is to consider using a grey card. It's an old school approach, but very effective. Place the card in front of your subject, facing the camera in the light that falls on your subject. You'll get a much better reading of the exposure. I carry one with me for that extra bright coloured flower. The result is good colour with the texture and detail retained. Shooting on a partly cloudy day, or at different time of day when the light is more even with less contrast will help. Figure out what works for you, sometimes it takes some trial and error.

The photographer has created an image with great potential and appeal, with very good composition. Keep working on scenes like this, and you will improve your photography. 11

---

### Poppies Are Also Red by Win van Oosterwijck - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: These lovely flowers look like a ruffled breed of tulip, with a glorious rich red colour. They are well balanced in the square format, offsetting each other with their varying height. This gives the composition a nice balance and the intricate details of the petals have been well captured by the maker in this shot.

The composition has been placed against a background that contrasts well.

The background itself appears to contain a reflected image of the flowers; but washed with the green and moody tint. The maker has suitably reduced the stems so that they do not touch the frame. Their terminations have been very well graduated to gently blend with the background.

The exposure is about right, and there are some good subtleties of light in the image. Consider raising the brightness a small amount, if a little more intensity is desired. The colour graduations in both the flowers and the background are very good. This image has a painterly feel, and pictorial sense that adds an enhancement. An increase in clarity and/or sharpness would benefit the textures to be had in this scene, both in the flowers and the mottled background. The image has used the balancing power of the square format well.

The photographer has produced a beautiful image of these flowers, presenting them with good poise and balance. This is good work by the maker. 13

---



## Flight by Allen Skilton - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: These two propeller-driven air force planes are echoes of another time; and are probably of the WW2 era. This viewpoint makes use of their outline; and their underbelly makes for a dramatic view against that clear blue sky. Interestingly, it appears that one of the planes has their wheels down, while the other has their wheels still up. This gives the image some good counterplay between the similarly positioned planes.

The composition is balanced but could have benefited from a much tighter frame to bring the planes closer to the viewer, strengthening the image. The exposure is about right for this scene. Explore adding some more light to the underside of the plane in post processing, if that's an option for you. Experiment with increasing the contrast, clarity and sharpness to the planes. Consider adding a strong vignette, that is darkened corners, which would bring a dramatic focus to the scene. At an airshow or opportunity like this, if possible, try capturing the planes in a few different positions, for a variety of shots to choose from.

These types of captures are not easy to do. If these two planes just happened to be going past you at the time, then you have done well to get this shot.

The framing is nicely placed in the square crop, for an in-flight aesthetic.

Keep up the good work. 11

---

## Grannies Bonnet by Wendy Stanford - Second Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here has found a great subject in this Grannies Bonnet bloom. It is otherwise known as the Columbine, or Aquilegia plant. It has been well captured for the viewer to appreciate its beauty.

Compositionally, the flower has been presented on a good axis to show off its outer and inner structure to the viewer. The eye is appropriately drawn in to the middle of the bloom. A little more space at the edge of the frame would give it some room to breathe. The exposure is a tad overbright, as some of the details of the petals aren't present or washed out. It only needs a small decrease in exposure. Even better, if you have access to software where you can adjust the gamma or curves, this would balance out the exposure, without any decrease in the exposure setting. An increase in contrast, clarity, blacks and sharpness, would enormously benefit those details that enhance a flower image, and this background. Whether the background was manually placed, or by software, it has been well integrated.

The stamens have good detail. The petals provide for a regular rhythm that contrasts with the flowing rhythm of the stamens. The image conveys the harmony that a well poised composition can bring to a square frame. It has a gentle and delicate mood.

Well done to the maker on setting up this creative image.

This is a fine photograph. 14



### Capturing a Photo Shoot by Deirdre Blunt - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer has brought us to - a photography shoot. The painted door is likely to be part of an art installation. The image has a story with players in the scene, and a dramatic backdrop of the warehouse door, as the setting.

Compositionally, the scene needs some tighter framing to home in on the story you have got going here. Cropping diagonally from the top left corner, down to the horizontal line just below the lights, would show a much more focussed scene. This would bring the action and colour closer to your viewer. If it were possible, try getting a capture whereby we can see the photographer with his camera in action, perhaps waiting for him to change his position, or changing your position.

The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of about 2/3rds of a stop. There is some scope to come up in your ISO. Balancing this out with some higher f stop number would add some sharpness to your image. Consider increasing the contrast, clarity, and sharpness in pp, if that's an option for you. The door colours and texture would benefit from these adjustments.

Aesthetically the scene has some good contrasts between the white and lined segments, and the free-flowing colours and shapes of the warehouse door. These elements combine to make a striking visual that draws the viewer's eye. And this is aided by the colour of the figures, and the model's pose with her red skirt. There is a creative mood, with some synergy between the model and her photographer. The elements in the frame suit the square format.

Well done to the maker on an entertaining image, with this well spotted opportunity. Keep up the good work. 11

---

### Natural Wild Beauty by Sharon Alston - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: There is no doubt about the uniqueness of a banksia flower like the one the maker has captured here. This image shows the shape, cylindrical form and details of these very Australian plants.

Compositionally, with a great subject like this, think about cropping tighter to bring the viewer's attention to that main part. This would give your image much improved impact. Crop a large part of the bottom off, removing that branch, and a lesser amount left, right, and top. Don't be afraid to lose half of the leaf lengths at left and right. The lower branch is a distraction. Centring the view above the flower's collar gives the image more power, especially in the square format.

The exposure is about right, a small increase in brightness would benefit the scene. If you have access to pp, increasing the blacks will add some richness and drama to the image. There are loads of interesting details to be had with this bloom's structure. Try adjusting the contrast, clarity and sharpness for added impact. The overall curved shape and spine collar gives a flowing rhythm to the repetition of the spines. The image is replete with aesthetic values of line and shape, repetition and a regular rhythm. It does evoke a mood of wonder.

This is a natural beauty. Well done to the maker on capturing this image. 11

---

### Itchy by William Cleverly - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a delightful capture of this seal, taking a moment for a scratch, while curled up atop a pier. This scene readily lends itself to being portrayed in the square frame.

Compositionally, the scene could be lowered to show just a little more of the pier for some added drama. The photographer has caught a good animal moment, showing movement and giving the scene some story. The pose is dynamic, with the arc of seal within the square frame, akin to a golden spiral flipped horizontally. Put another way, the maker has captured the seal in a good pose and nicely placed it in the frame.

The exposure could benefit from a small increase in brightness. This extra light would help the separation of the seal from the watery background.

Consider adding some more light at the eye for a catchlight in pp, if that's an option for you. Conversely dim down the bright area on the neck folds. Also tone down the bright blown out area at the rim of the pier and below it, to restore some detail and texture. Darkening the wood at bottom right corner of the frame would also help to reduce the brighter distraction. Adding some contrast, clarity and sharpening would give a lift to the image.

Well done to the maker for capturing a decisive moment with this seal, and some good square framing. Keep up the good work. 12

---

### Two Mates by Chrissi Miles - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an interesting capture by the maker, and there's more to it than at first glance. There is a good story here of the trees and the landscape they are set in.

The composition is visually anchored by the two trees, especially by the brighter and more forward tree at the right. The position of the trees being a little offset from each other, adds interest. They are well placed within the square frame.

The two trees are composed such that they provide a 'seeing space' to notice the shadows, which draws the eye deeper into the scene. The canopy of branches provides a meshwork screen of wriggly lines and are a contrast with the fluffy clouds. This is like a stage curtain to the further layers in the landscape. There is a series of left to right layers of fencing, trees, trails, power lines and grass creating an alternating rhythm. The textures of the tree bark contrast within themselves, and with the other tree. All these elements combine for some pleasing aesthetics.

The exposure could do with an increase in brightness of about a third of a stop. The colour is good, although there is some green cast in parts of the clouds and sky. Try adjusting the overall white balance or colour deflection for a localised correction.

This is an interesting scene due to the maker's care with the composition. Well done, you have a photographer's eye, and this is good work. 12

---

## Colours of the Rainbow by Jessica Wells - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: Something a little different now, with this sunburst streaming through a nice multi coloured collection of leaves. The maker has positioned themselves to take advantage of some late afternoon warm lighting.

The composition works well with the square. The sunburst has been framed by the brightly coloured leaves. The combination of the radial points of the sunburst effect, and the arc of the branching, gives a sense of movement around the sun. The pendulous branch reaching low, adds to this. The more blurred green coloured leaves provide a softer background the gives contrast to the warmer colours. Consider an alternative crop that places the sunburst in line with the centre of the frame, but not in the centre, for a better balance.

The exposure is about right for this scene. In fact, the maker has done well to balance the brightness of sun, with the other parts of the image. Add contrast, clarity and sharpness to see all those details and colour in the image with more impact and pop. There is a lovely ambience to this image, and it evokes a restful mood at the end of the day.

The photographer has created a pleasing composition with a good aesthetic.  
This is good image making. 12

---

## Buzz Pollinator by Glenda Black - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here has captured a good moment of what appears to be a native bee. The critter is having a good feed and collection of pollen from the long pollen bearing stamens, possibly from some type of lily flower.

Compositionally, the photographer has got the right idea of getting in close.

The critter has been well placed in the square frame. With an image like this, consider an even tighter frame. Crop off more at the top and left side, and less at the right side and bottom. This would remove the grungy part of the flower. The hugging pose really adds to the story. For an alternative view, try rotating the whole image to the left. With these types of images where the critters can get in all sorts of orientations, explore what happens when you rotate the image.

The exposure could benefit from about a stop of extra light. This immediately adds more drama to the image and shows off the good detail and colour. If it's an option for you in pp, add contrast, clarity and sharpness to develop those details further. The catchlight is large and showing the shape of the light, which is somewhat distracting. Dim or clone it out. Experiment with another type of lighting method. This type of photo is not easy to take; the maker has done well with this image.

There is a clear concept about using the square frame with this good close-up view. Keep up the good work. 12

---

### Stillness by Patsy Cleverly - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is one of those images, where the maker has turned an ordinary scene into a more thoughtful composition. Here the maker has well spotted an arching branch and its reflection in the still water. This is good photographic skill in action.

The placement of the branch and its reflection works well in the square format. This image is a good example of the square format's ability to give structure to shapes within the frame. The incomplete circle creates visual tension. The foreground smooth and glass-like water contrasts with the coarse and wiggly lines of the background. The curved line of the arch also contrasts with that background. There is good balance and symmetry between the frame and the circle. Together with the still water it promotes a harmonious mood.

The exposure would benefit from a lift in brightness of about two thirds of a stop. This would bring out more of the details. Lifting the shadows, in addition to the exposure, will also help. The brighter part of the sky should be dimmed down, or cropped slightly tighter. Increasing contrast, clarity, blacks and sharpness will yield much improvement to the structural elements and texture of the scene.

This image shows good framing ability. The photographer has had the perception to see the scene's potential. Well done on capturing this image. 14

---

### Mums Teacups by Yvonne Schnelle - First Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has taken some views of mum's teacups and created an image that has been presented in an arresting way. The use of the square image, filled with a series of more squares, is a powerful use of this format. There is some good story telling here. The image engages the eye of the viewer across the entire frame.

Compositionally, there is a particular aesthetic appeal, showing the various forms of the teacup elements in the sub scenes, all in their own unique viewpoint.

The maker should be commended for the thought and time that has gone into constructing each scene. There is indeed a notion of form over function of the otherwise ordinary, and utilitarian teacup. This is an excellent concept by the maker.

The exposure is about right, but could benefit from a small increase. The lighting has been really well done, with no harsh glare on the porcelain anywhere.

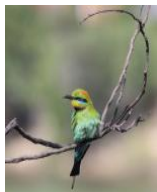
The varied far and close-up views, the variety of shapes, colours, position and changing orientation of the cups, cup handles, and the saucers, are fabulous. There is very good aesthetic use of emphasis with colour, the curves, and the random rhythms. The seven cropped portions create a visual tension in a gestalt like way. This adds great drama. It makes the overall scene dynamic when seen alongside the complete set of cups and saucers in the centre view, and that of the top right view. The mood is playful, upbeat, inventive, and almost whimsical.

Consider increasing the clarity and contrast to add a touch of finesse.

The maker should be commended, for taking the time and effort to create a dynamic image, with excellent appeal. Well done to the maker, as mum's teacups have never looked better! 15

---

### **Sitting Pretty by Michael Black - Accepted**



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has an image of what appears to be an Australian native bird, the stunning Rainbow Bee Eater with its many vivid colours. The focus is appropriately, at the eye, and this beautiful bird, is sitting pretty.

Compositionally, the placement of the bird is good. While the upper branch has a nice arc to it, it is a distraction from your subject. With a subject like, this we want to see the bird up much closer. Consider cropping much tighter for a stronger image. With the centre of the image about the bird's body, we would see more feather detail and that eye engagement from the bird would be stronger. The isolation of the subject is very good, against that blurry background. The image works well with the square format.

The exposure is about right. Adding some light, to the eye in pp will also further enhance this image. The eye connection between the bird and the viewer, builds an emotional connection to your image.

The maker has presented an image that has good appeal and engages the viewer with a great subject with this bird. This type of image can be very challenging, and this is good work by the maker. 11

---

### **Within by Rod Alexander - Accepted**



Judges Comment: John Russo: This image is set against a backdrop of seaside daisy flowers, with the main feature being the striking red bloom with an open centre, of perhaps a Tulip.

The maker had a good concept in mind here.

The composition with the daisy background works well, and the position of the red flower uses the square format's centring power. Consider cropping just slightly to centre the red flower in the frame. The extra space at bottom right, creates a weight that unbalances the scene. The view from top down with that backdrop is very good thinking, as it adds depth and gives the image a good dynamic.

Overall, the exposure is about right. What is desirable here, is even light on the bloom without shadows or bright contrasty light falling on the petals. Try a small white diffuser. Try shooting on a cloudy bright day when the clouds act as a very convenient softbox, or in the late afternoon when the light can be more even.

It can be a tricky situation for the flower photographer, with some contrast present in bright sunlight, and that red colour.

Aesthetically, the view shows good rhythm, contrast, and scale going on between big and small flower size, light and dark colours, and between the centres of the two types of flowers. This image exudes a joyful mood.

The photographer has created an appealing image with good composition. Keep working on scenes like this and you will improve your photography. 11

---

## Above the chandelier by Jill Hancock - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This photographer has presented an a very appealing slice, of a ceiling. It appears to be a vaulted ceiling with a feature dome, and candelabra or light fitting. The details are exquisite, and the patterning is highly mathematical and proportional. This type of patterning is very suggestive of arabesque patterning. The maker has done well by looking up, something all photographers should remember to do when out and about, to take advantage of hidden views that we would otherwise miss.

Compositionally, the square frame suits the image, concentrating the focus to the proportional nature of the image itself. It would have been preferable, if you were able to, get directly under the light fitting to harmonise the fitting with the rest of the scene. The exposure is suitable. It could be increased by a small amount, if so desired. There is some darkening in the corners of the vault. Consider a lift in the shadows or add light to the corners in pp, if that's an option for you.

The contrast is good. The colour is excellent, and well saturated across the entire image. There are rhythms, textures and good details, in the patterns of the ceiling, with an alternating rhythm in the panels of the dome. The aesthetic makes for an eye-arresting mood.

The maker has presented an image that is entertaining. This was well spotted and good work by the maker. 13

---



## Comments report for Photographer EDI Colour - Make it Square

### Am I Colourful by Judy Hofmeyer - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has captured one of the most colourful birds you can find, a Rainbow Lorikeet. The colours are striking, and that blue and orange plumage, red eyes and orange beak are well worth capturing. The bird has good eye contact with the photographer.

Compositionally, the bird is placed neatly in the square frame, with the bird's aspect leading into the negative space. The side shot shows off the eye, beak and feather colours and the plumage to the viewer. The background is busy. For a bird shot like this, try and isolate the bird by using a lower f stop number. This will vary depending on the lighting, and the specific equipment you are using. Focusing on the eyes, or about the eyes, is a good practice in bird photography.

The colours of these birds in nature are bright, and attention needs to be taken with the exposure. These luminous colours can be tricky for the camera's meter. In this image, they are oversaturated from over exposure. The strong sunlight makes this more problematic. The high ISO used here of 5000, is also too high in these conditions. Meter away from the bright colours to set the exposure; exposure lock on a camera is very handy. Dealing with strong colours is a common issue for photographers.

This image can be progressed, keep working on scenes like these, as photographing birds can be very rewarding. Keep on going with your photography. 10

---

### Pretty in pink by Rhonda Hansen - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: Pink flowers are beautiful, and this Chrysanthemum, with unfurling petals is no exception. The image has good colour, and the maker's exposure has contributed to this. This photo has been taken in good side light, and the lighting quality itself, is even light. There are some shadows crossing the bloom, making some undesirable dark areas. Try and take advantage of this light to get more of the flower illuminated. The dark background complements the flower.

Compositionally, the orientation is good, showing the centre part to the viewer. For greater impact with this flower's shape, consider cropping to place the centre of the bloom, in the centre of the square frame. It would help focus the viewer's attention on the inner unfurling petals. Framing of flowers takes a lot of practice. The power of the square to convey symmetry and balance, works very well with an image like this. The rounded petals form a flowing rhythm, that is aesthetically pleasing; and entertains the eye.

The photographer has created an image that has appeal. Keep working on scenes like this. Taking photos of flowers is very rewarding. 10



### Pagoda roof by Debbie Burt - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has found an interesting scene; and taken this slice to focus the viewer's attention. The pagoda roof is of Asian architecture, and the image shows the interlocking tiles and a pattern, of what appears to be a lotus symbol repeating on the side of the upwards roof line. The slender shapes of the bamboo background, contrast with the shapes and forms of the details, in the pagoda roof. The scene evokes a calm, and relaxed mood of being in this type of place.

Compositionally, the maker has creatively framed the shot in the square format. Consider cropping tighter, to show more of that pagoda roof detail, which is the main subject that you are calling the viewer's attention to. The bamboo does add to the story.

The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of about two thirds of a stop. Also, lifting the shadows in pp will help, if that's available to you.

As the details are soft, consider an adjustment in contrast, blacks, clarity and sharpness. This will further enhance this image. Isolating the roof part of the scene by a lower f stop number, or by subtle blurring out of the background in pp, would help to focus the viewer's attention and add mood to your story.

The image has a good aesthetic feel. The maker has displayed photographic vision in taking this slice of the scene. 11

---

### Scented square by Mary Singh - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This maker, with an image of a bottle of fragrance, has the viewer focussed on a square container that has been centred. The image does play upon the square format itself.

Compositionally, the framing could be cropped, to even up the presentation. There is a rhythm between the layers of the square bottle itself, its corners and the corners of the frame. Photographing this bottle top down within the square frame, is another composition worth trying. Experiment with this subject and try and find a unique perspective. There's lots of fun to be had with this object, and the square format.

The exposure is about right. A very small increase could be applied. The maker has done well considering the reflective glass, that can easily cause mayhem with the metering. Increasing sharpness will help to neaten the shape. Tidy up the white flecks in the black cloth by using a spotting tool, if that's available to you. Darkening the bottom corners of the frame will add to the spotlight effect; and bring more drama and focus to this scene.

The photographer has conveyed a message about square shapes within the frame. Well done to the maker, with this inventive image. 11

---

### Sweet Treats by Michael Klusacek - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is another lively, and stylish scene put together by the photographer.

The co-ordination of the squares within the square format is another inventive image. The maker has done well to arrange this scene.

Compositionally, the arrangement of some items plays on the diagonal strengths of the square, while other items reinforce the sides of the square frame. There is a rhythm and contrast at work visually. The blue elements provide a good colour contrast with the white squared items, and the white background of the plate. The blue edging of the plate is another rhythm with the square sides of the frame. The red strawberry square adds a point of distinction, to the rest of the patterns to be found. This becomes the focal point of the image.

The exposure would benefit from a lift of about half a stop. This would even out the lighting on the scene and brighten up the colours. Consider adding contrast, clarity and sharpness to give more punch to the image. There is some scope in your settings to raise the ISO, and adjust the f stop to a higher number. You may have to add in, or adjust the amount of artificial light.

This is an entertaining and very well put together scene.

This is good work by the maker. 12

---

### A Square of Squares by Joanna Rath - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is another inventive image based upon the idea of squares within the square format. The maker has been creative by using various linear shapes and colours, all made from a crocheted patchwork quilt. This has been cleverly done. Perhaps the patchwork was made by the photographer.

Compositionally, the sub-framing attracts the eye with the focal point being the lightest, and brightest element, the sky-blue square. The eye does move around the patchwork with the changing shape and colour. This random rhythm creates a visual tension and drama. It is highly effective. The columns are not even and straight; this has an interesting benefit, and unexpected effect. This startles the viewer, as the brain is primed to look for order and evenness. The crocheted patchwork adds its own texture to the sub-squares. All this combines for an entertaining and unusual aesthetic.

The exposure would benefit from a lift of about half a stop. This would even out the lighting on the scene and brighten up the colours. Consider adding contrast, clarity and sharpness to develop the crocheted texture of the image, if pp is available to you.

This is an excellent concept and use of the square format.  
Well done to the maker on creating an entertaining scene. 13

---

### brick symetry by John Robertson - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here was passing by and spotted this arrangement of brickwork, that does make for an interesting image. There are often things like this we can find when out and about, and it's good to stop and take the time to make a photo.

Compositionally, it has been framed well. With brickwork scenes like this, it can sometimes be tricky to line them up within the camera frame. The maker has done well here, as there is no obvious horizontal or vertical distortion. It would benefit from a very small rotation to the right. The make-it-square profile works to focus the viewer's attention to the central dark area. The curves work in a harmonious and complementary way with the sides of the square format. The horizontal lines of the brickwork and mortar reinforce the square format while at the same time, leading to the mortar circular outline. The centre disc interacts with both the rhythm of the outer mortar circle and the mortar lines of the brickwork pointing into it. It is an intriguing pattern and combination of aesthetic value.

The exposure would benefit from some increased brightness of under half a stop. To develop the image further, add contrast, clarity and sharpness.

The maker has done well to take this opportunity.  
Keep working on scenes like these, as they can be very satisfying. 12

---

## Lanterns in the Lens by Bill Thompson - Second Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has done well to notice this view and take a capture of this intriguing scene. The reflection of the Chinese lantern lights in the lens is quite entrancing. Especially the way the lanterns seemingly ?fall? into the lens. The scene does evoke thoughts in the viewer?s mind about what was the juxtaposition of the lens for this to have occurred.

Compositionally, the scene has been well placed within the frame. The larger bright orange lantern at the bottom left anchors the scene. It creates the start of a leading line into the lens. The arc of the diminishing sizes of the lanterns towards the lens?s front glass, creates both a progressive and flowing rhythm. The trail leads into the scene, into the lens as it were, giving the two-dimensional image a sense of depth. The changing colours add variety, interest and impact.

The curves in the scene are complemented by the even sides of the square format, which helps to give a sense of harmony with this image.

The exposure could benefit from at least a half a stop of extra light, depending on the desired effect. The extra light would benefit the colour, allowing the image to have more life. With the increased brightness, there is a rectangular plane that becomes visible, which in a way, adds to the scene. It supports the direction of the lanterns ?tipping? into the image. The two intrusions along the edge of the top right side of the frame, should be removed, and the two white light reflections on and near the red lantern. They would be easily cloned out. To add further improvement to this image, increase the contrast, clarity, blacks, and add sharpness in pp, if that?s an option for you. While the scene was a coincidental juxtaposition, it does have an abstract and conceptual aspect.

The maker has done well to convert the prospective scene to a cleverly composed image with an abstract meaning. This is good photography. 14

---

## Under the Bridge by Ian Guthrie - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a creative image by the photographer, using a very wide-angle lens to add impact. The distortion added by the lens to the existing curves and straight lines in the scene is highly effective, making for an attractive image.

The composition of using both the wide lens, and the resulting black mask, works very well in focussing the viewer?s attention. The vignette effect with its rounded inner corners, echoes the curves within the scene. The framing is a little too close to the edge of the square. The image has harmony with the square format.

The placement of the road and bridge in the frame is good, and nicely balanced. The viewpoint from which this shot is taken, adds to the drama, with the leading lines in the foreground.

The exposure is about right. It could be decreased by a small amount, as the sky is starting to lose colour. Lifting the shadows in the balance of the scene will help. There is some chromatic aberration that is a common issue when shooting this wide. It can be reduced if the aperture is not set at either end of the extremes. There are two ways that will reduce it in pp, if these tools are available to you. Firstly, try the chromatic aberration correction tool. Secondly, brush the edge and desaturate and lighten it, being careful of the transitions. These steps sometimes might not get rid of every trace of it, but you will make a significant improvement, perhaps eliminate it. Don?t let it deter you from using the lens! They are good fun and can make some great images.

This image uses the harmonizing power of the square presentation very well. The maker should be commended for a simple, yet highly effective image. 13

## Beyond The Pines by Ishani Booms - First Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer shows us a well composed image of this very off-road scene. The image immediately evokes the smell of pines, the dusty road, and that out-in-the-country feeling. The pines are well balanced here in the square format.

The composition has been well placed against the background of the mountain and the sky. The road and the pines on both sides make good leading lines into the scene. The diminishing road and tree line create a v-composition, and a progressive rhythm, that gives movement to an otherwise static scene. The focal point in the distance shows us the far-off mountain destination. The colour is good, and the colour layers add rhythm and depth to the scene.

The exposure would benefit from a lift of about half a stop. There are some good subtleties of light and colour in the image. Try lifting the shadows. To further enhance this image, apply increases in contrast, clarity, and sharpness. This scene is loaded with textures: The road, the trees, the sky and the mountain, just waiting to be developed. The image has used the balancing power of the square format well.

The photographer has produced a beautiful image with good composition.  
This is very good work by the maker. 15

---



## Comments report for Advanced EDI Monochrome - Make it Square

### Collecting Food by Sharon Alston - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer has well captured a European honeybee foraging amongst the stamens, looking for pollen and nectar. He has obviously been a busy bee, notice that the pollen sac is quite full. The maker would have to have been patient with this shot, as the bees do like to move around.

Compositionally, the bee has been well placed in the frame. This type of image suits the focussing power of the square. This side view was a good orientation for the capture, showing the full length of the bee. There is too much background that takes away from the main subject. Consider cropping tighter to bring the bee and the good detail you have, much closer to the viewer.

The exposure is about right. There is a hotspot on the body that could be dimmed down or cloned out in pp. In these types of captures, depth of field and a light can be an issue. The maker has done well here with a reasonable depth of field, and there is good light on the subject. There is some scope to increase the ISO to help increase your depth of field, try f8 for any additional benefit.

Details on the bee such as the banding, wings and hairs have been captured with good sharpness. The catchlight on the eye adds to the take. To further enhance the image, make adjustments in pp to contrast, blacks, clarity and sharpness.

These adjustments work very well with bee shots.

The maker has done well to handle the challenges in this shot.

This is good work by the maker. 12

---

### Protective Burn by Patsy Cleverly - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has captured a scene of a fire preparedness project. There is a strong sense of the smoky atmosphere. The inclusion of the figures in conversation adds to the story going on here.

Compositionally, the figures and the tree have been well placed within the frame. Consider a small crop from the top and sides to strengthen the view. The arch made by the tree trunk anchors the scene, and acts as a framing element to the figures below. The figures add a sense of scale. The square format enhances the curved element of the tree, giving a good balance between it, and the figures. The sunlit smoke creates the mood of an aftermath.

The exposure could benefit from a small increase in brightness. This would help the smoky beams show more. If you have a dehaze tool in software, this would also help, to make the beams stronger. They are like a spotlight, highlighting your story. The tonal values are good, with lots of texture present in the scene amongst the tree bark, foliage and the undergrowth. This would be much enhanced with an increase in contrast, clarity and sharpness.

The monochrome suits the image.

The maker has created an image with good appeal, and a story to tell.

Well done to the maker. 12

---

## Sunday Morning Relax Time by Glenn Rose - Second Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has found a pleasant Sunday morning scene, and it does convey a calm and relaxed mood. There is a retro look and feel to this monochrome, due to the tonal values, and the side lighting in the scene.

Compositionally, the maker has framed the shot well, and has taken care to consider what to include, and what to exclude in the frame. It works well with the square frame. The image evokes the type of square format photos of bygone decades in the black and white era. The high contrast adds an alternating rhythm to the scene. The dog, the drawer cupboard, basket and the handled wood block toy, all convey the domesticity of the place. This is done in an excellent layered manner.

The exposure is about right for this composition and supports the use of the monochrome well. Consider adding light to the face and hair, arm and hand of the woman in pp, if that's available to you. The image could be rotated to maintain the verticals of the room.

This is a well composed image with a timeless aesthetic feel. It complements the square format very well. And this is very good work by the photographer. 14

---

## Statue in Vienna by Malcolm Godde - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an intriguing image by the maker that is adventurous in its rendering. It appears that the statue and its pedestal have been rendered, either by exposure of the lighting in the courtyard with the contrast of night, or in post processing. The overall image is one of strong contrasts. It appears that the sky has been darkened for effect. This gives a mood that is strong as it is also stark. This scene is one of the four famous 'horse tamer' statues in the foregrounds of the Austrian State Parliament.

The aesthetic effect adds something more than the ordinary view. The high key rendering of the statue shows the level of detail in an elevated way. The stone pedestal declares its strength and permanence. In case you're wondering, the statue represents the 'taming of passion' and a plea for politicians to keep their passions in check.

Compositionally, the parts of the scene are arranged with the centre piece of the statue, while the buildings are presented in a juxtaposed way. The square format gives power to that composition. The view has been carefully constructed to line up the statue.

The upward and back perspective of the pedestal adds to that sense of drama.

The exposure is reasonable for this image, and the monochrome is well supported.

The tonal values are limited, but the starkness is part of the art that makes the message work. Consider raising the blacks to bring out the lines in the statue and to strengthen the contrasting background you have created. The small intrusion at the right edge of the frame should be removed. It clones out easily. Overall, the presentation works well.

This is a carefully crafted image and good photography. Well done to the maker! 13

---

## The Photographer by Garry Pearce - First Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer of this image has [pause]?taken a good shot of a fellow photographer! With his Canon 5D Mark IV camera firmly in hand, mounted with a 100mm f2.8 lens, the hatted character becomes something more than just someone passing by. This adds to the story of the image and engages the viewer, with questions such what was he photographing? Where was he? And what is his story as a fellow photographer?

Compositionally, the pose is candid enough, to be quite natural, whether deliberately posed, or not. The camera?s position, and the tilted head, create strong diagonal lines that are well placed with the tight framing, and the square format serving the image well. It strikes the viewer that he was a ?serious? photographer, with a ?serious? camera. The camera is half the story, the other is the intent, aged, lined and character-filled face of the photographer. His mood is rather reserved, but alert. The story would not be the same without that wispy wiry chin hair, which gives a uniqueness and distinction to the face.

The intense eye contact is also pivotal in this shot. The monochrome tone helps the look and feel of the image?s aesthetic of a retro looking candid portrait.

The exposure is about right for this image. Consider adding some light and contrast to the eyes in pp, if that?s available to you. Adding clarity will help develop the texture of the face and especially the chin hairs. The shadow across the face does distract, having the subject in a different orientation would help.

Consider dimming the periphery of the image subtly. This would add another touch to the mood of the image and help reduce the busyness in the top two corners. It would also help reduce the brightness at the bottom left and right, to help focus the viewer?s attention on the essential part of the image.

This is an entertaining character study with a good story. Well done to the maker. 15

---

## Three in waiting by David Skinner - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: Something different here. This maker has taken a candid shot at the traffic lights, with a message that leaves the viewer with that waiting feeling. The mood is further conveyed by the pensive faces, particularly on the face of the fellow in the white shirt. The square format and monochrome work well to show this little cameo of a street corner.

Compositionally, the tight framing works well by directing the attention to this scene. The eyes go straight to the right-most figure in the white shirt, and then travel to the figure at the post. The placement of the post anchors the scene, and frames the shot from top to bottom. This reinforces the focus to the story of the figures. It also bookends the brighter tones of the monochrome. Notice that the facial expressions or gaze is different for each individual, giving the viewer the impression that they would rather be elsewhere than waiting at the lights.

The figure at the post has his head turned, looking to a point out of the frame.

This creates a visual tension, and gives some sense of continuance outside of the frame. The array of changing clothing and footwear, convey thoughts about the backstory to the assembled characters in this story.

The exposure would benefit from a very small increase in brightness of about a third of a stop, or just lift the shadows in pp. This would give more separation between the figures and the background. Consider lifting the contrast and clarity to strengthen the textures on the post, the wall and the clothing.

The maker here had a good concept. Keep working on scenes like this, as it can be very rewarding. Developing good street photography is an art to be appreciated. This is good work by the photographer. 11

---



### Leaning Towers by Deirdre Blunt - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here has made a creative decision that gives the buildings an appearance of leaning over. Trying something different, a unique perspective is at the heart of a lot of good photography. What works particularly well for this scene, is the contrast between the curves and the lines that further adds to the arresting nature of the leaning towers.

The tight framing compositionally works well. The square format with its even sides, emphasises shapes and geometry. The image is anchored at each side by the angled white line at the left, and the angled corners at the right edge of the frame. This works to focus the viewer's attention on the contrasting architecture and the tonal variation between the two buildings. This does evoke a story of the 'conversation' between the two buildings. Aesthetically, there is good rhythm, symmetry, repetition and alternation in this scene. The look of the leaning is not what the eye expects, so there is an element of visual tension. This adds to the dramatic mood and feel of the image.

The exposure is about right for this scene. It supports the monochrome image, which helps focus on structure, shape and geometry. To enhance those details further, increase the clarity, blacks and sharpness.

The maker shows a keen eye for some creative vision. Keep working on scenes like these, as they can be very satisfying. 13

---

### Serenity by Geoff Bayes - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has done well to see this view in their mind's eye; and bring it to fruition with this image. It appears to be a distillation of a tree in ponded water, with some reflective component, that has been rendered to a white background. It is quite entrancing, as the scene has a simplicity about it, and yet a complexity. There is a deep sense of serenity, and contemplation.

The placement of the subject in the frame would be strengthened by a central composition. Consider cropping off the top and right, leaving an even amount of negative space. As it is, a preponderance of white space at the right, tends to draw the eye away. The horizontal lines act together as one leading line, adding depth to an otherwise two-dimensional scene. The branches move the eye around the centre of the frame. The diminishing size and changing directions of the branches provide a good progressive rhythm, that entertains the eye.

The exposure serves the scene. The high contrast developed by the maker gives a dramatic look, and locks in the attention to the subject. The slightly lighter tone, of the horizontal lines (the water ripples), helps to emphasise the darker tone of the tree.

This is a very thoughtful and stylised work, with a nod to minimalism. Well done to the maker, on creating an excellent image. 13

---

### Burnt 425 by Allen Skilton - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This image tells us a story about a fire event that has come to this tree.

The message is well conveyed by the blackened bark and the tag. The tree now tagged, marks the event, with the number of 425. The mood is sombre, and this evokes the question in the viewer's mind, 'what happens next?'

The placement of the tag in the composition is excellent. The scene is balanced vertically, and left to right along thirds. The tight frame focuses the viewer on the blackened bark of the tree. It's a simple composition, but highly effective. The contrast between the tag and the bark, adds to the impact of the message, as does the number of 425. While the exposure is not unreasonable for this subject, a small lift in brightness would help to show more of the texture of the blackened bark. To enhance it further, increase the clarity and sharpness in pp. This image uses the even sides of the square format to harmonize the scene.

The photographer has created an image with good composition, that has a tale to tell. The maker has done well to see this scene and take this opportunity 12

## Source Of Power by David Willis - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This scene shows a good view of a water wheel. The composition of this image has been taken from a good angle that allows the viewer to see the whole structure.

The framing is balanced in the square format. The white railing does distract the eye, taking away from the main event, which is the water wheel and its interesting structure. For an alternative view with more impact, consider cropping tighter to exclude the white railing as much as possible. This will allow the viewer a closer, undistracted, and better look at the wheel and its features.

There are mixed levels of brightness in the scene. It does have some areas that are underexposed. With this exposure, you could consider raising the brightness a very small amount, lifting the shadows, and/or apply some local brightness adjustments in pp. Of particular interest in the scene is the wheel's various parts, its structure and supporting lines. These are partly in the dark, especially around the inner gearing ring area. An increase in contrast and clarity would benefit the textures and structure in the scene. The image has used the balancing power of the square format well.

The photographer has produced a pleasant scene, with good potential.

The maker should be encouraged to keep working on scenes like this, and you will be rewarded. 11

---

## Flying High by Chrissi Miles - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an interesting scene, that you don't see every day. And indeed, the occupants in the balloon are flying high. This image is a good example of an opportunity taken by the maker looking up for a photograph.

The composition is balanced in the square frame. There is a story here about the balloon, and the people enjoying this flying high experience. The people though, are too distant, and this takes away from the message. Consider a tighter crop to bring the people closer to the viewer. This would help the impact of your message, by focussing on the human experience. Bring the viewer into that experience, and the dramatic mood you have here.

The exposure could benefit from some increase in brightness, of around a half a stop. While the image doesn't fit a monochrome definition, it does have some interesting elements and story. Aesthetically, the basket and the balloon have good line, pattern and repetition. The alternating panels add a good rhythm.

The human element is entertaining, with the variety of body positions and the facial expressions. To enhance the details further, increase the contrast, clarity and sharpness. Consider adding a strong vignette, that is darkened corners, for a telescope-like effect.

The framing is nicely placed in the square crop. It does convey a feeling of flying high. The maker has done well to capture this entertaining scene. 10

---

## Trees of the Lake by Vicki Cain - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here has created a minimalist image that has a good ambience with the ethereal foggiess amongst the trees. There is a peaceful mood that is evoked in the viewer.

Compositionally, the trees have been placed well in the frame. The darker and larger tree at lower left, anchors the scene. Its stronger presence counterbalances, the very misty trees. The mirroring in the water adds to the symmetry and balance of the scene. There is good use of the negative space.

The viewer is invited to explore the scene and enjoy the fabulous branching and the serene mood.

The exposure is about right. The brightness could be reduced, if desired to alter the effect. To further enhance this image, increase the contrast, clarity, blacks and sharpness. This would strongly benefit those details to be found in the branches.

The structure of the branches has a good random rhythm, with their changing directions. The image conveys the harmony that a well poised composition can bring to a square frame. It has a gentle, and delicate mood.

Well done to the maker on setting up this creative image.

This is a fine photograph. 13

---

### Mates by William Cleverly - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a great scene the maker has captured. There is a good story about a woman and her best friend. The emotional bond and companionship here is readily conveyed to the viewer, along with the feel-good mood.

Compositionally, the scene is well framed. There is a strong line diagonally with the side view composition, up from the dog's head to the woman. This gives expression to the emotional dynamic between the two. This diagonal is compositionally enhanced by the maker's use of the square frame. The subjects have been well isolated from the background.

The exposure is good for this scene; it could even be decreased a little, to show some more tonal graduations in the dog hairs. The monochrome does suit the scene, as it focusses the viewer on the emotional dynamic that is going on between animal and human. Another way to achieve some more tonal graduations, is to adjust the gamma or curves in post processing, if this is an option for you. Increasing the blacks will also work here. Add contrast to also further enhance this image.

The synergy of the framing and composition is excellent. The affectionate mood between the dog and its owner, is well conveyed by the photographer.

Well done to the maker with this highly engaging image. 14

---

### Window Watch by Pamela Milliken - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has created a unique view with this perspective. This image does a evoke, both a mood of mystery, and fascination. This is one of those scenes where openings act as a 'seeing-through' element, that can work very well in photography.

Compositionally, the view works well with the square frame. It reinforces the lines and shapes that direct the viewer. Of particular note, in this composition is the placement and the angled head of the foreground figure. It is the origin point of the scene, that the maker calls the viewer to see. This figure is well placed such that it does not unduly dominate the frame, yet enough to add the cue to the image. I note that the hair does merge with the darkened top right corner, which confuses the visual separation.

The image would benefit from a decrease in exposure of about half a stop.

The exposure is over bright for the white striping. If you have access to pp, increasing the blacks will deepen the black shapes. Aesthetically, the diminishing shape and changing tone, adds a progressive and alternating rhythm respectively. This gives a sense of movement through the scene, adding to the drama of the search for the child. The monochrome helps focus the scene.

Well done to the maker on spotting this opportunity; and capturing this well composed image. 14

---

### Always a Delight for the Senses by Win van Oosterwijck - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a dynamic scene; and it does delight with the way it draws the viewer in. This scene readily lends itself to being portrayed in the square frame.

Compositionally, the scene uses the convergence and distortion created by the wide-angle lens, with the large structure at left, the railing at right, and even the shadows. This creates a sense of drama. The photographer has set up some good leading lines. They take the viewer through the image to a focal point containing the figure. The inclusion of the figure; not only provides a focal point deeper in the scene, it also adds a sense of scale to the surrounding structure.

The lines of the shadows also contribute to the sense of movement and geometry in the image. The scene is high in repetition and symmetry. There is a white band, albeit faint, running vertically at right, that does detract from the image.

Try cloning this out, if this is an option for you. The exposure is about right and supports the monochrome image.

Well done to the maker on 'seeing' this scene; and taking the opportunity for this capture. Keep up the good work. 12

---

### **Heres Looking At You by Michael Black - Merit**



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a great take of this emu by the maker. The look with those eyes, the scruffy hair, and that snarky beak is fabulous. Emus seem to have that look of being both serious, and mischievous.

The framing is good and works for the square format. Being slightly off centre adds some interest. The slightly turned head is good composition. This subject could be tightened up, with a small amount of cropping, at top and at right.

The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of about half a stop of light. There is some rim light effect along the emu's edge hair, and that extra light would enhance this further. This would give more definition between the subject, and the background tone. The subject has been very well isolated, with your long-distance lens. The bokeh is smooth and enhances the emu's figure-ground separation.

To further develop the image, add contrast, clarity and sharpness in pp, if that's an option for you, as there are some wonderful details waiting to be exploited.

The monochrome works well with this image.

This is a pleasing animal portrait, that has been well captured.

Well done, with this terrific photo. 14

---

### **Boy in the street by Jill Hancock - Accepted**



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is a delightful portrait of a child in the street, and has been well captured by the maker. The monochrome works well with good tonal values. The mood evoked by this image is thoughtful and pensive. The hat adds to the portrait providing contrast, and emphasis to the child's face.

The composition works well with the square. The photographer has positioned themselves to capture a view that is slightly to the side, which adds interest.

The background is busy. If it were possible, try for a moment where the background is more even, and less distracting. To enhance this image consider darkening in pp the lighter parts of the background to blend out the post's lighter tone.

A similar treatment with a suitable tone could be done at the left also.

Alternatively, consider burning in the corners for more of vignetted look.

The exposure is about right for this scene. Try adding contrast and a small amount of clarity. There is a good feel with the monochrome character of the photo.

The maker has created a pleasing portrait with a good aesthetic.

This is good image making by the photographer. 13

---

### **Balance Beam Bird by Glenda Black - Accepted**



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker here has captured a good moment of what appears to be some type of Spoonbill bird. It's in a great pose, as if it's in a dance move, and balancing itself on that branch.

Compositionally, the photographer has got the right idea of getting in close.

The bird has been well placed in the square frame. Consider a slightly tighter framing, with a small crop off the top and the right edge. This would give more impact to your image. The inclusion of the highly textured branch works well, with its diagonal movement through the frame. This adds to the dynamic of the pose and reinforces the viewer's eye on the bird.

The exposure could benefit from about a half a stop of extra light. This would help increase the separation of the bird from the background. Add light about the bird's head, above the beak. Also add light, clarity and contrast to the bird's eye.

This is where you want to draw the viewer's attention to. The feather detail is on the soft side, increase sharpness for a dramatic difference.

The maker has captured a good moment in nature with this bird image.

Well done to the maker, on looking for an interesting moment in time. 12

---

### Square within a Square by Jessica Wells - Accepted



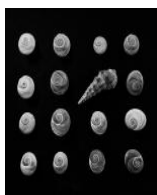
Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an inventive image, where the maker has used an object and presented it with a perspective that adds more, than its regular form.

The scene's shapes benefit well from the square format. The angling of each layer of the cube adds interest to the composition, while at the same time, the turn still shows squares to the viewer. To strengthen the image, the amount of background should be reduced, cropping an amount off all sides. This would give more focus to just the cube itself. There are some bright distractions at the top of the frame. They could be darkened by dimming the whole perimeter of the frame, leaving the main lighting effect. That highlight light works well in drawing attention to the Rubik's cube. The exposure of the image itself is about right. There has been some thought given to the lighting arrangement for this shot by the maker.

The photographer has had the perception to see the scene's potential in their mind's eye. Well done on translating an object into a more thoughtful composition. 12

---

### The Odd One Out by Donna Rohrich - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has assembled quite an interesting array of shells, that immediately evokes a mood about the seaside. And then there is the one shell, just one, that's different from all the rest, which becomes the focal point of the image. There are conflicting moods in this scene of harmony, and tension.

Compositionally, the circular items are arranged in the pattern of a square.

Their rounded shape contrasts with the straight lines of the square format.

The very noticeable, and differently shaped element in the 4th column, creates a point of distinction. The image, as simple as it may look, engages the brain of the viewer by challenging the brain's desire to perceive complete patterns. The regular rhythm has been very cleverly set up by maker, and shows an awareness of the square frame, and the aesthetic effect of breaking that rhythm.

The regular shells have their own way of engaging the viewer, with their logarithmic swirls and differing tones. The shapes, lines, structures, patterns, and tonal values used by the maker, are all enhanced by the use of the monochrome.

The exposure would be improved by an adjustment of half a stop. To enhance this image further, increase contrast, clarity, blacks, whites, and sharpness in pp, if that's an option for you.

This is an excellent display of an aesthetic concept by the maker.

Well done to the maker on a fine image. 14

---

### Waiting For Work by Wendy Stanford - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has captured an up-close, and personal view of some working horses in a built-up area. Perhaps they're on a break from pulling a coach (From right outside the gothic styled St Michaels church in Vienna, I'd say). There is a lot of detail of the horses' faces, manes, and their bridle strapping and rigging. The horses have good eye contact with the photographer. This builds an emotional connection to your image.

Compositionally, the framing of the horse at left is tight. This gives the viewer the sense of being right there. The framing in the square format helps to focus our attention on the horses' faces. The very busy background, and the lack of isolation of the horses, would be improved by using a lower f stop number, balanced with a higher shutter speed. Or consider adding a subtle amount of background blurring, in pp. Leave the pavement as is. Adding a vignette, that is darkened corners, would also enhance this image. The monochrome adds to the nostalgic mood.

There is some strong side lighting on the 2nd horse, which unbalances the exposure. This could be dimmed. Increasing contrast, clarity and the blacks will also enhance this image.

The maker has presented an image that has good appeal; and engages the viewer with the subject horses. This is a pleasing scene. 11

---



## Comments report for Photographer EDI Monochrome - Make it Square

### Squares on Squares by Joanna Rath - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer has presented an image that readily utilizes the square format. The item appears to be a cushion or fabric with this design, perhaps it was handcrafted by the maker. The idea is simple, but very effective.

Compositionally, the central element of the elephant, is framed by an inner square. All sides of this inner frame echo the outer frame of the image.

The arrows and dots, (which are themselves in a square), then further reinforce this concept. There are good rhythms in this image that are dynamic, giving a sense of movement from the sides of the image frame to the centre.

The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of at least a third of a stop. The monochrome is suited to enhancing the lines and shapes used in this image. If possible, try to smooth the fabric's appearance prior to the capture. The maker has done well to take this from directly overhead, as it can be tricky to position the camera and line things up. To further enhance the image, increase contrast, clarity and blacks, in pp, if that's an option for you.

The maker has done well to identify and use this item for the make-it-square project. The concepts are strong, and this is good work by the maker. 12

---

### Sitting around by Rhonda Hansen - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The photographer has created a quirky scene that invites the viewer to try and unravel it. It appears to be a soft toy with some shoes on it. The eyes of the toy are marvellous, adding a humorous touch, with the shoes on the legs. The tree bark makes for a good texture background. The mood here is fun and whimsical.

Compositionally, the tree hollow has been well used to frame the figure.

Consider a small crop from the top, bottom and sides to strengthen the view. Alternatively, add a vignette, which would help focus on the tree and its hollow. This would lose some of the extraneous and dark part of the frame at the right side. The exposure would benefit from a large increase in brightness of at least a stop, or more. As the scene is dark, the viewer needs extra light to see what you have created.

The maker has created a scene that entertains and tells a story.

Well done to the maker for injecting some humour and fun in their image. 11

---

### It's Hip to be Square by Bill Thompson - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: This scene is interesting, even for just that book title: The Railway Enthusiasts Bedside Book. Apparently, this book is a well-known popular collection from around the world of nostalgic stories, historical facts, and practical information - all about trains? That smile is self-conscious, but the mood is also playful.

The composition with the subject placement off-centre works well. The subject is effectively isolated with the blurred background. The monochrome suits the scene. It could easily have been a square format candid environmental portrait taken in the 70's. There are some good tonal values due to the angled side lighting in the scene.

The exposure would benefit from an increase in brightness of about two thirds of a stop. There is scope for raising your ISO to adjust the brightness without losing the good isolation of the subject. To improve this image, increase the contrast, clarity and sharpness, in pp, if that's an option for you. Consider a small crop dragging from the top left corner to tighten the scene. In a set-up like this, try other poses and angles for a more entertaining viewpoint. There is an idea here that could be explored further to better communicate your photographic intention. Think about whether the image itself conveys your message - without the title.

This is a pleasing portrait scene.

Keep working on scenes like this and keep up the good work. 11

## Banana Plant by Judy Hofmeyer - First Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: This is an intriguing image, that is adventurous in its subject matter, composition and rendering. It is a banana plant, and it has been captured in the square in a low contrast way that works well. The overall image is one of bold lines, curves and tonal values. This gives a strong dramatic mood.

The image is actually a very detailed look at the parts of a banana plant. The banana fingers develop from the female flower, and after that, a male bud develops. The large hanging part at the centre of the image is the male bud. This image could easily have been from a botanical book of times past, as a detailed black and white picture ?plate?, as they were called. The scene has a retro look about it, albeit of a banana plant.

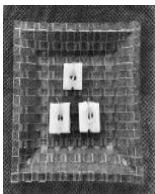
Compositionally, the scene is arranged with the centre piece being the large male bud, with the finished female flowers above it. Above that the fingers of the bananas can be seen. This arrangement, and the square format give power to those shapes in the composition. The vignette suits the scene and the monochrome look, very well. They serve to give a strong focus to the image.

The exposure is the tricky part of this image, as it could have some minor balancing, if desired. Carefully lift the shadows (i.e. don't blow out the highlights) and add light to the centre where the female flowers are, in pp if that's an option for you. Dim the bananas where they are too bright, after any small exposure adjustment. Add contrast, clarity and sharpness to the image. The tonal values are limited, but this is part of the art that makes the aesthetic aspect work. The view is a unique perspective. I will never look at a banana the same after seeing this image!

The is a well-crafted, interesting image and good photography. Well done to the maker! 15

---

## Now We All R Square by Michael Klusacek - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: Some more squares within a square, and this time with another twist in the story. This is an inventive scene, where the maker has taken a rounded form, that we are familiar with, of an apple and presents it to us in another form. The cubed apples repeat the four sides of the square tray, and of the image frame itself.

Compositionally, the elements are well placed in the scene. The tight framing, and the square format serves the image well. The number of apples breaks the pattern of the theme of the four sides. It is an aesthetic point of distinction. This creates visual tension and drama, where the viewer is expecting four square shaped apple cores. The maker has done well to photograph this scene from above. This overhead view is key to the composition. The fabric below the tray adds texture, as does the squares of the tray, that also repeat the pattern of the theme.

The exposure is a little unbalanced for this image. The scene needs more brightness, but the apples would then be too bright. Some adjustment at the time would have helped, or some added light source, or trying the phone's flash. It can be adjusted in pp, if that's an option for you, by lifting the shadows and if required, selectively dimming the apple to regain the texture. To further enhance the image, increase contrast, clarity and sharpness. There is a lot of line and texture that can be enhanced. The mood here is one of calculation, with the strong geometric story.

This is a clever story about square shapes and an inventive composition.  
Well done to the maker. 12

---



### Lemon Scented Gum by Debbie Burt - Merit



Judges Comment: John Russo: The scene of this lemon scented gumtree is dynamic in its use of the square. This angled composition, and the towering size of the tree give a dramatic mood.

Compositionally, the tight framing works very well by directing the viewer along a leading line created by the tree's large trunk. The eye then explores the rest of the scene following the dividing branches spreading across the image. The maker's decision to create that upward gaze and the placement of the middle of the trunk in the corner was a good one. It makes a powerful diagonal that works very well with the square frame. The wide-angle lens has also contributed to get that dramatic emphasis on the tree trunk.

The exposure is unbalanced for this image. The scene needs more brightness. Consider the setting at the time of the capture. F20 could be lowered for more light. There would still be plenty of depth of field with a lower f stop number. The ISO could also then be lowered. These adjustments would allow you to use a faster shutter speed to balance out the exposure. There are some good details in the scene that would be enhanced by some added contrast, clarity and sharpness in pp, if that's available to you.

The maker here had a pleasing concept. Keep working on scenes like this, as it can be very rewarding. This is good work by the photographer. 12

---

### Into The Darkness by Ishani Booms - Second Place



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker had an intention here, and the viewer is left to ponder that message. It is a figure descending the stairs, but there is more to the story here.

Upon closer examination, the person appears to be having a cigarette. The wispy shapes suggest it is a smoke trail. The maker has used a slow shutter speed, and this contributes to the wispiness and blurred outlines in the image. This gives it an ethereal look and mysterious mood.

Trying something different for a unique insight is at the heart of a lot of good photography. What works particularly well for this scene is the contrast between the darker curve and the darker area at right. That area at right anchors the scene and adds to the drama. This is particularly so when contrasted with the lighter tone of the steps, that leads to the brighter light, that shows the origin point of the story.

Compositionally, the even sides of the square frame help to bring emphasis to this image. The under-exposure of some parts of the scene adds grain which works well to add to the feel of the photo. The exposure is about right, for what this scene is trying to achieve. It supports the monochrome style. The look of the image is not what the eye expects, so there is an element of visual tension.

To enhance the image further, add some light selectively to the wispy smoke trail to draw the viewer's eye, in pp if that works for you. The white cigarette, and its white glowing end, could be lightened to add to the story.

The maker shows a keen eye for some creative vision. Keep working on scenes like these, as they can be very satisfying. 14

---

## Drophead touring car by Ian Guthrie - Accepted



Judges Comment: John Russo: The maker has presented us with one of the classics, a Sunbeam Talbot 90 mkII. This is the coupe version. It has a convertible roof, which is known as a drophead. Car shows and meets are interesting and are good opportunities for photographers.

The tight framing of the car compositionally fills the frame. The background is busy. The lines and the curves of the car are beautiful, and work well in the square format.

The exposure serves the scene. There are a lot of reflective surfaces, try using a polariser to reduce the glare. Car shots are best done on cloudy days, for more even lighting conditions. With an opportunity like this, try to get closer and look for some low angle that provides a unique perspective on some part of the car. Be mindful of the background.

Filling the frame with a close of part of the car can work well too. This has the advantage of no background issues, and can make for an interesting image. Adding a vignette to this image would add focus, eliminate distractions, and add a touch of nostalgia to this vintage car image.

This is nice capture of a beautiful car.

Well done to the maker on taking this opportunity. 10