

Underbathwater Photographer of the Year 2020

The competition was something that came to me as a mad idea of how to keep people engaged with diving and using their dive gear - photo equipment was an obvious choice here and I hoped it would bring out the creative side of people while in lockdown. To be fair, most of our team thought I was going a bit crazy, so who else could I contact for a reality check? Saeed - his reaction, "Hell, yes" told me everything I needed to know: that there would be people out there similarly inspired. He helped me to put the fine tuning on the idea, roped in (Sir) Alex Mustard, and then the frankly amazing fourth element marketing team, took the idea and ran with it - developing a concept and identity.

We decided on a short term format so it was more like a splash-in event but we had no idea it would be so popular

We had just under 450 entries from all over the world and the level of input and creativity was way beyond what either of us anticipated. So, we enlisted the help of Franco Banfi as a judge as well, and we had quite a tough job to work out the winners and there were so many to which we wanted to give recognition.

There was no doubt about the winner though - all three of us picked it for its likeness to real life, the ingenuity of the ice blocks and the composition



Mikko Paasi

This image captured all three judges' imaginations as at first glance, one is not sure if it is a real image. Great lighting and composition has utilised softnolime canisters to double as remarkable atmospheric ice cubes, and the seal itself is looking down the camera. Fantastic image.

www.instagram.com/mikkokohtaodivers/



Simon Yates

This image showed great creativity with some of the props underwater and the split level image well composed. The stand-out feature was the curious cat who appears to be wondering just what on earth is going on down there.

This split level shot was so reminiscent of a sunset and the atmospheric use of light and colour distracted from the very obvious bathroom scenery. It nearly has the power to transport us to a warm and sunny tropical destination. Great escapism for many of us.

www.instagram.com/simon.yates.79/



Sheilagh Adam

The Cat fishing made us chuckle. The twist comes when you look closer and realise that the cat appears to have been pulled into the water: looking at the expression on the fish's face makes you wonder who is predator and who is prey.

www.instagram.com/sheilaghadam/



Joe Hyland

A very clever concept using the surface of the water to double as the surface from above, giving the impression of a perfectly timed shot of a diver rolling into the water. Beautifully still surface, which anyone who tried this will agree is difficult in itself combined with the perfect capture. The magic was injected by rotating the image 180 degrees.

www.instagram.com/chat2joe/



Nicolas Winkler

We loved this for the sheer effort that went into creating this photo. So many entries showed huge effort and creativity, and this showed great use of real ice as well as capturing the feel of polar waters. The fourth element logo swayed one of the judges too.

www.instagram.com/nicolaswinklerphotography/

of the image itself which really drew us in. Mikko Paasi is a Finnish cave diver who is based in Ko Tao in Thailand and is one of the heroes of the Thai Cave Rescue. He was one of the first guys on the scene and assisted through the rescue mission. It's fantastic that this was the first competition he has entered and he credits his daughter for the loan of the stuffed seal.

Jim Standing

www.fourthelement.com

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