

Critiques June 2012.

Theme Digital – One Second

All theme images were critiqued by Terry Maguire from Dunedin,

This is a challenging set subject, because it is open to so many interpretations. The two main ones that you have chosen to exploit in your competition appear to be firstly, trying to make an interesting composition by exposing the subject for one second with the result usually being a blurred representation of an unrecognizable subject, or, secondly, trying to show the passing of one second by photographing something quite recognizable, but showing the passage of time.

We have good examples of both approaches in this competition. However, just hand-holding a camera for one second of exposure and hoping for something interesting to result did not work for several of the entries. These images tend to either lack a subject to provide a centre of interest or are not abstract enough to provide either a pattern or a satisfying composition. I think the photographers who used their 'one second' to try and make an image which captures both the feeling of the passing of time and a slight abstraction of the subject have been more successful.

All the very best of photographic successes.

Thank you Matamata CC for letting me see your images and for having the confidence in my opinions to ask me to assess them. You have some excellent work here and I have enjoyed the experience.

Terry Maguire, Dunedin. July 2012



C-Grade: Just A Moment In Time

This was one of the simplest, but most effective, interpretations of the passing of one second. I loved the way the clock face is placed in the picture area and the way the photographer has exposed the image to catch the two positions of the second hand so sharply. Well seen and well done.

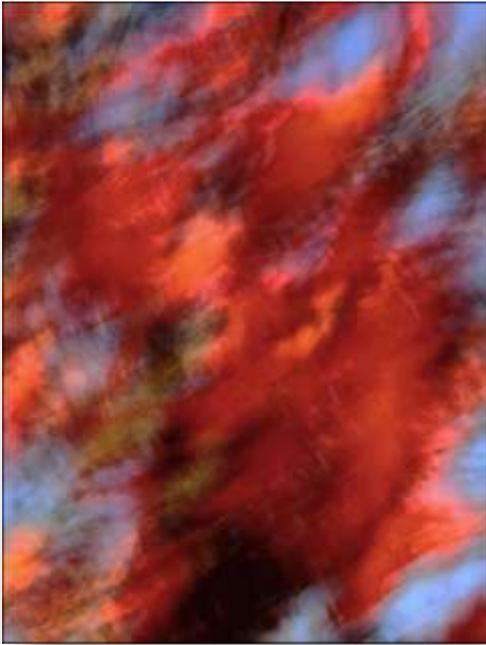
Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Autumn colours.

Good colour contrasts here with strong reds, oranges and greens. A great impressionistic feel – much like a painting where dabs of colour make up the image. Just one little fault and that is the downhill lean of the image towards the right corner which brought in a small white highlight in the top right, and this could so easily have been removed. Otherwise a very good effort.

Accepted.



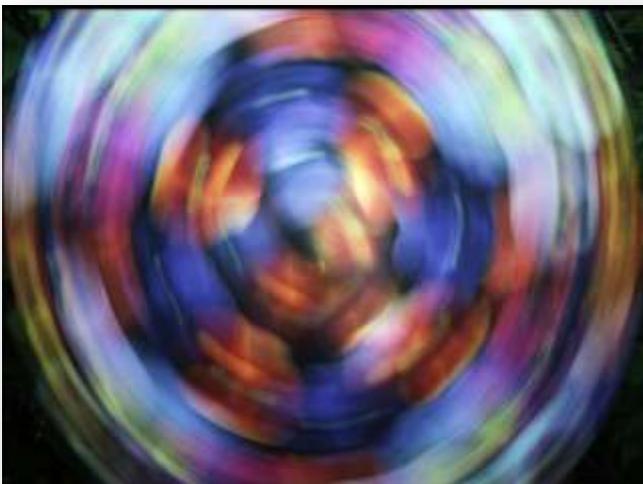
B-Grade: Autumn Sky

I found this one just a bit too abstracted resulting in a composition lacking in strong form of any kind. The colours are very saturated, but the pattern is not strong enough to retain the interest of the viewer for very long. However, there is a diagonal feel from top left to bottom right which does help provide some sort of composition. Accepted.



B-Grade: Autumn Walk

I loved the way the out of focus contrasts so well with the sharp figures in this image. It looks as though a slight pan while exposing has kept the moving figures sharper and this in turn adds a feeling of three dimensions to the picture. There is a nice compositional balance between the three groups of figures. Well seen. Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Dizzy

I am not sure how this image was made – either the camera or the subject was rotating rapidly during the exposure. This has resulted in a very circular composition, but with the circles so centrally placed the picture lacks that interest that would have resulted from having it slightly off-centre. Nice colours, but no real point of interest. Accepted.



B-Grade: Easy On The Eyes

I'm afraid I found this one just too confusing as to the intent of the photographer. Just having large areas of the image as out of focus colour tells me little about the subject or the interpretation of it by the photographer. It really needs something for the viewer to rest the eye on and to provide some sort of structure.

The colour is strong with good harmony of reds and greens
Entry.



B-Grade: Fluro Bracelet's

This image had potential, but the items shown are too scattered and small in the picture area. Thus the image does not seem very coherent with different parts competing with each other for attention. Even so, some of the shapes are interesting and the colours nicely saturated.

Entry.



B-Grade: Joined Circles

This is a much more successful rendering of the same subject as the last image. Here the photographer has concentrated on one item and made a very interesting pattern with the circles of colour interlinking well. Here the viewer has the freedom to see and interpret in their own mind what they think they are looking at.

Accepted.



B-Grade: Out Of Body Experience
Great image reflecting the title nicely. We can easily identify the subject and what the story is. Just enough orange colour in the bottom left to provide a little interesting variation to the rather monochromatic remainder. A good use of the one second to interpret a common subject.
Merit.



B-Grade: Painterly
An interesting result which relies on the pattern created for its interest. I am not sure what the subject is. It could be water, or a pattern created solely by camera movement during exposure, but the result is pleasing. Just small touches of colour add little highlights to break up the black and white of the main subject.
Accepted.



B-Grade: Rhythmic Light
An interesting pattern created by camera movement. Good lines and colour differences add the needed interest. Simple, but very successful.
Accepted.



B-Grade: Self Portrait

The photographer has used a cunning way of using the moving background to make the main subject stand out. I am assuming that when the photo was taken, the subject was spinning perhaps on a roundabout of some sort. Nice exposure and very clever. Accepted.



B-Grade: Spiky

I am not so happy with this image because it appears to have a very unbalanced presentation. All the light is on the left and the rest of the image area is quite dark. I was also a bit disturbed by the horizontal smearing of light bands which spoil the lovely burst effect of the lit plant. Entry.



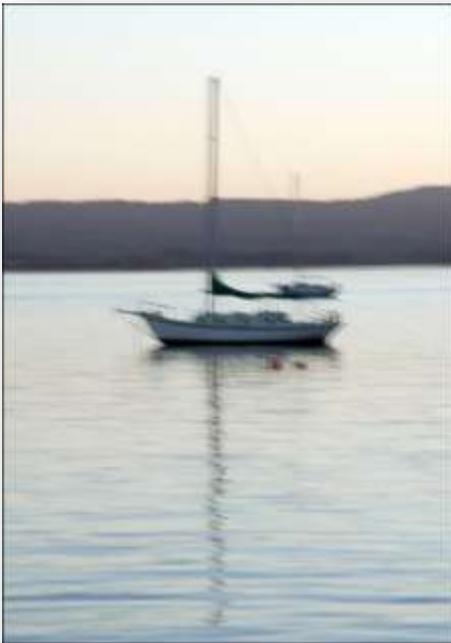
B-Grade: St Andrews At Night

This is a standard night shot with not much interpretive input, but I liked the colours used. I would like to see some cropping off the left hand edge of the image where some shadowy trees don't add much information to the picture. However, this is a good night exposure. Accepted.



B-Grade: Steel, Light and Rotate

A very intriguing composition with interesting rhythm and patterns. It does lack a centre of interest, but there is a good balance between the sharp portions and the out of focus parts of the image. Perhaps a touch of another colour somewhere would have helped. Accepted.



B-Grade: Sun Set

Not so successful here as what has resulted is a slightly blurred image of an easily recognized subject, Added to that are the sloping horizon and the rather barren top to the image. There is some lovely light at the bottom in the water, but very little interpretive input from the photographer. Tilting the camera down and looking at the patterns in the water might have made a more successful photograph. Entry.



B-Grade: The Cross

An example of drawing with light. The photographer has filled the frame well, but I am not so happy with the demanding white border which tends to drag the viewer's eye away from the subject. Still this is an interesting result. Accepted.



B-Grade: The Golfer

This was one image which I felt where the photographer has used the one-second exposure in a very simple but thoughtful way. By keeping the feet sharp and using the movement to emphasise the swing of the club, I think this photographer has combined reality with abstraction in a well composed and exposed image. Honours.



B-Grade: Through The Windmill

A nice colour wheel, but very centrally placed. I can see what the photographer was trying to do, but I feel that the image would have been stronger if it had been cropped from the left to move the wheel off-centre and at the same time removing some of the less interesting area on the left. Nice idea and nice exposure. Accepted.



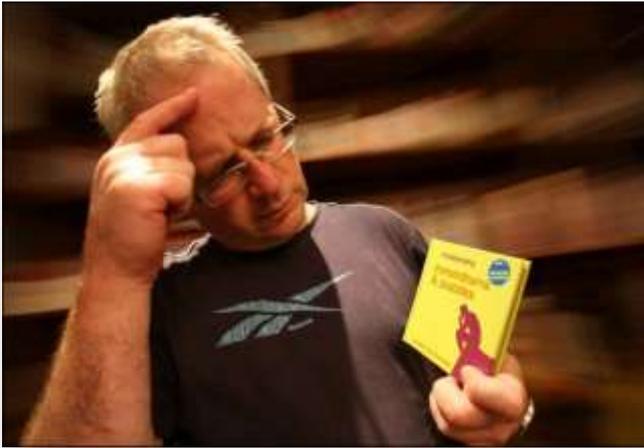
B-Grade: Television Action

Fairly busy in content, but a great range of colours. The movement of the people on the screen contrasts nicely with the sharply focussed 2 in the bottom right corner. There is enough interest created by the recognizable faces to hold the viewer's interest and the strong vertical lines of movement help too. Accepted.



B-Grade: Undulating Flame

A long exposure of a moving flame has created an interesting series of shapes, but there is some monotony in having the same colours throughout. The pattern of the flames have been tightly cropped into the frame which is good and there is an obvious diagonal line from bottom left to top right. Merit.



B-Grade: What Happened

I am not sure what exactly has happened here. Again the figure is sharp while the background has been blurred by some means, but I am not quite sure what the story is here, or what the connection is between the title of the image and the title of the book. I apologise if I have missed something obvious. The exposure is great and the technical aspects excellent.
Entry.



B-Grade: Winnie

This one is not as successful of the one we saw earlier of the cat. It is basically a blurred portrait of the dog, centrally placed, but with sufficient movement to make it interesting. Again a crop off the right would have moved the head off-centre and improved the composition.
Accepted.



B-Grade: Winter Tree

Totally monochromatic, but with very interesting shapes, with one tree trunk dominant because of the stronger lighting. This is a very satisfying composition, but there has been little apparent interpretation put into the use of the long exposure. It could just as easily have been taken at a much shorter shutter speed with much the same result. However, I liked the overall result.
Accepted.



B-Grade: Zoom Zoom

I originally thought this was a straight panning shot of a moving vehicle, but if you look closely at the red tracing produced by the tail light, you will see that there has been some different camera movement in other directions. This adds some mystery as to how this was taken, but the feeling of movement has certainly been well caught. Accepted.



A-Grade: Frayed Fireworks

Good use of multiple light sources to make an interesting pattern. The use of only red and yellow colours results in a loss of viewer interest and perhaps if another colour had been present it would have done a little better. Good use of the diagonal lines in the composition. Accepted.



A-Grade: Hazy

Strong vertical patterns and mysterious mood are created by the blurred tree trunks and there is detail in all the shadows. One trunk stands out nicely from the rest, but the image lacks a focal point and is partly divided into a light bottom and a dark top. However, I liked the feeling of depth and the soft colours. Accepted.



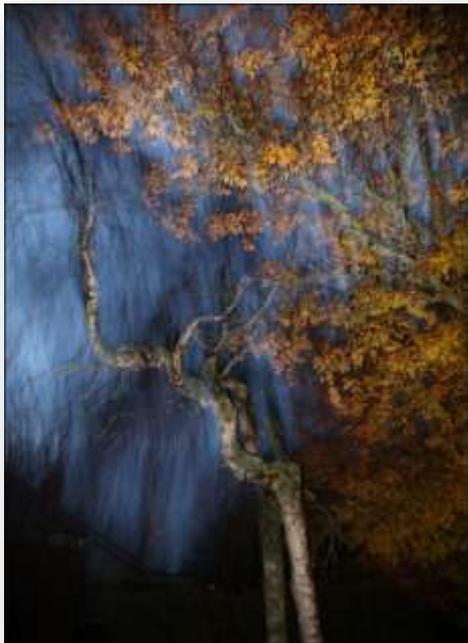
A-Grade: Number 101

There is sufficient movement of the tram to give the feeling of passing time and there is enough detail to identify and appreciate what the subject is. Nice colours, but a rather central placing of the subject. Again some centre of interest would have helped. Accepted.



A-Grade: Predator

I did not get a feeling with this image that it was a 'one second' exposure, as the shark is quite identifiable and reasonably in focus. It could have been taken showing more movement to give the feeling of time. As it stands, although it was a one second exposure, no attempt seems to have been made to interpret the subject to show this. The result is a shot of the shark which is not any different from one shot at say 100th second. Good placement of the subject and I liked the vignette framing.
Entry.



A-Grade: Silky

I really liked the complementary colours used here and the composition is very satisfactory too. The placing of the tree trunk is important as a leading line up through the image and there are sufficient sharp portions of the branches to identify the subject, but with just the right amount of abstraction to make the image different.
Merit.



A-Grade: Time Flies

Several entrants have used clocks as their subject, which is not surprising in such a competition as this. In this case the execution and interpretation have been well done. I liked the feeling of movement into the distance – a sort of time travel impression which comes from the converging lines. Well done. Accepted.



A-Grade: Time Jump

This one is not quite as successful as the previous clock image as the figures form a much smaller part of the picture area and one does not get the same feeling of time travel, but the colours are harmonious and the clock face is nicely abstracted, but still leaving enough to recognize it for what it is. Accepted.



A-Grade: Wellington Lights

An interesting image with a nicely controlled vertical movement and a nice variety of colours. There is a division of subject into a top and a bottom section with a strong black line of darkness between them. Something binding the two together would have helped. Accepted.

Open Digital

All open images were critiqued by Lynn Clayton of Auckland,

Geoff and the team, please don't be upset if your work didn't get me excited, I am just one person. if you love it hang it on your wall and enjoy it... forget the silly old judge ...but maybe and just a small maybe; you will learn a little about how to make your image stronger. All the best with your photography. Visit many exhibitions, read books, Google photographers and see what is going on out in the world of photography. You will find inspiration and tips galore on Google!!

Lynn Clayton APSNZ AFIAP



C-Grade: Tomtit

Nature photography is an extremely difficult genre... so many rules. Anyway this is in the Open Category so you can alter the image as you wish. Firstly well done in getting this little bird against such a wonderful plain background, really shows him/her off well. There is light in the eye, always a positive! The bird has moved just a little I think, so some feathers are sharp and some are not... bad luck I'd say. A greater depth of field would have helped and/or a sharper shutter speed. All depending on the light at the time, hence these images are so hard to get perfect. The soft out of focus branch is also unfortunate, but in this grade it is a great start to Nature photography. Merit.



B-Grade: Beautiful Curves

Curves would have been sufficient as a title, or Curves London or wherever! Anyway this is very well composed, so easy to leave in too much. If you had played with your exposure etc. you could have made the background white and then the image really pops. It is good but can be much brighter and more eye catching with some more post production effort. Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Chewing on the Rugby Mouth guard after the Game

WOW.. what a mouthful! Jokes aside titles should not be so long winded unless there is a very good reason! We can all see pretty much what is happening and the title is off putting. That aside it is a good grab shot, I like the shallow depth of field. If you had asked him for a photo you could have waited for the man to move from his right hand side. You may even have got a big smile!
Accepted.



B-Grade: Curves Lines & Points

The colours work well together in this image. However, the image is soft.. Did you have a tripod? What was your ISO? Anyway no real excuse in B Grade for softness - it is a basic. Compositionally the top of the curve is cropped in a tad tight. I wanted to see all of the curve/point. The image also lacks what I call the WOW factor, at a different time of day this glass would glisten and look amazing. That is what makes one shot a record and another a photographer's great image.
Accepted.



B-Grade: F Major

Good title. This is eye catching and I like the square format. If you had been brave and cropped this even closer you would have received an Honours, the right hand side is too distracting where the light is too bright. Very difficult to control the light on brass in the sunshine so consider cropping it. The image seems to be very sharp so worth while playing with the crop tool. I guess you wanted to leave the top curve in, you could do that and make it an oblong. I enjoyed the image.
Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Fly

This is good work in B grade. The choice of a small f stop has created a wonderful soft background to showcase the fly. Some would want all the fly in focus but I am happy with this interpretation. In a Nature competition you may need to have the fly all sharp. There is patch of bright light on his rear wing that could be dulled down to improve it more.
Honours.



B-Grade: Rested Enough

The colours here are complimentary and work very well. You have chosen a fifty-fifty split whereas most of us would have placed this as a one third two third ratio. I guess you did consider that option? The 'jewel' is very central so all in all a few rules broken here. Are they broken intentionally or accidentally. that I am not sure of. Strangely my eye travels from the white central jewel to the black blob nearer the top and I am confused a little. The jewel doesn't have a strong reflection in it so I am struggling a little to understand the photo. A good crop may have helped. I do like the fact though that you have attempted something different. Merit.



B-Grade: [Untitled]

Great placement on the third and the tilt of the wings helps considerably. I would love to have seen more detail in the nose of the plane. The light is behind the plane unfortunately so this is more of silhouette. I like the gray sky behind the smoke, it shows the smoke off well. Next time try and get the plane in better light. Accepted.



B-Grade: Nodding Trees

You have found two beautifully coloured poplars, are they nodding because your lens pulled them in? I suspect so. Anyway the trees are post card beautiful. In B grade I would like to think you are starting to add some soul to your images, your own style maybe. You need to somehow make the image unique so that we linger and enjoy it for a longer time. This is a good record of two beautiful poplars. I want more...

Accepted



B-Grade: Parked Up

This is a wonderful old car screaming out to be photographed. I like the perspective, low but it is not straight? I like the power pole and the background information gives the image some scale. One or two things you might have considered, a few bright patches could have been cloned out or dulled down, especially under the car. Did you think of making it a black and white? Had you done those few things an Honours, but you didn't...sorry. Please have a play and re-enter it someplace
Highly Commended.



B-Grade: Red Sky At Night

Another title stating the obvious. Sunsets are beautiful.. photographing them is irresistible to us all. However you need a few things working for you. Nature has created the scene, you need to add something dramatic or maybe subtle but something to show it is your own special image. The trees and roof are not exciting enough, a tree with defined shape would work well. If you look at sunset photos online you will see that some really hold your attention. Try and work out why.

Accepted



B-Grade: Reflections At Dusk

I think I have seen these trees.. maybe near Whakatane? But who knows. Anyway they are very photogenic. I wish there had been more colour in the sky... this image is quite cold. You have left the land in the bottom of the photo, possibly a good idea except it is missing in parts letting the water run out of the scene! All or nothing please.

Accepted.



B-Grade: Resting

The dog is resting – and a beautiful animal. Resting means that he is not moving so no excuse for out of focus eyes? I am concerned that the eyes are so soft – the nose is sharp and a few hairs around the nose are sharp but just like portraiture the eyes are the key to a winning image. Next time try a larger depth of field and if necessary a tripod. Maybe f11 or f 16 but certainly more than you used for this image. It can be surprising how far it is from the nose to the eyes, a real tap for the inexperienced photographer. Do try again and when the eyes are sharp you will do very well.

Accepted.



B-Grade: Steel Light & Zoom

These are fun images to create. The overall red colour suits the concept. However the difference between a great zoomed image and just a zoomed image is possibly 30-40 frames to get it just right! I feel that you have included too much in this frame, the foreground does not add to the image. Did you try cropping this image? Have a play and see if you think less is best.
Accepted.



B-Grade: X-Ray Vision

I sure hope that is not your anatomy! I really like what you have attempted here. Has it come off? That is the big question. You think so or you wouldn't have entered it. I am struggling.... So I need to consider this carefully and for longer. I have now decided, and you may not agree, that the darker area on the right is overpowering the subtleties on the left. When I cropped that right hand third off I really started to enjoy the image so much more. I would have given you an Honours! See what you think. I hope you keep experimenting, you are onto something special here.
Highly Commended



A-Grade: Camo Swimmer

I don't understand the title exactly but regardless of that I love this image. Your choice of treatment suits the subject well. The choice of clothing and drape work so well together. The face is well lit and the eyes have good light in them, the swimmer has a great expression, maybe showing his inner strength! My only concern is that the base of the cloth is not left with space around it but that is a very minor point. Honours.



A-Grade: Coming Out

Rodeo photos are not hard to take, but to really knock the sox of a judge is very difficult. This is a good image, plenty of dust and good light on the bull. The wording, although annoying, is at least on the sides. I suggest you tone them down considerably. The people behind the ring are quite sharp, try using a shallow depth of field to throw that background into a soft out of focus background. But a pretty good effort overall. Highly Commended.



A-Grade: Shadow Dog

Well seen and this has the makings of a good photo. I feel it is over exposed. I would like the shadows to have been black, but I do like the dog being placed on the third. Good composition. The grey flecks on the road are not helping this.

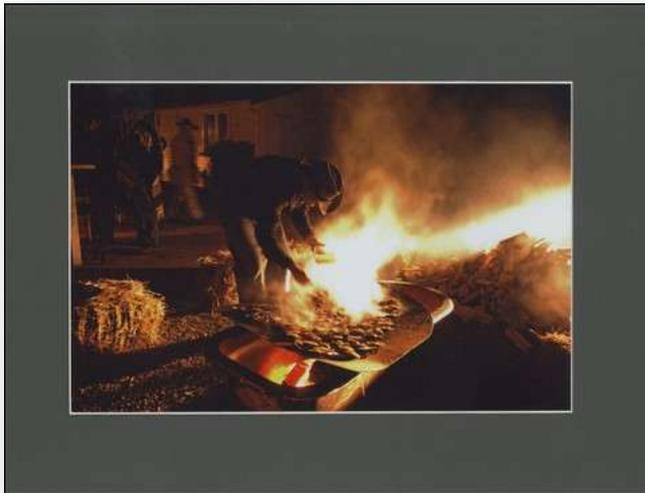
Accepted.



A-Grade: Zombie Plague

What can one say? The eyes definitely have that Zombie look... Good light on the face but all rather unnatural. Maybe a darker more moody treatment would have lifted this in the rankings. The onlooker is a tad too bright and detracts from the Zombie! But a good effort. Highly Commended.

Open Print



B-Grade: Cowboy Cook

These shots are the type of image I struggle with too... great atmosphere and low light. Fortunately you didn't ruin it with flash! The hay bale is a tad bright and my eye keeps wandering there, try a crop on this. The flames have totally lost any detail. Maybe try one second at f/3.5, to capture the flame detail, but use a tripod and pray the man stands still!! It is not easy. Merit.



B-Grade: [Untitled]

This is a very good portrait for a novice photographer. I like the fact the background is out of focus and does not interfere with the face. I like the angle of the face. Be careful when taking these images, look around the perimeter of the frame before clicking the button as you have nicked her ear off... I don't mind the top of her head being nicked off but it isn't ideal. The light isn't totally controlled on her face so her skin tones have burnt out on her nose so there are many things to watch for when shooting portraits. Study this genre and search online for tips on natural light portraiture. Merit.



B-Grade: Graduation

What a beautiful young lady and I am sure everyone is very proud of her. Photographically, I feel you have been side tracked by the Autumn colours instead of the young lady. You have almost chopped off her feet, which is so unnecessary as you have a ton of space to play with. The photo is fine but if you had asked her to walk across to the Autumn trees and had her fill the frame with those trees behind this could have been stunning. Her face is well enough lit, but really you haven't made the most of the situation, it could have been such a great photo. In B Grade you should be starting to grasp composition and portraiture concepts.
Accepted.



B-Grade: Lake Hayes

What a beautiful spot..... Well seen. So now I ask myself what has the photographer added? Probably got out of the car but you haven't done much more.... Your vantage point is not the greatest as the green bank and shrub are distracting. This is a wonderful record of a perfect day in paradise. Photographers need to do more.....
Merit.



B-Grade: Nosey

I really like this.. and cows are such nosey beasts! In a perfect world cows wouldn't wear ugly yellow ID tags, don't farmers know they spoil photographs! I like very much that the cow is looking at you, her eye is sharp. Her nose is soft but who cares.. not me! I go straight to her eye area and the character comes through. Good out of focus background.
Honours.



A-Grade: Waterline

This is sitting on my desk and the sun has cast blind shadows across the image and it looks amazing.. then I closed the blind and it became less amazing! The vast area of red really is a tad too much. I love the idea but it is overpowering everything. I like the subtle colours at the base. However I could see this 1 metre long on a wall and a price tag of a thousand or so and people getting excited... it is just for me too RED!
Highly Commended.

Quote: "If you think adventure is dangerous, try routine. It is lethal
– *Paulo Coelho*