

Results - Salon Portfolio

<p>Set 1</p> 	<p>Dawn at Howling Wolf Rock – Well, I was so fascinated by this wonderful rock I simply had to consult Auntie Google to find its whereabouts and was stunned to learn it’s just down the road at Mangawhai! Who would bother with Piha’s Lion with this on our doorstep? The photographer has created a real piece of wall art here by combining the beautiful soft colours of a dawn sky with the rawness of those sombre grey rocks. The image is well composed, the painterly effect is beautifully executed and the scene lends itself perfectly to a panoramic format. A real WOW for me.</p>
	<p>Otuihau Whangarei Falls – Such an iconic local beauty spot and our photographer has taken something of a risk entering this image. Like the famed Wanaka tree, the Whangarei Falls have been photographed thousands of times, with each artist hoping to capture something different, be it from another viewpoint, in varied weather conditions or seeking those elusive light rays. A pleasing composition has been achieved, leading the viewer along the stream, then around the bend towards the waterfall. Exposure has been handled well to create the silkiness of the water, but detail is still retained in the cloudy sky. (I shall be interested to see this projected on screen as the green grass in the centre was distractingly vivid on my monitor and tended to draw my gaze instead of leading me towards the waterfall)</p>
	<p>Venus setting under the Milky Way – A very good attempt at astrophotography, a genre I am not at all familiar with so I had to call on my trusty sidekick Kate to help me out here. It has generally been well handled, but there are a couple of distracting bright spots which need a little toning down to raise this image to a higher level. The viewer’s eye tends to be drawn towards the cliffs on the left side and then across to the grass in the central foreground, rather than being held by the subject.</p>
<p>Set 2</p>	
	<p>Wispy Wave – Such a great sense of movement in this image. You can almost feel the power building within the waves as they surge towards the shore like galloping horses. (I can even see the streaming manes and tails!) Beautiful shades of ocean blues and I especially like the sweeping curve of the wave which almost fills the entire frame.</p>
	<p>Charles Sound, Fiordland – The lighting here is simply stunning so I can certainly understand why the photographer was impelled to capture this scene. However, the image just doesn’t work for me as the lit area is quite unsharp. I feel there could be great textures on that tree, in both the bark and the mosses and I would have preferred to have seen them with more clarity. I do not feel this is a Salon portfolio quality image.</p>
	<p>Buller Mollyhawk – It must have been a real thrill to get this wonderful bird swooping through the waves in your viewfinder. I wonder if this image is as shot or whether you have cropped in more closely. In either case, poor old Molly has not been given full justice as both wing tips are right on the edges of the frame, giving the bird no room to spread his (or her) wings. A little more water on either side would have made a more pleasing composition.</p>
<p>Set 3</p>	
	<p>Icebergs are made From - I have spent a fair amount of time studying this colourful entry and I’m left totally bewildered. I have no idea what I’m looking at – there is no story attached, I am not led on any journey – maybe it’s an abstract, in which case the subject doesn’t really matter. I think the photographer has had a creative idea in mind when setting this up, but for me it simply doesn’t work and I don’t see this as Salon Portfolio standard.</p>
	<p>Oakura Bay Dawn - A pleasant enough early morning seascape which might benefit from a “letter box” or panoramic type crop, but we’ve all seen hundreds of similar images. This one doesn’t stand out and lacks the “wow” factor for me.</p>

	<p>The Uprising Wine Bottle - Well, this at least raised a quiet smile, but seriously, as presented it is not a Salon Portfolio image. It's a photo of a bottle and to hold any viewer's attention long enough to say "Wow", a couple of additional props are required to build a story (a revolver and bandanna spring to mind). This strikes me as more of a grab shot than a still life that has been carefully set up.</p>
<p>Set 4</p>	
	<p>Left standing - I spent a great deal of time musing over this monochrome entry. Initially I felt there was huge potential but something was not quite right. I couldn't work out just exactly what, so trusty sidekick Kate came to the rescue again. Her first comment was that it's too busy as presented and there seem to be several images within the one photo. The 4 concrete slabs in the centre foreground cause the most jarring aspect and I know that they are there in reality and there is probably no way to shoot that scene without including them. However, we're talking Salon Portfolio here and I think the photographer would be amazed to see this with the offending slabs cloned out. This would allow several options including leaving the full number of poles in the frame or cropping to isolate several in a group.</p>
	<p>Taking a Walk in a National Park - Another example of our magnificent New Zealand scenery, spoiled for me by the placement of the hiker on the track. I have no objection to seeing people included within a landscape as so often they add to the scale of the surrounding terrain, but to gain the greatest impact they do need to be in exactly the right spot. Unfortunately this hiker is too close to the photographer and I feel the image would be more effective with the person further back at the bend in the track.</p>
	<p>Pink Flower - My first viewing of this impressionistic flower image in its soft pastel tones was very favourable. However, I became more critical on further viewings and feel the image needs something to lift it to another level so I wonder if the addition of a subtle texture to just the background would be an improvement.</p>
<p>Set 5</p>	
	<p>Pretty in Pink - Delicate, dainty, ethereal and a great big WOW!! This is a beautifully creative piece of artwork that would grace any wall. Some workers may have been tempted to remove the tiny ant in the centre but its presence really adds to the image. Congratulations to the worker.</p>
	<p>Kingfisher on Lookout - Oh, I am so envious of this image. A stunning capture of this cheeky chappy showing excellent detail in the feathers and a catchlight in his eye. Skilful editing has rounded the image off and made the bird really pop out of the frame.</p>
	<p>Special Place - And my word, it certainly is. Moody, magical, mysterious – take your pick. How Peter Jackson would have loved this spot for one of his movie locations in Middle Earth. Beautifully exposed, composed and lit, I can only say it's a total WOW!</p>

<p>Following the above assessments and comments I'm sure you will have all worked out just which sets are my Winner and Runner Up. Two sets stood out for me, with the winner exhibiting photographic versatility, entering 3 images of entirely different genres, all of a very high standard and excellent quality.</p>	<p>I have great pleasure naming for 2021,</p> <p>Set 5 as the stand out Winner.</p> <p>Set 1 as Salon Portfolio Runner Up</p>
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Thank you for inviting me to judge your Salon Portfolio competition. In order to give all entrants their due consideration I advised Ruth that I would also like to call on Kate Jones' expertise whenever I was stumped or unsure of the value of a particular image. My impression of this competition has always been that it is the most prestigious award in Camera Club, a competition that would reflect the very best images that each Salon photographer might create over the year, thereby setting a standard of exhibition quality work, a standard that lower grade photographers would aspire to reach in the future. Sadly, this has not been the case this year as only two entrants have met the above brief. I understand that everyone starts the year full of enthusiasm, taking numerous images, eagerly entering every competition on the calendar with little or no discrimination. However, it's very easy to run out of steam towards the end of the year and find yourself frantically scrabbling around to find three images to fulfil the Salon Portfolio criteria, finally realising that your best work has already been entered into the minor monthly competitions and cannot be considered for your portfolio. I can only assume that this has been the case for some of you and the reason why work of a lesser standard has been selected. The Salon Portfolio award does not deserve to be treated this way. It should be a huge honour to win this trophy, an achievement every Salon worker should aim for. The images should be carefully chosen, bearing in mind that the judge will be expecting to see creative art work with the "wow" factor. I suggest that next year, each Salon worker puts a folder on their desktop to which they will add every image they feel proud of and consider a worthy entry for their portfolio. Throughout the year, images can be moved in and out as they are replaced by work of a more superior quality. You may then find you are perhaps holding back entries you might have considered for Open, Landscape or Portrait competitions. That doesn't matter, Salon Portfolio is the award you should all be striving to win and it's more important to keep your options open to ensure you have a portfolio you are proud to share and exhibit. Pauline Guy