

Wise Words From Wise Photographers

Improving My Photography

Tom Way - Nearly is not
enough.



Tom Way - Light, Character,
Simplicity.



WOW Factor = Light

Plus:

Clive Downes - to create great
light you must have great shadows.



Paul Strand - Say something
or be beautiful.



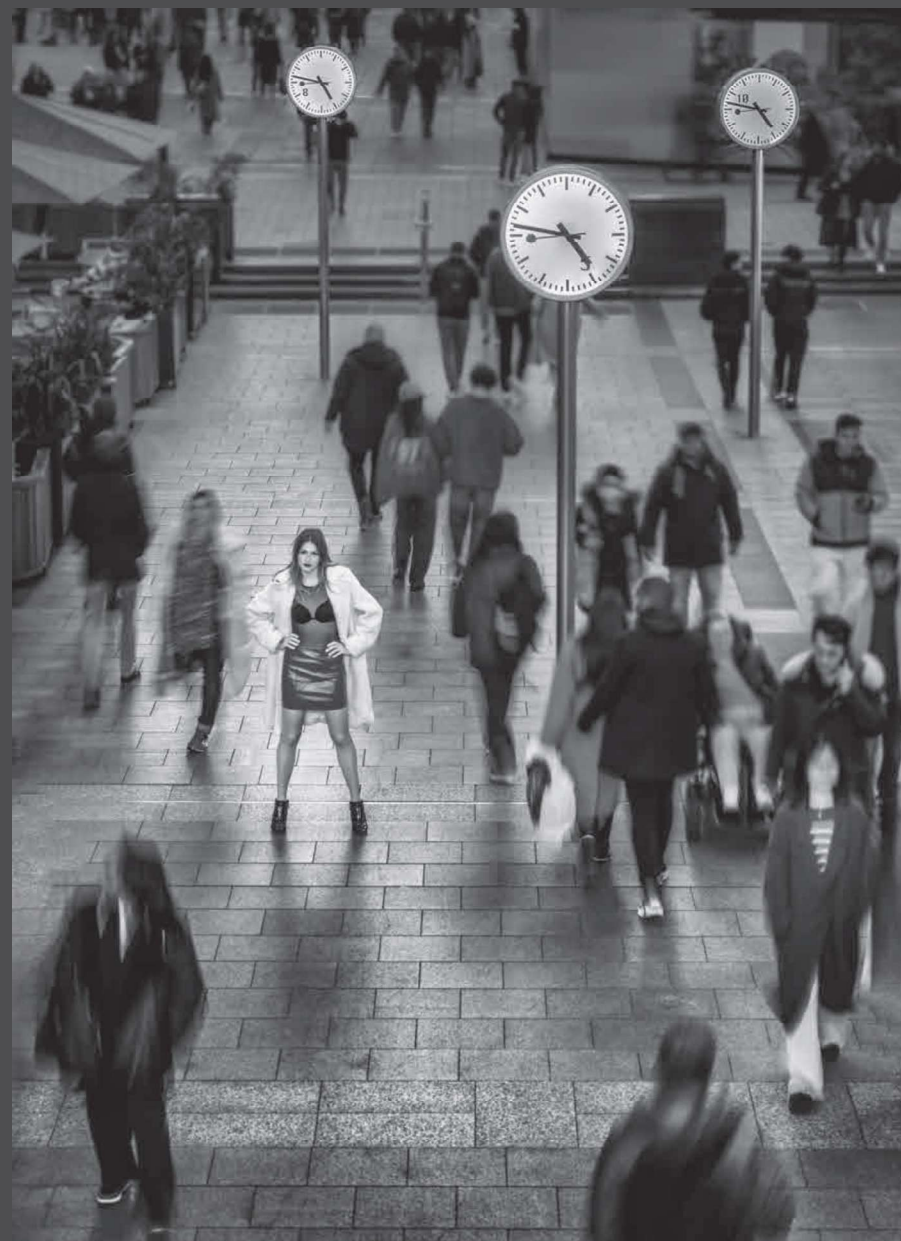


James Abbott - to be in the top 2% of photographers,
you must do things the other 98% won't.



Peter Adams - great photography is about depth of feeling, not depth of field.

John le Carre - the cat sat
on the mat is not a story.
The cat sat on the dog's mat
is a story.





Cecil Beaton - be daring, be different, be impractical, be anything that will assert integrity of purpose and imaginative vision against the 'play it safers', the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary.



Amateur Photographer editor - today's cameras mean anyone can take a sharp, well exposed picture. What will you add?

Micke Boynton - give people something they never see: dawn, sunset, movement, long exposure, behaviour.



Percy Harris - skill in photography is acquired by practise,
not purchase.

Francois Gola - it is better to invest in raising your skills rather than
spending on gear. You are the brain here, not the camera.

- Damien Demolder - composition invites a viewer in to explore your picture. Having accepted the invitation the photographer has to give them a reward.



Henry Rollings:
No such thing as spare time
No such thing as free time
No such thing as down time
All you got is lifetime
Go!



End of Part 1

Value of Critiques





There's a lot to like here - a lovely sense of place, bold primary colours, & fine detail throughout. The composition works well with the pier taking us diagonally into the frame. The red canoes add a strong focal point & link foreground to distance nicely. I might suggest holding back the brightness of the water slightly, as it's very reflective & could draw the eye away from the boats. Likewise, a touch more contrast in the mid-mountains could add richness to balance the tones.

Overall score 18/20

A high standard club image showing strong composition, technical control & colour harmony.

Where it gains marks:

Composition 5/5 The leading line of the jetty & the strong diagonal placement of the canoes create excellent depth.

The scene has a natural flow from foreground to background.

Colour & Impact 5/5 The saturated reds against the turquoise water & grey mountains have instant appeal.

Technical Control 4.5/5 Exposure is well handled, detail is retained across highlights & shadows.

Where it loses marks:

Tonal Balance -0.5 The mid distance could use a touch more contrast or local clarity. It slightly flattens compared to the vibrant foreground.

Foreground-Background Integration -0.25 The foreground boats are so strong they almost feel like a separate



subject to the landscape. A minor dodge & burn adjustment could better balance the relationship.

Distraction Management -0.25 The bright orange boxes & blue paddle boards on the right edge attract the eye more than they need to. Slight desaturation or cropping would strengthen focus.

Emotional/Narrative Engagement -0.5 For the highest awards, judges look for an extra layer - perhaps human presence, mood or weather. This image, whilst superbly executed, is more 'beautiful view' than 'emotive story'.

It's an image that consistently pleases & would be near the top of a club open competition. With slightly stronger storytelling or tonal refinement, it could move from 18 to 19 or 20.



Estimated score 18/20

A striking and well executed in-flight study showing excellent control of exposure and focus. With a slightly stronger sense of action or refined tonal sparkle, it could challenge for a 20.

Where it gains and loses marks:

Impact/subject choice 5/5 superb direct in-flight capture. Dynamic and arresting.

Technical Quality 4.5/5 - excellent sharpness, slight softness at wing tips where depth of field tails off.

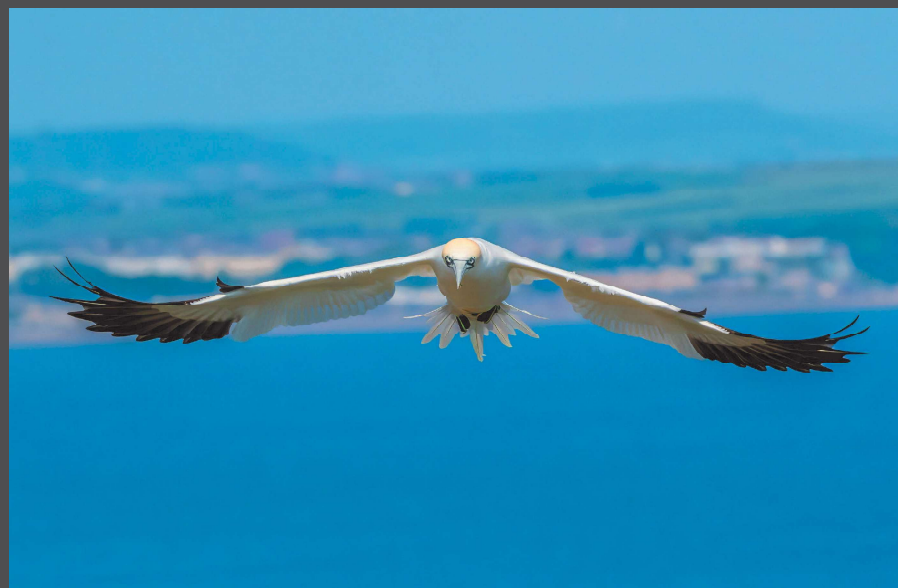
Exposure and tone 4/5 - whites very well controlled but could use a fraction more brilliance and contrast around the head to make it pop.

Composition and framing 4/5 - strong symmetry works. A touch more space ahead of the birds path would add tension and breathing room.

Background/distraction control 3/5 - Horizon and shoreline are faintly visible and might pull attention. Subtle blur or desaturation would strengthen isolation.

Narrative/Moment 3.5/5 - Fantastic moment but lacks interaction. Would score more highly with behaviour shown e.g. nesting material in mouth, at a diving angle.

With improvements, close to Awards standard.





Score 17/20 Highly Commended

Why does it score lower than the other two but get Highly Commended?

The score is given on how well the image meets the competition criteria in isolation - technical quality, composition, narrative, impact.

This image felt quieter, more refined, less dramatic than the other two so scored lower. Yet it's compositional control, tone and clarity of intent made it stand out from the other entries so was awarded Highly Commended



How can we all use critiques like these?

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Type into the request bar:

'You are a PAGB trained photographic judge who is very experienced in judging at camera club competitions. Please assess this picture as if it has been entered into a club competition at Royston Photographic Society giving judges comments, a likely score and suggesting processing improvements which could enhance the picture. Thank you.'

The response isn't perfect - judges are not either - but it is stunningly good and so helpful.

