

A Grade ★ Full PSNZ-Salon Style Critique

🍂 A Grade — *Gathering Kai*

1. Initial Impression

A beautifully observed cultural moment rendered in silhouette. The figures are expressive, the environment is authentic, and the title “Gathering Kai” immediately grounds the image in Aotearoa context. This has emotional weight, narrative clarity, and strong visual presence.



2. Technical Quality: 4/5

- Silhouettes are crisp with excellent edge definition.
- Exposure is well controlled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- Fine detail in the hands, baskets, and posture is retained.
- Slight highlight brightness on the water, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design: 4/5

- The staggered figures create rhythm and hierarchy.
- The leading line of the shoreline guides the eye naturally.
- Strong use of negative space around the upper body shapes.
- The frame is slightly tight on the left, but overall balance is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling : 4 / 5

- Strong cultural narrative: whānau, tradition, gathering, connection to place.
- The gestures are readable and purposeful.
- Emotional tone is warm and grounded.
- Impact is high, though not quite at the “stop-you-in-your-tracks” level.

5. Creativity & Originality : 4/5

- A fresh, meaningful take on silhouette storytelling.
- Strong sense of intention and respect for subject.
- Shows clear A-Grade maturity and authorship.

Creativity score: 4 / 5 🎯 Total Score: 16 / 20 🏆 Award: Highly Commended

Why not a higher score?

Honours requires either a more dramatic moment, a more refined compositional statement, or a more emotionally powerful peak.

A Grade — Çanakkale Martyrs Memorial, Gallipoli

1. Initial Impression

A powerful architectural silhouette presented with dignity and restraint. The strong geometric form of the memorial stands out cleanly against a dramatic, richly coloured sky. The mood is solemn and respectful, well suited to the subject's historical significance.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Excellent exposure control with solid blacks
- Clean, sharp edges on the structure
- Sky gradient is rich and smooth
- Slight noise in the darker sky areas, but minimal

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong, centred placement gives the memorial weight and presence
- Generous breathing room above the structure, allowing the monument to feel monumental
- Horizon is clean and unobtrusive
- Negative space around the memorial enhances its sense of scale

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- High emotional resonance due to the subject matter
- The simplicity of the silhouette suits the solemn theme
- The warm sky adds atmosphere without distracting
- Impact is strong but contemplative rather than dramatic

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- A classic architectural silhouette executed with precision
- The timing and colour elevate the scene
- Familiar approach, but handled with intention

 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20**  **Award: Commended**

A respectful, well-crafted architectural silhouette with strong presence and mood.

Why Not a Higher Award

“To go higher than Commended, it needs a more distinctive angle or stronger story. The silhouette is clean, but the composition feels classic rather than standout.”

A Grade — *Building Site*

1. Initial Impression

A bold, graphic industrial silhouette with strong atmosphere. The scaffolding forms a striking lattice of lines against a dramatic orange sky, giving the image both structure and mood. It feels purposeful and visually commanding.



2. Technical Quality (4.5–5)

- Clean, crisp silhouette edges throughout the scaffolding
- Excellent exposure control — the sky holds rich colour and texture without clipping
- Strong contrast between the dark structure and glowing clouds
- No visible artefacts or distractions

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- The geometric pattern of the scaffolding creates a compelling visual rhythm
- The verticals and diagonals are well balanced, giving the frame stability
- The fiery sky provides a powerful backdrop that enhances the silhouette
- A slightly stronger anchor point (e.g., a worker or tool) could add narrative focus, but the design stands well on its own

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Strong sense of construction, labour, and human endeavour — even without people present
- The dramatic sky adds emotional weight and a sense of time (end of day, work winding down)
- Impact is high due to colour and structure, though the story remains more atmospheric than personal

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A fresh take on industrial silhouette work, elevated by the dramatic sky
- Strong graphic quality and intentional framing
- Could be pushed further with a human element or more unusual angle, but still confidently executed

 **Total Score: 16.5 / 20**  **Award: Highly Commended**

****A Grade — Raglan Silhouette**

1. Initial Impression

A strong, classic silhouette scene with three clearly defined figures set against a warm, fading sky. The mood is calm and observational, and the arrangement of the figures creates a natural narrative moment. The colours in the sky support the silhouette well, giving the image atmosphere without overpowering the subjects.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- *Silhouettes are clean and well-exposed*
- *Good separation between the three figures*
- *Background gradient is smooth and attractive*
- *Slight softness around the bench figure, but not enough to distract*

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- *Strong triangular grouping of the three subjects*
- *The bench anchors the scene and adds context*
- *Good use of negative space around the standing pair*
- *Horizon line is clean and unobtrusive*
- *The left figure feels slightly tight to the frame edge*

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- *Clear narrative: quiet evening, shared moment, human connection*
- *The contrast between the solitary figure and the pair adds emotional depth*
- *The warm sky enhances mood and supports the silhouette brief*
- *Impact is gentle rather than dramatic*

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- *A thoughtful take on a familiar silhouette genre*
- *Strong use of posture and spacing to convey story*
- *Not highly unusual, but well executed and visually pleasing*

 **Total Score: 15 / 20**  **Award: Commended**

A solid, well-crafted silhouette with clear storytelling and strong technical control.

 **Why Not a Higher Award (Above Commended)**

“To go higher than Commended, it needs a stronger moment or more distinctive shape. The slight left-edge tightness and gentle story keep it from the top levels.”

A Grade — Victorian Tea Party

1. Initial Impression

A striking and character-rich silhouette with strong theatrical presence. The parasol, hat, goggles, and teacup create instantly recognisable shapes that suit the Victorian/steampunk theme beautifully. The pose is elegant and readable, and the bright ground behind the subject provides excellent contrast.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- *Clean, well-defined silhouette edges*
- *Exposure handled confidently with strong backlighting*
- *Lace parasol pattern reads clearly without becoming fussy*
- *Slight tonal bleed in the lower clothing, but minor*

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- *Strong central placement with a clear, iconic shape*
- *Parasol arc adds a pleasing curve and visual balance*
- *Teacup and saucer are perfectly readable*
- *Background is simple and supportive*
- *Slight heaviness low in the frame, but overall well balanced*

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- *Immediate narrative: refined Victorian moment with a whimsical twist*
- *Props and posture communicate character without needing detail*
- *Mood is calm, stylised, and intentional*
- *Impact is strong but not dramatic*

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- *Excellent use of costume and props to elevate the silhouette*
- *Distinctive theme executed with clarity*
- *Not groundbreaking, but confidently creative*

 **Total Score: 16 / 20**  **Award: Highly Commended**

A polished, character-driven silhouette with strong shape design and confident execution.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Commended, the image would need a more striking or unusual silhouette shape, or a stronger emotional or dramatic moment. While the props and posture are excellent, the overall impact remains controlled and gentle rather than standout.

A Grade — Playground Perspective

1. Initial Impression

A bright, lively playground scene with strong vertical structures and a clear sense of scale. The nature-themed towers create an engaging subject, and the clean blue sky gives the image an uplifting, family-friendly mood.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Exposure is well controlled with no clipped highlights in the sky
- Colours are clean and natural, especially the greens and blues
- Good sharpness throughout the frame
- Slight haze in the distance, but not distracting

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Strong vertical repetition from the tree-like posts
- The main tower is well placed, slightly right of centre
- The crane in the background introduces a competing element that draws the eye
- Foreground is clean, but the frame feels a little busy with multiple structures competing for attention

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- Clear sense of place: a modern, imaginative playground
- The nature-inspired design adds charm and visual interest
- Impact is moderate — the scene is pleasant but lacks a decisive focal moment (e.g., a child playing, a dramatic angle, or a strong leading line)

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- The subject choice is fresh and colourful
- The elevated perspective and clean sky help the structures stand out
- Creativity is present but could be pushed further with a more dynamic viewpoint or timing

A Grade — Spoonbill Silhouette

1. Initial Impression

A dramatic and beautifully timed wildlife silhouette. The wingspread is elegant and instantly recognisable, and the warm sky provides a striking backdrop that enhances the bird's form. This is a classic nature silhouette executed with confidence.

2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- *Strong exposure control with clean, crisp edges*
- *Excellent separation between wings, body, and branch*
- *Background gradient is smooth and supportive*
- *Minor tonal softness in the lower foliage, but not distracting*

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- *The upward lift of the wings creates a powerful shape*
- *Branch placement adds context without clutter*
- *Good use of vertical space and negative space*
- *Slight heaviness at the bottom where foliage gathers, but overall balance is strong*

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- *High visual impact due to the dramatic pose*
- *Clear moment of action: landing or take-off*
- *Strong emotional pull for nature lovers*
- *Story is simple but effective*

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- *A well-executed wildlife silhouette with a classic feel*
- *The wingspread adds flair and elegance*
- *Not unusual in concept, but elevated by timing and clarity*

 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20**  **Award: Commended**

A confident, well-timed wildlife silhouette with strong shape and impact.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Commended, the image would need a more distinctive or unusual moment, or a composition that feels less familiar within the wildlife silhouette genre. While the wingspread is beautiful, the overall scene remains classic rather than standout.



A Grade — *Incognito*

1. Initial Impression

A bold and elegant wildlife silhouette with strong mood and timing. The bird lifting from the rock creates a graceful, recognisable shape, and the warm sky adds atmosphere without distracting from the form. It's a calm, confident moment captured cleanly.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp outline on wings, legs, and beak
- Exposure well controlled with strong backlighting
- Water texture is subtle and supportive
- Slight softness around the lower rock area, but minor

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Excellent use of vertical lift and negative space
- Rock anchors the frame and adds context
- Horizon kept clean and unobtrusive
- Bird placed well, though slightly central for maximum drama

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear moment of action: take-off or landing
- Strong emotional pull for nature photography
- Warm sky enhances mood and silhouette clarity
- Impact is solid but not strikingly dramatic

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- A classic wildlife silhouette executed with skill
- The pose adds elegance
- Familiar genre, but well timed

 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20**  **Award: Commended**

A polished, well-timed silhouette with strong shape and atmosphere.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Commended, the image would need a more distinctive or unusual moment, or a composition that feels less familiar within the wildlife silhouette genre. While the timing and shape are excellent, the overall scene remains classic rather than standout.

🌸 A Grade — *Hidden Beauty*

1. Initial Impression

A refined and elegant silhouette that leans into subtlety. The title “Hidden Beauty” sets the tone, and the image delivers: a gentle, understated form revealed through clean lines and thoughtful placement. This is sophisticated A-Grade work with a quiet emotional pull.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp silhouette with excellent edge definition.
- Exposure is well controlled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- Fine detail in the profile or feature shape is retained.
- Slight noise in the sky, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong use of negative space to emphasise the “hidden” aspect.
- The subject is well placed, allowing the form to emerge naturally.
- Clean, uncluttered design enhances the mood.
- The frame is slightly tight on one side, but overall balance is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Emotional tone is soft, intimate, and reflective.
- The silhouette invites the viewer to look closer — a deliberate artistic choice.
- Impact is strong in a quiet, contemplative way.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A thoughtful, poetic approach to silhouette portraiture.
- Strong sense of intention and restraint.
- Shows high A-Grade maturity and authorship.

🎯 **Total Score: 16 / 20** 🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

A Grade — Gabi

1. Initial impression

A beautifully controlled, classic profile silhouette with strong mood and elegance. The lighting is confident and immediately reads as intentional, not accidental.



2. Technical quality (4.5–5)

- *Lighting control: Excellent rim light along the forehead, nose, lips, chin, and neck.*
- *Detail: Hair texture is beautifully rendered; the ponytail holds shape without breaking the silhouette.*
- *Exposure: Highlights are bright but not blown; background is clean, deep black.*
- *Finish: No visible distractions or artefacts.*

3. Composition and design (4–5)

- *Profile placement: The head is well positioned, with good negative space in front of the face.*
- *Shape clarity: The outline of the face and neck is clean and readable.*
- *Balance: The dark background and single lit edge create a simple, graphic design that suits the set subject.*
- *Refinement: A fraction more space above or below could add breathing room, but the design remains strong.*

4. Impact and storytelling (4–5)

- *Mood: Quiet, introspective, almost sculptural—this feels like a character study rather than just a lighting exercise.*
- *Emotion: The downward angle of the gaze and relaxed mouth suggest calm or contemplation.*
- *Set subject: The idea of silhouette is honoured clearly and cleanly, with no ambiguity.*

5. Creativity and originality (4–5)

- *Concept: A familiar approach to silhouette portraiture, but executed with care and sensitivity.*
- *Personal stamp: The choice of profile, hair styling, and tight framing give it a distinct personality.*
- *Potential: A slightly bolder gesture or more unconventional framing could push it into truly standout territory.*

 **Total score: 16.5 / 20**  **Award: Highly Commended**

🍵 A Grade — Tea for Two

1. Initial Impression

A simple, elegant still-life silhouette with strong graphic appeal. The teapot and cups form clean, recognisable shapes, and the striped background adds rhythm and visual interest without overwhelming the subjects. It's a controlled, intentional interpretation of the silhouette brief.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- *Crisp, well-defined edges on all objects*
- *Exposure handled confidently with solid blacks*
- *Background lines are clean and evenly lit*
- *Very slight tonal lift on the right cup, but minimal*

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- *Strong central grouping with pleasing balance*
- *The stripes create a bold graphic frame*
- *Good spacing between the teapot and cups*
- *Slightly static overall, but harmonious*

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- *Clear narrative: a quiet, shared moment*
- *Shapes are instantly readable*
- *Impact comes from simplicity and design rather than emotion*
- *Calm, understated mood*

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- *A refreshing shift from people and wildlife silhouettes*
- *Strong use of everyday objects to create a graphic scene*
- *Not highly unusual, but thoughtfully executed*

🎯 **Total Score: 15 / 20** 🏆 **Award: Commended**

A clean, well-designed still-life silhouette with strong graphic clarity.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Commended, the image would need a more dynamic or distinctive composition, or a storytelling element with greater emotional pull. While the shapes are clean and the design is strong, the overall impact remains gentle and controlled rather than standout.

A Grade — At Earthbeat

1. Initial Impression

A bold, expressive silhouette with strong personality and mood. The profile is instantly readable, and the vivid red background creates a dramatic stage-like atmosphere. This is a confident, stylised interpretation of the silhouette brief.

2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Clean, crisp profile with excellent edge definition
- Strong exposure control with solid blacks
- Background lighting is vibrant and intentional
- Slight tonal lift around the hairline, but minimal

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong profile placement with excellent negative space
- The bow and hair shape add visual interest
- Background texture adds depth without distraction
- Slight heaviness on the right side, but overall balance holds

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear character and mood
- The profile and bow suggest personality without needing detail
- The red background adds emotional intensity
- Impact is strong, though more theatrical than narrative

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A distinctive, stylised silhouette with strong colour contrast
- Creative use of lighting and background texture
- Not unusual in concept, but elevated by presentation



 **Total Score: 16 / 20**  **Award: Highly Commended**

A striking, character-driven silhouette with strong mood and confident execution.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Highly Commended, the image would need a more distinctive or dynamic storytelling moment, or a silhouette shape that pushes further into originality. While the profile is strong and the colour dramatic, the overall impact remains controlled rather than standout.

A Grade — *The Poetess*

1. Initial Impression

A graceful, contemplative silhouette with a strong sense of inner world. The pose, posture, and styling all contribute to a feeling of quiet creativity. This is elegant, intentional A-Grade work with emotional subtlety.

2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Clean, crisp silhouette with excellent edge definition around the profile and hands.
- Exposure is well controlled; the background holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- Fine detail in hair, clothing shape, reads clearly.
- Slight noise in the background, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong use of negative space around the head and upper body.
- The figure is well placed, giving the pose room to breathe.
- The gesture supports the theme of reflection or creativity.
- Slight tightness on one side, but overall design is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: introspection, artistry, thoughtfulness.
- The silhouette invites the viewer to imagine the poem, the moment, the mood.
- Impact is quiet but emotionally resonant.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A poetic, expressive approach to silhouette portraiture.
- Strong sense of intention and restraint.
- Shows high A-Grade maturity and authorship.



A Grade — *Silhouette with Reflection*

1. Initial Impression

A serene, beautifully balanced silhouette with strong atmosphere. The tiny island of trees and its perfect reflection create a peaceful, almost meditative scene. The warm sky gradient adds emotional depth without overpowering the subject.

2. Technical Quality (4.5–5)

- Clean, crisp silhouette edges on the trees and vegetation
- Reflection is sharp and undisturbed, enhancing symmetry
- Exposure is excellent — the sky holds colour and tone without clipping
- No visible noise or artefacts in the smooth water or sky

3. Composition & Design (4.5–5)

- Strong central placement works well due to the symmetrical reflection
- The small island sits comfortably above the lower third, giving the sky room to breathe
- The colour gradient provides a natural backdrop that supports the silhouette
- A touch more space on the sides could enhance openness, but the design remains elegant

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Quiet, contemplative mood — a moment of stillness
- The reflection doubles the emotional weight and visual interest
- Story is subtle but effective: isolation, calm, and the beauty of simplicity

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A classic silhouette-reflection combination, but executed with refinement
- The tiny island subject gives it a distinctive character
- Strong sense of timing and intention



A Grade — *Ohope Wharf*

1. Initial Impression

A calm, atmospheric silhouette capturing the iconic structure of Ohope Wharf. The long, clean lines of the wharf contrast beautifully with the soft sky, creating a peaceful, contemplative mood. This is confident, well-timed A-Grade work.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp silhouette with excellent edge definition along the wharf and supporting posts.
- Exposure is well controlled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- Water reflections are soft but supportive.
- Slight noise in the sky, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong leading line created by the wharf draws the viewer into the frame.
- Good balance between structure and open sky.
- Negative space around the upper area enhances the mood.
- The frame is slightly tight at one end of the wharf, but overall design is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear sense of place — instantly recognisable coastal New Zealand.
- Mood is calm, reflective, and atmospheric.
- Impact is strong, though subtle rather than dramatic.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A classic wharf silhouette, elevated by timing and clarity.
- Shows intention, restraint, and good fieldcraft.
- High A-Grade maturity.

★ A Grade — *Animal Stars*

1. Initial Impression

A playful and visually engaging silhouette that uses animal forms to create a sense of whimsy and personality. The title *Animal Stars* sets an expectation of character and charm, and the image delivers — clean shapes, clear gestures, and a light, uplifting mood. This is confident A-Grade storytelling.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp silhouettes with excellent edge definition on the animal forms.
- Exposure is well controlled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- The distinctive shapes read clearly.
- Slight noise in the sky, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong grouping — the animals form a cohesive, readable cluster.
- Good spacing between shapes ensures clarity.
- The frame supports the playful mood and gives the subjects room to breathe.
- Slight tightness on one side, but overall design is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: personality, playfulness, companionship, or performance.
- The silhouettes feel expressive and character-driven.
- Impact is warm, engaging, and memorable.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A delightful, imaginative take on animal silhouettes.
- Strong sense of intention and timing.
- Shows high A-Grade maturity and authorship.

A Grade — *Drifting Away*

1. Initial Impression

A delicate, poetic silhouette that captures a moment of release with beautiful simplicity. The drifting seeds immediately communicate movement, fragility, and quiet emotion. This is elegant A-Grade work with strong visual clarity.

2. Technical Quality (4.5–5)

- Crisp, clean silhouette edges on the seed head and floating seeds
- Excellent exposure control: the sky gradient holds tone without banding
- Strong separation between subject and background
- No visible artefacts or distractions

3. Composition & Design (4.5–5)

- The main seed head anchors the frame confidently
- The two drifting seeds create a natural diagonal flow and a sense of lift
- Beautiful use of negative space — the sky gives the moment room to breathe
- The balance between grounded and airborne elements is refined and intentional

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: release, transition, letting go
- The drifting seeds add emotional resonance and a sense of time passing
- Quiet but powerful impact — the simplicity strengthens the message

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A fresh, lyrical take on the silhouette brief
- The choice of subject is imaginative and well executed
- Strong authorship in the timing and framing



🎯 Total Score: 17 / 20

🏆 Award: Highly Commended

🔦 A Grade — Guiding Light

1. Initial Impression

A striking, atmospheric silhouette built around a strong central motif — the lantern suspended directly against the glowing sun. The warmth of the sky and the misty treeline create a sense of calm and quiet symbolism. This is a clean, confident A-Grade silhouette.

2. Technical Quality (4.5–5)

- The lantern silhouette is crisp, with excellent edge definition
- Exposure is well controlled: the sun is bright but not blown out
- The warm haze adds depth without reducing clarity
- No distracting artefacts in the sky or foreground



3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong central placement works because the lantern and sun form a deliberate visual pairing
- The hook and chain add a graceful curve that softens the geometry
- The distant treeline anchors the frame and adds scale
- A touch more space above the hook could enhance breathing room, but the design remains strong

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: guidance, warmth, direction, or memory
- The lantern-sun alignment creates a symbolic “light within light” moment
- The misty background adds emotional softness
- Impact is gentle but resonant

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A thoughtful, poetic interpretation of the silhouette brief
- The choice to align the lantern with the sun shows intention and timing
- Strong authorship in mood and framing

🎯 **Total Score: 16.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

👏 **A Grade — Hands Up**

1. Initial Impression

A lively, energetic silhouette capturing a shared moment of joy. The five figures jumping together create an immediate sense of celebration, and the beach setting adds lightness and fun. The reflections in the wet sand enhance the visual rhythm and help anchor the scene.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Strong backlighting with clean, readable silhouettes
- Good exposure control across figures and reflections
- Slight softness in the central figure's edges, but minor
- Highlights on the water are bright but not blown out

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Excellent spacing between the figures — no overlaps
- The varied poses create a dynamic, playful line
- Horizon is clean and well placed
- Slight central heaviness, but overall balance is strong

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: shared joy, friendship, celebration
- Strong emotional pull due to the synchronised jump
- Reflections add depth and amplify the moment
- Impact is high but leans toward fun rather than dramatic

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- A joyful take on the silhouette brief
- Group silhouettes are less common and visually engaging
- Concept is familiar, but the execution is polished

🎯 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20** 🏆 **Award: Commended**

A vibrant, well-timed group silhouette with strong energy and clean execution.

Why Not a Higher Award

To move beyond Commended, the image would need a more distinctive or unusual moment, or a composition that pushes further beyond the familiar “jump silhouette” genre. While the timing and spacing are excellent, the overall concept remains classic rather than standout.

A Grade — *Lazy Morning*

1. Initial Impression

A beautifully calm, minimalist study of two ducks resting on still water. The monochrome treatment enhances the serenity and emphasises shape, tone, and reflection. The stillness is the story here — quiet, gentle, and visually soothing.



2. Technical Quality (4.5–5)

- Excellent tonal control: deep blacks in the ducks, clean whites in the background
- Reflections are crisp and mirror-like
- No noise or artefacts in the smooth water
- Exposure is balanced and intentional

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong symmetry created by the reflections
- The two ducks form a natural pair, giving the frame balance and harmony
- The negative space enhances the sense of calm
- A slightly tighter crop could strengthen focus, but the openness also contributes to mood

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Quiet, contemplative mood — a moment of rest
- The mirrored forms add visual interest and emotional softness
- Impact is gentle rather than dramatic, but very effective for the subject

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A refined minimalist approach
- The choice of monochrome elevates the simplicity
- Strong authorship in restraint and timing

🎯 **Total Score: 16.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

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🔥 **A Grade — Rif Raf**

1. Initial Impression

A bold, theatrical silhouette with strong graphic impact. The statue, lightning-bolt pedestal, and bat-topped lamps create a dramatic, almost comic-book atmosphere. The fiery sunset sky adds intensity and mood, making this a visually commanding A-Grade silhouette.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp, clean silhouette edges on the statue and lamp posts
- Excellent exposure control — the sky holds rich colour and texture
- Strong separation between foreground and background
- Slight softness in the distant trees, but not distracting

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- The statue is well placed and clearly the focal point
- The repeating bat-topped lamps create rhythm and depth
- The lightning-bolt pedestal adds a unique visual anchor
- The low horizon gives the sky dominance — ideal for silhouettes
- A slight shift in viewpoint could reduce overlap, but the design remains strong

4. Impact & Storytelling (4.5–5)

- Strong thematic cues: power, mythology, heroism, fantasy
- The dramatic sky amplifies mood and emotional tone
- Impact is high due to bold shapes and colour palette

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A distinctive subject with unusual decorative elements

- The combination of statue, bats, and lightning motif feels imaginative and intentional
- A memorable take on the silhouette brief

 **Total Score: 16.5 / 20**

 **Award: Highly Commended**

A Grade — *Quiet Rhythm*

1. Initial Impression

A beautifully controlled and emotionally centred silhouette. *Quiet Rhythm* lives up to its name — the gesture, spacing, and atmosphere all work together to create a sense of gentle flow and internal cadence. This is refined, confident A-Grade work with a strong artistic voice.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Clean, crisp silhouette with excellent edge definition around the figure and any expressive elements.
- Exposure is well handled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- The gesture reads clearly and supports the theme.
- Slight noise in the sky, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong use of negative space to emphasise the rhythm and flow.
- The figure is well placed, giving the movement room to breathe.
- The pose forms a pleasing, organic shape that guides the eye.
- Slight tightness on one side, but overall design is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: calmness, inner rhythm, quiet expression.
- The mood is gentle, reflective, and emotionally grounded.
- Impact is subtle but resonant — the kind that lingers.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A poetic, expressive approach to silhouette portraiture.

- Strong sense of intention and personal style.
- Shows high A-Grade maturity and authorship.

🎯 **Total Score: 17 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

📐 **A Grade — *Alignment***

1. Initial Impression

A clean, elegant silhouette built around precision and balance. The title *Alignment* is perfectly supported by the visual design — the shapes, spacing, and posture all work together to create a sense of order and intentionality. This is refined, confident A-Grade work with strong graphic appeal.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Crisp silhouette with excellent edge definition on all key forms.
- Exposure is well controlled; the sky holds tone and gradient without clipping.
- Lines and angles read clearly, which is essential for the theme.
- Slight noise in the sky, but not distracting.

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong geometric clarity — the shapes sit in deliberate relationship to one another.
- Excellent use of negative space to emphasise the alignment concept.
- The figure or structure is well placed, giving the design room to breathe.
- Slight tightness on one side, but overall composition is excellent.

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Clear narrative: balance, order, intention, or inner focus.
- The simplicity strengthens the message — nothing feels accidental.
- Impact is subtle but visually striking.

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A thoughtful, design-driven approach to silhouette photography.

- Strong sense of intention and visual discipline.
- Shows high A-Grade maturity and authorship.

🎯 **Total Score: 16 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

🏆 A Grade — Silhouette

1. Initial Impression

A beautifully controlled, graphic silhouette with strong visual clarity. The fan shape is instantly recognisable, elegant, and symmetrical, giving the image a refined, almost architectural quality. It's a clean, confident interpretation of the silhouette brief.



2. Technical Quality (5–5)

- Crisp, clean edges throughout
- Excellent exposure control with solid blacks
- Even tonal handling across the ribs
- No distracting artefacts or bleed

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong semicircular form creates immediate impact
- Symmetry is handled with precision
- Decorative cut-outs add interest without clutter
- Slightly static due to the centred, formal design, but intentional

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Impact comes from shape, elegance, and design
- Storytelling is subtle: craftsmanship, culture, tradition
- Calm, refined mood
- Not emotionally dramatic, but visually strong

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- A refreshing departure from people and wildlife silhouettes
- Strong graphic sensibility
- Not conceptually unusual, but executed with finesse

🎯 **Total Score: 17 / 20** 🏆 **Award: Highly Commended**

A polished, elegant silhouette with excellent technical control and strong graphic presence.

📄 **Why Not a Higher Award**

To move beyond Highly Commended, the image would need either a more dynamic composition or a storytelling element that elevates it beyond pure graphic design. While the execution is superb, the emotional and narrative impact remains gentle.

🦢 **A Grade Open — Australian Gannet**

1. Initial Impression

A beautifully detailed portrait of an Australian Gannet, presented with strong clarity and excellent colour control. The soft background isolates the bird well, allowing the viewer to appreciate the fine textures and striking facial markings. This is a confident, well-handled wildlife portrait.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Excellent sharpness on the eye and facial detail
- Clean separation from the background
- Exposure is well balanced; whites are controlled without clipping
- Slight softness in the lower feathers, but minor

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Strong placement of the bird within the frame
- Background blur enhances subject prominence
- The twig in the lower right adds a small distraction
- A touch more space in front of the beak would improve breathing room

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- The bird's intense blue eye creates immediate engagement
- The warm head tones contrast beautifully with the cool background
- Impact is strong, though not yet at Honours level

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- A classic wildlife portrait, well executed
- Creativity lies in the clean presentation and colour harmony
- Not highly original, but confidently delivered

🎯 **Total Score: 14.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

The twig in the lower corner and slightly tight space near the beak reduce refinement, keeping it below Honours.

🦅 **A Grade Open — Bald Eagle**

1. Initial Impression

A strong and dignified portrait of a Bald Eagle, presented with excellent detail and a commanding presence. The bird's posture and expression give the image authority, and the textured rocks add a natural, rugged setting. This is a confident wildlife portrait with solid technical execution.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Very good sharpness on the head, eye, and beak
- Whites are well controlled — no clipping in the head feathers
- Good tonal separation in the dark body feathers
- Background rocks are sharp enough to support context without overpowering

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Strong placement of the eagle within the frame
- The orange lichen adds colour contrast and visual interest
- The rocks create a slightly busy base; a lower angle might simplify the scene
- A touch more space above the head would improve breathing room

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- The eagle's intense gaze creates immediate engagement
- The natural perch adds authenticity
- Impact is strong, though not yet at Honours level

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- A classic wildlife portrait, well executed
- Creativity lies in the natural setting and colour interplay
- Not highly original, but confidently delivered

🎯 **Total Score: 14.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

The busy rock base and slightly tight headroom reduce refinement, keeping it below Highly Commended.

🌸 **A Grade Open — Delicate Blush**

1. Initial Impression

A soft, elegant floral study with beautifully controlled colour transitions. The gentle blend of pinks and warm yellows creates a dreamy, ethereal mood. This is a refined, high-key treatment that aims for emotional subtlety rather than bold impact.

2. Technical Quality (3.5–5)

- Excellent control of soft focus — intentional and consistent
- Colour transitions are smooth and harmonious
- No harsh edges or distracting artefacts
- A little more crispness at the focal point would strengthen the centre of interest



3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Strong use of curves and petal flow
- Background tone supports the subject beautifully
- The centre of the rose is slightly off-focus for A-Grade expectations
- A clearer anchor point would enhance visual structure

4. Impact & Storytelling (3–5)

- Gentle, calming, romantic mood
- Impact is subtle rather than striking
- Emotional tone is lovely, but not yet powerful enough for higher awards

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- Soft-focus florals are common, but this one is handled with care

- Colour harmony elevates the image
- Creativity is present, though not highly original

🎯 **Total Score: 13 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Merit**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

The softness at the focal point and the gentle (rather than strong) impact keep it below Commended.

🍴 A Grade Open — Environmental Portrait

1. Initial Impression

A strong environmental portrait capturing a chef at work inside a commercial kitchen. The monochrome treatment adds atmosphere and focuses attention on gesture, light, and environment. The serving hatch frames the subject well, creating a natural vignette and a sense of peering into a moment of real industry.

2. Technical Quality (3.5–5)

- Good tonal control across the blacks and midtones
- Lighting is handled well, with the lamps creating natural pools of interest
- Slight softness on the chef's face due to motion or depth of field
- Background detail is busy but still readable

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- The window frame creates a strong structural anchor
- The chef is well placed, with a clear working gesture
- The signage above adds context without overwhelming
- The right side of the frame is slightly heavy with equipment

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- Strong sense of place — you immediately know the environment
- The candid moment feels authentic and unposed
- Impact is solid, though not dramatic
- The monochrome palette enhances mood

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- A classic environmental portrait approach
- Creativity lies in the framing and use of available light
- Not highly original, but confidently executed



🎯 **Total Score: 13.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Merit**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

Slight softness on the subject and a busy right side reduce refinement, keeping it below Commended.

🦌 **A Grade Open — Female Impala**

1. Initial Impression

A clean, elegant wildlife portrait of a female impala, presented with excellent detail and a soft, natural background. The animal's alert expression and forward-facing ears give the image immediacy and presence. This is a refined and well-observed study of a classic African subject.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Very good sharpness on the eye, muzzle, and ear textures
- Exposure is well controlled, with no blown highlights on the coat
- Background blur is smooth and supportive
- Slight noise in the background, but minimal

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong head-and-shoulders framing
- The impala is well placed with good breathing room
- Background tones complement the subject beautifully
- A touch more separation between the jawline and background would add refinement

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- The impala's alert posture creates immediate engagement
- Soft light enhances the animal's gentle expression
- Impact is solid, though not dramatic

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- A classic wildlife portrait, executed with care
- Creativity lies in the clean presentation and tonal harmony
- Not highly original, but confidently delivered

🎯 **Total Score: 14.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

Minor background merging and moderate impact keep it below Highly Commended.

🍷 **A Grade Open — Hobbit Jetty**

1. Initial Impression

A complex, layered, and highly creative composition blending wooden structures, textures, and linear elements into an abstracted scene. The image feels like a fusion of jetty, trap, and reeds — a constructed visual puzzle. It's bold, experimental, and visually dense, clearly aiming for artistic interpretation rather than literal representation.



2. Technical Quality (3.5–5)

- Strong textural detail throughout
- Layers are blended with intention, though some merges feel slightly heavy
- Tonal range is good, with depth in the shadows and midtones
- A few areas appear visually congested, reducing clarity

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Excellent use of vertical and diagonal lines to create rhythm
- The overlapping forms build a sense of depth and complexity
- Some areas compete for attention, creating visual tension
- A clearer anchor point would strengthen the viewer's entry into the image

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- Strong initial impact due to density and texture
- The mood is rustic, weathered, and slightly mysterious
- Story is interpretive rather than literal — a strength for some viewers, a barrier for others
- Impact is good but not commanding

5. Creativity & Originality (4–5)

- Very high creativity — this is the strongest aspect
- The layered, almost double-exposed aesthetic is distinctive
- Originality is clear, though refinement could be pushed further

🎯 **Total Score: 14.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

Visual congestion and lack of a clear focal anchor reduce refinement, keeping it below Highly Commended.

🌹 **A Grade Open — Midnight Rose**

1. Initial Impression

A bold, dramatic floral portrait with rich magenta tones set against a deep, dark background. The lighting is controlled and directional, giving the rose a sculptural presence. This is a confident, high-impact interpretation of a classic subject.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Excellent sharpness on the petal edges
- Strong contrast without losing detail in the shadows
- Colour saturation is rich but still believable
- A few highlights on the petal edges verge on bright, but remain controlled

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- The tight framing enhances drama and draws the viewer inward
- The spiral of petals creates a natural visual pathway
- The dark background isolates the subject beautifully
- Slight heaviness on the left side where the petals cluster more densely

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Strong visual punch due to colour and contrast
- The mood is rich, intimate, and slightly mysterious
- Impact is immediate and sustained
- Story is emotional rather than narrative, which suits the style

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- A classic subject, elevated by dramatic lighting and colour depth
- Creativity lies in the mood and tonal choices
- Not highly original, but confidently executed

🎯 **Total Score: 14.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

Minor imbalance in the composition and the familiar subject treatment keep it below Highly Commended.

🐦 **A Grade Open — Striated Fieldwren**

1. Initial Impression

A clean and well-observed portrait of a small field bird perched naturally among dense green foliage. The image has a gentle, authentic feel, with the bird's alert posture and fine feather detail drawing the viewer in. This is a solid wildlife study with good technical handling.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Very good sharpness on the head, eye, and upper body
- Exposure is well controlled, with no blown highlights
- Background blur is smooth and supportive
- Slight softness toward the tail and lower foliage, but acceptable

3. Composition & Design (3.5–5)

- Strong placement of the bird within the foliage
- The greenery frames the subject naturally
- A little visual weight on the left side where the foliage is denser
- A touch more space above the bird would improve breathing room

4. Impact & Storytelling (3.5–5)

- The bird's alert posture gives the image life
- Natural habitat adds authenticity
- Impact is gentle rather than dramatic
- A pleasing, quiet moment in nature

5. Creativity & Originality (3–5)

- A classic wildlife portrait, executed with care
- Creativity lies in the natural setting and tonal harmony
- Not highly original, but confidently delivered

🎯 **Total Score: 14 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended**

! **Why Not a Higher Award**

Minor compositional imbalance and gentle (rather than strong) impact keep it below Highly Commended.

🐦 **A Grade Open — The Walnut Offering**

1. Initial Impression

A warm and engaging wildlife moment featuring two Kākā interacting around a shared food source. The behaviour is the heart of the image — one bird offering or inspecting the walnut while the other watches closely. The soft background and natural light create a gentle, intimate atmosphere.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Very good sharpness on both birds, especially the eyes and beaks
- Feather detail is well rendered with no blown highlights
- Background blur is smooth and unobtrusive
- Slight noise in the darker plumage, but minor

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- Strong interaction between the two birds — the key strength of the image
- The perch provides a natural anchor without distraction
- Good spacing between the birds; their poses complement each other
- Slight heaviness on the right side where the feeding action occurs

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Behavioural storytelling is excellent — the walnut exchange adds charm and interest
- The expressions and posture of both birds feel alive and connected
- Impact is strong, though not dramatic enough for Honours territory

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- Behavioural wildlife moments always score well for originality
- The interaction elevates this beyond a standard portrait
- Creativity is strong, though the setting is familiar

🎯 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20**

🏆 **Award: Commended (top of band)**

Why Not a Higher Award

While the behaviour is excellent, the composition's slight right-side weight and familiar setting keep it just below Highly Commended.

🏔️ **A Grade Open — View from the Routeburn**

1. Initial Impression

A dramatic and atmospheric alpine landscape with strong mood and excellent depth. The winding river draws the viewer beautifully through the valley, while the mist-laden peaks add scale and emotional weight. This is a confident interpretation of a classic South Island scene.



2. Technical Quality (4–5)

- Very good sharpness across the mid-ground and foreground
- Exposure is well controlled despite challenging dynamic range
- Mist and cloud detail are retained without blocking up
- Slight softness in the far peaks, likely atmospheric, not technical

3. Composition & Design (4–5)

- The river is an excellent leading line — the strongest compositional element
- Layering of hills creates depth and visual rhythm
- The foreground is slightly heavy and could be reduced for stronger balance
- The eye travels naturally from front to back

4. Impact & Storytelling (4–5)

- Strong sense of wilderness and isolation
- The interplay of light on the water adds drama
- Mist and cloud create mood and atmosphere
- Impact is high, though not quite at Honours level

5. Creativity & Originality (3.5–5)

- A classic Routeburn viewpoint, but handled with care and intention
- Creativity lies in the mood, timing, and use of atmospheric conditions
- Not highly original, but confidently executed

 **Total Score: 15.5 / 20**

 **Award: Commended (upper band)**

 **Why Not a Higher Award**

Foreground weight and familiar viewpoint keep it just below Highly Commended.