



Washington Apple Pi 2017 Photo Contest Results

28 October 2017

How Photos Were Judged

- Point out strengths and weaknesses based upon
 - Adherence to the Category
 - Composition
 - Subject
 - Technical Factors
- *Remember, these are just my subjective comments on the photos, another judge may give you very different feedback...*

Some General Observations

1. Many of the images were blurry and out of focus. You should not submit a blurry photo into a competition.
2. Many of the images were cropped too close to the edges with features either very close, or cut off. When cropping, you need to give the image a bit of space to breath.
3. Many photos had blown-out highlights. When you have very bright areas in photos, they tend to draw the eye of the observer to the detriment of the rest of the photo. There are tools available in Photos and elsewhere to tone these down.
4. Be aware of distracting elements on the edges of the photo.
5. When cropping, you probably need to do more. Determine what the main subject of your photo is, and crop to ensure that that is the element that draws the observer's eye.
6. Determine what story you are trying to tell with your photo, and whether or not another person, who was not there when you took the picture, will see the story.
7. I felt that some photos were in the wrong category, so I moved them to what I thought was the correct category....

Awards

- I followed the model of the North Bethesda Camera Club to determine the number of awards in each category.
- The number of awards is roughly 30% of the number of entries in each category, very loosely rounded up
- I also added a “Best in Show” Award.
- Awards are listed at the end of the comments for each category

Novice - Just a Photo Photos

10 Entries, 4 Awards



The composition of this sunset picture is very nice. I like the way that the grasses frame the setting sun. Having the large clump of grass on the left nicely balances the sun, which is towards the right.

Unfortunately, nothing in the picture is in focus, probably due to low light conditions. Also, the horizon runs very close to the center of the photo. It would have been better to have tilted the camera up and included more sky in the photo.



The composition of this photo is excellent. Having the sun the moon at the same time works nicely. The corona around the sun, and the colors, below the clouds, in the sun portion of the photo, in both the sky and the water, are beautiful. The reflection on the water provides a nice leading line, and the little bit of grass in the foreground provides some balance and framing. Since the most important elements of this image are in the sky, it works well to have the horizon low in the images

The only little nit I can think of is on the horizon about halfway from center to the edge of the photo. It looks like there is some sort of structure sticking up out of the water, and my eye kept wandering to it. This would be easy to remove using the Retouch tool in Photos.



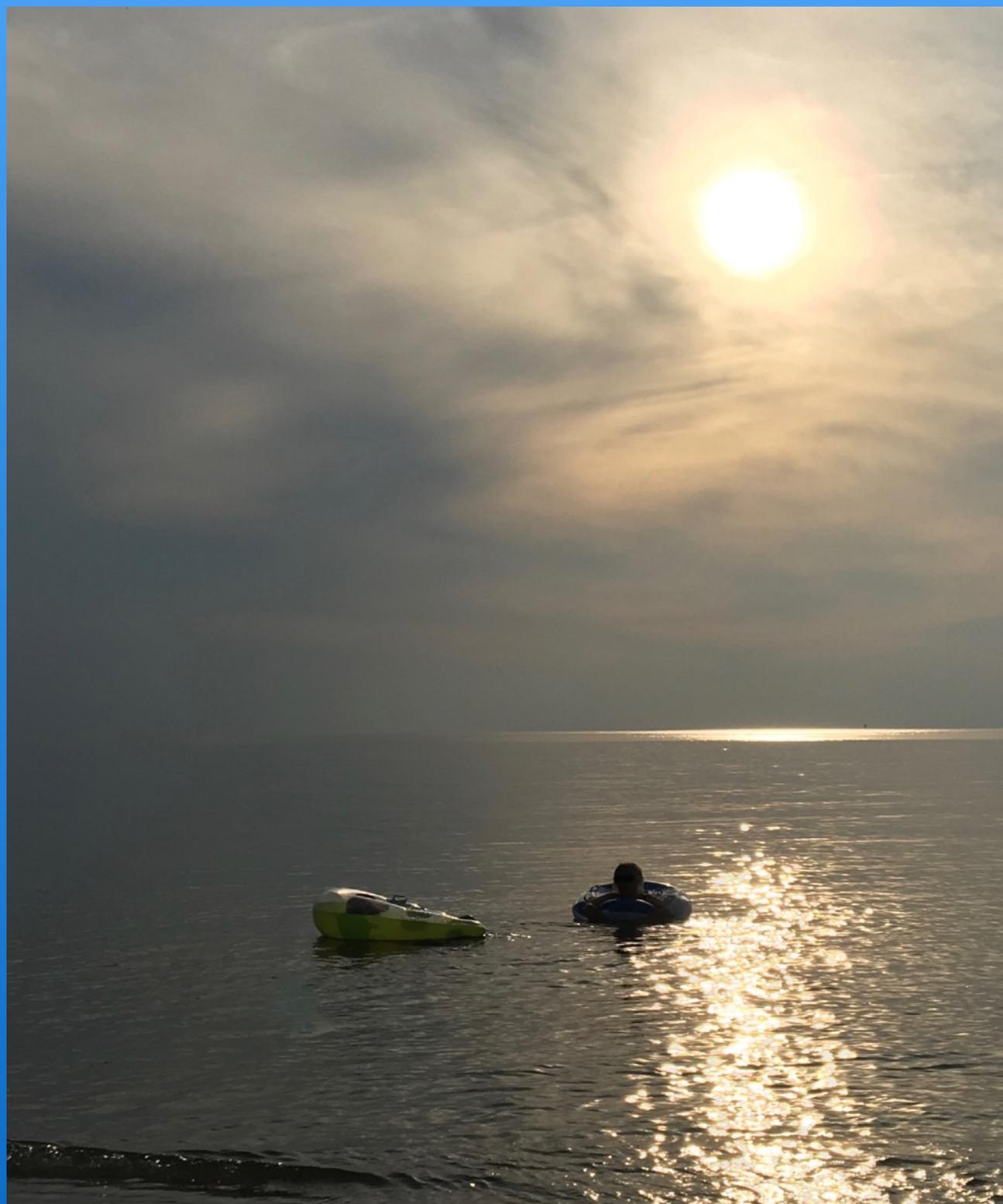
Nice use of framing to capture iconic Washington, DC features, the Washington Monument and buildings in the Smithsonian. Everything is sharp and clear, the cloudy sky is handled well so that there is no glare and you can see details in the clouds.

In order to make an image like this truly work, it really needs to be balanced, side to side and top to bottom. If possible, I would have moved a bit to the right so that both of the planters in the foreground were, preferably, totally included or were evenly cropped. Usually, I would not want an item, such as the monument to be centered, but, in this case it might have worked. The picture is a bit unbalanced with a more space on the left than on the right. The framing arch, itself, is very close to being balanced on the two sides, but it is not well-balanced top to bottom. I would have included less top and more bottom.



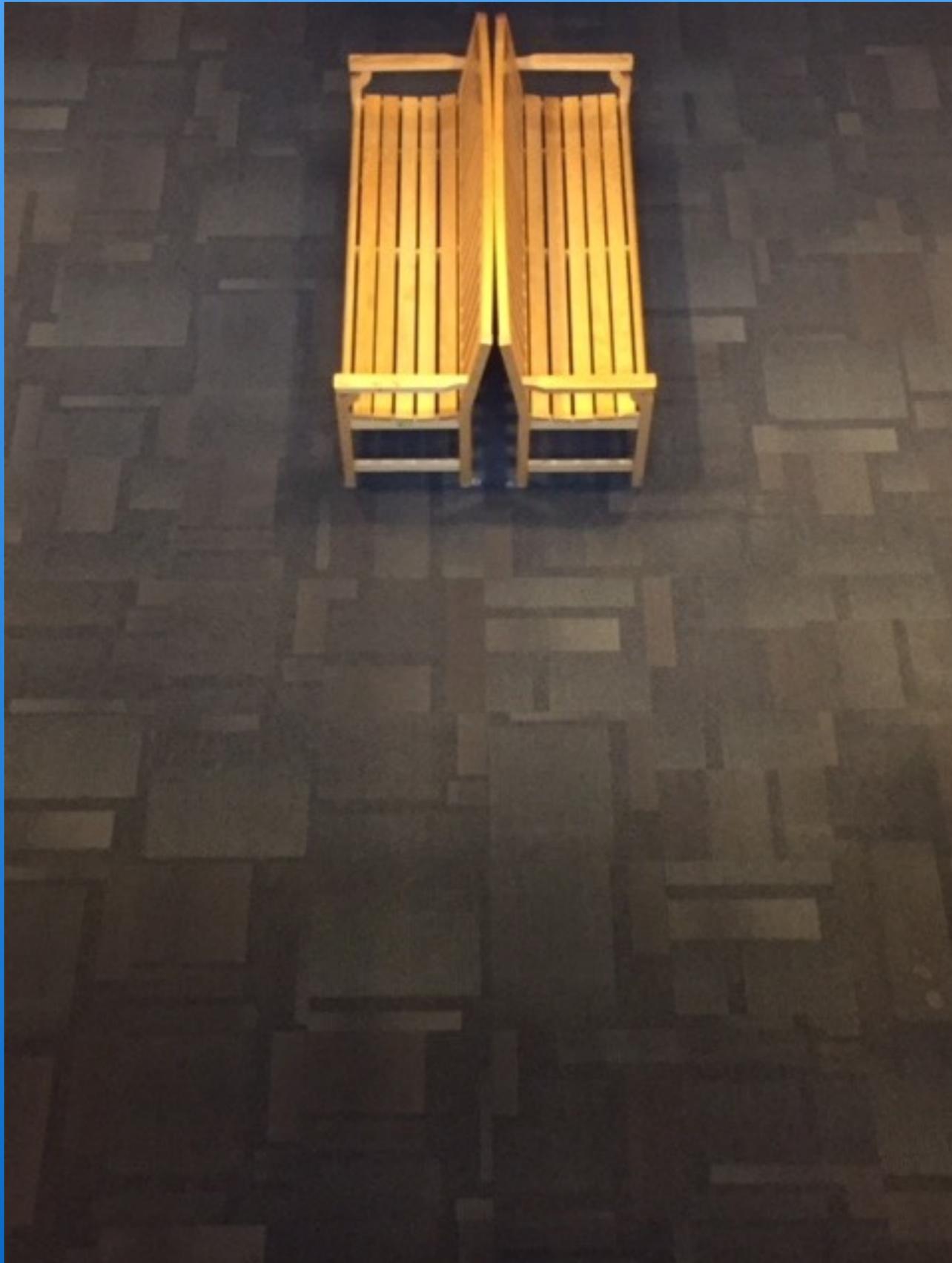
Good “slice of life” composition with a lot of interesting features. First, there is the great capture of all the swimmers in mid-air as they dive for the pool. The reflections in the pool add a nice dimension to the whole photo. Other interesting features include the official blowing the whistle, the other timer looking at her stopwatch, the expressions on the faces of the observers, and the swimmer on the left-hand side, huddled in her towel and watching.

There are two things that might make it a slightly stronger image. If possible would, I would have left more room on the right side for the swimmer to move towards; this would also prevent the man in the black tee shirt from being cut in half. Also, using the Photos Retouch tool, I would have tried to remove the arm on the left-hand side, above the swimmer wrapped in a towel.



What struck me first about this image is that everything is nice and sharp, despite the low light. It is a very good composition with the sun off to one side and the horizon down in the lower part of the picture. I think that the lighting around the sun and the clouds is quite dramatic.

There are two things you may want to consider to make this a stronger image. First, you may want to crop a little bit off the bottom to eliminate the wave in the lower left-hand corner, which is a bit distracting. Also, in Photos, you may want to try experimenting with lowering the highlights, and adjusting the contrast to provide a bit more definition of the water and the boats.



I like the minimalist concept of this photo, and having the bench along the center line of the image works well.

The first thing that stuck me about the photo is that neither the bench nor the floor are sharp. Also, the bench is way too close to the top edge, almost touching it. With elements close to the edge, you always need to leave a little bit of “breathing room”.



I always find shadow selfies to be fun. This one is nice and sharp, with the shadow well placed in the image. The definition in the sand adds to interest in photo.

This image would have been a lot stronger without the foot in the middle of the shadow, and the toes on the bottom right hand side. They tend to distract from the shadow and remove some of the interest and mystery in the photo.



This is a simple, but fun, and sometimes whimsical, photo. Everything is sharp, and the blue-on-blue coloring works well. I particularly like the top cloud which looks like a creature about to swallow something.

The only improvement I could suggest would be to not cut the bottom clouds in half. I would have either included the entire clouds, or cropped the photo to eliminate them.



There is a lot to like in this picture. It looks as if it were shot through a screen which gives it a certain painterly look. The birds, especially the ones perching on the bicycle and ladder provide a nice whimsical touch as they seem to be posing for the shot.

Unfortunately, it is very blown out, starting in the upper left-hand corner, and moving diagonally towards the ladder. This area is so bright compared to the rest of the photo that it immediately draws your attention away from the birds, and the rest of the picture is almost lost in the glare. Reducing the highlights using Photos may have cleared up or reduced this problem.



The title of this is "I'm Sad", and, well, who wouldn't be sad if they were laying there amongst other dead or dying fish. This photo is well shot. Everything is sharp and clear. It is an interesting composition. Overall, the lighting is good.

There are two things that might improve the photo. First, the fish's eye seems to be right in the middle of the photo. I would have taken the shot to put the eye a bit lower, and show a bit more of the fish. Also, the underside of the fish, and area below it, are a bit bright. Toning it down by reducing the highlights would make this area less distracting.

Novice - Just a Photo



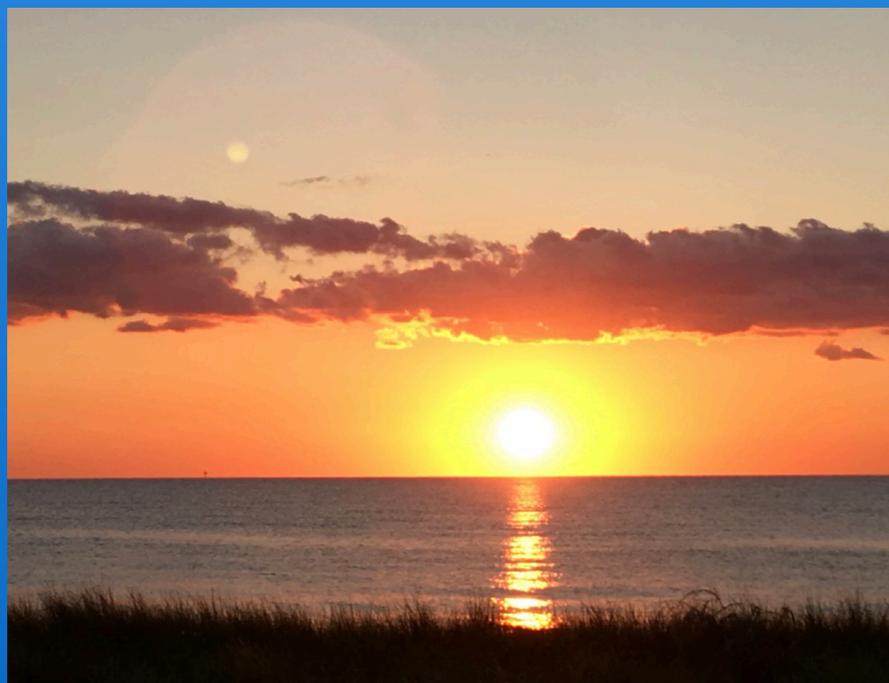
1st Place

Diana King



2nd Place

Diana King



3rd Place

Diana King



Honorable Mention

Nancy O'Sullivan

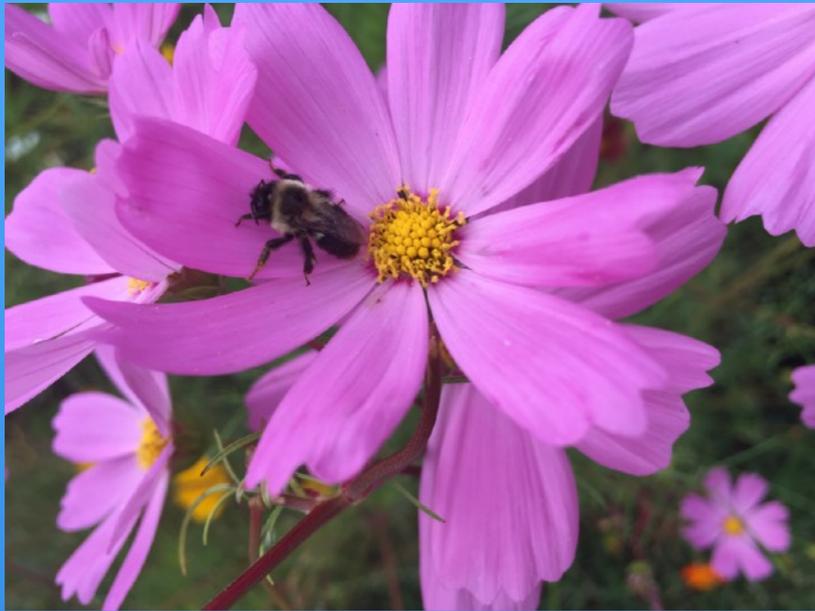
Novice - Modified Photos

8 Entries, 3 Awards



The cropped version of this image provides a nice panorama. Having the lighthouse on the right, somewhat balanced by the open area on the left works well. The horizon is close to the center of the photo, but, as it is not visible all across the image, it is not an issue.

The notes say that one of the elements removed was a person, yet I still see a person climbing up the rusty stairway. This shot would have been stronger if the remaining towers and wires in the right foreground had been removed. Also, I would suggest either totally removing the rusty stairway (and the person), or redoing the crop to include the bottom of the stairway on the beach.



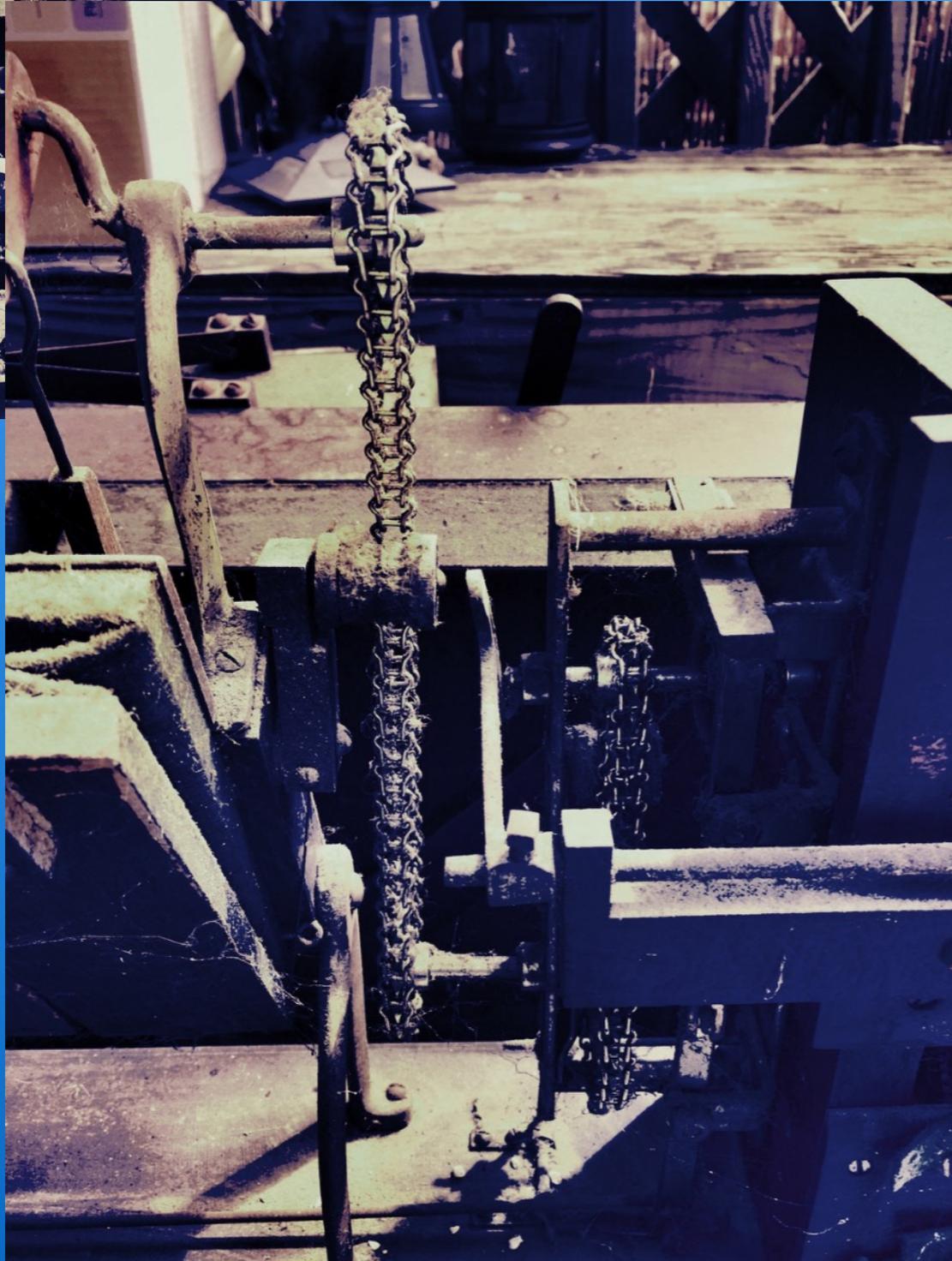
This is a well-executed, well-composed macro photo of the flower with the bee. The vignetting succeeds in highlighting these important elements.

Both the flower and the bee are fairly sharp, but not the sharp-sharp one typically looks for in macro photos. Also, one possible improvement would be to either darken, or use the Photos Retouch tool to remove, the bright orange spot below the flower on the bottom, left.



This is a fun beach scene well rendered to look like a painting. There are a lot of stories going on and they all mesh well to show a typical day at the beach, all watched over by the gull on the signpost.

The image would have been stronger if less had been cut off of the bottom. The two stories are the gull and the people on the beach, and it would have been better to see more of the people on the bottom, right-hand side. Also, even though the post with the gull is off center, it is so dominant in the picture it would have been better to shoot the photo with it being a bit more to the left. Finally, above the horizon, the right-hand side, there is a dot in the picture, probably a gull in flight. Since it is not clear, it is distracting. I would recommend removing it using the Photos Retouch tool.



This is an interesting close-up of part of a piece of old machinery. The presence of cobwebs show that it hasn't been used for a while. The picture sets a somber mood of age and disuse. It is well composed and interesting to view.

The lighting on the picture is a bit jarring and variable, which makes it difficult to view and understand. The brights are very bright and the dark areas very dark, setting a discordant tone.



This is a fun picture that is easy on the eyes and brings a smile to my face with its odd mixture of gators and snow. The faces of the gators with their large red eyes add greatly to the whimsy of the photo. For the most part, it is well composed. The objects in the shot are sharp and well placed.

There are two suggestions for a stronger photo. First, crop out the section of white house in the upper left-hand corner. Because of all the snow, it is not as distracting as it could be, but it is distracting and doesn't add anything to the picture. Also, if possible, I would have shot from a bit further back to place the gator on the left a bit further back from the edge of the photo; as is, it is crowding the bottom edge of the photo.



This is a very neat picture of the inside of a player piano. The photo shows good use of shallow depth-of-field with the important elements in the front sharp and clear, and the background elements somewhat blurry.

The only areas of improvement I would recommend would be to show a bit more of the machinery to right of the picture (if possible) and to reduce the highlights to tone down the hot spots, particularly on the left-hand side near the chain mechanism.



Nice cosplay portrait of a girl. The colors are great and I love the expression on her face, a blend of knowing, innocence and cynicism.

One major problem with the photo is that it appears that her knee is in focus, while her face and the face of her fish (I think) are somewhat blurry. These are really the most important elements and should be sharp. Also, because of the column, which is crowding the right side of the picture, I would have moved back and moved the girl closer to the left side picture to give her some breathing space.



Good attempt at a watercolor rendition of this flower photo. The composition is good, and some of the colors, particularly the greens come across as very alive and vibrant.

Unfortunately, in using the Waterlogue filter some problems were introduced that were not present in the original photo. In the original, the pink color of the flowers is very vibrant, here the color is washed out by overly bright highlights. Also, the filter made the wall in the upper left-hand corner overly bright, and distracting. In the original image, the wall is a pale gray and far less distracting. This was a good attempt, but the original photo is actually a much stronger image.

Novice - Modified Photos



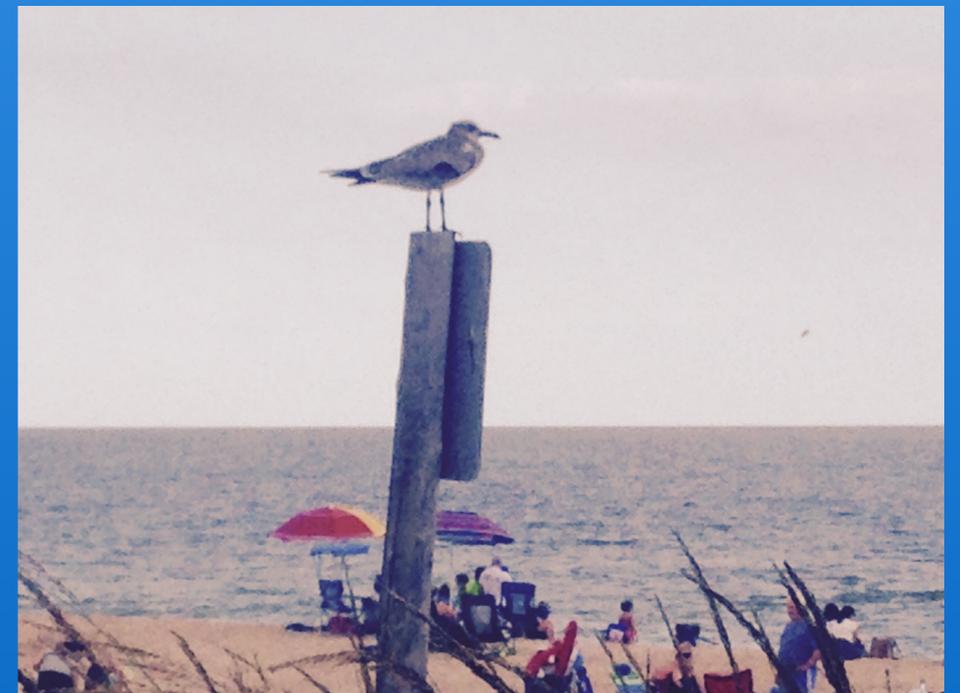
1st Place

Jon Bernstein



2nd Place

Nancy O'Sullivan



3rd Place

Benson Michael

Advanced - Enhanced Photos

3 Entries, 1 Award



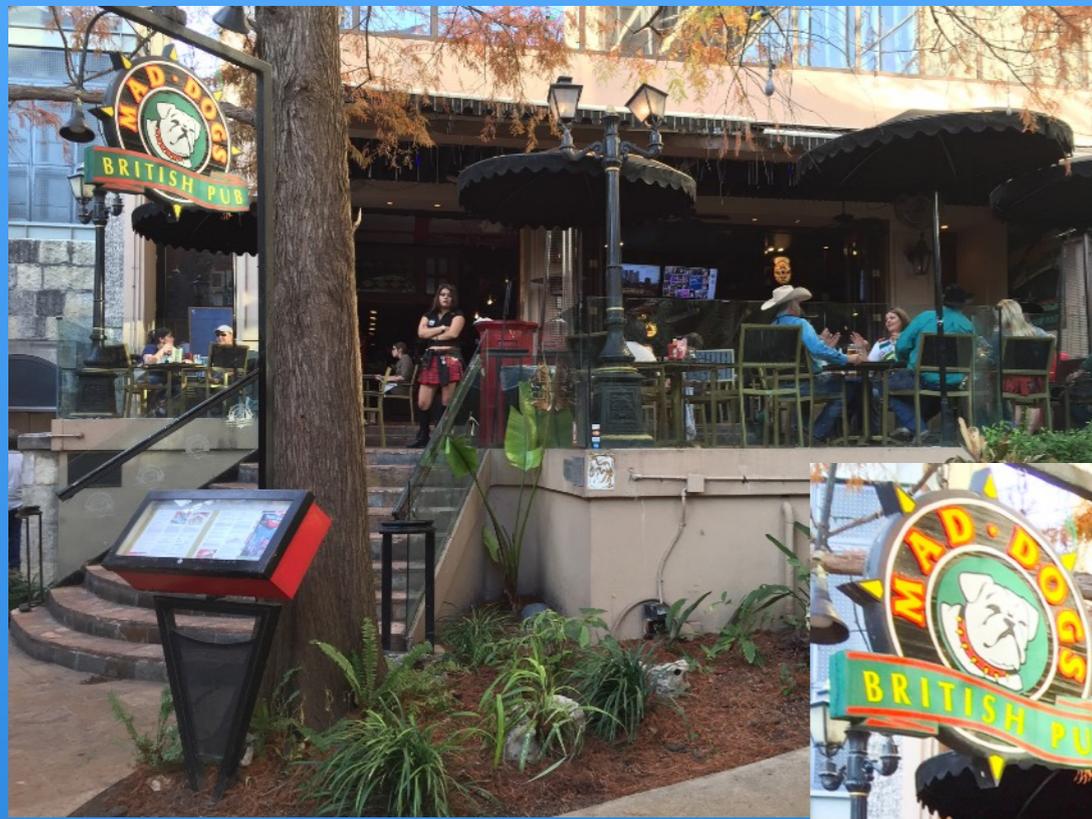
Very nice lily pad photo. I like the framing provided by the reflections of the trees in the water. The PhotoShop modifications really helped to make the colors in the water and on lily pads pop.

The lily pad at the very bottom is cut off. This would be a stronger image if the entire lily pad were shown in the photo.



This is a fun and colorful photograph. Use of the Chrome filter really made the colors pop and the photo come alive.

As the main subject of the photo is the rickshaw strewn with flowers, it would have been a stronger image if you had stepped back a bit to include the entire rickshaw, i.e. the entire flags at the top and the entire front wheel. Also, the bright area and the people on the right side are distracting and tend to draw your eye away from the main subject. You could use the Vignette Adjustment in photos to darken these areas and lessen their impact.



This image is well shot, with good lighting and colors, and everything is sharp.

When I looked at this photo, I was not really sure what to focus on and what was the main subject. I sense the photographer was just trying to show an overview of the pub. Actually, the most interesting part of this image is the waitress with the attitude on the left-hand side. I would suggest cropping this as a square, starting with the sign and going to the umbrella to the right of the waitress, reducing the highlights on the sign, and darkening the people sitting under the sign. This would focus on the waitress and, I think, make for a more interesting photo.

Advanced - Enhanced Photos



1st Place

Cheryl Lavoie

Advanced - Monochrome Photos

2 Entries, 1 Award



This is a nice shot, with an interesting subject, the man throwing the net in the foreground. The shot is sharp, and, overall, the black and white is done well.

The most interesting part of this photo really is the man throwing the net. I would have cropped in much closer to just focus on him. Also, as the man is the main subject of the photo, I would have made him brighter to stand out more, at least to the same extent as the net.



Nice view showing good detail in the doorway and of the foliage through the door. The black and white is nicely done as you retain the detail.

It is not clear which part of the photo was used in straightening. The problem is that you have a not very straight structure on an uneven surface, so the final version appears to tilt to the left, where the original appeared to tilt to the right. Sometimes you need to just do this by eye. Also, I don't say this very often, I would not have cropped in quite so tight. The tight crop contributes to this looking uneven as you see much less grass on the left than on the right. Finally, I would have opened up the shadows a bit and/or brightened the foliage seen through the doorway a little.

Just a personal opinion, but I like the color version better.

Advanced - Monochrome Photos



1st Place

Cheryl Lavoie

Open - Just a Photo Photos

7 Entries, 3 Awards



This is a beautiful image nicely rendered in black and white. The black and white works very well for this photo as it helps to minimize the impact of the house in the background and the wires in the foreground, so that you can focus on the more interesting elements such as the snow, trees, fence and creek. The creek also works well as a leading line, drawing you into the more interesting parts of the photo.

Overall, the photo is sharp and crisp except for a small area in the foreground. This is not very noticeable, but cropping it out might make for a stronger image.



Interesting slice-of-life photo. Everything in the photo is sharp and clear. It has good composition, a beautiful sky and a very nice early morning/early evening feel.

I would recommend cropping out the hood of the car. If you have Photoshop, you can make it disappear without cropping; you could also try this using the Restore tool in Photos.



This is an interesting photo with a good subject, good composition and colors.

Unfortunately, everything in the photo is blurry and out of focus. Also, it would have been a stronger image if the rear basket were totally in the picture rather than having the last bit of it cut off.



This is a fascinating picture with a lot of interesting elements. It looks as if you are shooting through a window, in the rain, at a cityscape with a river or harbor. The first thing I noticed was that the buildings towards the center and left are sharp, despite shooting through a window. I can also easily make out the boats on the water and the palm trees in the foreground.

One suggestion for making this a stronger photo would be to use the Retouch tool in Photos to remove some of the bright hot spots, especially the three starting a bit more than half way up and to the right of center.



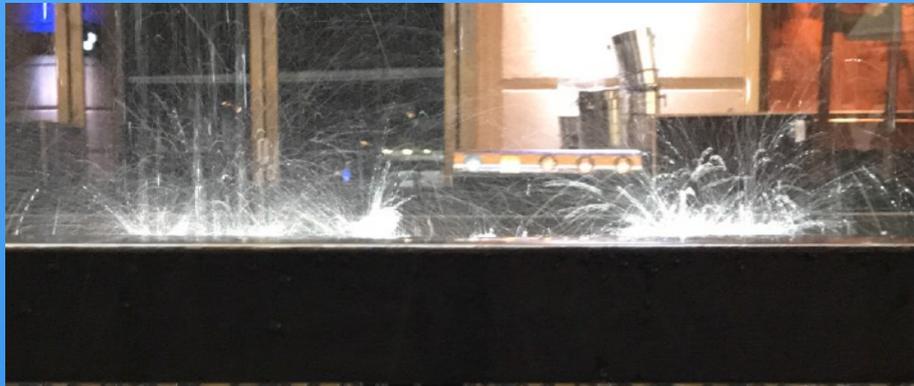
Airport photos like this are always fun. Even though they are fairly common; the various looks and expressions on the subjects' faces are what make the picture. I particularly enjoy the woman on the right talking on the phone.

Unfortunately, nothing in the image is sharp, everything is blurry. Also, the cropping is very close to the women, especially the one speaking on the phone, making the photo feel claustrophobic. Looking at the original picture, I can see that it was always tight above her head, so that the straightening just made it more so; this would have needed to have been corrected at the time the shot was taken, unless you have Photoshop....



What really makes this photo are the antics of the monkeys climbing over the statue and the feature above it. The picture is overall very sharp and clear. The lighting and color are both good.

Since the monkeys are what make this an interesting picture, I would have focused more on them. The legs and tail of the monkey on the bottom are all cut off; the shot should have been made to include the entire monkey. Also, the top part of the feature is cut off. I would have included the entire feature, or, better yet, shot in closer to focus more on the monkey. Also, if possible, it would have been worthwhile to wait for the monkey in the middle to show his face.



Conceptually, this photo is a good idea, catching the water as it splashes on the handrail.

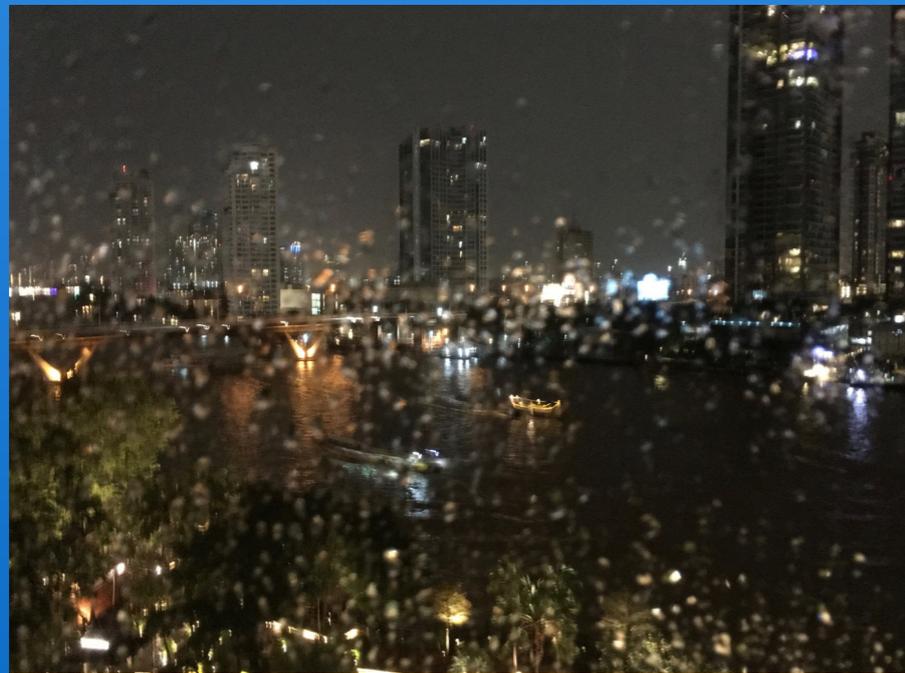
Unfortunately, it just doesn't work. Looking at the original photo, I can see that, not only was the sharpest part of the photo cropped out, but also that the uncropped image is far more interesting than the cropped version. In the cropped photo that was submitted, everything is blurry and out of focus. The highlights are blown out on the base of both splashes, as well as on the wall above the stove, and on the stove, itself. Not only could this have easily have been mitigated in Lightroom, but, in the original photo, the blown-out highlights are less noticeable and less of an issue.

Open - Just a Photo Photos



1st Place

Diana King



2nd Place

Cheryl Lavoie

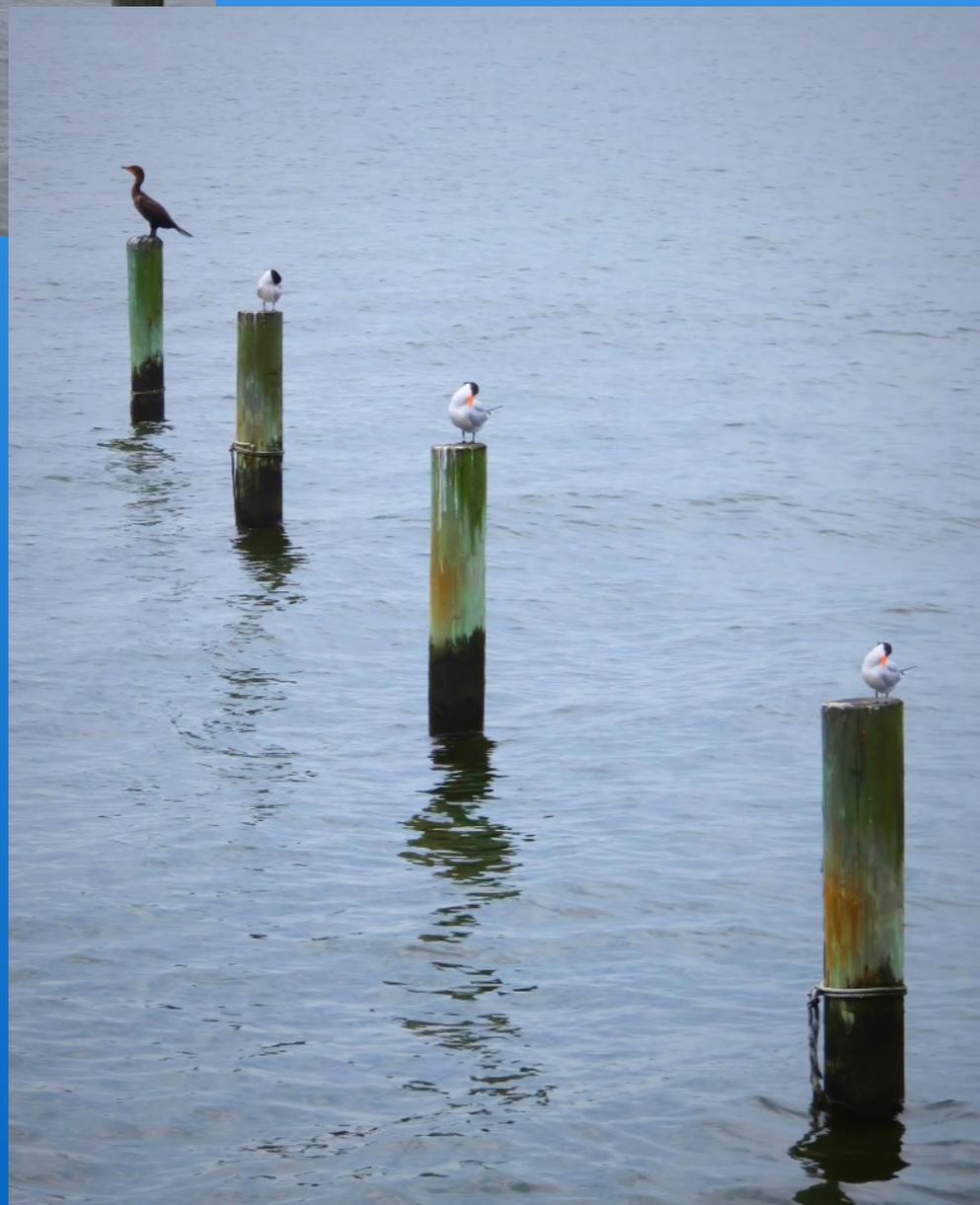


3rd Place

Cheryl Lavoie

Open - Modified Photos

12 Entries, 4 Awards



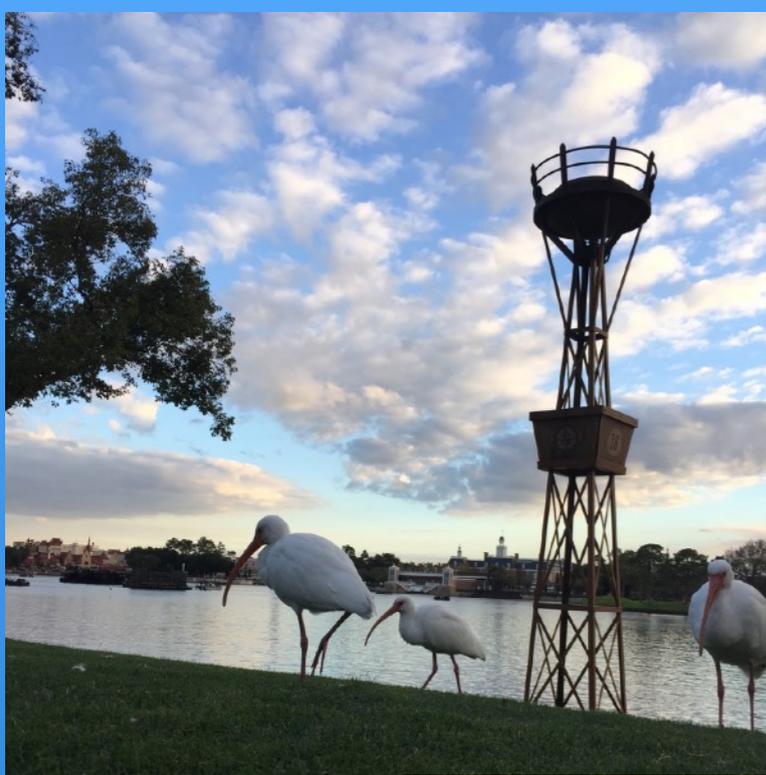
The piles with the birds form a good leading line, taking you to the “different”, the cormorant. I can see that Photoshop was used to copy the bird on the second pile to the first pile to complete the set. The photo is sharp, and with lighting and the color both being good, after a bit of tweaking.

I would have two suggestions for this photo. First the first pile is very close to the bottom and the right-hand side; I would have shot it to give some more room. Also, you may have wanted to consider cloning the bird closest to the cormorant so that you didn't have two identical birds next to each other.



Nice capture of a fawn under a tree. The picture is nice and sharp, and the color and lighting are good.

The only suggestions I would make for this would be to crop in more from the left, there is a lot of empty space there, and you do want to concentrate on the fawn. Also, I would have tried to brighten up the fawn's head a bit.



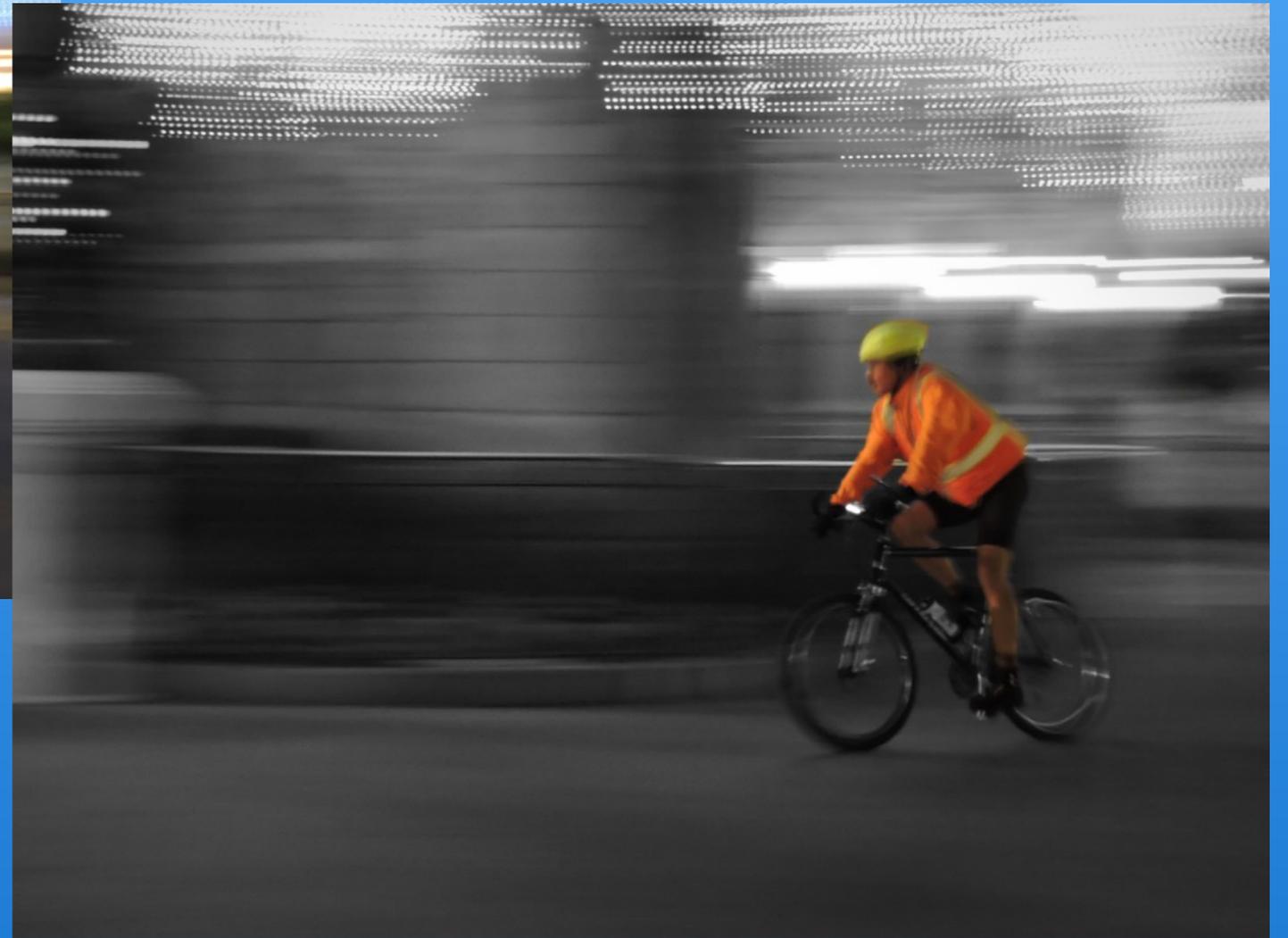
Nice capture of the egrets and the tower, with the various buildings forming a background, and a magnificent sky. Everything is sharp and clear, and the colors are good.

There are only two things that I would suggest changing. The branches coming in from the left are intrusive and don't really add to the picture. You could try to removing them using the Retouch tool in Photos. Also, the birds are very close to the center of the photo, but, looking at the original, I don't see a good way to change that.



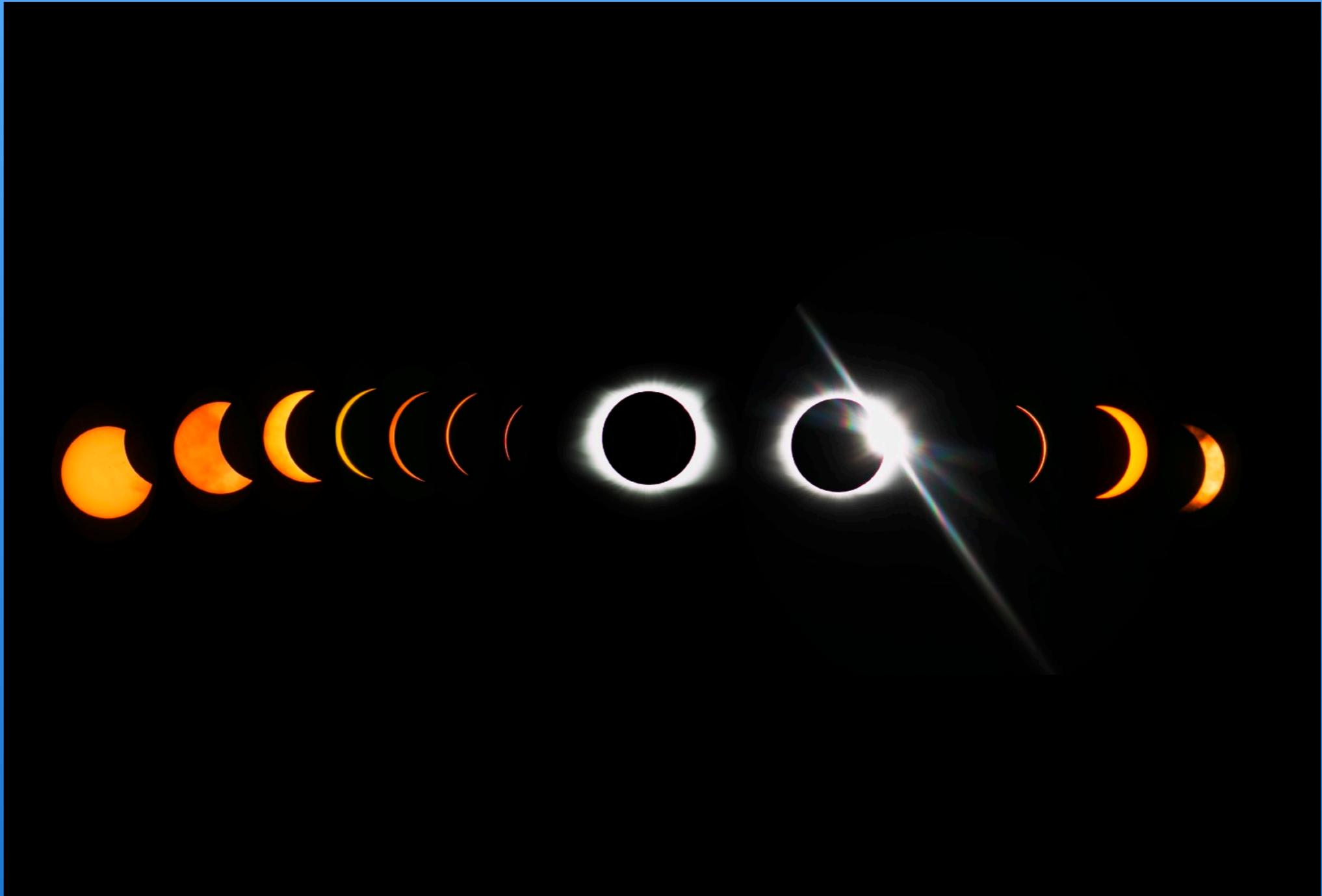
This is a really good shot of a rhino! Everything is sharp and clear, and the overall lighting and colors are good.

The only problem is that, if you didn't know there was a rhino there, you might miss it. I would have cropped in more on both sides, and, using the "rule-of-thirds" made sure that the rhino was on the line between the left and middle thirds. Also, as the rhino is the most interesting part of the photo, I would suggest playing with Adjustments in the Photos app to try to open the shadows and make the area around the rhino brighter and make the rhino more visible.



This is a noble attempt at a very difficult shot, capturing a moving bicycle rider. The manipulation performed works well to make sure the rider pops out of the background.

Typically, with a shot like this, you try to have the rider in focus, with a blurry background, or having the background in focus and have the rider appear as a blurry apparition. Unfortunately, in this image, both the rider and the background are blurry and out of focus.

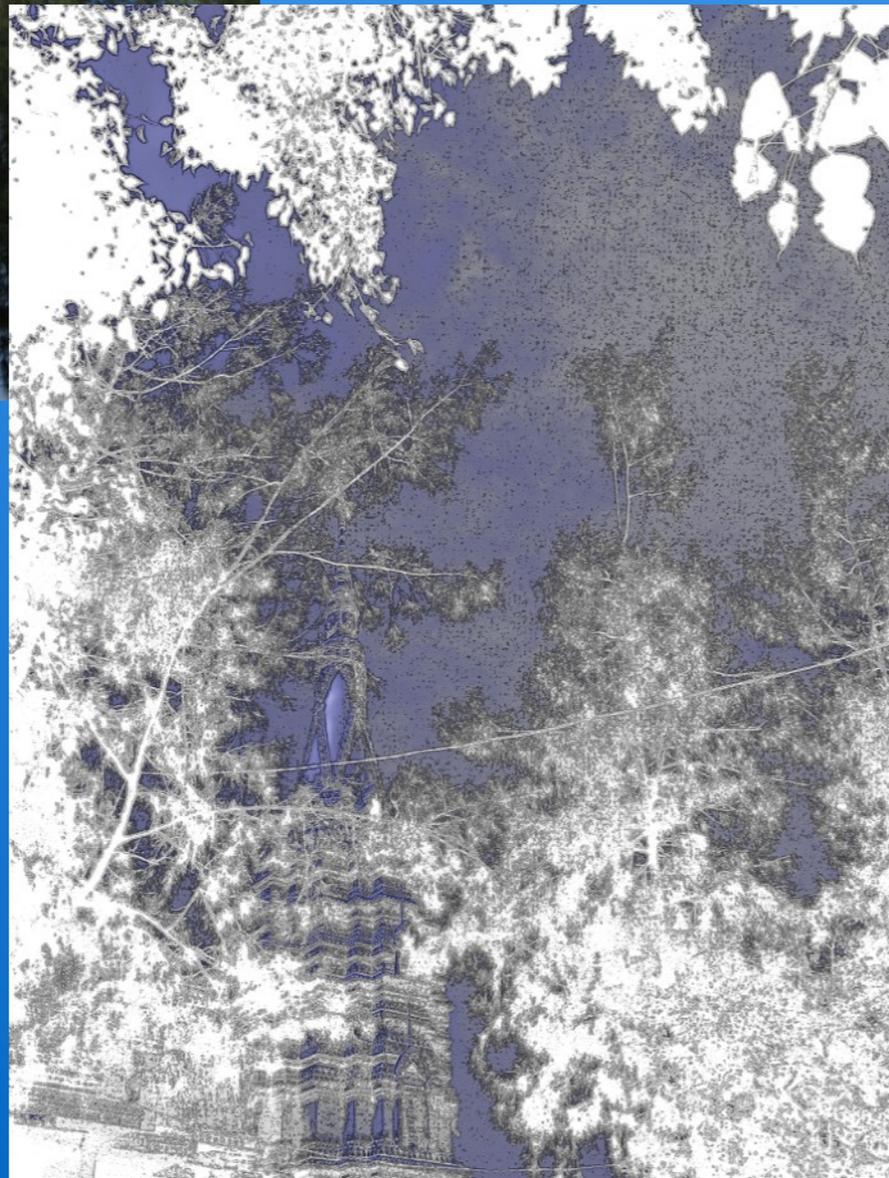


I don't know what to say except that this is a fantastic composite photograph and a great effort on the part of the maker. The only possible comment I can think of would be to take down the highlights on the brighter of the two center images, but that is nit-picking.



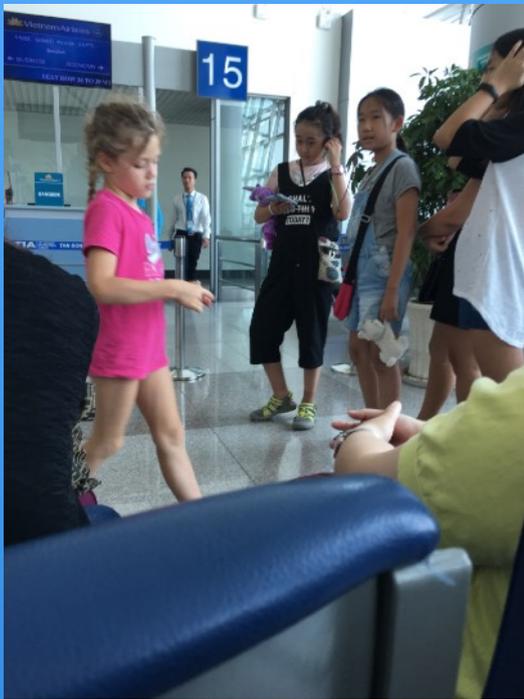
This is a great capture of a tender moment between, and I'm guessing here, a mother and daughter. Using the Waterlogue filter works well here to make a very lovely photo. The colors and exposure are good, with none of the hot spots that sometimes appear when using this filter.

The picture does seem to be tilting down to the right, and I would recommend straightening it, or at least rotating it a bit to the left.



The use of the filters on this photo give it the look of an infrared photo and/or a metallic print. In the final version, you can make out vegetation in the foreground, but it is not clear that it is a tower in the background. The wavy lines on the tower almost give the impression of looking down into the water at a reflection.

While this is an interesting image, the highlights around the edges are so blown-out that they draw all of your attention...I needed to force myself look beyond them and into the photo. Perhaps the use of a bit of vignetting could be used to cool down the hot spots.



This is a very nice “slice-of-life” photo of children killing time at an airport. The use of the filter gives it an interesting look, and makes it unimportant that the child on the left is out of focus (in fact, using this filter, this actually makes the photo a bit more interesting somehow...)

While cropping this, I would have shown more of the child on the left, at least including all of her elbow, even though it would have meant a small bit of the black shoulder in the foreground would have intruded.



This is a very fun photo. The processing was mostly successful in mostly producing the look you desired. For some reason, it did not seem to take on the face and arms of the man in the center.

Since you used Lightroom, you may want to take another look at this using the Antique Filter under the Lightroom B&W Toned Presets. Also, I would have cropped this a bit differently, I would not have cropped so closely on the left so that the elbow would not be practically right on the edge. Also, I would have cropped more on the right so that the van was not so obvious...I'm guessing that you cropped the right as you did so that some of the anvil and hammer would be visible, but I think I would be willing to sacrifice those to get rid of the van's tire. Also, a bit of vignetting would have been useful to play down the more modern elements in the photo.

Finally, while it is still free from Google, I would recommend that you download the Nik apps and play around with Silver Efex Pro 2.



This was a good attempt at capturing an interesting image. The room and the whiteboard are sharp and clear, and the lighting almost seems to put an aura around the young girl.



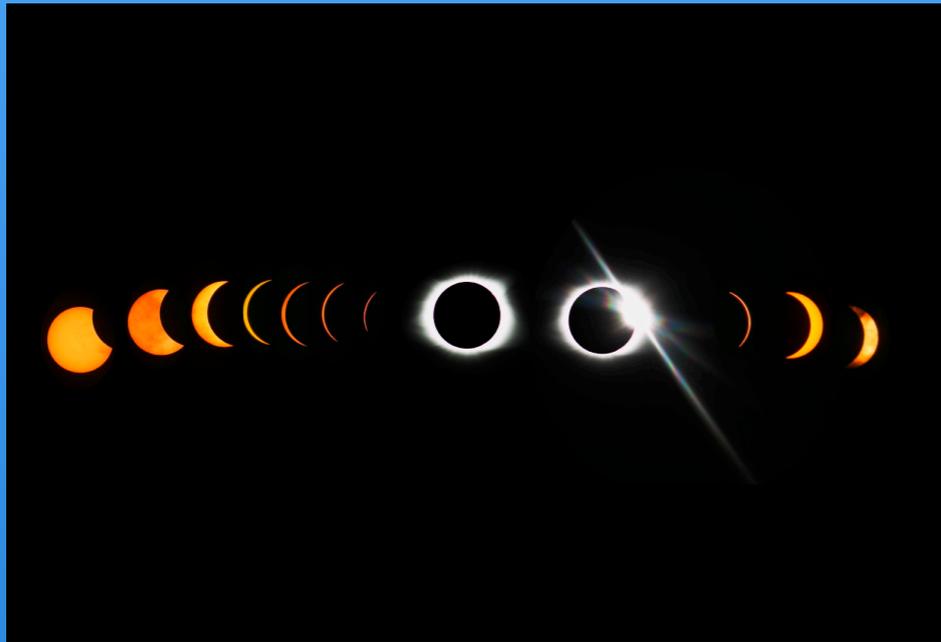
Unfortunately, probably due to the shutter speed, and her moving, the main subject of the photo, the young girl is blurry and out of focus. If it had been possible to use a flash, this may have been avoided. Also, looking at the original picture, it would have been nice to have been able to include the boy standing to the left of the girl, but, since the top of his head was cut off, cropping him out was the right decision.



This is a photo that had a lot of potential, viewing the bicycle, on the sand through the gap in the wall, with this filter gives a very old-world feel, and almost a sense of mystery.

There are several areas of this image that I would address. First of all, you see too little of the wall on the right-hand side, giving the picture an unbalanced feel. Also, I would have attempted to straighten the picture so that the lines of bricks and the top of the gap were level. You can do this using the protractor on the right side of the Photos Crop tool. The background on this is way blown out, distracting the viewer from the rest of the image. Finally, when using the filter, there is a loss of detail, especially of the bicycle. You could increase the contrast to recapture some of the detail. Both highlights and contrast can be adjusted using the Adjust tool in Photos.

Open - Modified Photos Photo



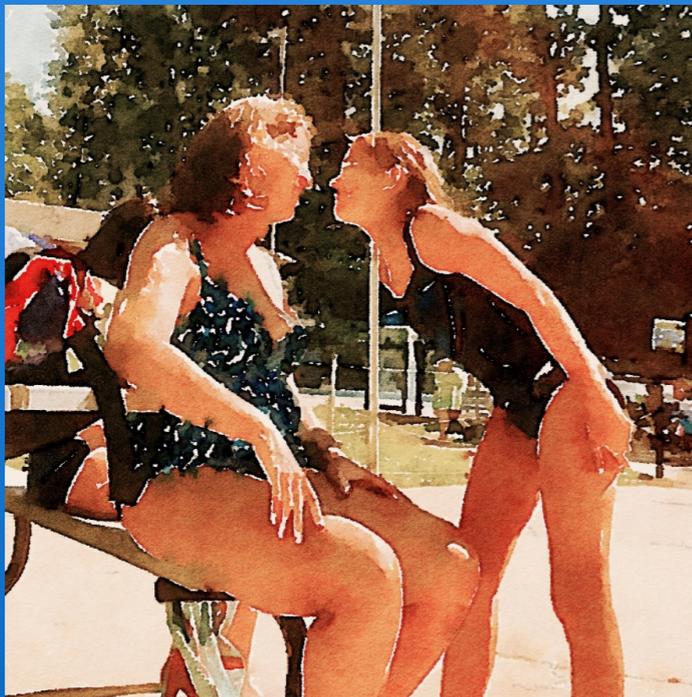
1st Place

John Freitag



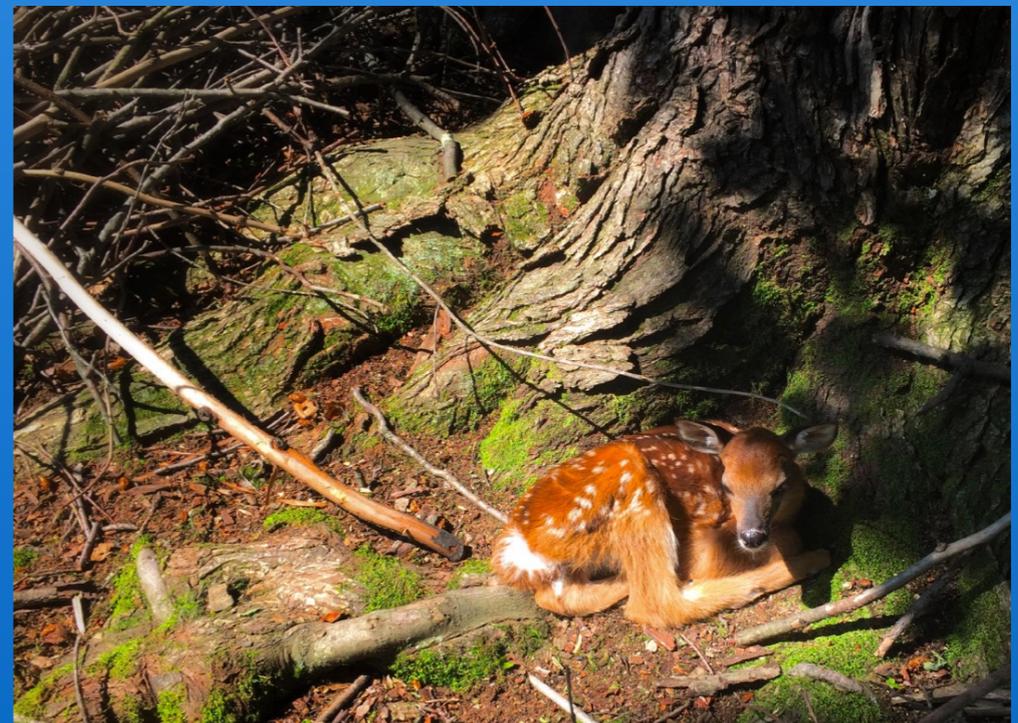
2nd Place

Cheryl Lavoie



3rd Place

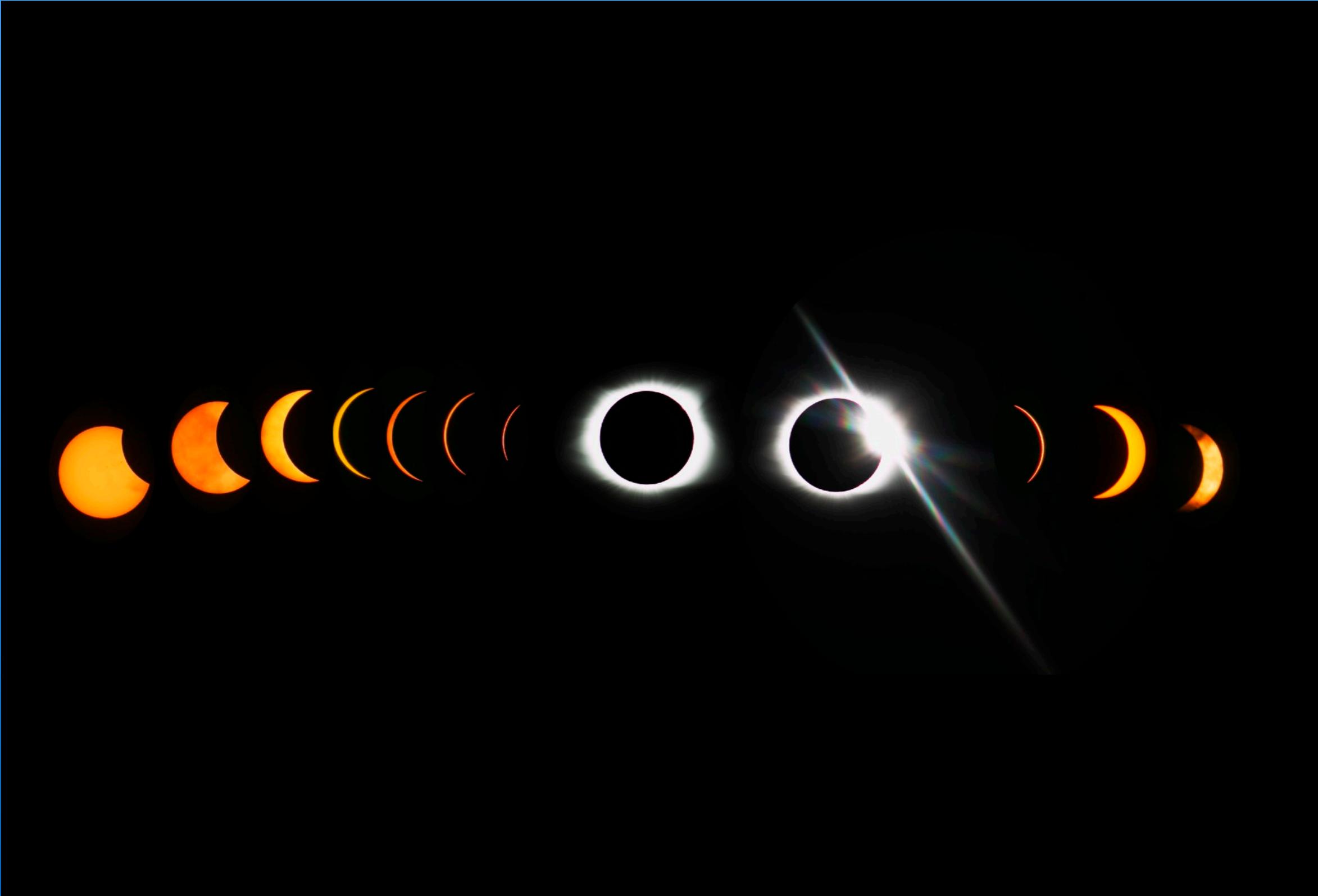
Diana King



Honorable Mention

Dale Hrabak

Best in Show



John Freitag

That's It !

We Thank

Everyone Who Submitted Photos