

First, it was a delight to see so much new black-and-white photography — and such a variety of styles and genres. I've grown up loving black-and-white, and it holds a special place in my heart. Black and white seems timeless, and somehow allows the image and composition to sear a place in my memory with much more detail than most color photographs, (although I really love color, too).

This contest also reminded me of the difficulty of making a truly great black-and-white photo that really stands out and feels unique and worthy of attention, especially given the rich history of photography made by the masters over the past 150 years.

One criterion I used when selecting my picks, was wondering if I would be happy to have each of these images hanging on a wall in my home or office, where I would see it every day. Would it continue to make me pause and gaze at it, soaking up some beauty or wonder? Each of the winners and honorable mentions met those criteria.

Regarding my choices, I was pleased and surprised at what an eclectic mix seemed to rise to the surface after carefully studying more than two thousand images. And, of course, each of the winners was chosen for a unique quality, often indescribable, that spoke to me personally.

Many of the photos I chose work especially well precisely because they are photographs (and not paintings, or poems, or songs or sculptures), and in this case, because they were in black-and-white and not in color. Photography can do some things so perfectly, like blur a tiny motion while keeping the rest in sharp focus. Extraneous details, bits of wire, a shadow or something poking into the frame or out of it, can add a sense of mystery or intrigue that adds rather than detracts from the image.

I'm pleased to see so many photographers shooting in digital (which is in color, by default), but choosing to transform the final image into rich monotoes of blacks and grays. I also love the qualities that film gives to photographs, and the aberrations and imperfections that arise in images captured with simple crude cameras like plastic Holgas, or Dianas, or pinhole cameras.

So, in the end, I'm grateful for the opportunity to have viewed so much inspiring work here. Hats off to all of you!

Jim Casper, editor, Lens Culture