

Results FlatLay – 20.19 – July

	<p>01 – Pebbles: What an array of interesting stones! This image has no one point that demands my attention, rather I am left to roam, and not without fascination, over the varied stripes, speckles, spots, and textures. The image is near monochrome, but I wonder if the photographer had considered a complete black and white conversion, as the slight yellow patina that is on some of the rocks, in my opinion detracts from the simplicity of the construct. A subtle dark vignette might also be considered, particularly as the brightest part of this image is at the top right; and as such is an obvious escape route for my eyes. MERIT</p>
	<p>02 – Hibiscus and Rosehip Tea: I enjoy the play of light on the linen cloth, particularly as the darkened edges work as a frame to the scene, gently inviting my eyes to stay within its borders. The red rosehips are gorgeous, the touch of highlight that is on each one, whilst arguably a technical flaw, somehow bestows life to each berry – and assumes something of a catchlight that one looks for in an actual eye. I found the cup of tea a little less visually rewarding. However, the diagonal placement works for the overall composition. The three wayward rosehips are a nice filler, but I find that the sugar cubes are a touch too white and texture-less; a smooth element within a texture filled arrangement. I found this a very enjoyable image to explore. HIGHLY COMMENDED</p>
	<p>03 – Spice Time: What a fun and happy composition. The textured orange background beautifully supports the colours of the spices forming the intervals of this 'quite-jolly' clock; although I wondered in my O.C.D. way, why you didn't make smaller dots, so that all the numbers were represented? The cinnamon quills make excellent clock hands, and I liked the small detail of one side up and the other side down. The random pepper corms, and varicoloured rock salt grinds complete a picture of a liberally freckled, happy face. I have smiled all the time I have been typing this evaluation. HONOURS</p>
	<p>04 – Ready, Set, Go: The traffic light arrangement of the three apples, together with a background that could be imagined as a racetrack, has me looking for the starters flag. This is a hit-you-in-the-face type of image, even down to the tricolour stripes on the border; but it is fun. As this is a photographic evaluation, I wonder if a little less direct light could have been considered as the image has been left with no nuance or subtleties; a touch of modelling shadow beneath each apple would have given it a greater sense of dimensionality. MERIT</p>
	<p>05 – Voyage Plans: This frame is filled with opportunity. Each item has been carefully placed, and my eye strolled from sextant to the book of knot, before skipping over the ruler, pencil and rubber, and landing on the book bottom right. I then happily bounced across the sextant landing on 'Williams Owen's Northland Coast New Edition' book, before finally taking in the brass objects in the centre. I was left to only wonder at the charts the pencil and ruler will create. HIGHLY COMMENDED</p>
	<p>06 – Which One: Perhaps oddly, my eyes went straight through the objects arrayed here landing on the tiles, or perhaps paper with crease marks, that is sitting beneath the items. The yellow hue from the lighting above, and I think the lines or folds immediately caught my eye. In my opinion, a successful flat lay must be composed on a background that is either unremarkable entirely or part of the story. I found the story a little confusing in this tableau; is the choice between camera accoutrements, or a choice between the prints, or as a third option, is it showing a range of prints produced over time and with different lenses? ACCEPTANCE</p>



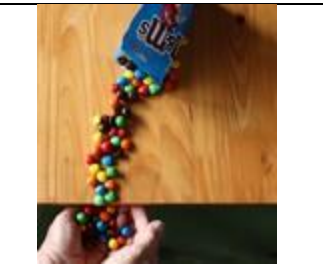
07 – Lots to look at: This so reminded me of the books I bought my children every Christmas called 'I Spy'. These books had pages of similar objects all hidden within a scene, and the idea was to pick out '2 paper clips, three rings in a row, four shoes and an H that Hangs'; you get the idea. I had more fun than the children I suspect! I don't love the cream colour of the paint, and in this instance the vignette has assumed a dirty colour which makes me wonder if a black and white conversion might be worth considering. BUT I had a lot of fun exploring! MERIT



08 – The Daisy Arrangement: The solid black background sets off this arrangement perfectly! The white daisies, with their happy yellow centres are arranged in a wonderfully pleasing curve. The green foliage acts as a literal and visual balance, both in colour and texture. I wondered about the vase, as this is not as focused as the rest of the image, and as a consequence becomes something of an irritation. I wonder if a neutral ribbon or string tied at the base of this bouquet would have made for a simpler, and therefore more appealing final touch. HIGHLY COMMENDED



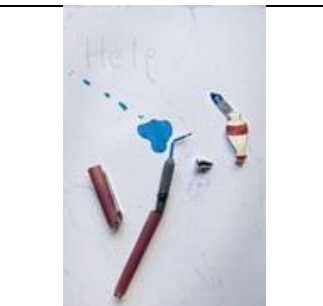
09 – Autumn Leaves: The not-quite-perfect arrangement of beautifully coloured autumn leaves, led me wondering what this flat lay may have been like if you had attempted either a more haphazard, organic, display or, a perfectly symmetrical arrangement with the stems and leaves all placed with absolute precision, and inside the frame. The pale green, textured concrete background feels at odds with the subjects and serves as more of a distraction than being a supporting player to these beautiful leaves, making me think that a more natural background such as hessian or sacking might be worth considering. ACCEPTANCE



10 – Caught Just in Time: I love this story! The placement of the components, in a kind of teasing diagonal, works really well; and of course, the bright colours of the M&M's are visually compelling (not to mention a tease to our tastebuds). I found the wooden board with its varied grains and joins just too busy, and wondered if a plain white background could have been better. MERIT



11 – In the Vege Bin: I think I have had vegetables that look far worse than this, in the bottom of my vege bin. A triangle of colour; orange, yellow and brown give a solid platform for my eyes' journey, and with some imagination the yellow courgette is almost a sad smile within a vegetable face. I wondered about the inclusion of the onion skins, yes, they form part of the vege bin narrative, but they are not as in focus as they could be. The lettuce leaves reminded me of the traditional 'bed of lettuce' one might find under a prawn cocktail; except, not as beautifully arranged. This concept has the potential for a successful flat lay, however I did not find the union of the components created compelling viewing. NOT ACCEPTED



12 – Murder Most Foul: Is this a statement on the use of English language today? A broken pen, spilled ink, and a knife tipped in the blue blood, of what used to be thought of as correct... or am I being too imaginative. The spacing of each element of this composition feels a little loose, and as such isn't quite as impactful as it might be. The photographer might like to reimagine this image within a square aspect ratio to see if the greater closeness of the objects adds even more tension to the message. Nevertheless, I thoroughly enjoyed spending time contemplating this story, and opining upon its message. HONOURS



13 – Birds of a Feather: The white tree, set on a black background, all held within a square aspect ratio, make an immediate impact. The selection of items added as embellishment I found to be perplexing. The feathers I understand, but the bee and the heart did not seem relevant. The glass birds, particularly the one top left, are heavy and are difficult to untangle visually. This is a good concept for a Flat Lay, that in my view could be further refined. ACCEPTED



14 – Crystal Dreaming: The use of the side lighting has created a dynamic excitement to this arrangement. In fact, I could image only the left-hand half being a mystery filled 'Flat Lay' all by itself! I wonder if a simpler approach could be considered – just the large bottle and its shadow, or alternately the bottle and the large white crystal. This is a case where less may have indeed been more. MERIT



15 – Coins pre decimal currency: This is an interesting, yet challenging subject for a Flat Lay, and I am sure that you explored a number of ways for the presentation. Whilst I certainly enjoyed studying the individual coins, I couldn't work out a reason for their relative placements; and I did try. I considered the various coins in terms of age, colour, size, value and material, but couldn't find a link! I did note that the bottom row depicts the 'Heads' and the rest, the 'Tails'. In this instance the weave of the white cloth has become something of a distraction in that I notice it; particularly as there is light coming from the bottom of the tableau that has produced shadows from the coins, that highlight the weave. Perhaps the photographer could have tried coins in a circle, or in straight lines and explored different backgrounds and lighting angles. NOT ACCEPTED



16 – IN HALVES: Unfortunately, none of these fruits seem all that desirable in terms of edibility, all being somewhat tired in terms of freshness; but perhaps that is the point? Sitting tight in the frame, and on a surface that is well used and not a little ugly, is at once jarring, but still somehow fitting. I can't help but wonder if this tableau sits between the perfect and imperfect, and not really managing either story well enough. NOT ACCEPTED



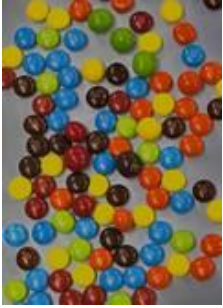

17 – Lunch: I like the idea of something so every day as an arrangement of the debris of one's lunch. The presentation of this arrangement has a down-hill feeling, not helped by the downward facing shadows which are accentuated by the texture of the linen cloth in the background. I am very particular about the edges of a frame and subscribe to the belief that if something is to be included, it must be complete. If something is to be partial, then it must be cropped with intent. 'Just clipped' in my view, is unfortunate. In this arrangement the clipping of the butter container and the banana is regrettable, when just a little more room around the edges would have given visual ease to the final image. NOT ACCEPTED



18 – Flash Photography: Pun intended; I am sure... The angled arrangements of each of these 'light adding' elements works, although I wonder why the speedlight is facing out of the frame. The idea of Flash Photography has been enhanced with the choice of dark vignette and bright centre, however, this coupled with the heavy texture of the mat or carpet acting as the background, has in my opinion overwhelmed the story. The photographer may like to attempt this flat lay again with a plain background, and some more nuanced lighting. ACCEPTED



19 – Grainy Days: The subjects of this flat lay work well together, and the choice to take the camera straps out of the frame gives the tableau a sense of something organic or natural. I can appreciate the use of the grainy wooden background in terms of the story you are telling, however in this instance I feel that it competes with the old cameras, rather than acting as a support. For me it is just too busy. MERIT

	<p>20 – What colour do you want: Each time I have looked at this image, I notice that I tilt my head. I thought at first I was trying to make this into a landscape orientation, as the way it sits, the M&M's feel as though they are slipping off the table and out of the frame. What I eventually decided was that I needed something to anchor me into the frame, not necessarily a single point of focus, but some stronger borders. I would like to suggest that the photographer reshoots this image using a square format and see if this give its more structure. The focus throughout this image is soft, and I wonder if the hand that was holding it was as steady as it might be. NOT ACCEPTED</p>
	<p>21 – The pack to go: Another good potential subject for a Flat Lay. There is a strong story, and I note that each of the elements has been arranged with care. The red case makes a strong focal point and it is with ease that the viewer can explore the rest of the medical items. The use of the carpet as the background, whilst no doubt convenient and available is not in my view as anaesthetically pleasing as it might be. MERIT</p>

FLAT LAY A great Flat Lay tells a great story; that story can be a simple message, a narrative, or the expression of an idea. The trick is the selection and the arrangement of the objects, the choice of background, and the light.

Photographically, a flat lay is relatively simple, with a sturdy tripod, a camera paired with the appropriate lens, the latter set at an appropriate aperture, and some knowledge of light. With luck (skill, and forethought), all these parts will converge seamlessly to give life to your story.

For me, and I suspect for many of you, it is the actual selection and then arranging of items that causes the greatest trouble, and of course what background to choose. I have evaluated these images largely on the choice and arrangement of the items and the choice of background, and then, with the question how does the lighting support the overall image. I asked myself; do the items express a cohesive idea or story? Is the arrangement of the items anaesthetically pleasing? Does the background help or hinder the overall story? Lastly, how does the lighting help or hinder the story.

As an aside, last year our club had a Flay Lay competition. I am pretty well useless at arranging things; I simply don't have that talent. I worried about the Flay Lay competition for a good six months before deciding just to have a go. I had an idea about a dying tulip I had kept, long past it used by date, and set out a tableau in my garage studio. I added quite a bit of light, only to have my husband open the garage door, just as I was exposing one frame. A shaft of angled light came in giving me some gorgeous shadows that transformed my still life arrangement – and that was the version I used! I have attached that image for you too hopefully enjoy. It is called My Diary...

Thank you for inviting me to give an opinion on your images. I do hope that the explanation I have given above gives you insight into my thinking. Whilst I have given some of you higher grades than others, I wanted to acknowledge everyone for giving this particular subject a try. I know from personal experience just how hard any still life is; and I freely acknowledge that I have produced a lot more unsuccessful renders than successful!