

Greater New Braunfels Photography Club (GNBPC) Score Sheet for April 2026

Judge: Paul Speaker

Assignment Theme Photos - " *Minimalism* " Scoring System: 3-9 pts

Image Title	Score	Comments
A Gentle Ending- Jackies Wise <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	8	The maker has presented an image that begs the viewer to accept what is presented, when the viewer wants to see more!! This is definitely a minimalist setup, but the maker isn't sharing the information needed to truly appreciate what he went through to present this bloom and leaf in a vase. If he is willing to return to the working file, may I suggest that he lighten the image overall, to taste, of course, with an eye to revealing the beauty of the rim of the vase and the gentle curl of the leaf, all while keeping the texture of the bloom (probably a tulip) under control. The spotlight on the background, barely visible as presented, is important to direct the eye to the bloom, but coming directly out of the upper left corner could instead draw the eye out of the image. Not the desired effect!! Good luck!! VF
Amber Spiral-Thomas Soutter	9	Definitely minimalist!! Good eye, right place. The small subject on a large amount of negative space with a pattern that is quickly dismissed as competing clutter works. Well done!!
Breakfast After 70- Horst Schronger <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	6	The maker has a good idea with the cup of coffee and a bunch of pills. However, the figure in the background is not supporting the story—it appears to be a female (probably a mannequin) but without a wig, and it suggests this may actually be depicting the regimen for a cancer patient. In other words, it's a distraction rather than a help. If the maker is willing to reshoot, may I suggest that using a white sweep will eliminate all distractions, and if shot on a large enough table, will allow the camera to be some distance from the subject, thus producing a minimalist image with minimal effort. The maker has good intentions, but the coffee needs to be the last item added to the set, and should be steaming hot to make this offering palatable. Good luck!! VF
Contemplating Art- Suzanne Daunt <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	8	The maker has a great start, but could simplify this capture still more, to make it about the art and two girls and their reflection. To that end, I suggest that she return to the working file with the intent to adjust the overall lighting, to taste, of course. Then, find a crop that eliminates any vertical lines on the sides or above the artwork. This should still leave plenty of negative space and will definitely remove most of the clutter. Good eye. Good luck!! VF

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Day Light-Michael Childers	8	A single light fixture with its shadow and a brick wall—this is minimalistic. My question of the maker is whether he has more room at the top and bottom and whether he could flatten the tonality of the brick wall, so it doesn't compete with the light for attention. The maker is in control of the monochrome tonalities, but has presented the light fixture in a crowded frame. If the maker has cropped the image for this contest, may I suggest he return to the original working file to restore a more spacious feeling, to taste, of course. The score would then reflect this level of comfort for the viewer. Good luck!!
Fragments of Her-Sharlana Dillard	9	The maker has chosen to place her image on a wide black mat, with an additional stroke for good measure. This is more often seen in PPA competitions, rather than PSA exhibitions. Minimalist? Yes!! The subject is small compared to the overall capture, with a large amount of negative space with limited clutter (the grain of the wood siding and the shelf the glassware is sitting on). Good eye. Well done!!
Grace in Motion-Christiane Menelas <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	7	This started out as a beautiful capture of a lone flamingo. However, the maker has chosen to add some kind of a blur in the upper half of the image. I say this because it doesn't look like normal bokeh that a long lens might produce. The alternative explanation is that a gust of wind came up, roiling the water behind the bird just as she captured the scene. If the maker is willing to revisit the working layered file, may I suggest that she would probably be happier with the final result if she were to remove the blur layer covering the top half of the image. The image is just over 3 degrees crooked—rotate CCW, to level the horizon, as measured by the waterline on the bird's legs, then recrop, to taste. The reflection is probably important, so go for a vertical over a horizontal, although either could work. Good luck!! VF
Last Barn Standing-Sandy Gilbert	9	The maker has a good understanding of the minimalist concept, providing a small subject, distant from the camera, with minimal clutter in the negative surround that could detract from the viewer's enjoyment of this capture. The chaff in the field is expected, and toned down to match the dawn or dusk setting. Well done!!

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Lone Ship-Shelby Caesar <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	6	The problem with trying to create a minimalistic image is the tendency to include too much. This is a daring endeavor, and the maker should think carefully about what the main subject is, then what in the environment needs to be there to support the subject, but no more. I believe the maker would be happier with this image with a combination of a brighter image, to bring out the sailboat, and a much tighter crop, to eliminate the sky completely, and most of the shadowed land beyond the boat. I suggest bringing the white hull be raised to near 245, as measured by the Info panel in Photoshop. The maker has good material to work with, it just needs a few more minutes of his attention. Good luck!! VF
Lonesome Rose-Craig Pellerin	9	The maker is showing lots of negative space around this rose, which is floating in a sea of black, losing all context with its normal environment. This is a choice the maker has made, and may not appeal to all viewers. The lighting has brought out the texture in the petals and the maker has complete control of the overall tonality. Well done!!
Long Horn-Edward Zukowski <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	6	Minimalist? Yes, to an extreme. The original image was a vertical, I suspect, which accounts for the present format. What would this look like if it had been transformed into a horizontal? Would the maker be happier? The all white background needs a justification, which could be this longhorn is grazing in a snowy pasture. However, the shadows appear to be nearly directly overhead, suggesting a summer capture, not a winter one. Unless the original was cluttered with other animals in a feed lot, I suggest the maker revisit the original capture with an eye for reducing, not eliminating the original background. This, with a horizontal format and appropriate sizing would materially increase the score. Good luck!! VF
On Point-Jerry Kloehr <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	7	This dancer captured on point is a good start towards a strong minimalistic image. I believe the maker would be happier with this image with a tighter crop to eliminate the distraction of the tutu, and darkened to reduce the clutter of the floor texture. An alternative crop with some of the tutu included, would be to change it to a black tutu (think of the Black Swan from <i>Swan Lake</i>). Be careful not to have the hem of the tutu lead the eye out of the frame in the upper right corner. Good luck!! VF

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One Tree-Barry Armer	7	The maker has a good understanding of minimalism, with the tree dominating the horizon and not much else to compete with it. However, the maker appears to have added a texture screen and/or a dark vignette, which adds clutter which distracts from the overall impression. This is especially noticeable in the clouds on the left and right sides of the image. If the maker is willing to return to his working layered file, may I suggest removing the texture entirely and reducing the vignette across the bottom (or its effect) by at least half. I believe the maker would be happier with the result, and the image would better meet the requirements of minimalism. Good luck!!
Pick a Tune-Robert Grosman <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	6	The maker is trying to relate the pick to the instrument with which it would be used, but I'm not sure the out of focus areas constitute minimum clutter. I find the background beyond the guitar to be a distraction, and the bright areas of the guitar itself compete for attention with the very sharply rendered pick. While this image tells a story, I believe the maker would be happier if a different crop was selected for this assignment. Good luck!! VF
Sentinals of the Past-Barbara Beversdorf <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	8	The maker has a good grasp of minimalist concepts, including a relatively small main subject, lots of negative space, and minimum clutter. The shadows in the foreground could be considered a detraction from the overall simplicity of the image. If the maker is willing to return to this file, may I suggest that she crop up from the bottom to eliminate the arc of the tractor tracks. If there is more room on either the left or right, or at the top, the building would appear smaller in the overall scene, thus improving the score. VF
The Door-James Moseley <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Assignment comments</i>	5	The maker has chosen to present this image with a low key interpretation. In spite of that, the concept of minimalism isn't quite met, as what would be negative space has well defined columns, shadows, windows, etc, which, while regular, doesn't eliminate the 'clutter'. The brightest pixel registers 238 as measured with the Threshold adjustment layer in Photoshop. If the maker is willing to revisit this image, may I suggest adding a curves adjustment layer, pulling the top end to a value closer to 245 while opening up the shadows, to reveal the detail in the door that is present in the original capture. This image could be a contender if the assignment had been 'leading lines', 'light and shadow', 'architecture', or 'perspective'. Good luck!! VF

Visual Feedback for April Assignment

A Gentle Ending-Jackies Wise

original

As Seen: low key is good, but too much hides available beauty, even with a minimalist approach

To Try: brighten the image, to taste, to bring out the detail in the bloom, the sweep of the spotlight from the upper left, and the gracefulness of the lone leaf extending from the sensuous curve of the vase

proposed

proposed alternate crop

Breakfast After 70-Horst Schronger

original

As Seen: unique subject; background is distracting; not the kind of negative space that helps tell the story; good subject lighting

To Try: if possible, reshoot on a white sweep, for total control; crop, to taste, as desired

proposed alternate crop

proposed

Visual Feedback for April Assignment

Contemplating Art-Suzanne Daunt



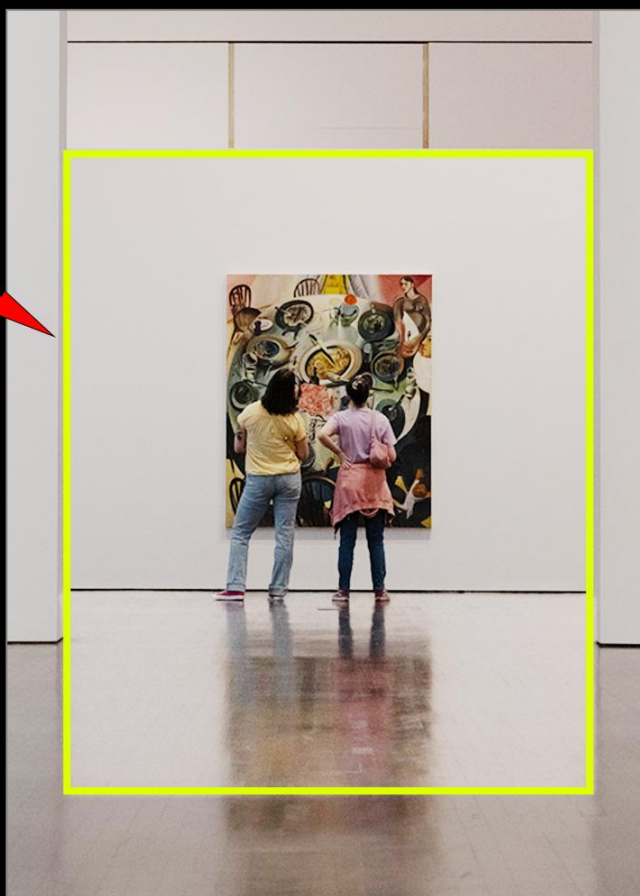
original

As Seen: overall, seems a bit dark to view art; great potential but could be simplified still further

To Try: brighten the image overall, then match the floor to the walls; consider a tighter crop, eliminating all the verticals that compete for attention

proposed

proposed alternate crop



Grace in Motion-Christiane Menelas

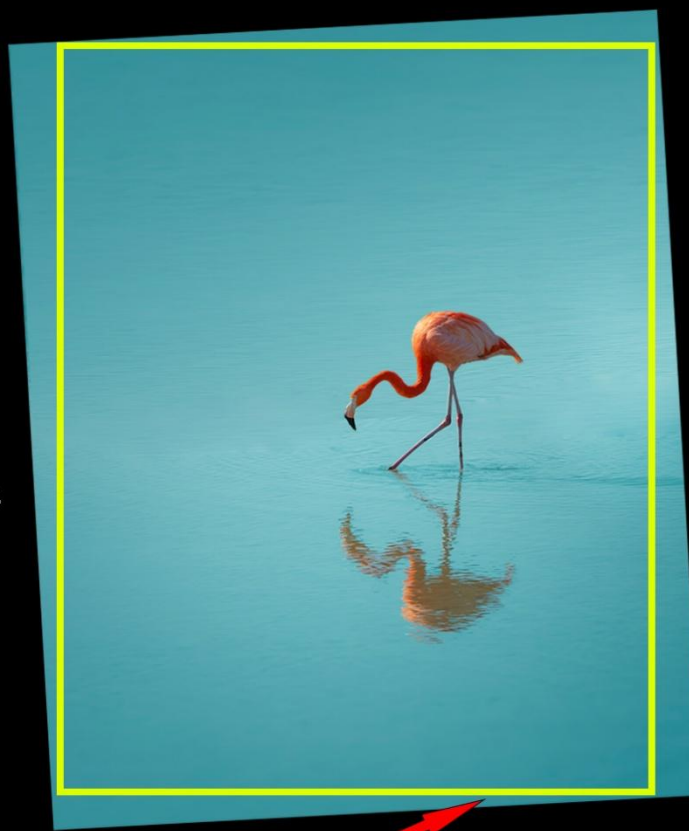


original

As Seen: great start for a minimalist image; top half of image doesn't appear natural without explanation; image is crooked by just over 3 degrees

To Try: remove the blur layer at the top of the image to achieve a normal looking bokeh; rotate the image to level the horizon as measured by the waterline at the bird's legs, then recrop, to taste.

proposed

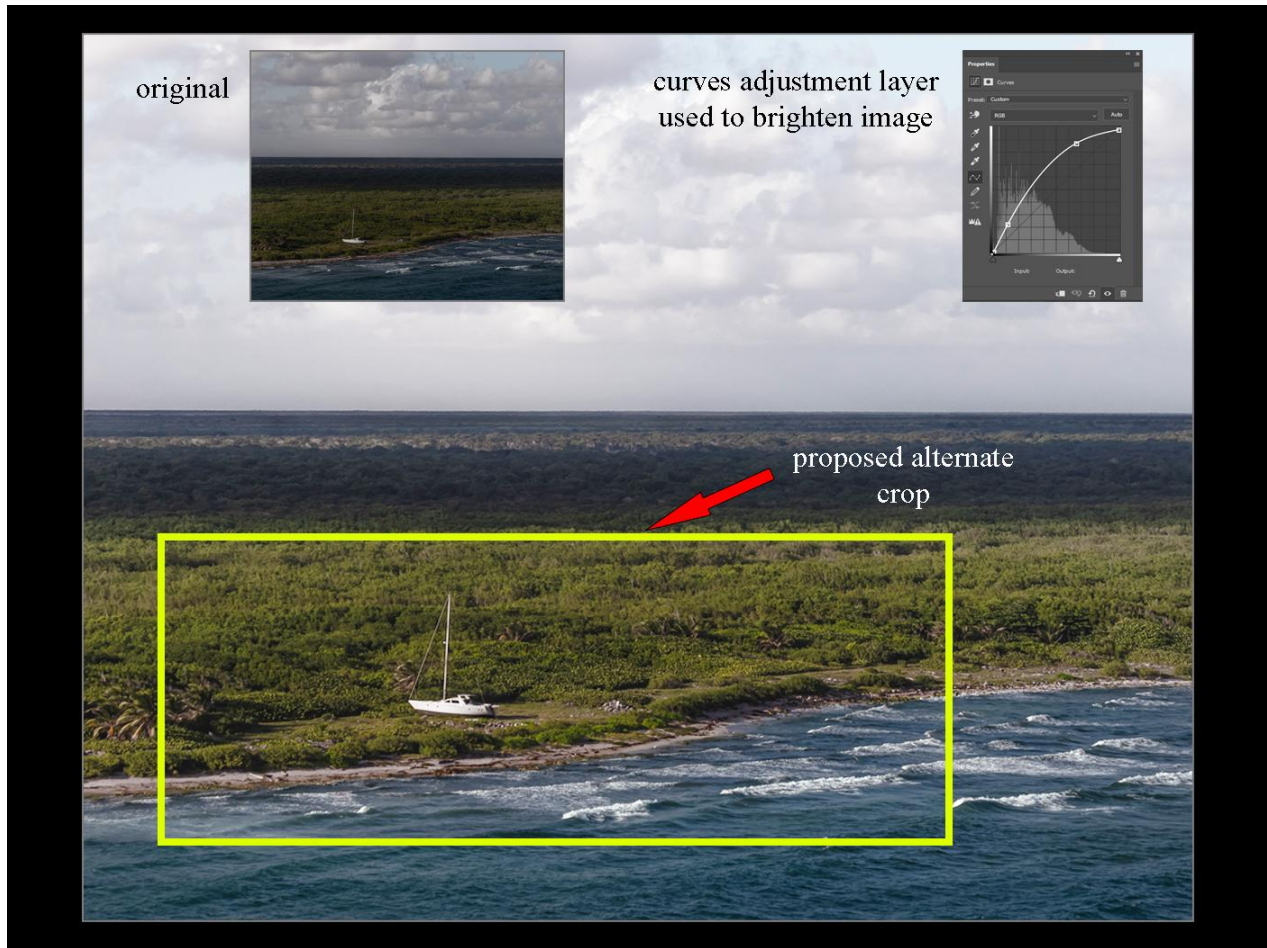


proposed alternative crop

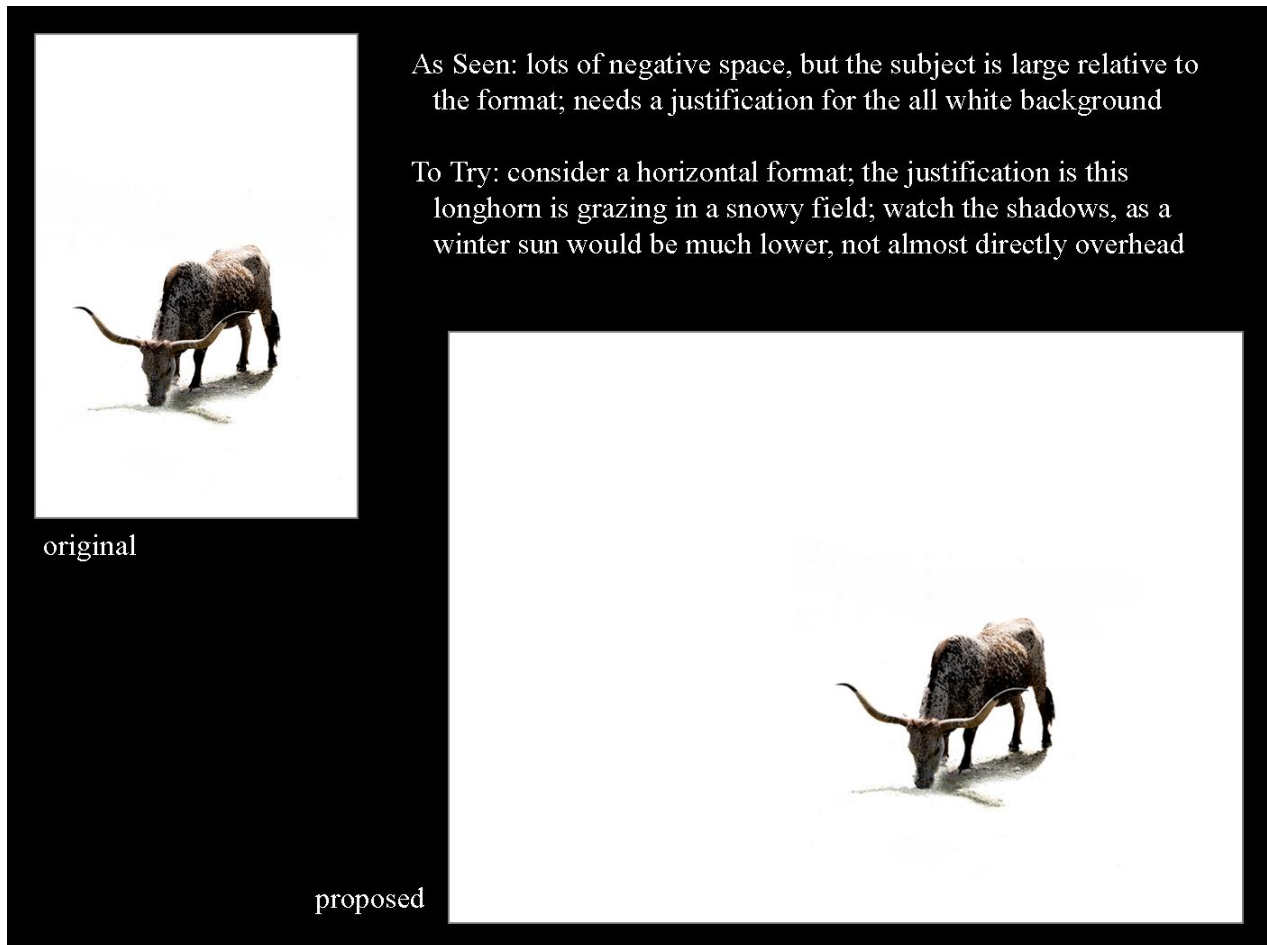


Visual Feedback for April Assignment

Lone Ship-Shelby Caesar



Long Horn-Edward Zukowski



Visual Feedback for April Assignment

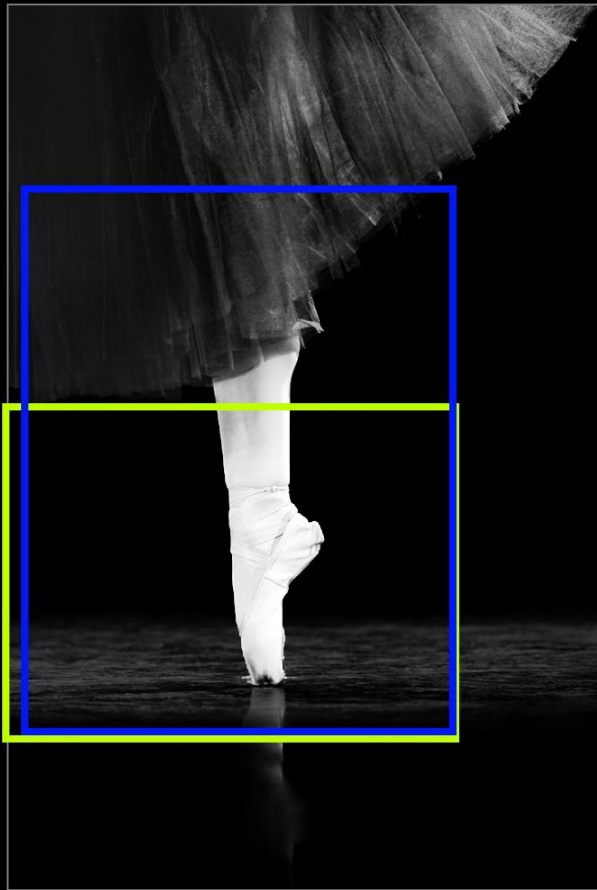
On Point-Jerry Kloehr



original

proposed

proposed alternate
crops



As Seen: The clutter of the floor is distracting;
the tutu leads the eye out of the image in the
upper right corner

To Try: Consider darkening the image overall,
placing the leg and foot on its own layer, first;
then crop tightly (yellow) for the minimalist
look; if the tutu is desired, consider changing
it to a black tutu (think Black Swan) (blue)

Pick a Tune-Robert Grosman

original



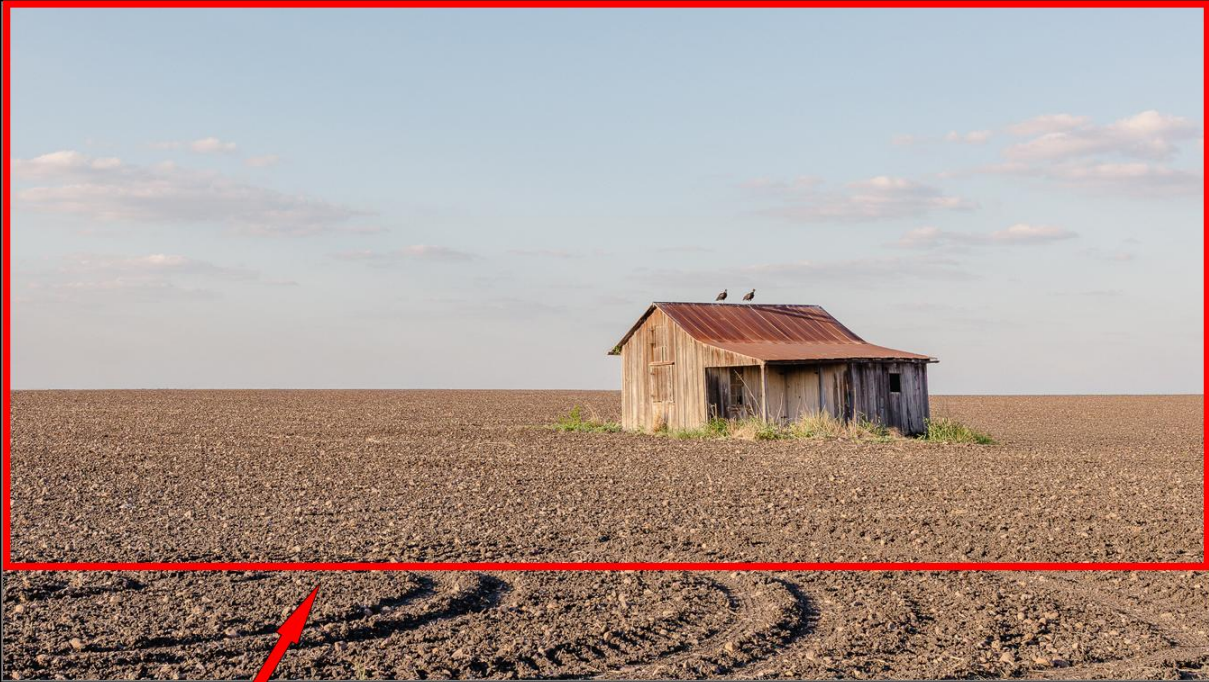
proposed alternate
crop



Visual Feedback for April Assignment

Sentinels of the Past-Barbara Beversdorf

original

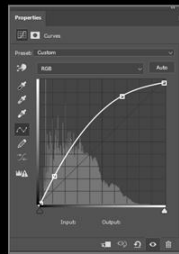


proposed alternate
crop

The Door-James Moseley



original



curve used to
brighten the
image



proposed

As Seen: image overall appears too dark, blocks up the detail in the door which appears to be the principal subject

To Try: apply a curves adjustment layer, to taste, to restore full tonal range

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Color Photos

Scoring System: 3-9 pts

Image Title	Score	Comments
A Tender Moment- Christiane Menelas	8	The maker was in the right spot at the right time to catch this moment. The eyes are sharp, and the bokeh suggests that this was captured somewhere in the American Southwest, perhaps Utah or Arizona red rock country. Well done!!
Bar Harbor-Craig Pellerin <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Color comments</i>	7	The maker has captured a scene that should end up in some lucky couple's wedding album. However, the image is tilted almost 2 degrees CW, which means that Florida will be receiving more water than it can handle!! If the maker is willing to revisit this image, I recommend starting by rotating CCW until the horizon is level, as seen in the distant right side of the image. Then, use a program like DxO NIK Color Efex Pro's Tonal Contrast filter to increase the mid-tone contrast, to taste, of course. Next, I suggest he open up the foreground to better show the preparations for the upcoming wedding ceremony and reception. Finally, recrop, to taste. Good luck!! VF
Bee Happy-Sandy Gilbert	8	The maker has maintained focus throughout this plant's stem, including the bee. I particularly appreciated the wisp of a spider's web. The fact that a second stem is partially out of focus in the background suggests that the maker may have blurred the background to ensure nothing would detract from the bee. Perhaps a little bit of the minimalist aesthetic bleeding over into this category? Nevertheless, a nice capture. Right place, right time, good eye. Well done!!
Egg Celent-Edward Zukowski	8	The intended storyline probably concerns a jewel thief who has just found the world's largest diamond after bypassing a plethora of alarms and sensors designed to deter theft. But here we are, with the jewel about to be clutched in his hot hands. My question to the maker is what is causing all those white specks on the diamond? If it's a reflection from the base its resting on, well, that's life. But if the stone needed to be dusted, that's what the Spot Healing Brush is for, after the fact. Overall an interesting setup, but not as clean as it could be. Good luck!!
Feeling Blue-Ralph Nordenhold	9	The maker was in the right place, at the right time to capture this colorful reptile. Good eye!! The tree provides leading lines leading to the lizard (or gecko?), keeping the viewer focused on the primary subject. Well done!!

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Image Title	Score	Comments
Grace in Flight- Suzanne Daunt	9	The maker had a good eye and fast reflexes to capture this Brown Pelican in breeding plumage in flight. The light indicates the time to be either late or early in the day, with warm light coming in from the left. The eye is tack sharp. Well done!!
I Sing Because I_m Free-Barbara Beverdors	9	The maker has a good eye, and an ear for bird song, which brought her to this Red-Winged Blackbird. When singing, the red wing patch is visible, as shown. The eye is sharp, and the bokeh works. Well done!!
Jeweled Bluebonnet- Michael Childers	9	The maker has a good eye for detail in this macro capture of dew drops on this Bluebonnet plant. Love the diagonals covered by the water drops. The maker may have been tempted to drop the background to black, but resisted. Thank you!! Well done!!
Leafing Out-Thomas Soutter <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Color comments</i>	7	If the maker is truly passionate about this capture, may I suggest revisiting the working file with the intent to open up the shadows, so the viewer can see the structure of the branches more clearly. Perhaps the easiest way to accomplish this is to use a shadow luminosity mask. The Adobe store has one called Interactive Luminosity Masks which is free and very easy to use. Due to the nature of these masks, they are self-blending. Just be careful to apply, with taste, so you don't overdo the relationship of the shadow areas with the topside, sunlit leaves. This image could be one of a set portraying this particular branch through the seasons. If this appeals to you, stick some pins in the ground so you know where to stand at each session, then shoot on a regular basis, like every two weeks, for a 52-week period. Then choose the 10 or 15 best for a portfolio with the intent to submit for PSA recognition. Good luck!! VF
Little Dancers- Patricia Jones	9	The maker has captured these girls during a public performance, so the motion in their dresses makes sense. Love the colorful outfits, and the expressions on the girls' faces. At least one mother will want this image for her memory book of her daughter. Good eye, right time and place. Good example of the Rule of Odds. Well done!!

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Image Title	Score	Comments
Santa Elena Canyon- Shelby Caesar <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Color comments</i>	7	I believe image this image shows the eastern exit of the Rio Grande from the Santa Elena Canyon. The maker has captured this scene early in the morning, but has presented the image darker than I believe she saw it at the time of capture. If the maker is willing to revisit this image, may I suggest brightening the image overall, then adding yet more mid-tone contrast to the sky in order to add drama to the scene. This location is dramatic, with the large block fault uplift dramatically visible from where the maker was standing. I believe this was a stitched pano, and I recommend examining the sky carefully to make sure there are no anomalies between the joins of the frames, particularly visible in the sky. Also, there is a vignette in the upper right corner, probably caused by a lens hood, that could be easily removed. I love the use of a panorama to capture this scene. But there are several factors holding the score down. Make the corrections suggested, and you'll have an image that will be important in your memory book of this visit (and a higher score, which the image deserves). Good luck!! VF
Sisters-James Moseley	7	The maker sharply focused on these two sunflowers and allowed the background to go soft with a beautiful bokeh. My question to the maker is whether he saw the bright areas present in the upper right corner when he was focused on the blooms. Did he move slightly to his right to bring the two blooms closer together and eliminating the distracting bright areas with a single stroke? I hope he moved around the subject, exploring the possibilities from a slightly higher angle as well, since this would also drop those pesky highlights out of the frame. The lesson here is to see not only the subject, but also what's present all around the subject, and to use more than one point of view before moving on. Good luck!!

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Image Title	Score	Comments
<p>Still, I Stand - Sharlana Dillard</p> <p><i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Color comments</i></p>	<p>7</p>	<p>This portrait of a bison has some great potential but needs some additional tender loving care to bring out the best this capture has to offer. If the maker is willing to return to the working file, I'm sure she will be happier with the image if the overall brightness level is increased by bumping the mid-tone contrast. She's held the highlights so the lightest pixel is sitting at 245, as measured by the Threshold adjustment layer in Photoshop so there is no danger of blowing out the highlights. If she is willing to experiment, try adding a Curves adjustment layer with the point at 100 moved to 125, or to taste, of course. If she has access to DxO NIK Color Efex Pro's Tonal Contrast filter, this would also give the image a subtle but significant boost. Whether this image was captured at a local bison farm, or one of our National Parks where the bison are free to roam, this will be a valuable part of her memory book of the trip. The bison's eye is sharp, as is the maker's. If the maker applies these suggestions, the score will rise accordingly. Good luck!! VF</p>

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The Judge-Jerry Kloehr <i>Please see Visual Feedback at end of Color comments</i>	7	<p>The maker's title doesn't clearly state what kind of judge this dapper gentleman is, whether in a court of law or at a horse show, for example. In any event, I believe the maker would be happier with this image if the skin tones were pulled down towards the lower end of what is acceptable for Caucasian skin. The readings of the Info panel in Photoshop should be monitored using both the CMYK and RGB scales. At present, a reading between the eyebrows yields the following approximate values: C=22, M=45, Y=53. In the RGB scale, the R value is 208. While this is a bit above the midpoint range of what is acceptable, I believe the subject would appreciate a bit more of a tan, so if the maker is willing, please apply a curves adjustment layer with the point at 180 pulled down to 150, or to taste. To add character, pull the point at 75 down to about 30, thus increasing the mid-tone contrast. This will result in a R value of approximately 180, and CMYK readings of 28, 52, 60. The relationship of Cyan remains low compared to the M and Y values, and the Y is several points higher than the M value, which means that the skin has a warm appearance. In any event, do not allow the R value to go below 170 at the low end, or above 230 at the high end. I prefer measuring between the eyebrows, since this is an area that works for both men and women, and women are less likely to apply heavy makeup in this location. I recommend the maker invert the mask of this curve to paint the man's face and the collar of his shirt, thus leaving the rest of the image untouched. This is a good environmental portrait. The windows in the background provide a sense of depth to the image. Good eye. Good luck!! VF</p>

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Image Title	Score	Comments
Unfolding-Jackies Wise	8	This capture of a tulip that is in the process of opening up is presented with an interesting mix of focus points. On the diagonal looking into the heart of the bloom, the focus appears sharp on several levels, but at what should be comparable distances from the lens around the exterior petals, and thus in focus, as well, there appears to be a progressive blur applied. This would operate much like the maker applied a graduated vignette, only for a blur. This is an artistic choice the maker has made for the viewer. Like it or not, that is the choice one must accept. It leads one to wonder: What would this look like as originally captured, with the normal depth of field and natural bokeh of the lens being used? So many questions!! The maker is teasing the viewer by not showing the pistils and stamens deep inside the bloom which is the whole point for the flower to open up. The maker has a good eye and control of the lighting. Well done!!

Visual Feedback for April Color

Bar Harbor-Craig Pellerin



original

As Seen: overall appears flat and dark, lacking drama; horizon is almost 2 degrees off

To Try: level the horizon as seen on the distant right; increase the drama in the image by increasing the mid-tone contrast, to taste; lighten the foreground to reveal the preparations for a destination wedding ceremony and reception; recrop, to taste

proposed
alternate
crop



proposed

Leafing Out-Thomas Soutter



original

As Seen: the leaves in shadow are masking the twig/branch structure of this tree; shadows are darker than the maker probably saw them at the time of capture

To Try: open up the shadows using a shadow luminosity mask to reveal the structure of the tree limb

proposed



Visual Feedback for April Color

Santa Elena Canyon-Shelby Caesar



original

As Seen: overall, too dark, lacking drama; stitched pano could use better blending in the sky (yellow arrows); note lens vignette in upper right corner (red arrow)

To Try: bring up the overall light level; add drama to the sky with increased midtone contrast; eliminate the vignette and smooth the pano joins in the sky

proposed

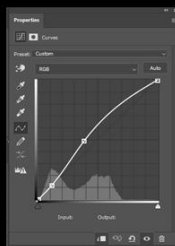


Still, I Stand -Sharlana Dillard



original

proposed



curve used to brighten image and increase mid-tone contrast



As Seen: The image appears flat, lacking in clear detail, which is present in the original capture

To Try: Brighten the image and increase the mid-tone contrast, to taste; to reveal the detail in the shadows and black hair

Visual Feedback for April Color

The Judge-Jerry Kloehr



original

proposed



As Seen: overall exposure seems spot on, but the gentleman's face appears near colorless, lacking a healthy pallor

To Try: apply a curves adjustment layer with the point at 180 pulled down to 150, or to taste, to add color and character to this portrait; don't overdo it, or he'll look sunburned



Paul Speaker - bio

I have been interested in photography since childhood growing up in the Portland, Oregon area, when I began with roll film and a box Brownie. After active duty in the US Navy, I attended Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, CA, where I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree with a double major in Industrial Photography and Color Technology. Shortly thereafter, I was hired by General Dynamics Corp, where I worked as an industrial photographer and color printer for 10 years. When our facility was sold and moved, I switched to Lifetouch, a school photography company, where, for 10 years I photographed classroom groups from 6 to 600 students, dances, seniors, and sports. I had my first Photoshop class in January, 2000, and, by April had hired on as a full-time retoucher for a local full-service portrait studio. Currently, I am semi-retired, accepting assignments if they interest me, but mostly doing Photoshop work for other photographers.

I am a Lifetime member of Professional Photographers of America (PPA), having served on the PPA Council for nine years between about 2005 and 2014. Through PPA, I have been certified as a Certified Professional Photographer. I have also earned the PPA Master of Photography Degree, the Photographic Craftsman Degree, and the Master Artist Degree. At the state level, I have earned recognition as a California Master Photographer. I have been the recipient of two Peoples Choice Awards, a Fuji Masterpiece Award, and two Kodak Gallery Awards at the state level. I am a past president of the Inland Empire Professional Photographers and Videographers, based in Riverside, CA, a local affiliate of Professional Photographers of California (PPC).

I served as President of the International Association of Panoramic Photographers (IAPP) during 2013-14 and remained involved as a board member until term limited out in 2019. In June 2024, I was elected to serve as President-elect and Treasurer, slated to return to the Presidential role in 2026.

Within Photographic Society of America (PSA), I am a Past President of the Southern California Council of Camera Clubs (S4C). I am also a member of two S4C affiliated clubs: Photochromers (based in Sierra Madre), and the Riverside Art Museum's Photo Artist Network (PAN). I received my first Recognition of Photographic Achievement (ROPA) distinction, PPSA, September, 2017. Within the Pictorial Image Division (PID) Digital Study Groups community, I am active in two where I serve as both Commentator and Secretary for DSG 29 Natural Landscape and DSG 52 Competitive. I also serve as the Secretary to the Board of Directors of the Pictorial Image Division (PID) of PSA. In October, 2022, I received recognition for my portfolio entry *Semi-Arid Beauty* which qualified for the Bronze award (BPSA). In May, 2024, my Silver portfolio entry *Bombay Beach Art Scene* was approved and in the second 2024 round of portfolio assessment, in July, my Gold portfolio entry *Bareback Rodeo Action* was accepted. I was recognized for my volunteer service to PSA as an Associate of PSA (APSA) at the September 2023 PSA Photo Festival.

Paul Speaker, APSA, PPSA, GPSA
M.Photog., M.Artist, Cr. 01-26-2025

