

Critiques April 2012.

All images were critiqued by Errol Kelly of Wanaka,

Theme Digital – Cemeteries / Graveyards



C-Grade: All That Remains

Another image that conveys powerful emotions. The colours are particularly appealing, with their harmony and soft tones. One could debate the existence of the shells. In some ways they appear to be out of place, yet they fill in what would otherwise be a somewhat blank area in the middle of the picture. But that comes down to opinion, and does not detract from the power of the image. Honours.



C-Grade: Crossroads

The photographer has made a good effort to simplify the material. The picture is also helped by the dark vignetting around the outer edge. However, these points are not enough to overcome the weaknesses - the disturbing colour cast, the burnt out white, and a title that really fails to adequately describe the subject. Crossroads may be appropriate at, say, a funeral, but for an obviously very old tombstone, it does much less appropriate. Entry.



C-Grade: Kept Safe For All Time

Here the title works, and helps the picture just enough to get it accepted. The fencing is a little too overwhelming, with the results that the headstone is somewhat lost. Never-the-less, the colouring is appropriate, and the cropping is well handled.
Accepted



C-Grade: Little Angel

While there are a number of images of this style among the entries, this is certainly one of the best. I like the figure being in the front left third, with the rest of the material forming a largely unobtrusive (although it would be very desirable to get rid of that white spot in the upper right - it is quite distracting) but essential background. Normally this would not be a good position, as it cuts one off from the rest of the picture, but here it works well because it is such a very strong focal point.
Honours.



C-Grade: Lost Me Head Lucky My Bottom Was Bolted On

A very good view point has been selected here: one that gives the picture good depth. But again, title! Sadly, we live in a world where it is always possible to offend someone. While personally, I am not disturbed by the use of “bottom”, I can imagine there are some who would be. “Base” would have served just as well, and would be unlikely to give offence. Merit.



C-Grade: In Loving Memory

To some extent, this is the strongest image in the set subject. Simple, great colour, and range of tones. And the crowning touch is the “fading” (out of focus) MEMORY. Honours.



C-Grade: Mary And Nicholas

Another picture which has similarities to other entries, and again, this is one of the best. The lighting is very appropriate - moody, gentle, with a mixture of joy and sadness. The way the primary headstone leans into the picture is good, and there is a nice contrast with the opposing headstone on the left. There is an excellent feeling of depth in the picture, that can often be hard to attain. And while a vertical format is most often used with headstones to give a feeling of height, the horizontal format is ideal here. Honours.



C-Grade: Rest In Peace Old Buddy

A VERY important thing to remember is that, when presenting images for judging, you must forget your memories of the contents, and consider how others are going to react to the image. The dog here may have left the photography with many, very fond, memories, but the viewer does not have these memories, and sees what is only a comparatively good record image. Colour is also good, but this does not carry the picture. Entry.



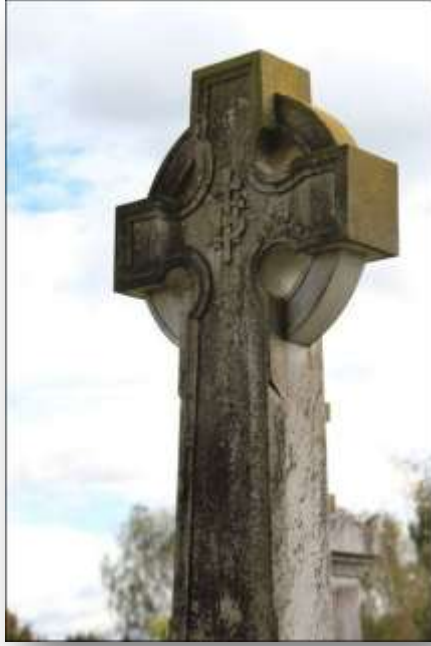
C-Grade: Undying Beauty

A strong image. The pink and grey work well together, the arrangement is strong - even with the flower being against two edges; its placing in the lower right keeps ones eye in the picture. The out-of-focus writing also works well. Honours.



C-Grade: You Will Be Remembered

Wonderfully simple, and powerful. The close viewpoint really makes this picture. It is a little unfortunate that the image shows up best when viewed close-up, where the subtleties can be appreciated. But viewed at a distance, there is a significant loss of impact. Honours.



B-Grade: Celtic Cross

While somewhat similar to an earlier image, this one just makes it. The light is now better, the angle slightly more interesting, and the exposure better. However, the sky is fairly distracting because it is so pale. I think a little more could have been made of the background. The out of focus trees are pleasant, and more of them might have helped.

Accepted



B-Grade: Forgotten

Taken under difficult lighting conditions, this comes out well. It would have been better if one of the headstones was more dominant than the others - as things stand, the black of the tree trunk competes with the headstones. But the overgrowth adds to the story, and it all comes together well.

Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Forgotten

This does have an interesting ethereal quality that works reasonably well. It is almost verging on being too faded, but overall gives the picture sufficient interest. The fallen cross is the feature that makes the picture, because it gives a strong focal point that the eye is drawn back to.

Merit.



B-Grade: Guardian Angel

I gather that I am supposed to reject pictures with incorrect file names, but since I too have problems with angle and angels, we will overlook that. This image is a much better rendition than earlier ones of figurines. The subject is better presented in terms of size and background, although the relatively small aperture used has provided a slightly excessive depth of field, so that the figure tends to disappear into the (too sharp) tree. The very shady light has also washed out the colour more than is desirable (get a polarizing filter - camera manufacturers have yet to make this necessary item standard).
Merit.



B-Grade: In Honour of Pioneering Families

This image bothers me. I can see what the photographer was trying to achieve, but it has not worked. There are basically three pictures here - the DOC sign, the plaque, and the headstone. While they are all related through the title, they do not relate photographically. And frankly, the Lighting on all three is very uninteresting. So sorry to be so negative.
Entry.



B-Grade: Lonely Sentinel

There is a good range of tones in this picture. But the image is still quite dreary, and this is emphasised by the gloomy sky. And again, the picture does not live up to its title. While the tombstone is well placed and well lit, and there is a good leading line up the path, the massive amount of tree foliage belies the “Lonely” of the title, and tends to dominate in the picture. Entry.



B-Grade: Mountain Mist

Not so thrilled with the title, because it does not relate to the competition subject. True, it is the focal point of the picture, but that is perhaps the picture’s weakness - the bright patch of mist is not an attractive focal point, and it is very central. The material framing the picture is all good, but tends to be a frame, rather than a picture. Merit.



B-Grade: On Guard

This has many similarities to the last picture. Again, the tombstone has more interest than the silhouette, but also again, the sky is fairly bland, and does not help the picture. Accepted.



B-Grade: One Handed Angel

This is one of the better headstones in this group. The rear viewpoint provides a different interpretation, and gives the imagination more scope. Selective focussing has been well used, and the monochrome helps considerably. Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Our Lady

Now I will start to sound like someone who cannot be pleased. But this picture is almost the opposite of the earlier ones in this grade. We have a more interesting tombstone, and a more interesting background. The sky is even more appropriate. But the picture is verging on being soft, and the flat light has washed out the colour and taken away any real sense of depth or distance.

Accepted.



B-Grade: Peter Rabbit Keeps Watch

While this is colourful and somewhat cute, it gives too little indication of meeting the set subject criteria.

Entry.



B-Grade: Reviving Memories

Although the bright light immediately catches the viewer's attention, and could be interpreted in some religious way, it does not make a picture. This light is so bright that it has made the rest of the picture virtually inaccessible to the eye. What pieces of headstone show up are brightly lit edges, with the result that picture has no composition, or satisfactory focal point.
Entry.



B-Grade: Stone Soldiers

A neat title that makes a good excuse for the very frontal viewpoint. The picture is helped by the way the tree-horizon tends to match that of the gravestones. What lets the image down is the very dull lighting that is unfortunately emphasised by the fact that the picture is monochromatic.
Merit.



B-Grade: The Fallen

While the lighting is somewhat flat, it does create a suitable mood. The arrangement and cropping is well done, and the strong line to the memorial in the distance is well presented.
Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Tombstone Cross

Sadly, this is a very strong silhouette that lacks any real interest. Had a more dramatic angle been used, this may have worked, but as it stands it lacks pictorial appeal.

Entry.



B-Grade: Where Does the Rest Of Me Go

This picture has such a marvellous mood and atmosphere about it that I really wonder if the attempted humour of the title is appropriate, because it does detract from the image. In fact, I think that this picture would be better if had been taken with a viewpoint slightly more to the right, so that the "Front Portion" was eliminated. Still, we must give credit for the wonderful atmosphere and mood. Honours.



A-Grade: Gone Too Soon

A pleasantly simple picture - just a fraction dark. The white could do with a little more exposure (it would still not be washed out), but more importantly, the background needs a bit more light to bring out the colour of the autumn leaves.

Accepted.



A-Grade: Grave Sunset

Unlike with an earlier image, the sun has been sufficiently subdued here so that the surroundings can be seen. There is still a little too much variation between land and sky, but it is still acceptable. The tree fills a lot of what might otherwise be a very uninteresting sky.

Merit.



A-Grade: Not Forgotten

I think that viewers will have variety of opinions about this image. It is the most interesting in this group, but is it a great picture? It is certainly striking, interesting, and different. But the composition is a little disturbing. There is a dichotomy between the cross and the vase, in that one's eye does tend to oscillate between them, even though the cross is much stronger. The large flat floor between them does not help - it makes the separation more obvious and disturbing. And to my thinking, the cross is just a little too bright (flash lit, or reflected sunlight?)
Highly Commended.



A-Grade: Remember

This picture has been well simplified, but it still fails to work. The colour is too strong, and is dispersed among the large areas of darkness. The result is, that while we have a strong focal point (the red flower) which certainly keeps attracting the eye, there is no composition in the picture. The other areas of colour that one looks at are too scattered and isolated, so the eye is continually jumping around the picture, rather than flowing through the picture.
Entry.



A-Grade: The Fallen

The title correctly applies to the headstones, which are reasonably significant in the picture. But what about the trees? They are very strong in the picture, and definitely have not fallen. The monochrome lighting is strong, is very well handled, and is what allows the picture to succeed.
Accepted.



A-Grade: The Watcher

While being mindful of the considerable effort that has gone into the preparation of this picture, it is a pity that we cannot be more appreciative of it. I suspect this is supposed to be the grim reaper (given the scythe), rather than a guardian angel or watcher. And if it is the grim reaper, then a sweet young maiden it is not. But the main problem is that the figure is too hidden in the dark background, as too are what may be graves. Finally, we have an overly bright sky. Sorry to be so negative after so much work
Entry.

Open Digital

Both the open Digital and the open Prints were critiqued by Geoff Beals who supplied an audio commentary for us.



C-Grade: Getting Ready For Winter

Those who know me know not to enter pictures of cute kids. But you don't know that, so you tried, and got away with it. This is a delightful study. It clearly shows the importance of using pictures that have universal appeal, rather than just appeal to the grandparents. The light is very well handled. The picture could be improved by masking off the bottom to remove the boy's right hand, and the white on the lawn. This would make the picture even stronger.
Honours.



C-Grade: Giovanni Antonio and Paddy

Now there's a great title. A fabulous grab shot, with a really imaginative title. Colour, cropping arrangement, excellent. A few minor distractions in the background.
Honours.



C-Grade: Just After The Sunset

Very nicely seen. I like the fact that the picture is not quite front-on - there are more posts on the right than the left, so that the symmetry is just broken. Exposure is also very well done.
Highly Commended.



C-Grade: Not Amused

Great (in-)action shot. Colour also good. Well cropped, although could do with a little more off the bottom. Good to see that the head is not dead centre. Merit.



C-Grade: Shadow Song

I like this an awful lot, although I do have some questions. But it is so evocative! The issue is, why the gap between the person and the keyboard, i.e., what is the connection between the player and the keyboard? Is she going to play, or is she reluctant to play? But that is not all bad - it leaves the viewer to fill in the gap. Intriguing. Highly Commended.



C-Grade: Winning Stride

Good action picture. Like the way the horse has room to move forward in the picture. Also like that the horse is moving right to left, when one's eye looks left to right, thus keeping the viewer's eye in the picture. Merit.



B-Grade: After A Hard Day

What fantastic back lighting! Excellent exposure and selection of material. Even the little bit of lit rope on the right of the tree adds to the picture.

Honours.



B-Grade: Brown Eyed Friends

A wonderful, natural, joyful picture. It may just be a record shot of people known to the photographer, but its great success is that it appeals to all viewers.

Honours.



B-Grade: Island In the Sun

Again, those who know me know not to try putting sunsets in front of me. But yet again, you get away with it. The problem is that sunsets have great colour, but too often the photographers get so excited about the colour, they forget about the composition. This one succeeds, because there is a single focus of yellow colour in the sky, and some interesting low clouds on the horizon. Not so sure what is the "island" here - that dark spot has more of the appearance of a headland. But overall, the picture ties together well.

Accepted



B-Grade: Nosey

What an eye catching image! And the picture speaks for itself. But it does need the cow on the right to be masked off. That really focus's one's attention on that grossly the wet nose.
Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Old Friends

What a fantastic character study this is. So human. But it could be improved by some cropping to eliminate those background distractions – particularly that door handle.
Highly Commended



B-Grade: Ripples

This is a picture the viewer will either like or dislike. For me, it has a lovely peacefulness, pleasant colour, and a wonderful sense of gentle motion.
Merit.



B-Grade: Tonks Grove, Wellington

This picture comes very, very close, but just does not quite work. The lighting is fabulous, and the sides of the buildings have fantastic potential, but there is this eye-sore (relatively speaking) in the 1/6 of the picture in the middle upper 1/2 which grabs the viewers attention - because this is effectively the focal point of the picture, and keeps dragging the eye away from the alley.
Entry.



B-Grade: Waiting For The Boat

Back to the old problem of titles. What boat? I can accept waiting for rescue, or waiting for the tide to go out, or is it that boat in the background. Never create confusion in the viewers mind - it distracts ones attention from the picture. Here I find myself more concerned about what this picture is all about. But what really bothers me is, where the heck is number 3? This could have been an interesting pattern shot, had it been only the “waiters”, but as it stands, I am too concerned about these issues to take a serious interest in the art.
Entry.



A-Grade: Taraxacum

While a very good effort, it lacks light. As presented it is just too subtle, and does not stand out sufficiently from the background.

Accepted.



A-Grade: Waikato Glide

A Bluntly, this is not an exciting slide, but it does have fantastic colour - sufficient to carry the day. And it is also technically excellent, with its so-correct arrangement.

Merit.



A-Grade: White Dingy

In spite of the somewhat strong colour, there are great subtleties in this picture. It is well cropped, and the splashes of white across the water just finish the picture off nicely.

Honours

Quote: "A good photograph is knowing where to stand." – *Ansel Adams*