

THE PHOTOMODE

E - MAGAZINE

ISSUE 33



THE VIRTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

COVER BY SOULSURRENDER

MEET THE TEAM



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We dedicate our pages to the Virtual Photography community.

We love the art form of Virtual Photography and believe inside you'll find the very best this community has to offer.

If you love one of the featured artists within the mag simply click their work and it will take you directly to their Twitter profile so you can show them some support.

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THE VIRTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS 2024

VIRTUAL PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR





ACTION



SUMMERS458/ACTION WINNER

How does it feel to be one of this years winners?

It's quite surreal tbh. I knew my shot was special and expected to do well but never expected it to go on and win. I was watching the YouTube Premiere live and I was so shocked to see my shot it was like a jump scare lol. Something like this is great to show to family and friends who aren't into gaming so they can see you can be creative with it.

How did you decide on this shot to enter into this years action category?

When I take photos over the last year I'm always making a mental note of what would be good to submit for an award. The winning image is a reshoot of a shot I did February last year and I always really liked the concept, even if it was overlooked and wasn't my best performing post. So in December I decided to remake it and if it was the same or better I would post the remade shot. The original was slightly off symmetry wise so I knew that was what I needed to address as it had to be perfect, which I know the judges would be looking for. It took me 30 minutes to get a shot I was happy with then I submitted the next day.

Can you walk us through your image? What was your process? It's a brilliant scene and looks quite complicated to set up especially on a console.

This photo is from The Last of Us Part II Remastered on PlayStation 5 showing Ellie in action removing her bag during an explosion in the distance. It was indeed a complicated scene to achieve, which required many attempts and time to obtain a beautiful explosion and natural character animation. I first placed a bomb on the ground in the distance which I then had to explode with Ellie's weapon, instantly I pressed the button to open the backpack and get this very interesting moving animation with a sense of urgency. Using gameplay elements is very interesting for this game and getting something more unique. All that remained was to refine the photo, finding the right angle, a slight focus and the use of lighting on the weapon to highlight every detail, the choice of black and white was obvious, more realistic and darker matching the photo.





Did you have any other images in mind for Action and why did you ultimately choose this one?

Yes, I did have other photos I was considering for the action category and even narrowed it down to just one other that I was going to use before taking the shot I entered. My original pick was a shot from Assassin's Creed Odyssey of Cassandra with her sword on fire.

In this scene, she had her sword up behind her head and was starting to swing at someone who she had lit on fire earlier in the fight. After going back and forth between the two shot, I ultimately went with this shot from Gran Turismo 7 because I ended up wanting to do something different from a fight scene.



© vp_infinity

VPINFINITY/ACTION

Tell us a bit about yourself and what virtual photography means to you.

My name is Elliott, but most people call me Ell. I'm from the UK and currently work as a gardener while also pursuing my tennis coaching badges. I started Virtual Photography around the launch of Horizon Forbidden West. I was mesmerised by the Photomode, so I thought, why not? It has allowed me to express my creative side and experiment with ideas and various art styles, so I'm very grateful to Virtual Photography for unlocking that part of me which I didn't know existed until I took that very first shot, and with that, VPInfinity was born.

MSZOMBIE/ACTION

Could you walk us through your capture? It looks like a very intense scene but you must've been very calm taking the shot.

The fight with Bayle the Dread is quite chaotic, so the first couple of times I went in solely to take pictures. I knew I wouldn't be able to focus on capturing well and beating him at the same time. This approach definitely made both tasks much more achievable.

What was your initial reaction to finding out you have made the shortlists?

I'm very happy and grateful to have one of my shots be considered, knowing how many capable VP artists sent in their entries.



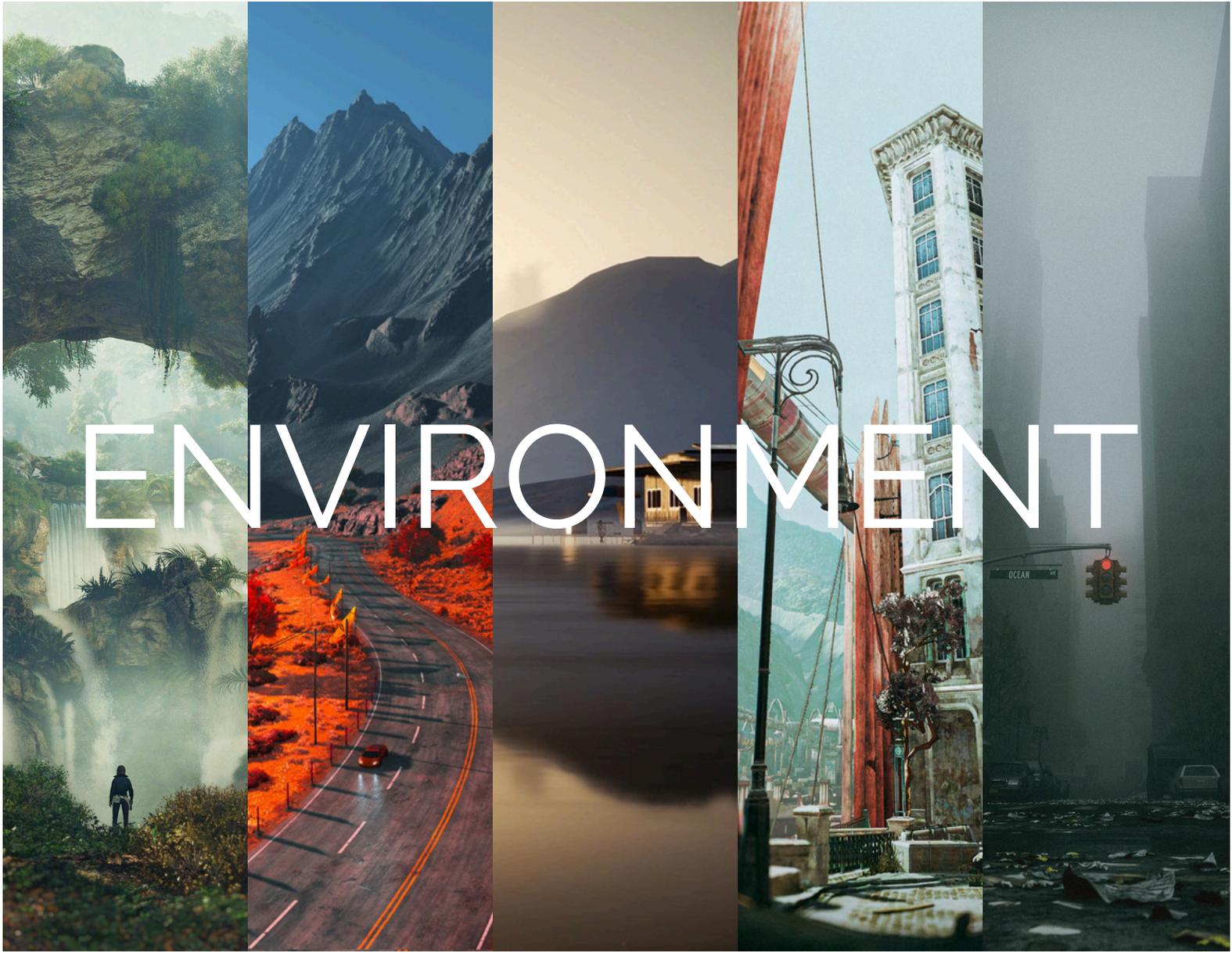


As someone who focuses primarily on portraits was it a nice surprise to find yourself in the shortlist for action?

Yes, absolutely! It was a year where I didn't feel like having anything worth for the VP Awards, even if subjectivity counts a lot in these contests. But you can see this action could have fit the portrait category as well! It's an understatement to say that I love portraits, they can tell a million stories, emotions, feelings with such tiny details on the face, in addition to the light on them and an environment/background and other things like hair and accessories. You could take thousands of portraits, you would still eventually get something different and new, and they also fit different categories... like action! Hellblade 2 is a perfect game for this, with one of the most realistic games ever made and a Game Award winning actor as main character. They make so many frames worth a shot. Of course we are talking about the VP Awards, so despite knowing the shot was excellent, the probability to see it shortlisted was very low, so even a photo that seems perfect, objectivity and subjectivity wise, it's always a surprise and a great pleasure!

What was your decision making process in choosing this specific image for the category?

Looking back at the very few shots I took from Senua's Saga: Hellblade 2, I found out they were better than the several photos I got from Stellar Blade, the only other game where I took actions shots in 2024. I was somehow more attracted, because they are more... expressive? It's crazy because I only have a bit more than 9 hours 30 minutes on the game, with probably more than half taking photos. In short, I barely played it (even if the game itself is very short). With amazing details and quite the dark tone, they were the ones getting my attention. So I was hesitating on different photos that were all captivating to me given the quality of the game, different scenes of combat between Senua and her enemies in the islandic storm. At the end, the one I submitted was both very good from a technical point of view (composition, frame, field of view, etc), quite simple and very intense, especially the violence on Senua's face, her eyes, the blood, and her motion. This is for sure, a perfect game to get both portraits and actions.



ENVIRONMENT



MORRIE/ENVIRONMENT WINNER

What was your first reaction to finding out you had won the environment category?

I was surprised and could hardly believe it! Because I'm not good at taking Environment shots... The game world is so beautiful and well-designed. Wherever I capture a scene, it becomes art in itself. Sometimes I find it very difficult to add my intentions or feelings to it, especially to landscapes or cityscape shots.

Your winning image is incredibly atmospheric, what was your process for capturing such a beautiful image?

I paid attention to 2 points in taking this shot. The first is the eye guidance. The bottom of the image was darkened and the top of the image was lightened to create a composition that guides the viewer's eye from the ground to the signal and then to the top of the image. The dirty ground represents emotional confusion, the red traffic light is self-control, and the area between and above the buildings represents curiosity about what lies ahead. Confused, I wanted to stop going any further, but wanting to know what's ahead...I tried to express such feelings of this game's players.

The second is the ratio of this image. The judges mentioned the ratio, and actually I don't really like 9:16 either. In most cases I crop to 2:3 usually. But I thought 9:16 was the best ratio to capture everything from the ground to the sky, I took the challenge. As a result, I'm very honoured that the judges recognized that point.



Can you walk us through your shot, what was your process while capturing it?

My shot was pretty easy to take actually. I had just finished Pyramid Song, the final mission for Judy's questline in Cyberpunk 2077, and as I was driving away the visual of the bungalow struck me. The light felt perfect, so I approached to shores and took 2 pictures. One closer to the bungalow, while the other is the one I submitted for The VP Awards that somehow ended in the shortlist. I tried to make the sky and the water a mirror image of each other to make it look cooler, avoiding the city and the trash near the cabin itself. I also wanted to take advantage of the rule of thirds, so the main focus was the lake itself, to show where the gig takes place as it is the most important place between the lake and the house, with the bungalow as a secondary object to complete the whole thing.

Editing wise I didn't do that much, I just erased a dust particle on the top right, enhanced the colours a bit and called it a day. It was one of those pictures where every little thing seemed to align and fit right into each other. The location of the picture, the time of day, the colours. Everything just felt right. Not really hard per se because I had this one in mind from the start. Though I was undecided between this one and a different one I took of the same location but focused on the bungalow, but my girlfriend and my buddy helped a ton in picking the one that ended up being in the shortlist. Other shots I submitted were hard to pick yes, but not this one.

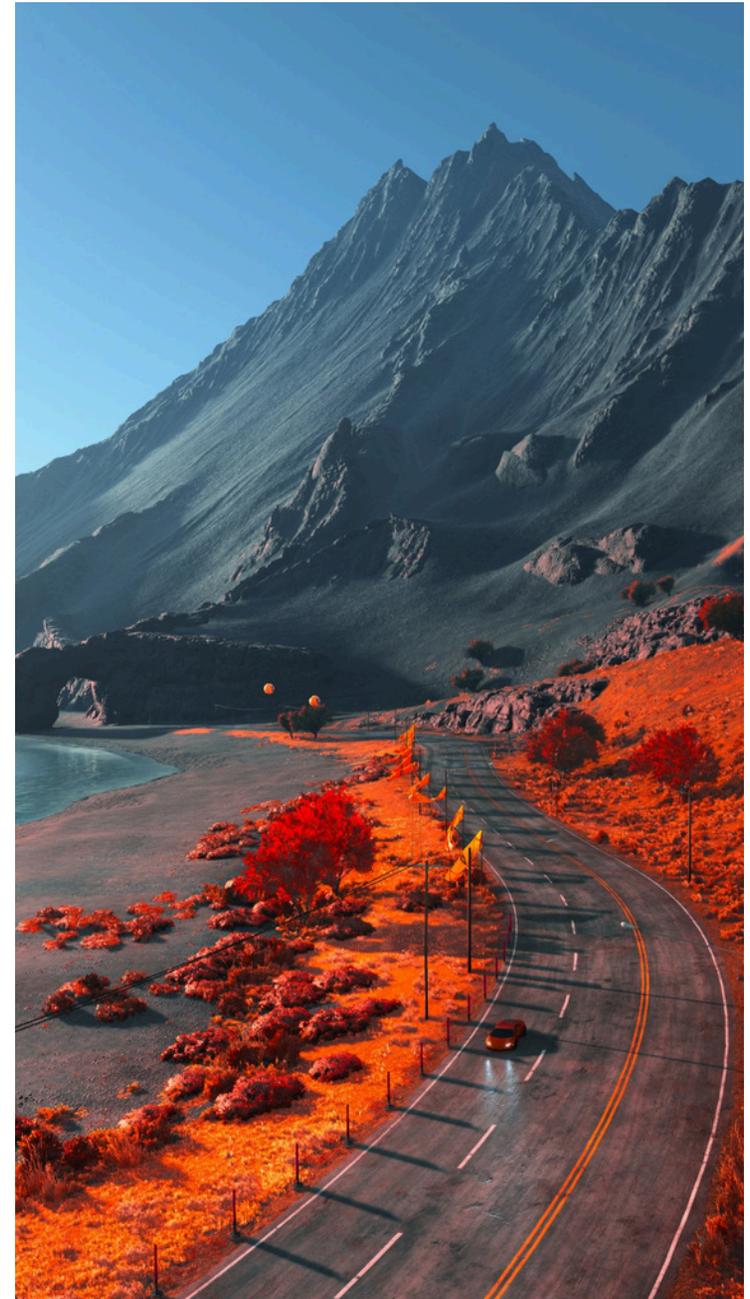
YEWONE/ENVIRONMENT

What was your reaction to finding out you made the shortlists?

My first reaction to finding out I'd made the shortlist was definitely one of surprise. For various reasons I'd let my Virtual Photography take a bit of back seat this past year and as a result had started to doubt the standard of my own shots a bit. In fact I'd only really entered this year to show my continued support for the VP awards and the work that goes into putting it all together for the community. So making it to the finals has definitely boosted the old confidence a bit.

What was your process? How did this image come about?

This particular shot came about after experimenting with various other vantage points in this area of the map. The contrast and juxtaposition between the barren mountainscape and low lying grassland is what really caught my eye. Im also always drawn to vertical orientation shots, which again I felt suited this shot perfectly and helped generate a sense of scale. This coupled with my usual liberal use of filters, exposure, contrast and vibrancy settings resulted in the final submitted shot.



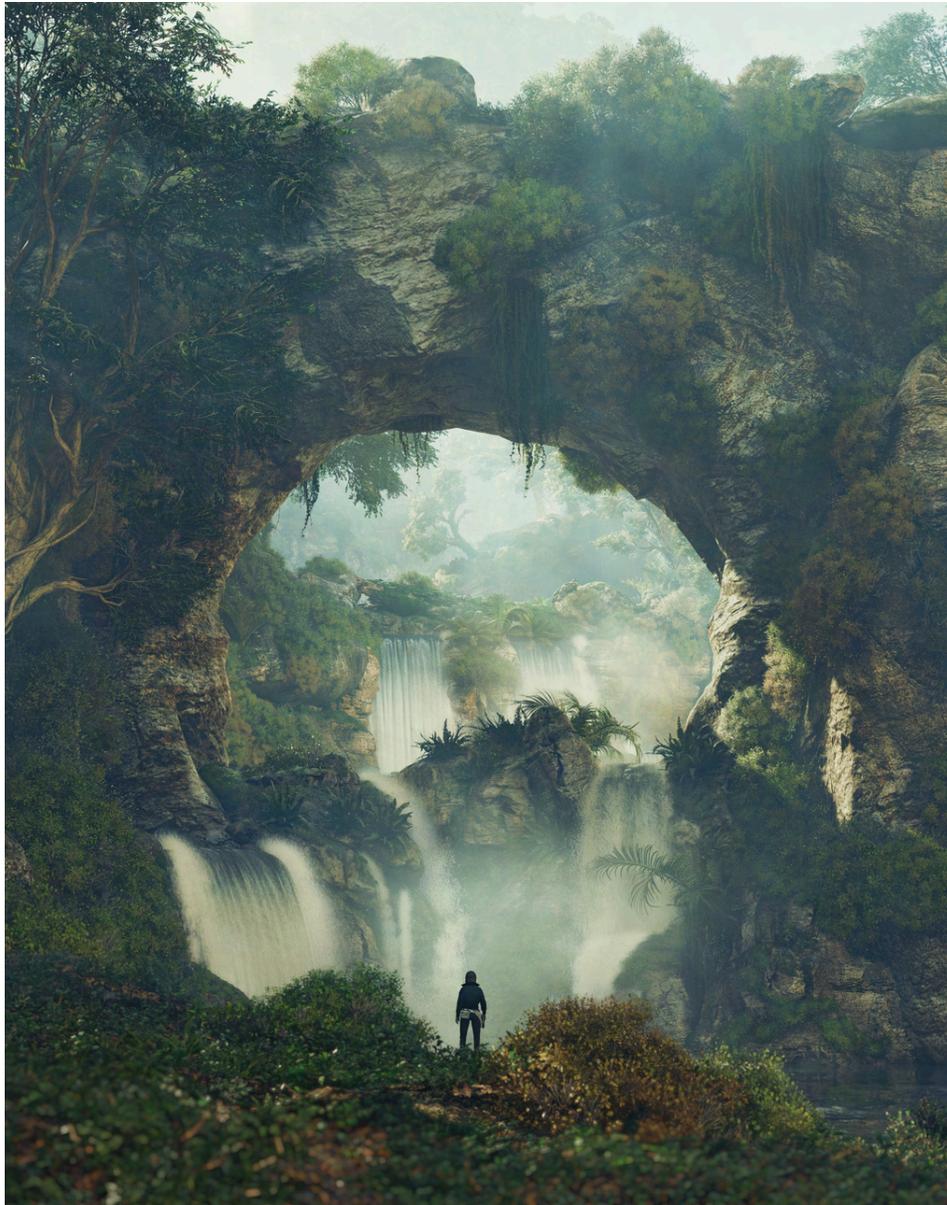


Can you walk us through your shot, what was your process while capturing it?

Injecting creativity into environmental photography has been one of my favourite challenges. When exploring the world of Assassin's Creed Origins, I stumbled across some civilians eating and dancing on a balcony, shaded by this screen cloth. I thought, instead of capturing the characters like I normally would, to shoot this wonderful landscape, with the added texture of this patterned cloth. The colours of the evening sun dancing on this striped fabric made for a perfect moment.

Did you find it hard or easy to choose this particular image for the environment category?

Choosing this photo for the Environmental theme was my easiest choice out of all the categories. I didn't labour over my selection process because there's something so simple about this shot that makes me very proud.



WINTERMUTE/ENVIRONMENT

Why did you choose this for the environment category?

I wanted to submit an image that would effectively convey a sense of the place, capturing the feel and character of the environment while celebrating its beauty - in this case the wet jungles of Akiva. The image aims to portray the serene allure of the lush green landscape unfolding before the protagonist. She is its silent admirer too. It is a simple yet hopefully impactful, congested composition that guides the viewer's eye across and into the distant layers of cascading water. I intended to preserve that quiet moment.

Was it a difficult decision?

It's a delicate balance between self-questioning and the need to detach from a piece you're too familiar with - this requires a fresh perspective. In the end, I sought outside opinions, which greatly helped me narrow down my choice to this one image from the few I initially considered.



@sistasangen

What was your reaction to finding out you made the shortlists?

I didn't expect it, it's my first success of this kind and I'm very happy to make it. It's nice when your work gets appreciated.

Tell us about your creation process.

I absolutely adore Dishonored visuals and I think at this point I'm admiring the game more than actually playing it. So I just walked around, got to some corner looking for loot, saw the view and took a shot. Then added some blur and colors via Lightroom, et voila.



DETAIL

QUA\$¥MØDØ/DETAIL

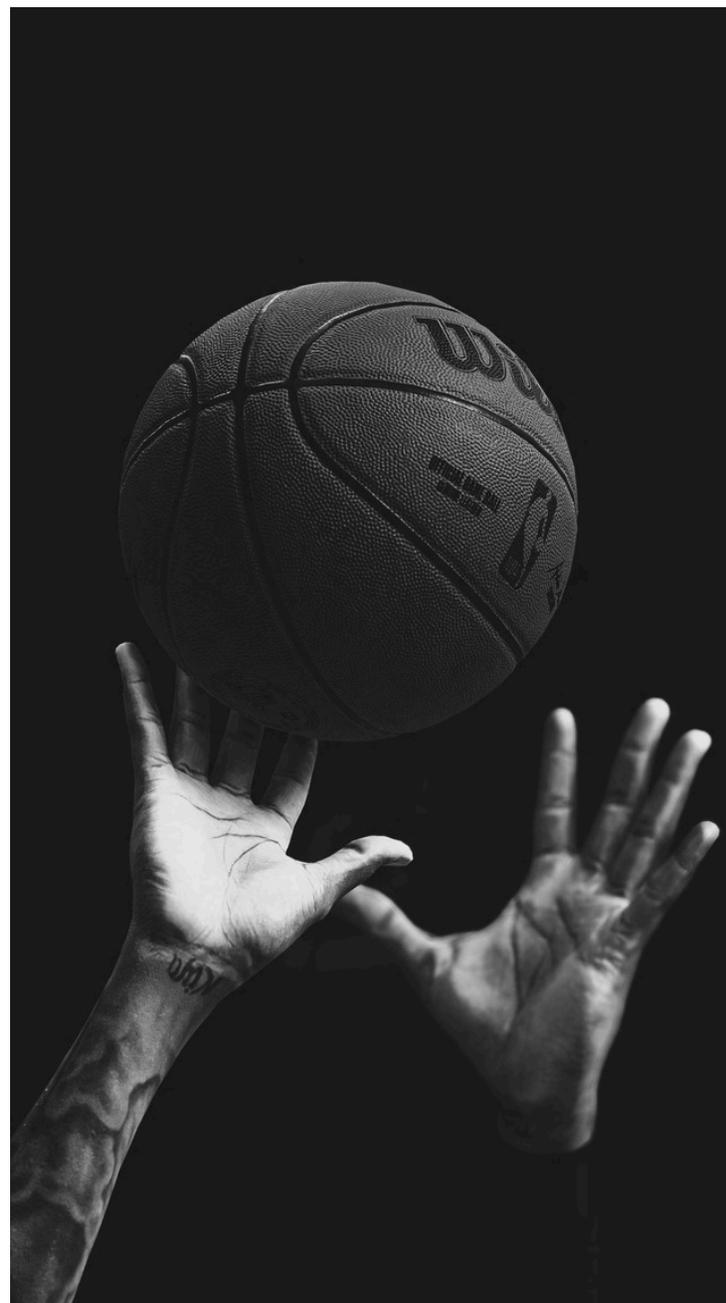
WINNER

How do you feel about being crowned the winner of the detail category and becoming the first person in the awards history to win twice?

I'm very excited!! People may think that virtual photography is easy, that you just have to press a button on your remote and that's it, but there's a lot of work behind it, just like in photography, you have to find the exact moment, Then there's the work of editing or correcting the image, sometimes it takes many hours to get the results you want. Getting recognition and seeing that your work is valued is a wonderful satisfaction, imagine if this happens to you twice!! I have no words!!

It's an incredibly detail image, and one from a game we don't see captured very often. What was the process behind capturing such a great shot?

After winning the first edition of The VP Awards in 2020, I have been seeing for several editions that the talent of each artist was incredible, the level is very high now, and I knew that if I wanted to have any chance of winning again I would have to do something different, but without losing my way of seeing and looking at video game photography. That is how I decided to take a risk with something that is not usually seen much like virtual sports photography. I wanted to show that you can continue telling and building a story in a context that in essence may not have it, and that is how it occurred to me to try to reflect all this in the best possible way, to capture the exact moment when the ball is about to reach your hands, the exact moment when you can catch it or it can escape you, all or nothing. This is what I was trying to do when I took a chance with such a different photograph against so much talent, all or nothing, and luckily it worked, of course you had to give some weight to the image and from the beginning I thought of it in black and white, and although it may seem easy, getting the perfect moment was not, so that the background was clean and with the right light to achieve that contrast when creating the correct black and white I had to try to get that moment many times, and well the result was great. All or nothing, sometimes you just have to try and see what happens, I got it.





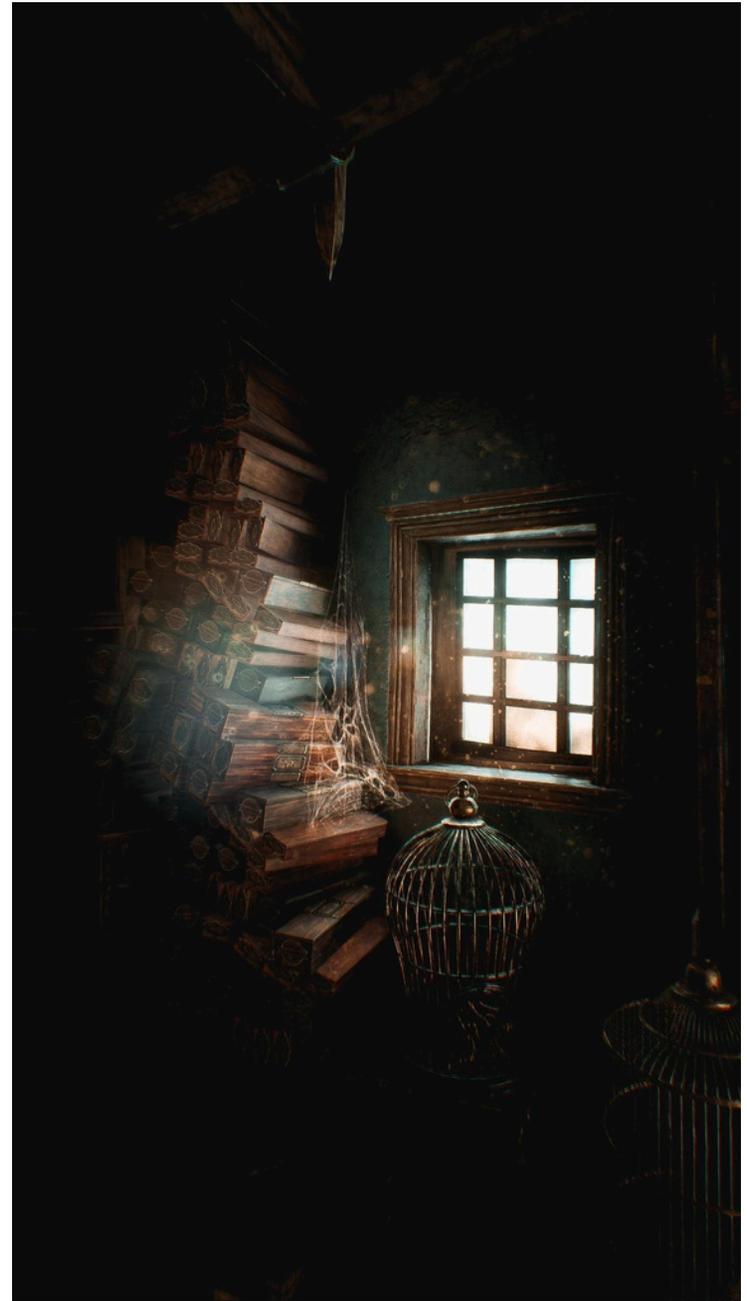
ML3NIUM /DETAIL

An incredible image, did you set out with an idea in mind or was the piano something you stumbled upon?

At first I wanted to capture a shot with hanako playing it. But at that time (early 2024) I didn't have enough experience to pose the character in my ideal image. So decided to make it simpler and just lit the scene and take a shot.

Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your shot?

I'm passionate about capturing photos in video games because they offer virtual worlds I'll never experience in real life. My goal is to find unique, cinematic scenes that evoke emotions or tell a story. I strive to create images that feel like movie scenes but within the context of a game. This particular photo stood out to me for its simplicity and perfect lighting, proving that sometimes, simplicity is all we need to create something extraordinary.





ITSYFP/DETAIL

What was your process for capturing the image?

I don't think, I just do. I surely would love to reply with a more pleasing comment but that is just me.

It's a beautiful scene, what initially stood out to you enough that you wanted to capture it?

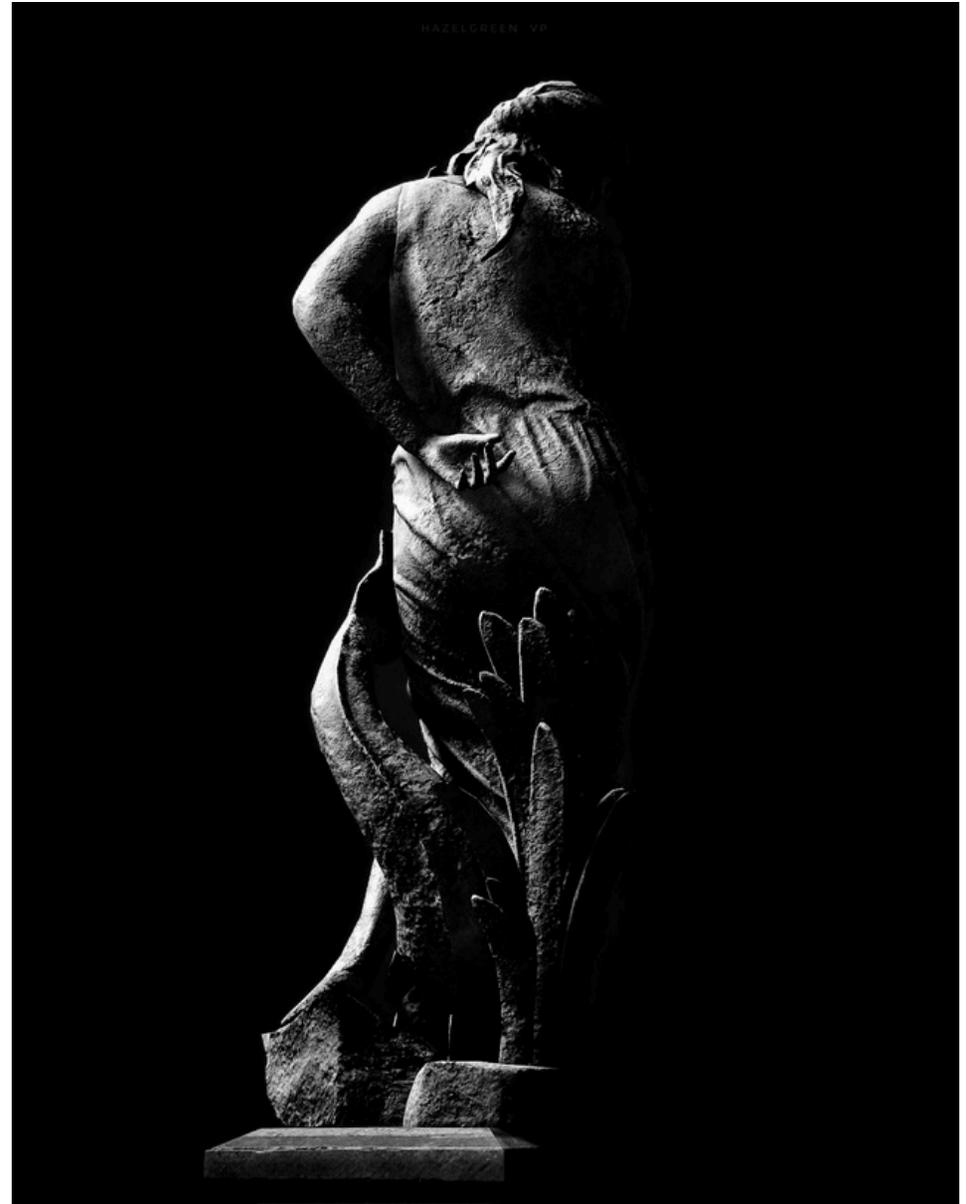
My goal for the whole game was rather simple, take pictures of places that hide the truth of the game from anyone viewing the images. Dead Island 2 is about violence and a lot of gore yet it offers such a huge variety of incredibly detailed rooms with well placed interior lighting. That is what i wanted to capture across the playthrough. The scene is just one of many that stood out, so i don't want to give it more or less credit than any other.

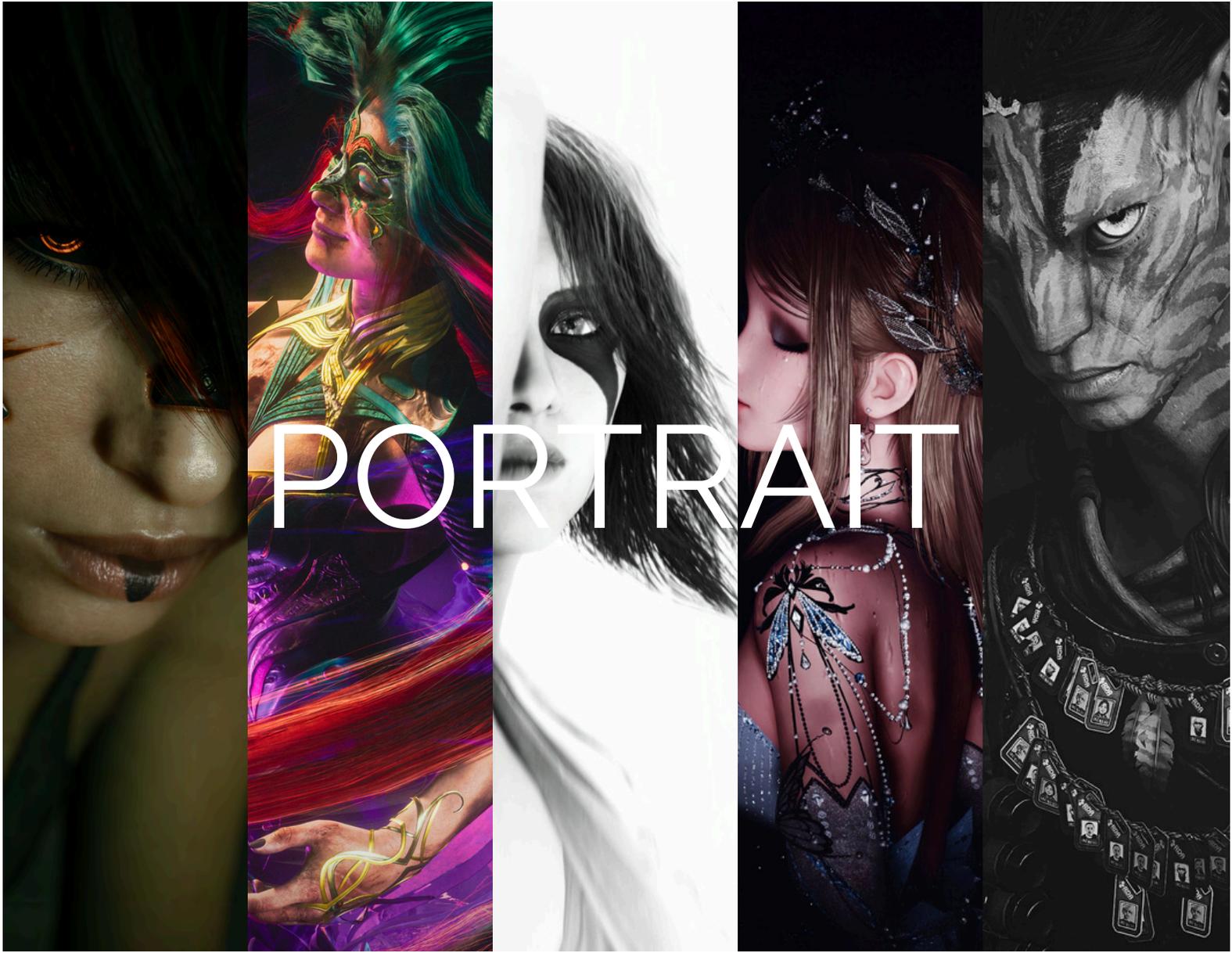
What about your subject stood out to you when playing?

The way the lighting emphasizes the contours, texture and details of the sculpture stood out to me. I also focused on highlighting the interplay of light and shadow during editing to further isolate the subject. Even though it's just a sculpture, it still felt like there's a certain dynamic and mystery due to its posture.

What was your initial reaction to being in the Detail shortlist?

Honestly? A moment of disbelief. I checked out the shortlists not expecting anything, especially since a friend of mine told me that he didn't spot any of our submissions. So when I saw my shot, I genuinely thought I must be looking at the wrong gallery - those must be all the submissions, not the shortlist, right? There were SO many incredible and talented submissions in this category, as well as the others. I felt honored and happy after realizing that my shot had actually been shortlisted, a very unexpected but amazing surprise.





PORTRAIT

OPTICSSHATTER/PORTRAIT

WINNER

What was your reaction to winning this years portrait category?

1. I was really just shocked, I am a very amateur when it comes to photography and photo editing but I really fell in love with this shot when I took it but I never thought it would be good enough to win.

Can you walk us through the process of taking a winning shot?

I went into the later part of Spider-Man 2 wanting to do some portrait work, in this particular segment I noticed strong light rays and shadows from the windows and thought this would give me a good chance for some nice B&W shots. I would stop and start the photo mode after moving her around to get the best contrast of light and shadows on the face and she also had this fearful look in her eyes that I wasn't getting most of the time. Went with a pretty zoomed in shot to get just the hair and face, I don't remember doing much in game to adjust the contrast but I did a lot of adjustments in the lighting settings of Lightroom after.





VP_ADVENTURER/PORTRAIT

What was your process in capturing this shot?

I already took quite a few captures in Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy with Gamora as the subject, but liked the casual setting that was taking place aboard the Milano in which she was wearing a more relaxed outfit instead of the usual combat armor.

I remembered one of the available poses in which she holds her hand on the back of her head and figured combining it with the PM's ability to make the characters look directly at the camera would make a good non candid portrait and more akin to a real life photo shoot, posing in front of the camera and the viewer. I tried multiple angles and positions until I found one with her head turned 90 degrees to the right, partially concealing her face drawing the attention to the eye. When I played around with the settings, turning it B&W made sense and luckily the conditions were right to make it high-key as well.

It didn't require much work in post, I fine-tuned the contrast and added a bit of blur to hide some of the textures I wasn't happy with (it was shot on a PS4). I'm glad people and the judges liked it, thank you!

Can you walk us through your process in capturing this shot?

Making this shot was kind of an accident. I wanted to do some experiments with the newly implemented light system in Cyberpunk 2077, and I just bumped into that spot while posing her. If I remember correctly, I needed to move her below a ripperdoc chair. After that, I just played with the proportions of light and shadow while moving her around and chose a cold expression. The light just popped out the details of her face, and the shadows with her hair made it so lively for me. I chose a close-up because I would like to emphasize the glowing eye and because I love close-ups very much.

Did you find it difficult or simple to choose your shot for the Portrait category?

In 2024, I was less creative and had even fewer original ideas. This shot I loved very much from the beginning, so no, choosing this was not hard, it hasn't got too many contenders.





HELLACORESHOTS/PORTRAIT

What was your decision-making process in choosing this specific image for the Portrait category?

This was kind of random. At the time I was heavily invested in Silent Hill 2 and most of my portrait shots were from this game. It was hard for me to choose the best one from so many options, so I decided that the shot should not be from Silent Hill 2. Luckily, I was also trying out the newly released Infinity Nikki, which has an amazing photo mode and infinite possibilities to create different outfits. I thought I'd go with the one I liked the most.

Why did you choose this shot for the Portrait theme?

I make a lot of portrait shots in different games and my main goal always is to capture the emotions of characters.

Infinity Nikki has a photo mode where you can "create" emotions yourself.

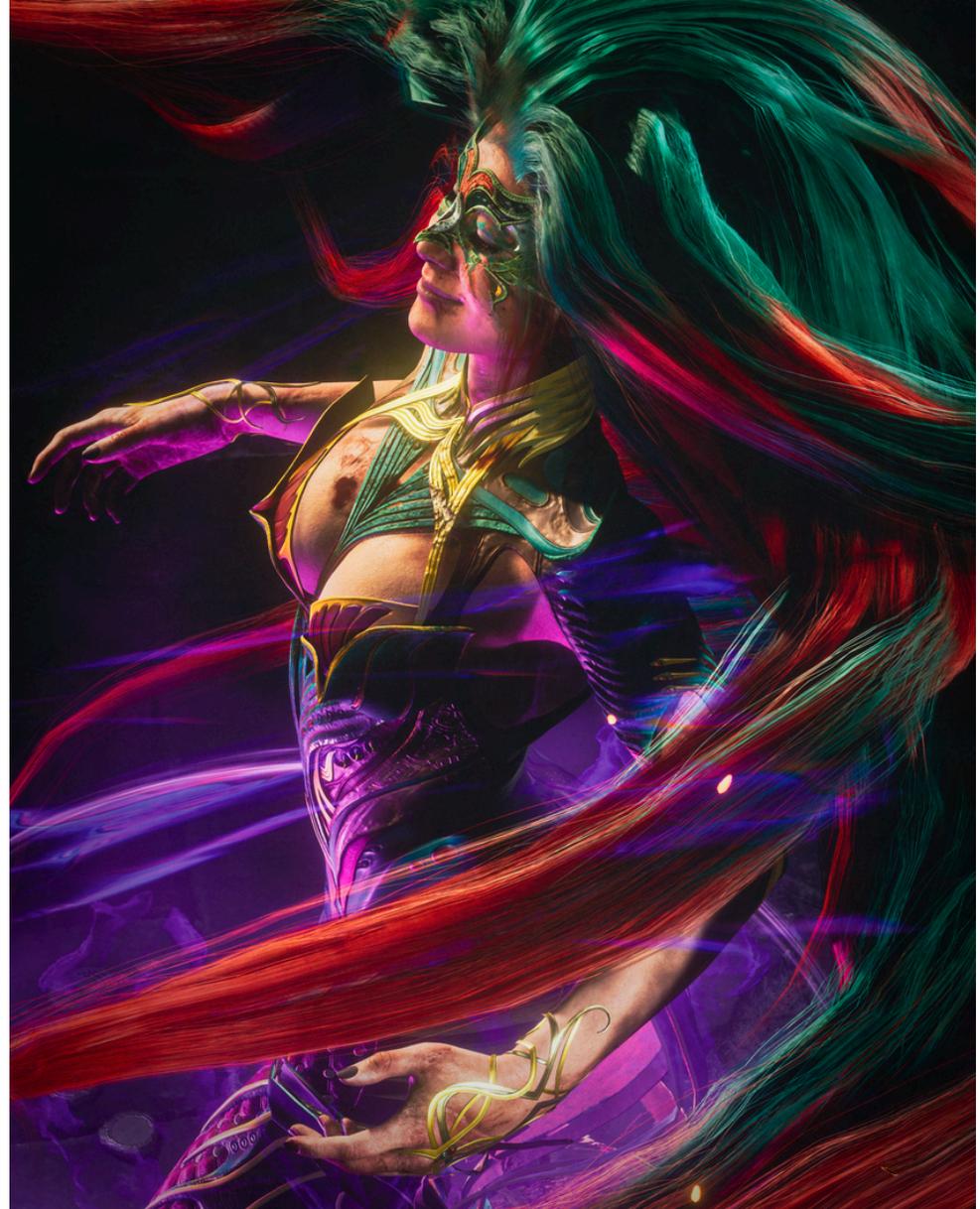
Nikki's pose here initially has a completely different mood. But put her under the rain, choose the right angle and light source and voilà, we've got some drama.

I like how detailed and also open to interpretations this shot came out. I usually shoot emotions that are "given" to me by the characters in the cutscenes. Here, I made it from scratch with the photo mode tools and some post-editing magic in Lightroom. That's why I chose it.

Why did you choose this shot for the Portrait theme?

When I first started shooting Mortal Kombat 1, one of my mantras was to showcase the essence of every character in their portraits - as in, not just a straightforward angle focusing on their face, but the photos should include parts of their power set, their fighting style, and most importantly, their personality. This portrait of Sindel instantly became one of my favourites, as it answered exactly every single criteria I set on myself, and for once I actually did a portrait with (gasp) decent composition.

For me, Sindel was one of the more difficult characters to shoot out of MK1's roster, simply because she's not a traditional martial artist and her regal status isn't something that is always visible through the act of throwing hands. The one time I managed to get a good portrait out of her, which includes both her expression and her mesmerizingly long hair (power) that manifests both threat and class, it turns out pretty ok. Though I have to say the real MVP here is the costume's color scheme.





DOMO_VP/PORTRAIT

What was your decision-making process in choosing this specific image for the Portrait category?

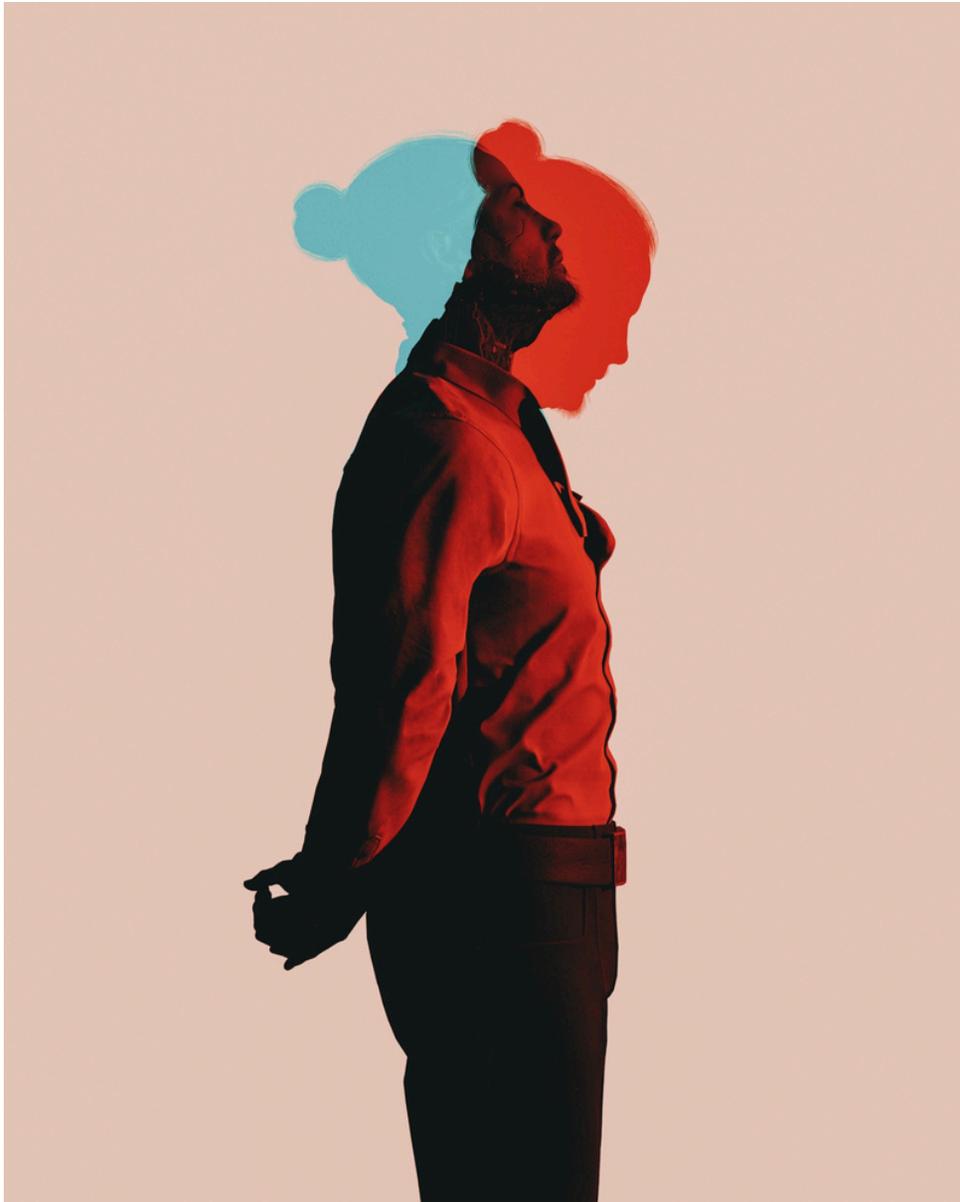
For me, the choice was straightforward and no other captures even came into consideration. I took this shot quite recently in fall 2024 and loved it ever since, it got stuck in the back of my head so it was quick to pop back up when it came to uploading a picture for the portrait category.

Can you walk us through your shot?

The process started before opening PM with waiting for So'lek (the subject of my portrait) to do a certain animation and timing it just right with my character jumping up to make So'lek look up, giving him quite a serious and mysterious look. Then I entered the PM and aligned my camera to where So'lek was looking. Upon changing the filter, everything connected beautifully together. I especially loved how So'lek's skin pattern looked in the black and white. At last, I adjusted the exposure and contrast sliders accordingly.



CREATIVE



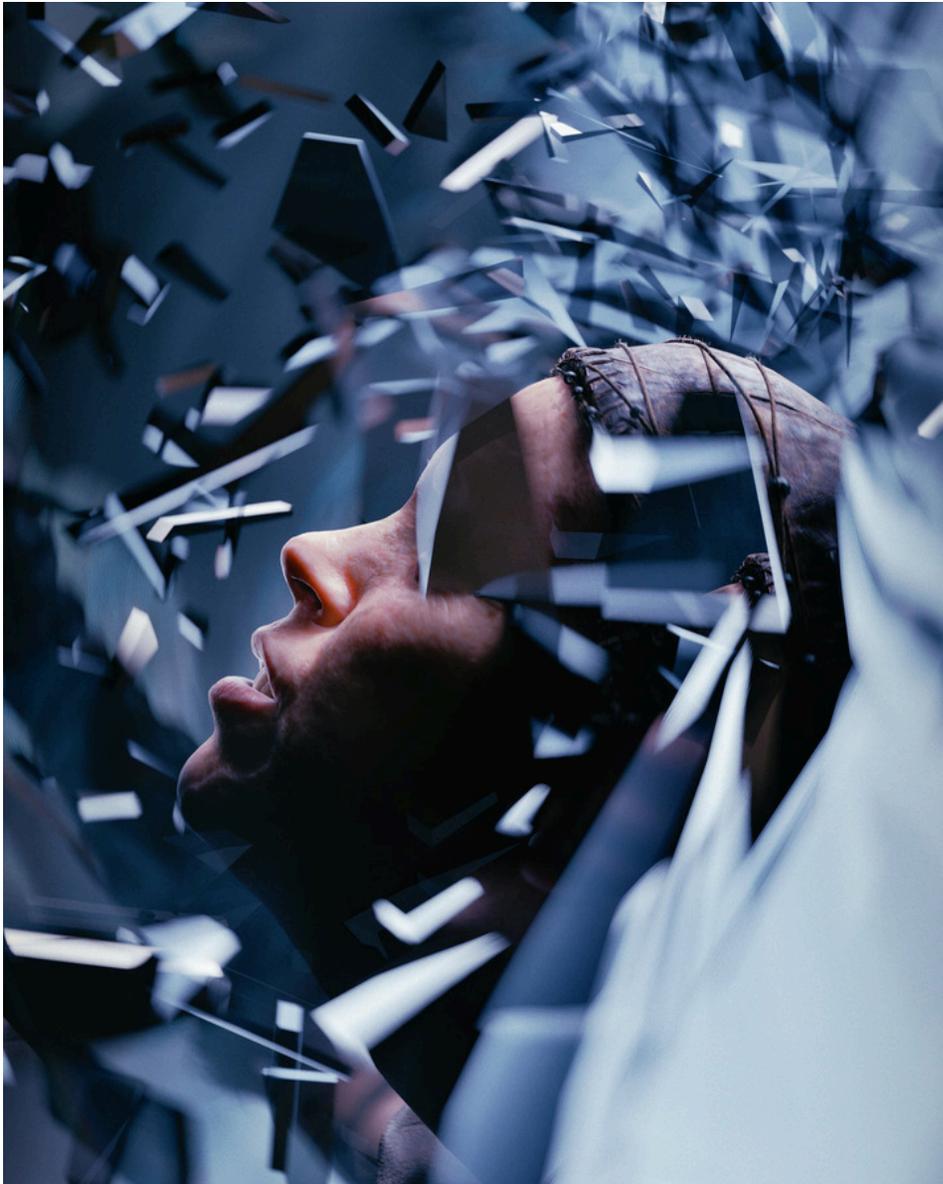
SOULSURRENDER/CREATIVE
WINNER

How did you decide on this image to enter into the creative category?

I chose this image because it was the one I was most happy with this year, both in terms of the creation process and the end result.

How does it feel to be crowned this years winner of the category?

Happy and awkward, haha.



SHKEGULKA/CREATIVE

Can you walk us through your process in creating this image?

Hellblade 2 has a cutscene where Senua gets dragged into a lake by her own reflection, with the surface shattering like a mirror. I thought it was a cool concept but not prominent enough in-game to really shine, so I spent quite some time replaying that same episode frame by frame, playing around with angles to see if anything stuck.

That particular composition came up almost by accident, as the initial plan was to simply show Senua falling down into the water depths. As it is now, it seems a bit like she is breaking out of a glass cage, giving the sense of freedom and hope to the whole scene. I liked that direction way more, so I did my best to amplify the idea by adding custom lights, including one the character would be reaching towards. The end result is drastically different from what I had in mind at first, but hey, it's much better this way

How did you come up with the idea for this image?

I know Ellie loves space and has an active imagination, from scenes like her imagining taking off into space. And imagining playing Mortal Kombat while her friend describes it. And she likes spaceships, astronauts & sci-fi comic books.

Can you walk us through your image in the Creative category, what was your process when creating it?

Process started in-game. I needed a shot of Ellie in the water with the astronaut suit, facing away from the camera. After that I found 3D models of the pins Ellie has on her backpack, I customized them with new textures in blender. Then I edited/composited it all together, adding smoke, clouds, birds, adding a reflection of the wings into the water from the game, a planet to match the pins. Plus, color grading and effects.





SOFIA_IN_NC/CREATIVE

How did you come up with the idea for your Creative shot?

My love for history, politics, and spy-thrillers influences my artworks, and I also like to conjure things that are least talked about or desired by many and look at the matter from a different perspective. In my artwork, despite my love for Myers (for which I have a reason lol), I wanted to shed a light on the horror of working for her.

Can you walk us through your process in creating this image?

So it started with me brain rotting to the lore haha, and then I came up with a subtle yet disturbing sketch of the concept for me to visualize the look I was aiming for. Given that, the poses I wanted for the characters were not available on Nexus Mods, so I had to create custom poses especially for Myers and the Male Big characters. Each character was shot individually against a solid background for easier editing. The lighting process was also critical in achieving this artwork, so I had to make sure that the lights were pointed towards the right direction in their respective shots. Lastly, the editing part, I've incorporated all of the shots in a single image and added some smoke to give off that eerie majestic vibe to the artwork.

How did you conceive of the idea for this creative image?

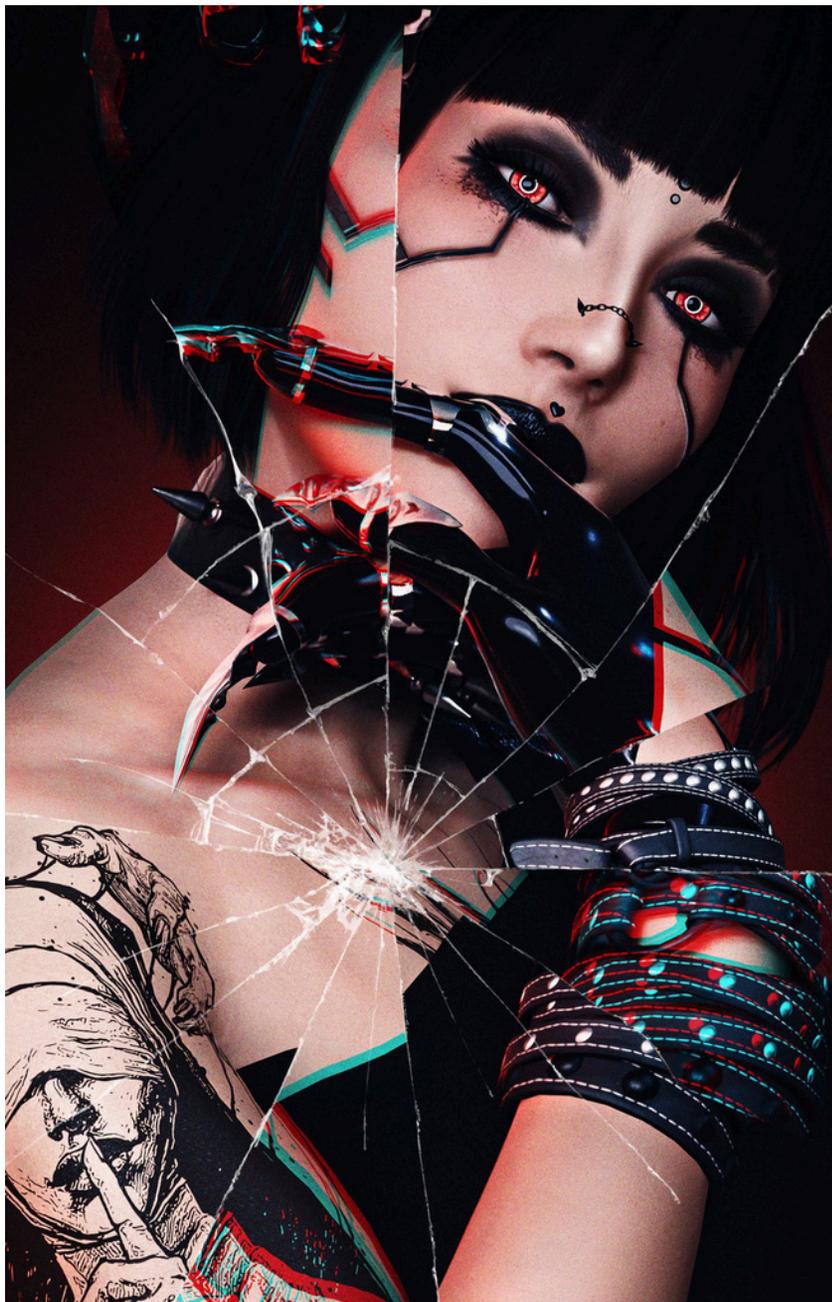
I wanted to make an original edit with my photos, without really knowing what to do at first. I can't remember how the card idea came to me, but I thought it would be interesting to mix card games and video games.

Can you walk us through your creative process to make this image?

To make these cards, I first had to research the actual dimensions of the cards, their classic visuals and their characteristic elements. Then I chose a photo of Deacon that I really liked and I started by editing this shot in Photoshop Elements (removing the background, adjusting colorimetry...). I then added the letter A, characteristic of the Ace. I didn't like the idea of keeping the classic red and black colors, preferring to echo the tones of the photos. Once the character and the letter were ready, I added the mirror effect and the central separation. Finally, I wanted to create an intriguing background, and after trying out many different effects, I chose paint splatters.

I'm currently working on the rest of the set and hope to make a physical copy one day!





ONLYMISUNA/CREATIVE

Can you walk us through your process when capturing this image?

My V in Cyberpunk 2077 has 2 personalities, her normal and cute side "Lily" and her evil and strong side "Lilith". I wanted to capture the evil side even more with the red eyes and black hair in combination with the red background.

What was your decision-making process in choosing this specific image for the Creative category?

This picture means a lot to me this year, because when I did it I got sick and decided to edit it as a broken vision of myself, but still with the more stronger side of my V "Lilith".



FROSENT/COLLECTION
WINNER

THE URBAN ARCHITECTURE HIGH CUT

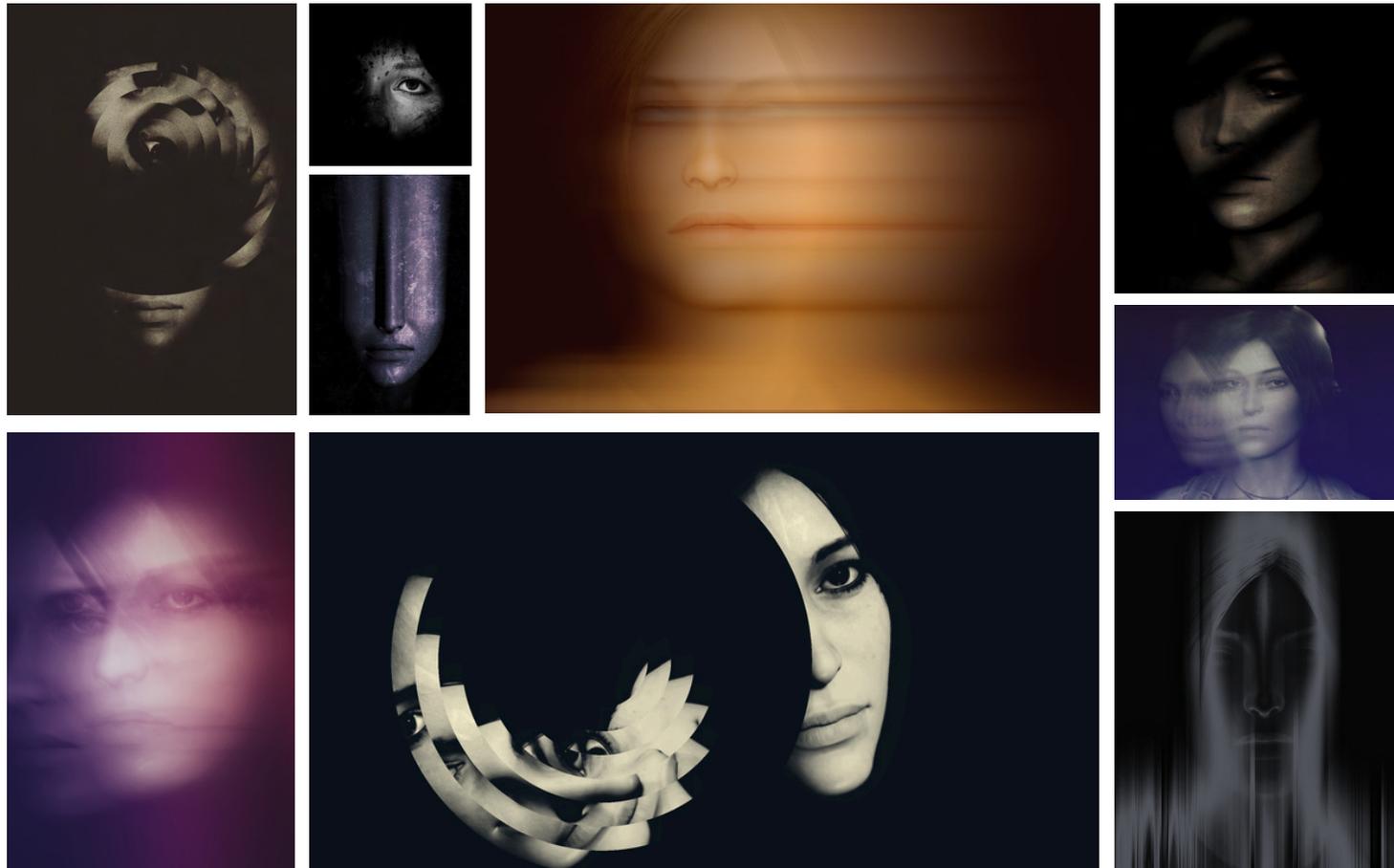


How does it feel to be crowned the overall winner of this year's Virtual Photography Awards?

The competition was quite serious! The first few days I kept track of what others were sending. But then I stopped.

How did you find the selection process? Picking a single shot for a category is hard enough but how did you manage to pick out an entire collection?

I don't even know, this is my first time entering. Deciding on what shots to enter was quite difficult but when I saw a new theme collection I knew my set of city architectural shots would fit the theme perfectly.



WHAT I AM

Did you create these shots for the Collection category?

Abstract Portraits isn't something I usually do, I created these for the #VP4Autism month that Kimchi hosted last year, which I found to be a great initiative—not just to raise awareness about the subject but also to try something new in virtual photography. This set is about the human mind, exploring multifaceted nature of people, isolation and self acceptance. It holds great value to me and that's why I chose them for the collection theme.

Why did you choose these shots for the Collection theme?

Last year, I didn't have any abstract shots to submit for the VP Awards, so this year I had already decided to create some abstract shots. Although we didn't have an abstract category this year, we got the collection category instead, which was even better because I could post them all.



THE PASSING OF TIME

What was your decision-making process in choosing these specific images for the Collection category?

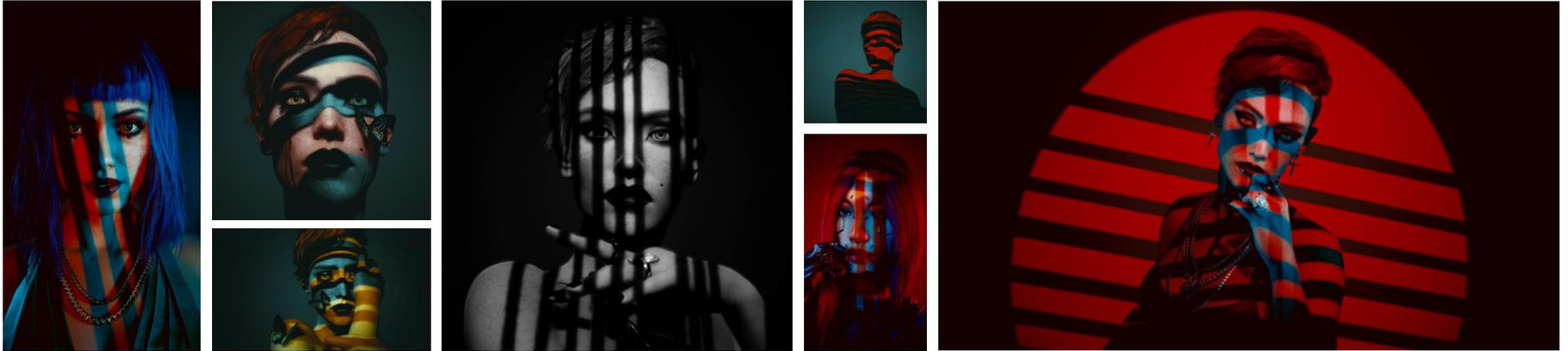
I love photographing the city and have taken many photos. I chose some of my favorites for this collection, but there were some photos that made a strong impression and some that are weak. I thought I could maximize the meaning of each by giving them a theme and title and putting them together as a collection.

How do you feel about being shortlisted in the Action and Collection categories?

I am truly proud to be a candidate in two categories in the VP community, where quality is evolving day by day. When I have been shooting for a long time, I tend to do the same thing over and over again, or shoot by inertia. I don't think that is good. I had to think about what needs to change and what should stay the same. I felt again that if I am going to continue, I want to keep updating my work without losing my own identity.

I am so glad I was able to remain as a candidate. No matter who wins, I plan to buy a cake and celebrate.

KULMA69/COLLECTION



LIGHT BENDING

How do you feel about being shortlisted in the Action and Portrait categories?

Not going to lie, I was only confident in my portrait category submission and I did not expect to see my Collection to be one of the finalists, and I don't even know how to describe the feeling I had, it just made me proud of the things I've done so far, because I didn't know I had this ability to express my thoughts into art and I'm happy people are liking it.

What was your decision-making process in choosing these specific images for the Collection category?

When I was choosing what to submit for the collection, I thought maybe I would submit photos that I've never seen in the VP sphere before. Portraits with different lighting techniques or bending or whatever people want to call them, and I thought my work fits the idea so I searched my archive and submit the ones I thought was good enough.

PINO44IO/COLLECTION



BEYOND THE DARKNESS

Did you find it hard or easy to come up with a theme for your Collection?

You never know what awaits you behind the dark corner. Darkness scares. And that was the main theme of my collection. I ended up with about 30 favorite shots, and choosing 12 of them was a great challenge for me. Using monochromatism was a right choice since it enhances the feeling of fear and despair.

What was your decision-making process in choosing these specific images for the category?

I had two collections in my mind. One of them should contain beautiful postapocalyptic shots from different games, showing that life continues even after the apocalypse. But in the end I chose "Beyond the Darkness" since I'm a big fan of horror movies and games. Thankfully, we have lots of good ones released.



FRAMES

Why did you choose these shots for the Collection theme?

I had a hard time picking the theme for the Collection category. I had 2 plans and at last I just want to share something I had the most fun with last year. And I love the colourful view of Night City from Cyberpunk 2077. Also it's kind of related to my own childhood memories. I always love to go to those traditional Chinese gardens and see the view from all the different moon gates and flower windows. I just like to look at the images through different "frames".

How do you feel about making the shortlist in two categories this year?

I am most surprised about the environment shot, since I didn't do many environment shoots last year, but that one set of landscapes is the environment group shoot I had the most fun with. I didn't expect too much from the collection, because there are too many good shots in the gallery and it's the first time we have this category. I'm still exploring and observing others how they express themselves in this category. But all in all, it's always a fun experience every year.



COVER BY QUASYMODO