



# Photo & Videography

Edited by  
Kurt Amsler  
& Peter Symes


*A matter of balance*

# Shooting Wrecks

Text and photos by Kurt Amsler  
Translation by Peter Symes







# photography



PREVIOUS PAGE: A wreck is too big to illuminate. You have to work with the ambient light

LEFT: Use a dive torch to add colour and point out structures

*There is no flash unit in the world that can illuminate a complete wreck. This is why the exposure must always be calculated on the basis of the ambient light*

must match the focal length of the lens if the corners of the resulting images are not to be out of focus.

Owners of SLR cameras have for a long time been spoilt for choice, with a huge selection of super wide-angle lenses with the recent addition of wide-angle lenses dedicated to digital cameras with their smaller CCD-sensors picture. When it comes to compact cameras, the possibilities are more limited, though some wide-angle lens attachments or converters have been put on the market—foremost through Sea & Sea and Inon—which enable image angles of up to 165 degrees.

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A photographer's heart always seems to beat a little faster when it comes to taking pictures of sunken ships and aircraft. So, how do you become successful in shooting wrecks? Granted, it is not entirely straight forward, but if you take the following advice and guidelines to heart, you will surely achieve good results.

Wreck diving is without question one of the most fascinating disciplines in diving, though it requires a bit of experience and sometimes also special equipment. This is also the case with wreck photography.

The challenge in shooting wrecks is that it often involves shooting at large distances, and that the circumstances are rarely optimal when it comes to current, visibility and depth. With the right equipment and good planning it is, however, possible to get a handle on the challenge. The objective is to portray as

much of the wreck as possible, which is why the picture angle of the lens should be as large as possible. At least 90 degrees is necessary, but 180 degrees is more desirable.

The "Rolls-Royce" lenses for wreck photography are the so-called "Fisheye" lenses that are capable of capturing angles of 180 degrees or more. This, in turn, requires another piece of equipment: all wide-angle lenses must be housed behind a dome port, which is characterised by a dome-shaped spherical front glass. The curvature of this port



Nikon 10.5mm f/2.8G IF-ED AF DX Fisheye Lens, a frame-filling fisheye lens for exclusive use with Nikon DX-Format digital SLR



Canon Powershot wide converter (for a compact camera). Turns a 36mm lens into a 27mm by 0.75x magnification







When photographing wrecks, make a combined dive and shooting plan that takes you to the deepest parts first i.e. the propeller

## Shooting Wrecks

must always be calculated on the basis of the ambient light.

In these cases, adjust the camera's exposure controls from readings using the built-in exposure meter in the old-fashioned manual manner. This could, for example, at a depth of 30m be aperture f:4.5 and shutter speed at 1/30 sec.

To properly balance flashlight with daylight, we know how to calculate the settings the flash unit should be set at for a given distance using f:4.5. Correctly balanced, the images will show infinite depth in the background and the foreground illuminated by just the right dose of light.

All the general rules for using flash also apply to wide-angle lenses, with the additional rule that on or inside a wreck, there is a much larger risk of stirring up particles. Good buoyancy and moving around carefully are of even greater importance to wreck photographers! The further away from the camera the flash is mounted, the less the risk is that the particles floating in front of the lens will reflect the light.

On wrecks, you can find marine life that you rarely see elsewhere, as they take up refuge in the structure



The road to good wreck photography, as the ambient light always will be dominating, is to use flash to freeze the moment and bring colour to the foreground as well as enhance overall contrast in the image. That aside, you can only capture whatever reflected light the wreck is willing to give off.

There is only one way to go about it. In wreck photography, both flash automatic or TTL is taboo. Because you will usually be shooting in open water, the built-in programming will lead to

wrong exposures. If the camera is equipped with a super wide-angle lens, the flash must also be capable of illuminating the same full image angle as that of the lens. Modern flash units usually cover at least 100 degrees, and that will suffice for most wide-angle lenses. If the coverage is insufficient, for example, when a fisheye lens is used, it can be necessary to use two flash units.

Most important is the correct aim of the flash or flashes. If the light has to pass through

too much of the water between the camera and the object, the risk also increases that it will also bounce off suspended particles in the water and produce hazy images. It is therefore imperative to observe the following: at distances of more than 1.5 meters, the flashes must aimed straight ahead. Only if you get any nearer to the object should you consider any repositioning.

There is no flash unit in the world that can illuminate a complete wreck. That is why the exposure





When moving inside wrecks long flash arm can be a challenge to handle. Be very careful not to stir up particles. They will both ruin your shot and, worse still perhaps also the view to the exit. Do not penetrate wrecks without appropriate training and adequate equipment



### Plan the shoot

The images resulting from a wreck dive will often fail to meet our expectations if we don't work out and follow a plan for the shooting. Once on the wreck, the time will only run by too quickly, so it is important that the photographer and the model knows exactly where to go and take up position already from the beginning.

To maintain a classic dive profile, start shooting at the deepest parts and work yourself upwards going gradually shallower. Start, for example, at the propeller and move towards the bridge. Determine which subjects you want to shoot and also how much time you want to spend photographing each, so you can

estimate air consumption and stay within the decompression limits. Always be safe when diving and use the buddy system. In regards to penetrating wrecks, there are also training, equipment and psychological issues to be considered.

Here is another tip: If you want to photograph in the murky and dim interiors of a shipwreck, a pilot light or focus lamp mounted on the flash will come in very handy when you have to position the flash.

Wreck diving is very fascinating, and being able to bring back images only makes it more interesting. It only takes a bit of determination. The path to great images is not wide.

### Tips

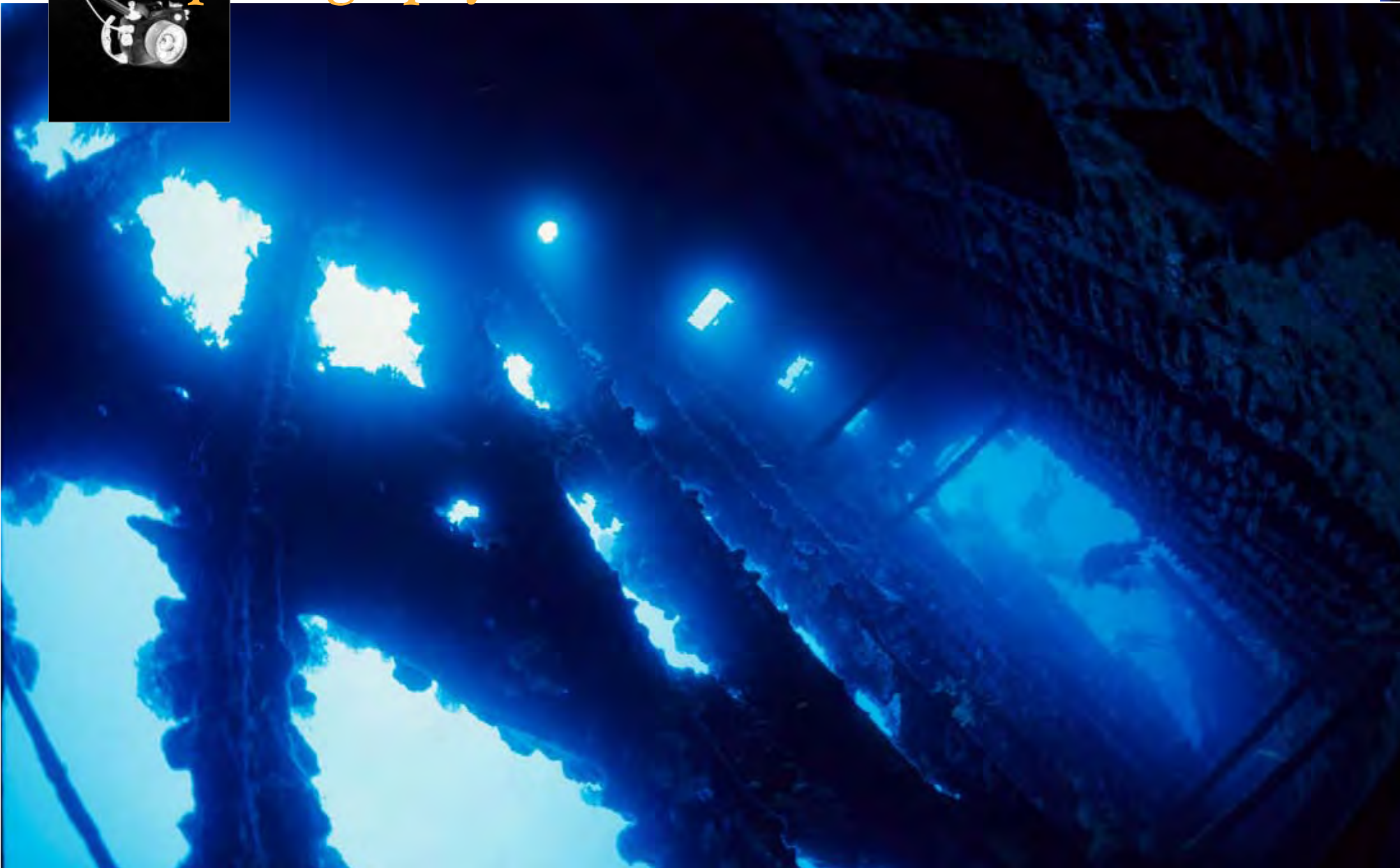
- Shooting wrecks requires prior planning. Only when the photographer and model have a prior understanding of the task ahead will good images result. Dive plans can be drawn up on a sketch of the wreck.
- Once on the wreck, the time will race by. Don't plan too many shoots on one dive; it is better to do more dives.
- When diving below 30m, little ambient light will remain, and shutter speeds longer than 1/30 sec will come into use. Under these circumstances, it will be necessary to keep the camera very still. Good buoy-

A strobe can only illuminate the foreground but used wisely it can add colour and texture

Wrecks comes across as being very static objects but their structure can be highlighted by working with the silhouette







Open your eyes. Sometimes the ambient light just does the job all by itself

ancy skills and ability to maintain a steady hover makes this less of a problem.

• It is the ambient light that constitutes the background light on wrecks. A flash can only supply fill light to brighten the foreground. As is the case with underwater wide-angle photography in general, use flash on a

manual setting to avoid wrong exposures.

• It is no simple task to photograph the insides of a wreck. The long strobe arms are often in the way when moving through narrow corridors, and the risk of stirring up sediment is considerable. A well-balanced photo equipment setup that is absolutely neutral

will considerably ease the task of working under such conditions.

• Sunken ships or aircraft will in no time turn into 'artificial reefs'. You must dive these locations with the same understanding and consideration that should be giving to natural reefs.  
• Wreck photography is captivat-

ing, and therein lies the danger. Always monitor time, depth and gas supply. Rule of thumb: 50 percent of the focus should be on the photography, 50 percent on the dive plan.

• Wrecks are often photographed at distances of more than 1.5 meters. It is therefore important that the flash, or flashes, be

parallel to the optical axis of the lens, otherwise it will produce faded pictures and capture suspended particles in the images

• On wrecks, you can find many animals that you don't or rarely find elsewhere. It often pays off to bring another camera fitted with a lens of longer focal length

in case any of these subjects should emerge.

• Wrecks often come across as very static objects. Therefore, divers swimming into the picture can add something important. A dive lamp can bring out beautiful effects. ■





## Ikelite Sony a700

Ikelite has introduced an underwater housing designed for the Sony Alpha DSLR-A700 camera. Constructed from clear polycarbonate, the housing includes TTL conversion circuitry that operates perfectly with current model Ikelite DS SubStrobes. Controls provide access to most camera functions, and everything is kept watertight with Ikelite pioneered Quad-Ring seal glands. A wide selection of dome and flat ports accommodate most macro, wide-angle and zoom lenses. Expected cost: Around US\$1,500. [www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)



## YS-17 TTL slave strobe

SEA&SEA has announced the release of their newest strobe, the YS-17 TTL slave strobe. The compact design features a guide number of 14, beam angle of 70°x53° and a recycle time of 3 seconds, making it an ideal accessory for many of the compact digital cameras on the market today. Powered by a pair of AA batteries, the unit offers a 2-step light level control, TTL capability and a consumer friendly price of US\$349.00. [www.seaandsea.com](http://www.seaandsea.com)



## MDX

Sea&Sea has announced the release of their newest and most technically advanced digital SLR housings to date. Named MDX for Machined Digital, the housings are purpose-built for the latest Nikon D300, D3 and Canon's EOS 40D and 1D/1Ds Mark III cameras. Rated for a depth of 200ft/60m, each housing is precision crafted from solid block aluminum alloy and protected with a corrosion resistant anodized coating. Two Nikonos type (5-pin for Nikon, 6-pin for Canon) connectors are provided, although TTL strobe photography is possible with the addition of an optional TTL converter. [seaandsea.com](http://seaandsea.com)

## Aquatica Nikon D3

Aquatica has announced the release of its new housing for the Nikon D3. Constructed from lightweight aluminum and loaded with features, this state-of-the-art housing is sure to please demanding professionals and discerning amateurs alike. Aquatica D3 ports, extensions and lens gears are compatible with all other bayonet mount Aquatica housings. In addition, all ports are now oversized to allow compatibility with the new Nikkor 14-24mm lens. [www.aquatica.ca](http://www.aquatica.ca)



## Modular

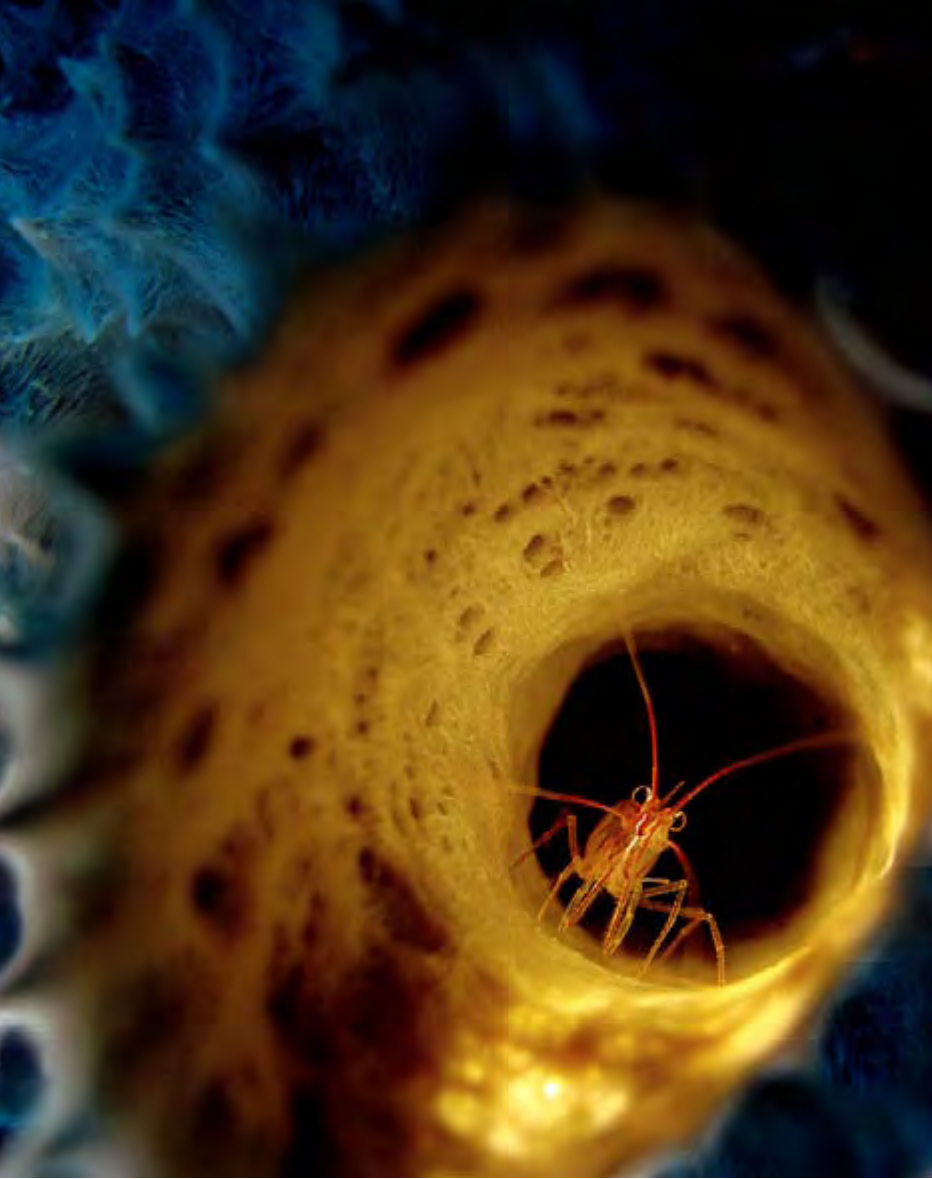
Ikelite's modular port system enables you to build a port out of universal components to accommodate a variety of macro, zoom, and wide-angle lenses. Port bodies are offered in a variety of lengths for use with different lenses. Using the interchangeable port bodies and extensions enables the photographer to create infinite combinations for maximum versatility and performance. When using a dome, image sharpness is very sensitive to port length, while the optics of a flat port are much more forgiving. The appropriate port body should be based upon the wide-angle or zoom lens to be used. A special extension is available for use with Nikon 105mm VR Macro and Canon 100mm USM Macro lenses. [www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)





# Underwater Competition Winners

With week-long live aboard trips to exotic places in diving heaven up for grabs in the 3rd Annual Wetpixel and DivePhotoGuide International Underwater Photography & Video Competition, it's no wonder there were a ton of entries. Prizes included trips to Socorro Mexico with Solmar V; to the Solomon Islands with Bilikiki Cruises; to Wakatobi, Indonesia, with Wakatobi Resort & Pelagian Yacht; to Vietnam with Rainbow Divers & Sunrise Beach Resort; to Ambon, Indonesia with Archipelago Fleet; to the Red Sea with Emperor Divers; and gift awards such as Nocturnal Lights SLX Focus Light, signed copies of the photobook "H2O" by Howard Schatz and the new Wyland book; Mares dive equipment, Ikelight flashlights, Sea&Sea strobes and other dive prizes and gift certificates for dive travel.



COUNTER-CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Still Images Compact Camera  
Silver Medal:  
Bill Goodwin (USA)  
"Shrimp in Sponge"

Still Images Macro Traditional  
Gold Medal:  
Mike Roberts (USA)  
"Urchin Abstract"

Still Images Wide Angle Unrestricted  
Gold Medal:  
Dale Sanders (USA)  
"Salmon"

Still Images Macro Unrestricted  
Honorable Mention:  
Beo Brockhausen (Germany)  
"Imperator"

**And the winners are...**  
Find a few samples here. For a complete list, visit the Underwater Competition website at: <http://www.underwatercompetition.com/owu2008-winners.php> ■







X-RAY MAG is proud to be a media sponsor of the Annual Wetpixel and DivePhotoGuide International Underwater Photography & Video Competition



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Still Images Best of Show:  
Borut Furlan (Slovenia)  
"Shark & Diver"

Still Images Wide Angle Unrestricted  
Special Mention: Olaf Veltman  
(Netherlands)"Toyota"

Still Images Wide Angle Unrestricted  
Honorable Mention: Jeffrey Hartog (USA)  
"Lemon Face"

Still Images Macro Unrestricted  
Gold Medal: Andres Salesjo (Sweden)  
"Shark Egg"

