



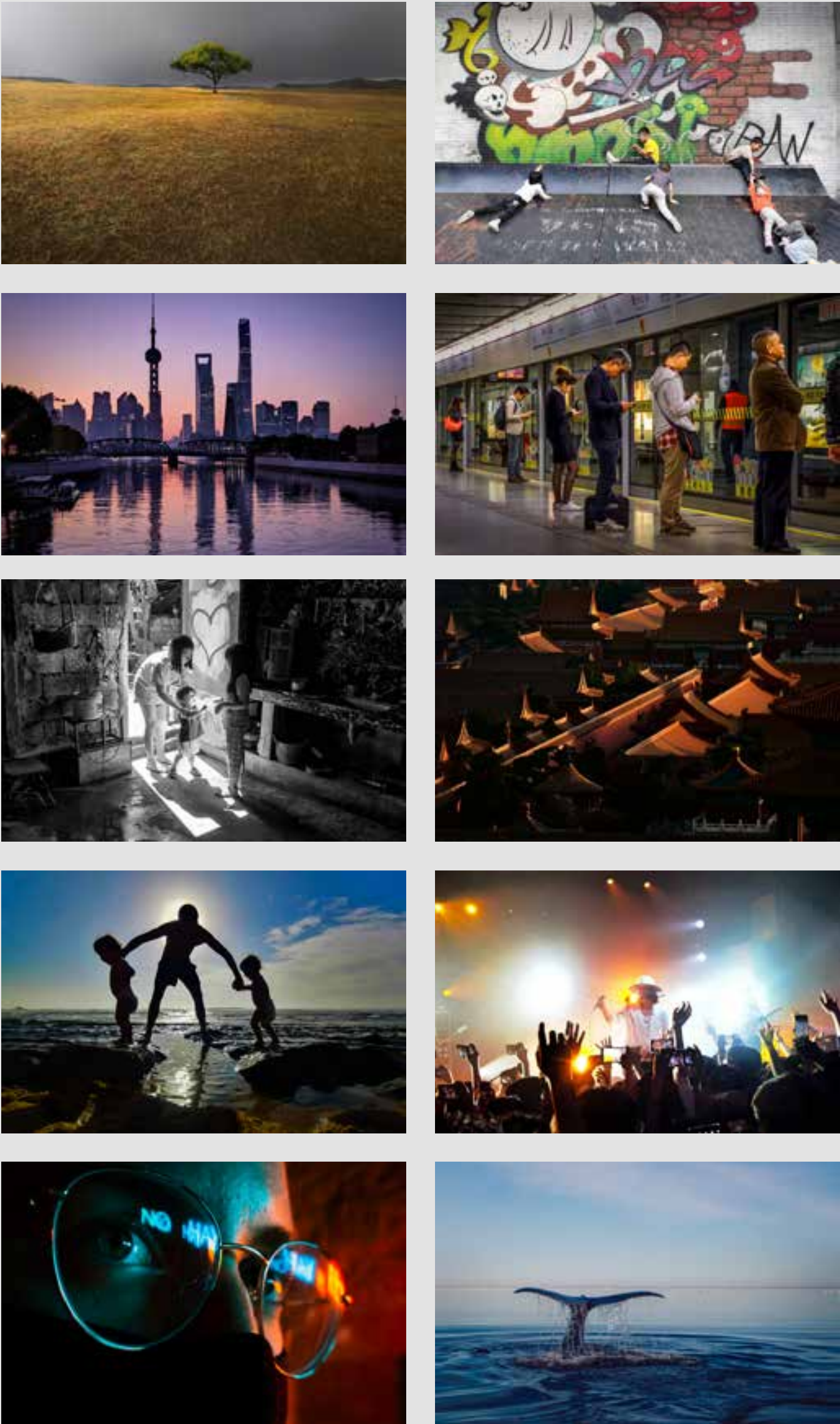
HUAWEI XMAGE

Trend Report

2023

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PREFACE

Since 2017, HUAWEI NEXT IMAGE Awards have supported photographic creativity across the globe, celebrating humanity's capacity and desire for self-expression. With almost 4 million entries from more than 170 countries, the awards have played a significant role in the establishment of HUAWEI XMAGE, a new mobile imagery brand.

HUAWEI XMAGE represents Huawei's new strategy and breakthrough in mobile imagery. Meanwhile, Huawei has used technology to enhance art and developed its own XMAGE style. Moving forward, Huawei will continue to lead innovation in mobile imagery and deliver a superior experience for consumers worldwide.

Huawei collaborated with FactStory, assembling a team of expert visual analysts who studied the submitted photographs and videos before sharing their insights on how Huawei devices are being used, with special emphasis on sociology, psychology and the emotions evoked by the curated images.

Mobius Labs, a deep tech company that builds machine learning software, supported the analysts in their work. The firm's AI-powered software analysed the photographs and videos submitted to the NEXT IMAGE Awards, applying more than 9,000 keywords to make it easier for them to sift through the entries and reach their conclusions.

Studying the images themselves while also noting which tags were found to be the most popular by the AI software, the team settled on 10 core image themes for their studies: Nature, Built Environment, Indoor, Relationships, Identity, Youth, Everyday, Cultural Heritage, Technology and Sustainable Future.



PHOTOGRAPHY TODAY

We live in a world in which sight is the most valued of the human senses, and the predominant means for us to make sense of that world. Images have become so central to social interaction that academics claim they have now surpassed other forms of communication such as the spoken word. The visual not only dictates how we understand the world around us, it also influences our sense of self within the world.

We create, share and store more images than ever before, and the ease with which we can take photographs and videos has changed our relationship with the camera.

We snap pictures instinctively and spontaneously. Sometimes to document a special occasion, sometimes to capture a fleeting moment of beauty or to assert our presence within the world with a selfie.

More than ever, photography today is something to be shared, with our experiences increasingly shaped by the smartphone. And when someone raises their phone to take a shot, often they are thinking ahead, wondering how the image might be circulated on social media, how viewers will respond and how this might reflect their own sense of self.



THE TEAM OF ANALYSTS

Dr Nichole Fernandez – Visual sociologist

Dr Nichole Fernandez is a visual sociologist with a PhD from the University of Edinburgh on representations of nation and place. Her research experience in creative and visual methodologies has covered digital sociology, popular culture, health, migration, geography, nationalism and environment.

“I began by doing a quantitative content analysis to see numerically what the data looks like. Then I took a representative sample of the images based on the final themes and qualitatively coded them into the themes using the software program known as NVivo. I then drew on social semiotic analysis to draw out different concepts related to composition and social structure within these themes. Alongside a social semiotic analysis, I used a more reflexive thematic analysis to pull out trends that emerged from the data. I also cross-analysed the codes to develop a deeper understanding of how the themes relate. NVivo coding provided rich qualitative analysis and insight into the data, allowing me to show some quantitative descriptive statistics about the data.”



Han Sang Kim – Visual sociologist

Han Sang Kim is a visual sociologist based in Seoul and Suwon in South Korea, specialising in methods to approach archival images as qualitative data, the ethics of photographic representation, post-colonial visual cultures and the visualisation of mobilities. His most recent book, *Cine-Mobility: Twentieth-Century Transformations in Korea's Film and Transportation*, explores the moving image archives of 20th-century Korea to trace the association between cinematic media and transportation in constituting the Korean public's modern perception of the world.

"I assessed the images to locate the positionality of the photographer or the viewer who would cast their gaze at the photographed subjects, whether the subjects are humans or things. I read the social interactions between the viewer and the viewed in the frame and contextualise the moment of shooting in its social and cultural conditions. By doing so, I could not only decipher the apparent meaning of what is seen in the images, but also interpret a deeper meaning of it in the context of production and reproduction of such images in specific social circumstances."



Jessica Hromas – Photographer and photo editor

Sydney-based Jessica Hromas is an award-winning photographer and picture editor. She was previously staff photographer at the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Financial Review Magazine* and served as director of photography for the Australian Financial Review Group. Most recently she was picture editor for the *Guardian Australia*.

“As a photo editor, I analyse an image beginning with the basic questions: who, what, where, when and why. Although we don’t have all this information with this large dataset of images, it is a good starting point. Looking at why an image was taken gives meaning to the subject matter. Was it simply a stunning landscape, or a milestone in a loved one’s life? Where is the gaze of the subject, and were they aware of the photographer or was it a candid moment? The subject’s expression is key to our emotional response. The colours chosen and tonal range give an image meaning. A photographer paints with light and it sets the mood of an image.”



Dr Cindy Chan – Psychologist

Dr Cindy Chan earned her doctor of psychology degree at the University of Hong Kong and she now works in private practice. She has more than 20 years of clinical experience in the assessment and treatment of different kinds of psychological issues and mental disorders. She is also experienced in conducting forensic psychological assessment for the court.

“I began by viewing images in the dataset with relevant keywords, focusing on the themes of Relationships, Youth and Identity. I analysed the images to identify themes and trends and then reflected on key insights that emerged. Finally, I explained the key insights through the psychological perspectives.”



CONCLUSIONS

The team members were impressed by the high quality of images submitted to the NEXT IMAGE Awards, saying the submissions were not so much focused on the aspirational self — which we often see and expect on social media — but on genuine reality. Social media tends to be a filter of the perfect life, the perfect holiday, with people presented at their very best. The NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions, however, proved to be far less self-conscious and more about candid moments and insights into daily life.

“The images show that these camera phones are powerful, turning everyone into not just a consumer of images but a creator,” Fernandez says of the Huawei phones used to create the submitted photographs and videos. “Even the untrained person can become a photographer, capturing moments they find meaningful and creating something they are proud enough of to submit to a contest. It is democratising image production.”

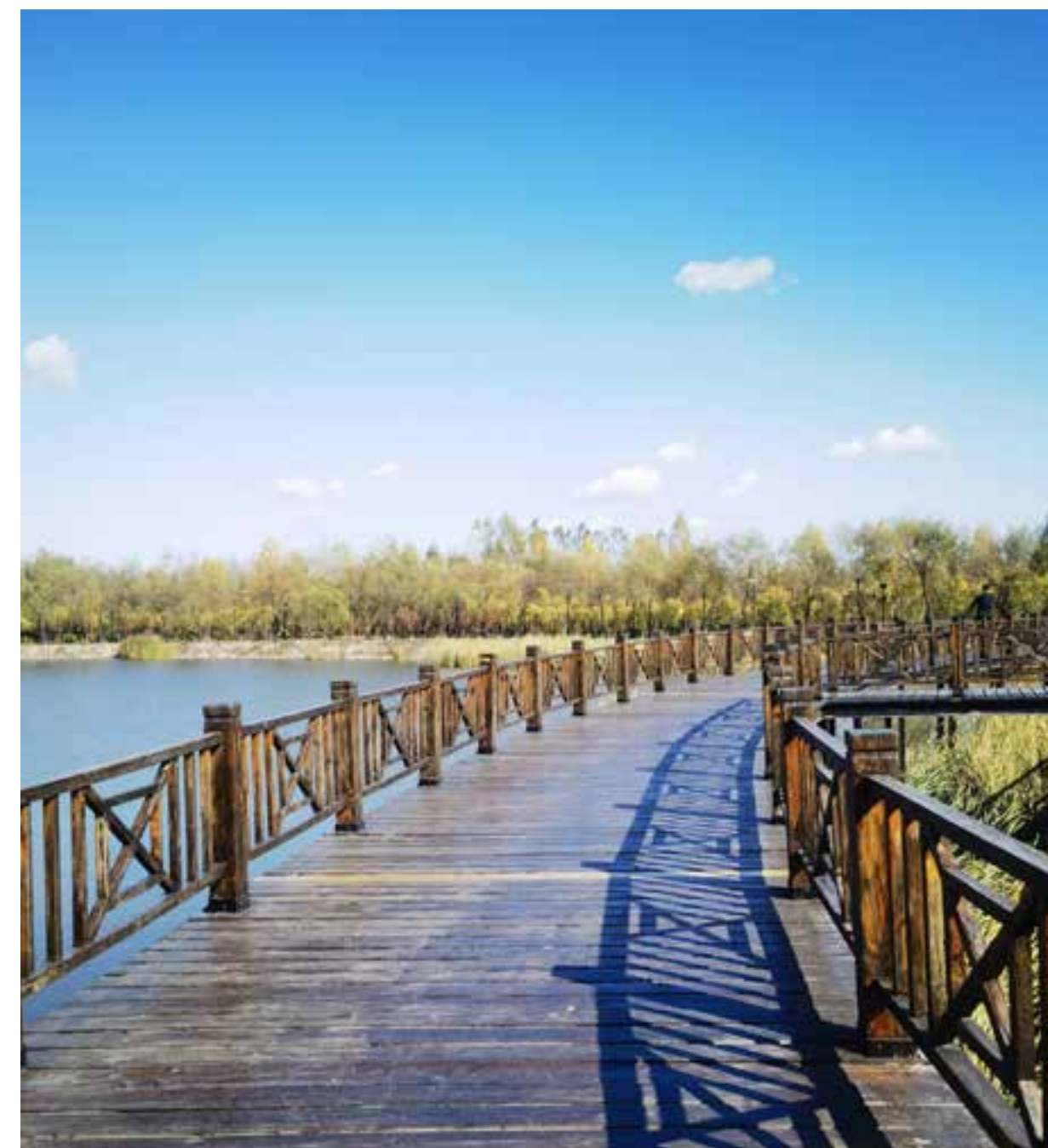




NATURE

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

NATURE



1 The theme of nature predominates across the submissions, but the natural world depicted is generally safe and ordered rather than wild and untamed.

2 A lack of people in the images suggests that nature is associated with solitude, offering respite from cities, but with occasional man-made objects alluding to some human presence.

3 Accounting for 17 per cent of the images, sunsets are a very popular subject, illustrating how the everyday can become sublime with the passage of time.

Nature is clearly highly valued and aesthetically pleasing, with many competition submissions spanning everything from rolling hills and sun-kissed cornfields to a lone daisy by the side of a road.

The AI tagged 80 per cent of all submitted images as somehow linked to nature. In more than a few instances the link is relatively minor — a potted plant on a balcony would make the cut, for example — but in most cases these great-outdoors photos and videos depict a particular vision of the natural world.

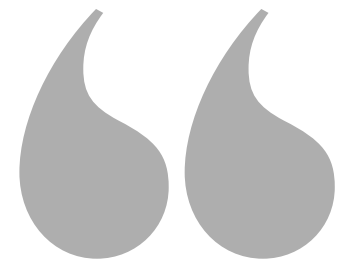


“The photos are not showing nature as wild and dangerous but rather as a place that is safe, ordered and peaceful,” says Fernandez. “While there are images of the danger of nature, they make up a small amount of the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions. The vast majority capture beautiful, inspiring moments that, even though largely devoid of people, are not devoid of inferences to people.”



“The vast majority capture beautiful inspiring moments that, even though largely devoid of people, are not devoid of inferences to people

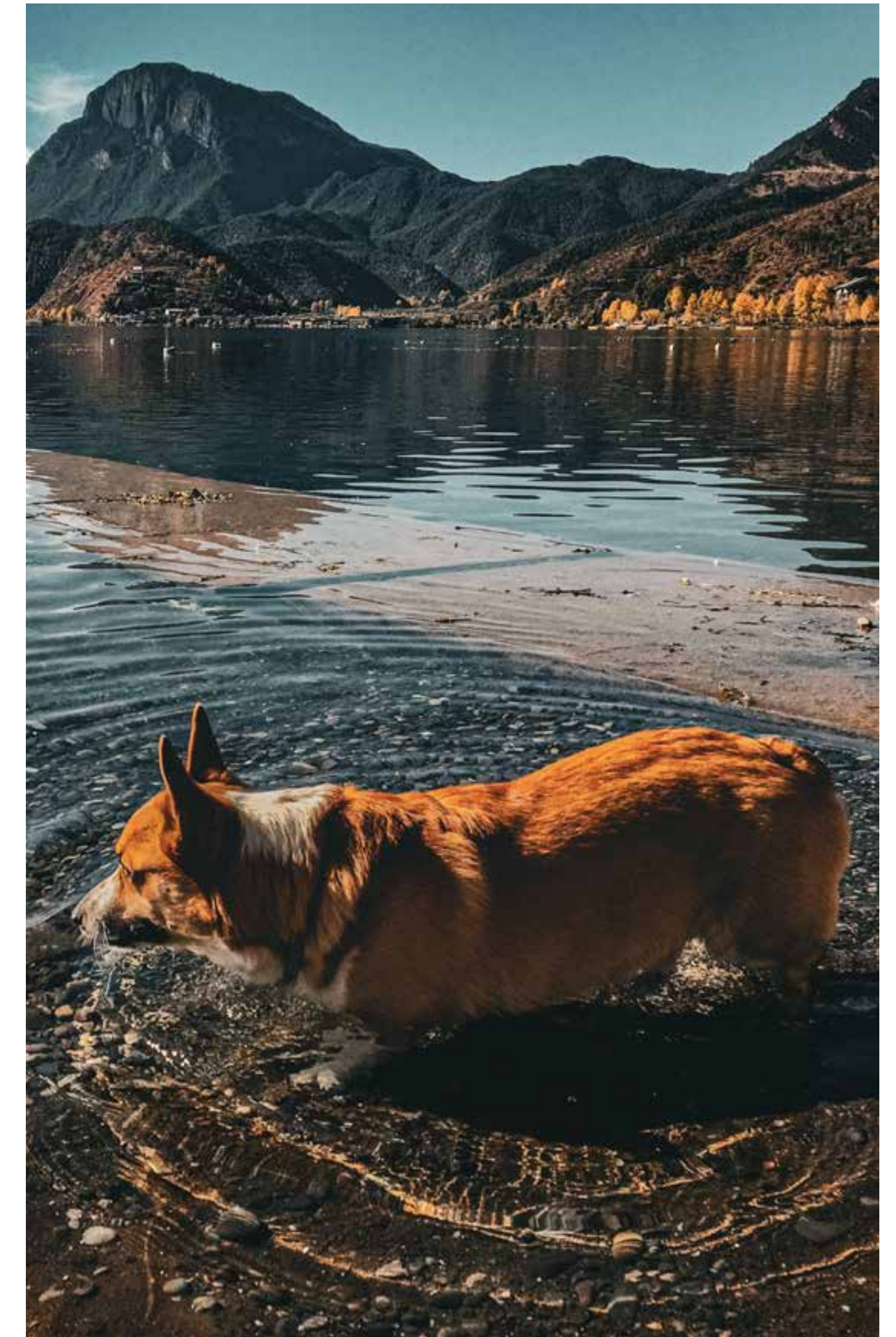
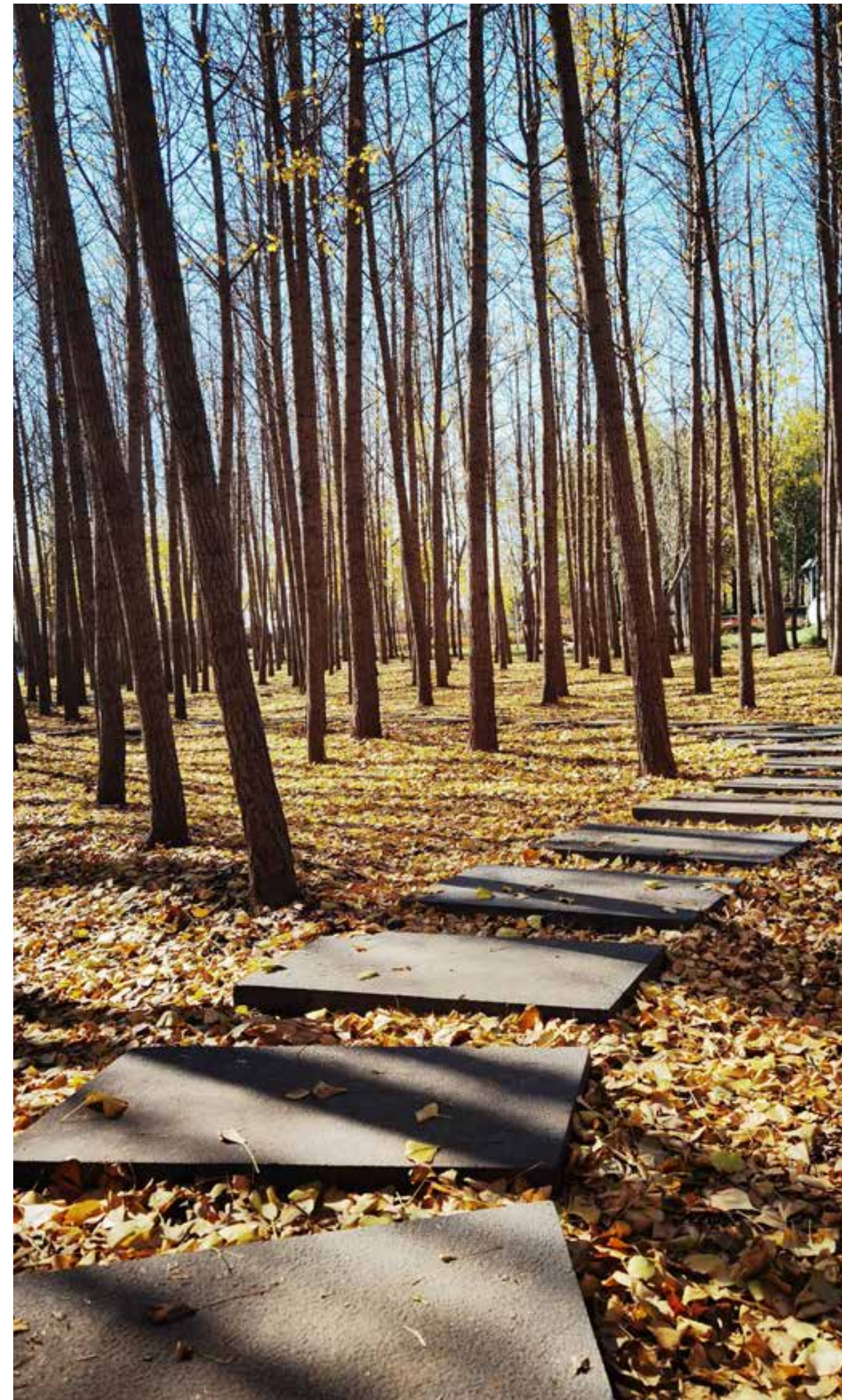
Fernandez



**It is nature as solitude and as
a small respite from the built
environment — not a full escape**

Fernandez

Whether it be through a simple stone path winding between trees or the arch of a wooden bridge in the distance, we are reminded of the presence of people even if they are not seen in the frame. “It is nature as solitude and as a small respite from the built environment — not a full escape,” says Fernandez.





Many of the nature images were either taken from a distance, for a more removed perspective, or they are close-ups, perhaps focusing on a single bloom or water droplets on a leaf. Kim considers these two broad stylistic tendencies — the bold, majestic mountain-scape and the small, intimate moment — within the context of social media.

“By uploading either spectacular or austere images of nature, the photographer can flaunt his or her good fortune at being at the right place and time, as well as his or her talent in composing and framing the image,” he says.

Hromas says the macro images — such as one close-up of a praying mantis on a leaf — might highlight the search for a deeper understanding of the natural world, capturing the detail that cannot easily be seen with the naked eye. And at the other extreme comes astrophotography, which encourages the viewer to contemplate their place in the universe.



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Kim

“If there is a human element in the image — a camper van against the backdrop of the Milky Way — the magnitude of that experience is amplified,” Hromas says. “Having a person in the picture makes it more relatable.”

Hromas also notes that while most of the landscape photos were taken in horizontal format, others are oriented vertically, taking advantage of the Huawei

smartphone camera's elongated image configuration. She sees these as a conscious nod to traditional Chinese ideas of how to visually present landscapes.

"The Western tradition uses the horizontal format and the rule of thirds, but these vertical landscapes hark back to traditional Chinese painting and are quite beautiful," Hromas says.

Sunsets were also a popular subject. Included in 17 per cent of all the images submitted for the competition — these fleeting moments of wonder and awe show how the everyday can become something truly sublime with the passage of time.





“These are examples of images that we would not necessarily have been able to take with a smartphone in the past,” says Fernandez. “However, with the quality cameras on our phones today, now we can take pictures of the amazing sunset that happened during our repetitive daily commute.”

Though they may be clichéd, we are drawn to sunsets for good reason. Visually dramatic, with the sky set afire in a short-lived blaze of reds, oranges and magentas, sunsets might also have multiple symbolic meanings, with hope being among them.

“Coming at the end of the day, sunsets mark the passage of time,” Chan says. “If you have been travelling all day and then come to a beach at sunset, it’s the conclusion of a good day. Or perhaps you might think, ‘I can look forward to tomorrow, it will be a better day tomorrow.’”

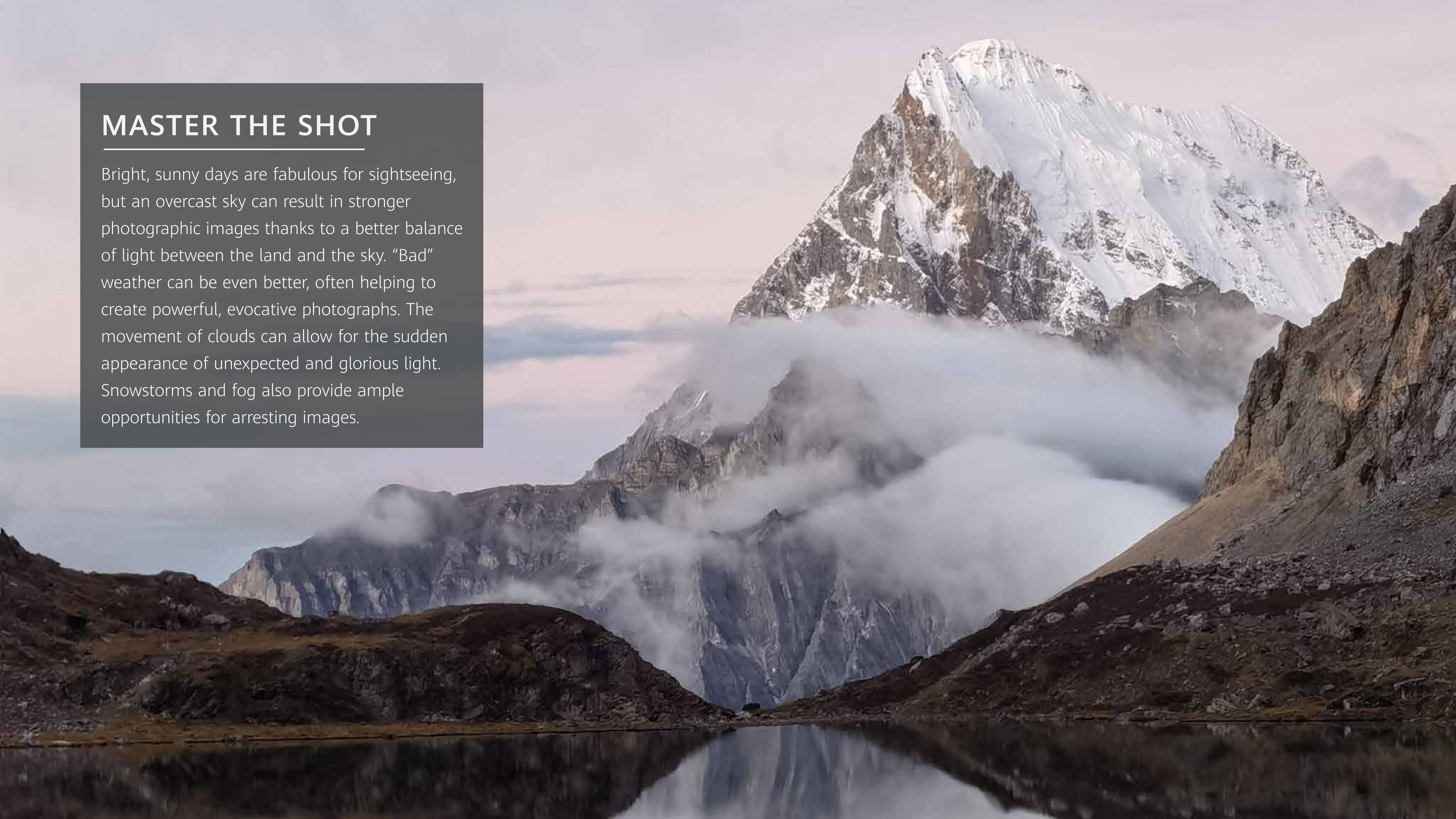
CAPTURE THE WORLD IN ALL ITS GLORY

The upgraded XD Fusion Pro of the Huawei series features True Chroma engine and Super HDR technology, as well as full focal length, all-environment and all-weather image acquisition for better detail, colour and dynamic range. Meanwhile, Huawei’s ultra-wide-angle and telephoto lens innovations enable users to take great nature photos, whether the subject is very close (macro shots) or in the distance.



MASTER THE SHOT

Bright, sunny days are fabulous for sightseeing, but an overcast sky can result in stronger photographic images thanks to a better balance of light between the land and the sky. “Bad” weather can be even better, often helping to create powerful, evocative photographs. The movement of clouds can allow for the sudden appearance of unexpected and glorious light. Snowstorms and fog also provide ample opportunities for arresting images.



A wide-angle photograph of the Shanghai skyline at dusk. The sky is a gradient of purple and blue. The city's lights are visible, reflecting on the water. The Oriental Pearl Tower is prominent on the left, and the Shanghai Tower is on the right. A bridge spans the water in the foreground.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

BUILT ENVIRONMENT



1 An anonymous figure can make a cityscape appear vast and cold, but when people are framed more sympathetically and we can understand their interpersonal relationship, the urban environment becomes a friendlier place.

2

Photographs of old buildings are often framed to create a sense of nostalgia that taps into a shared understanding of the past.



3

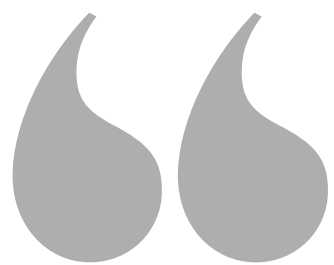
Night shots of cities are about basic shapes, structures and lights, without the daytime clutter, making for more aesthetically pleasing compositions.





The NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions show how many people prefer to photograph our built environment with a good helping of nature also in the mix, whether it be a village nestled in an idyllic valley, a river snaking through a city or a burst of bright flowers in front of a grey apartment block.

“Overall, there is a large blurring between the natural environment and the built environment,” Fernandez says. “This demonstrates that neither are separate from the other. The built environment exists with the natural environment, not separate from it, and the natural environment is not separate from human presence.”



Overall, there is a large blurring between the natural environment and the built environment

Fernandez

Nature, it seems, can add to the aesthetic thrill of a city, but phones are most often pulled out of pockets to capture a specific idea of nature: we like it to be vivid green, with emphasis on healthy trees, or watery, with a plethora of beautiful bays and harbours making up submissions. “We don’t want marshland in the middle of the city, we want an ordered, romantic nature,” says Fernandez.

The built environment is also almost always photographed with another element: if it is not nature, then people will be involved, and often there is a combination of the two. Perhaps a person might be walking down a tree-lined street, for example.

“The external built environment doesn’t show that many people,” says Fernandez. “When people are present in outdoor built environments, they tend to be distant from each other.”

A human figure in motion, walking down a city street, appears anonymous. There is little emotion in the image, and this can make the city appear larger. This completely



changes when people are framed as non-anonymous and we witness their interpersonal relationships, transforming the city into a warmer, friendlier place.

“If there are two people in an image, we make up a story about them depending on how they are seen to be interacting,” says Fernandez. “We put emotion onto them.”

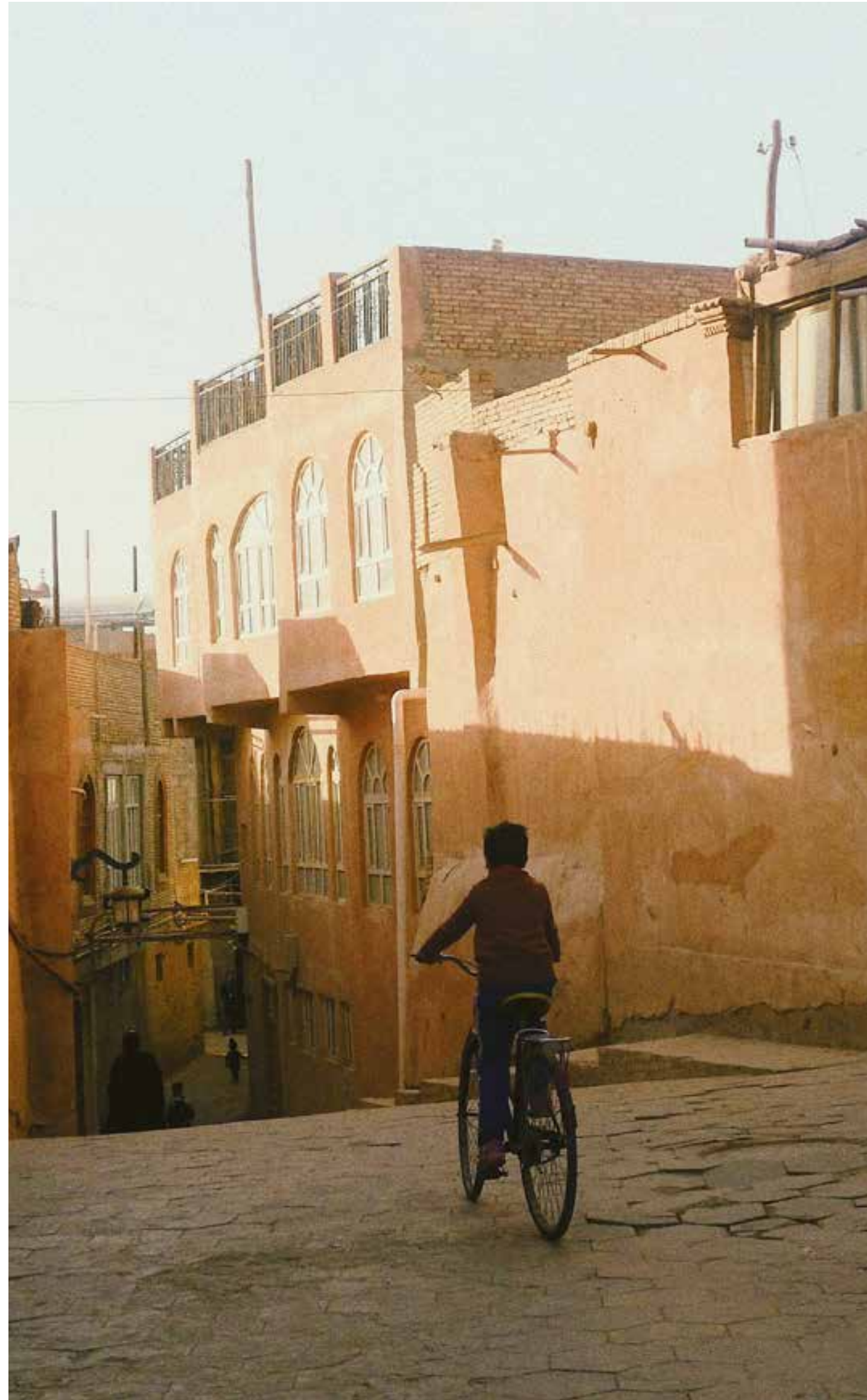
Images of cities are often taken from afar, with the city’s extremities stretching beyond the picture frame and making the urban sprawl appear vast. What’s



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more, images of architecture can be seen as an archive of human existence, and we create these images not only to make a record of the building itself but to draw on the collective memory.

Think of a moody shot of crumbling stone house in the countryside or a weather-beaten wooden hut on a beach. “Photographs of old buildings stimulate people’s shared memory of the past, perhaps from a generation ago, and there is almost always a nostalgic element to these images,” Kim says.

The photographer — consciously or unconsciously — pulls at the heartstrings by using certain symbolic conventions to infuse the images with a lingering sense of nostalgia. They might frame an old building within the confines of a narrow alleyway or focus on the shape of a quaint door.



“These photographers are very aware of their audience,” says Kim. “They are thinking about how the viewer will accept the photograph, and they compose their images with this in mind, trying to put in the nostalgic elements that link the audience to their own past.”

Many arresting and evocative photographs of cities among the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions were shot at night, which tends to strip the urban environment back to its basic hardware. Without the clutter of





daytime, the bare-bone structures and streetlights make for intense and aesthetically pleasing compositions.

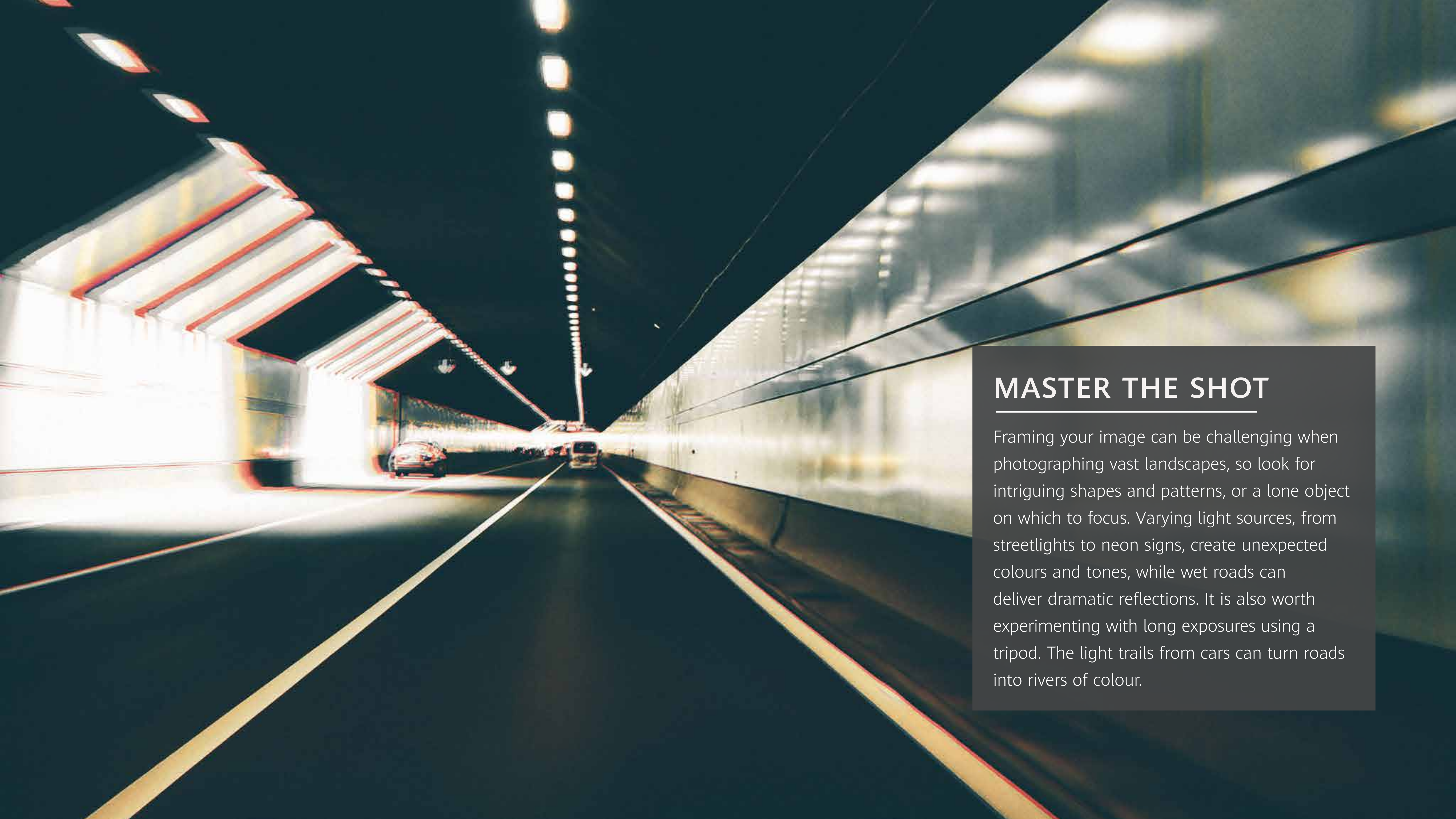
“There’s the sense of it being otherworldly and futuristic when you don’t see the people,” says Hromas. “It’s the light and energy surging through the concrete jungle. Its wild, pulsing with electricity.”

As the majority of people live in cities these days, they make for an easy and accessible subject, with bridges and skyscrapers especially popular. “They are built to be imposing, to be striking,” says Hromas. “The technical feat is there to marvel at, and photographers have not waned in their interest for the mega tower.”

THE BENEFITS OF AI TECHNOLOGY

Huawei announced its first generation of Master AI for the Mate 10 series in 2017, and AI has helped users to create better images ever since. AI modifies the colour rendering and dynamic range in complex sunset and sunrise scenes, and can help users take long exposures without the use of a tripod in Night Mode or Light Painting Mode by capturing and composing multiple frames simultaneously.



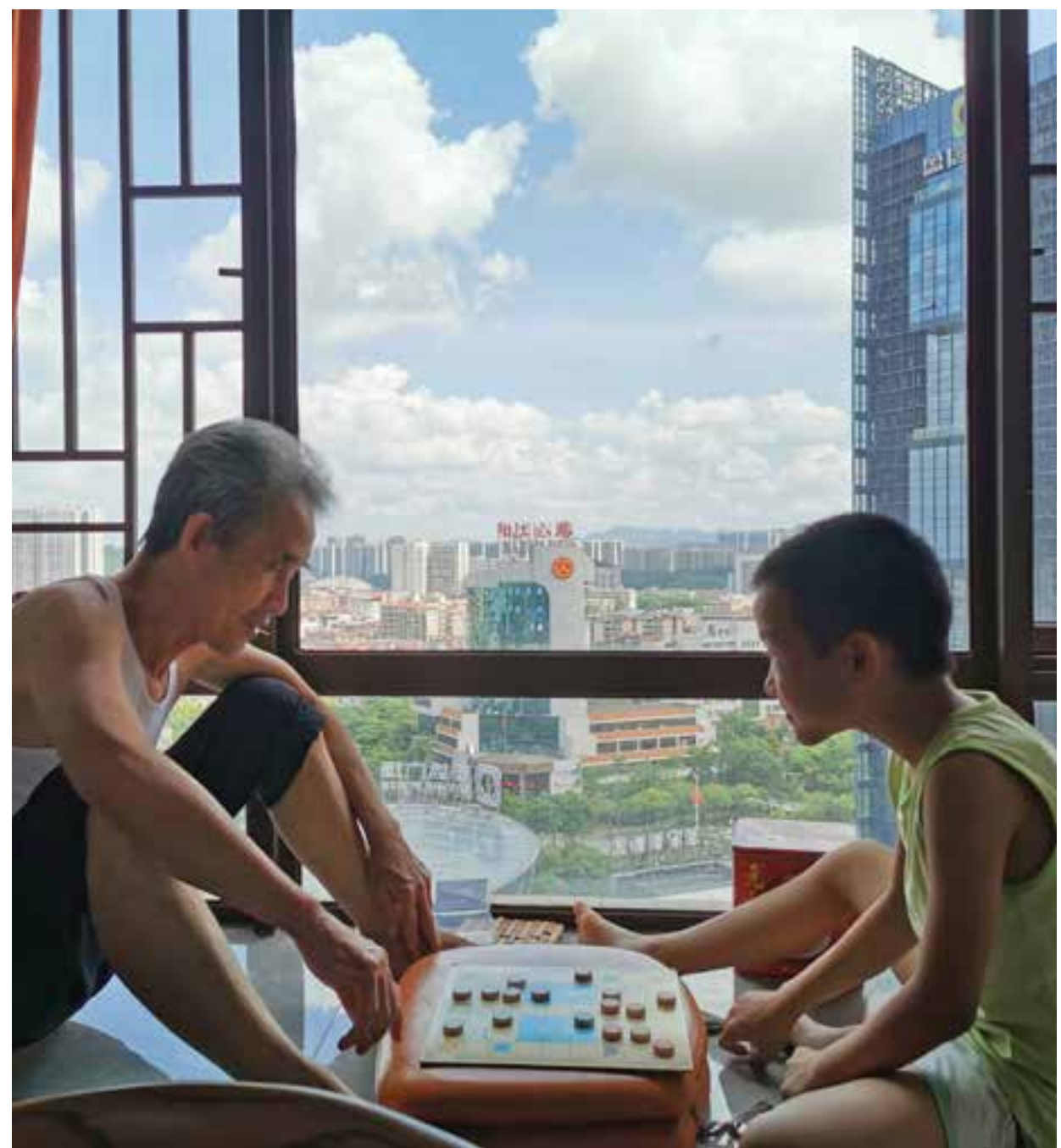


MASTER THE SHOT

Framing your image can be challenging when photographing vast landscapes, so look for intriguing shapes and patterns, or a lone object on which to focus. Varying light sources, from streetlights to neon signs, create unexpected colours and tones, while wet roads can deliver dramatic reflections. It is also worth experimenting with long exposures using a tripod. The light trails from cars can turn roads into rivers of colour.



INDOOR



1 Images taken indoors are intimate, focusing on relationships and displaying an emotional intensity.



2 When devoid of people, images of the home are about constructing an online identity and expressing social status, wealth and taste.



3 Pets add warmth to images. In the world of social media, they may be safer subject matter for a photograph of one's home than a family member.

TOP
THREE
INSIGHTS

INDOOR

Indoor spaces allow for more close-up and intimate images of people, their relationships and their living arrangements. They also make for less posed photos, often showing more emotional intensity. “We see people hugging, doing more intimate activities, like napping. They are in a more vulnerable position,” says Fernandez. “It is less of a public performance and more personal — a peek inside the ‘backstage’.”

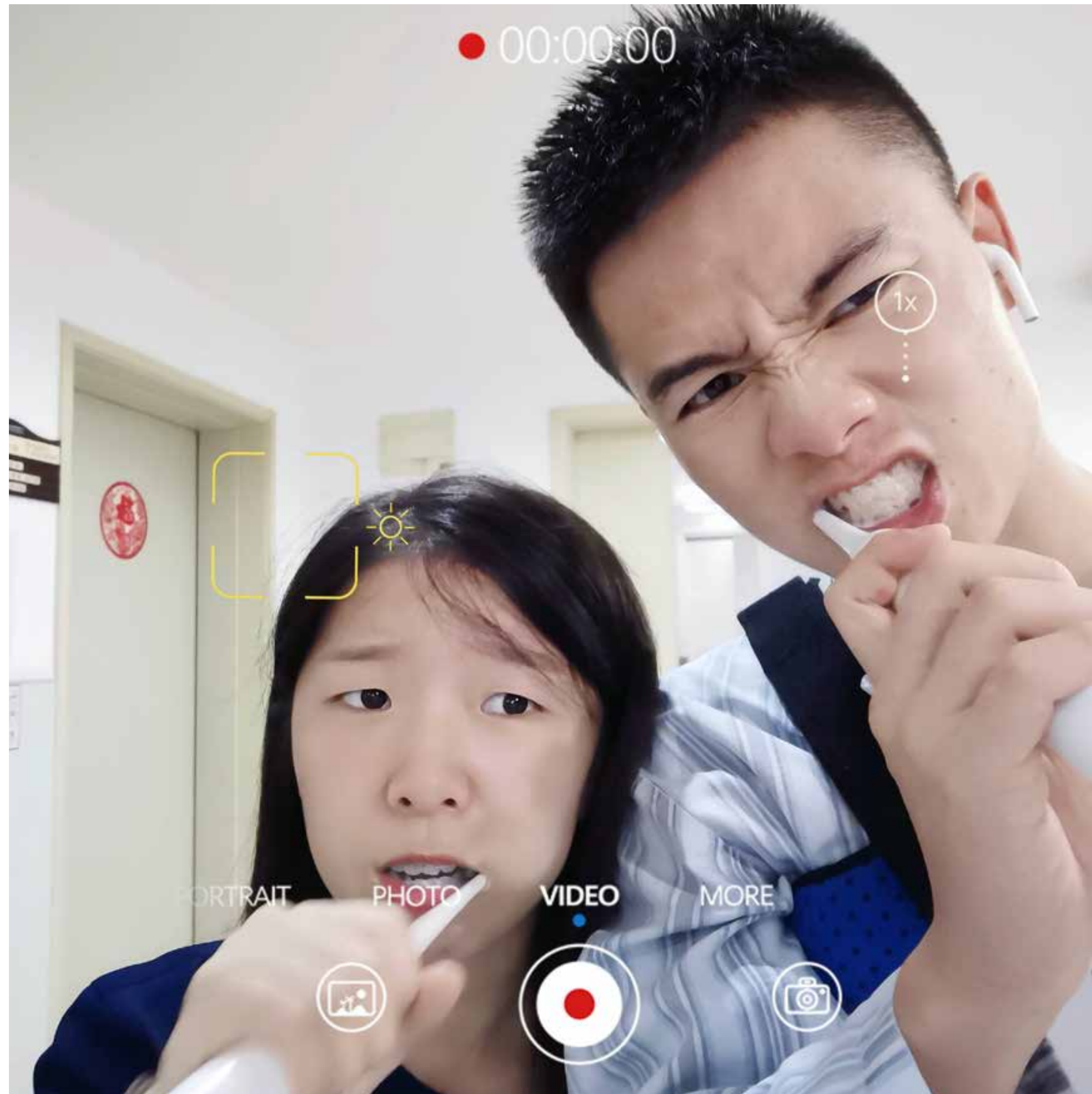
The term “backstage” was coined by 20th-century social scientist Erving Goffman, who used dramaturgical analysis — the idea that our day-to-day lives resemble



the performances of actors on a theatre stage — to understand social interactions. People present themselves differently in the home space. The backstage self is less governed by societal norms, rules and pressures.

“In the backstage, we express solidarity with others, which we see in images where the indoor spaces show social relations and communicate sincerity,” says Fernandez. “They feel like less of a front than the ones we see outdoors.”





And it is not just the setting that changes the way we present ourselves. In Goffman's dramaturgy, the audience — the person viewing the images — also plays a role. Essentially, the backstage is not unaware of the front stage, and that is where we prepare for the performance. "All of these images, though representing less socially restrictive behaviour, are still staged to some degree because they are taken knowing there will be some sort of viewer," says Fernandez.

One fun, quirky photo submission shows a couple cleaning their teeth together. We see their closeness and their willingness to be silly. But while it is a backstage look into the couple's domestic life, and they are clearly letting their guard down, it is still a presentation.



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Fernandez

Kim, meanwhile, notes a clear trend in the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions of people taking staged photos of their home interiors. Devoid of people, these images appear to have been carefully styled, often following the conventions of décor and design magazines.

“Compared to the images of everyday life in public spaces, photographs depicting indoor scenes of homes are rather artificial,” he says. “They are like still-life paintings from the 19th century, displaying a well-arranged combination of living tools and ornaments as objects.”

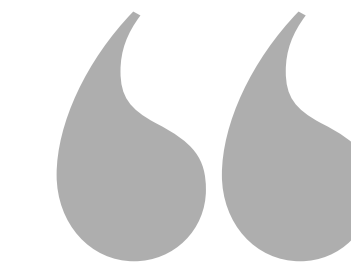
Kim says the meaning behind taking images of one’s home has changed in the age of social media. In the past such images might have had a personal or more family-orientated purpose, but today they are more social and outward-looking.

“The style you choose to decorate your home, the ornaments used to perfect your interior, the products you use in your daily life, the food displayed on your table — it is all related to your expression of social status, wealth or taste,” he says.



Compared to the images of everyday life in public spaces, photographs depicting indoor scenes of homes are rather artificial

Kim



There are many photos of people hugging their pets. This intimate connection with a cat or a dog shows that bonding to others

Chan

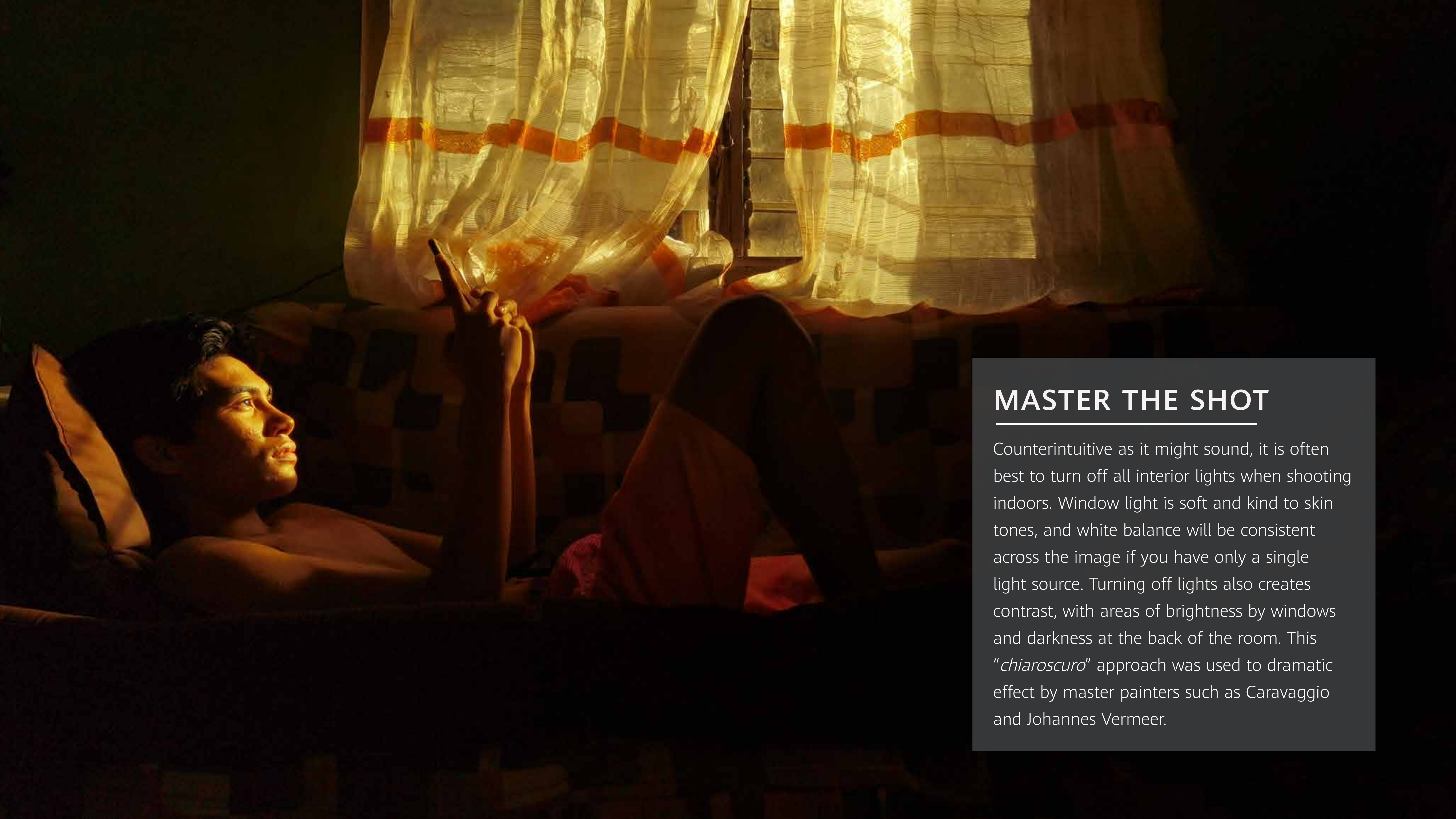
While many of the photographs in the NEXT IMAGE Awards are candid, there is also a clear trend for images of homes that are deliberately styled to look natural. “When you share some part of your intimate life with others, you are allowing that part to be seen as self-image,” Kim says. Pets often populate these pictures, lending a sense of intimacy when no people are present.

Kim says that when an image is intended for a wider audience, showing one’s pet is perhaps considered safer than showing a family member. “In the current media environment, when people are using photo media, homes are not just backstage any more. They have become another front stage when they are shown on social media,” he says.

Whether the images taken indoors are intended to present a relaxed home life or showcase a beautiful interior, the inclusion of a pet adds warmth. “Animals are authentic,” says Chan. “There are many photos of people hugging their pets. This intimate connection with a cat or a dog shows that bonding to others.”

Finally, Fernandez notes that while many of the photos taken indoors are engaging, they are not the most impressive from an aesthetic standpoint. “They are very cute and you can see a lot of emotions in them,” she says, “but I’m not certain they would win a photo contest. They are not as aesthetically nice.”





MASTER THE SHOT

Counterintuitive as it might sound, it is often best to turn off all interior lights when shooting indoors. Window light is soft and kind to skin tones, and white balance will be consistent across the image if you have only a single light source. Turning off lights also creates contrast, with areas of brightness by windows and darkness at the back of the room. This “*chiaroscuro*” approach was used to dramatic effect by master painters such as Caravaggio and Johannes Vermeer.



RELATIONSHIPS

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

RELATIONSHIPS



1 The most important relationships are within the family and they exude a warmth and emotional immediacy that is witnessed across generations.

2

Romantic relationships are relatively rare in the submissions and the images of couples suggest bonding and companionship rather than romantic love or physical intimacy.



3

Men are seen playing an equal role to women in parenting and caring for and playing with the family children outside the home.



Families are at the heart of the relationships images, with warmth and emotion apparent across generations, underscoring the importance of social connection and bonding. It is important to note, however, that such images — with two or more people appearing in a single frame — make up a relatively small subset of the entire database.

The vast majority of photos (73 per cent) feature no people at all, and just 6 per cent show groups. Within that subset, families dominate, particularly those with children.



We see families in fairly intimate settings. These aren't important moments, but ones where they are having fun. They felt sincere

Fernandez





“We see families in fairly intimate settings. These aren’t important moments, but ones where they are having fun. They felt sincere,” says Fernandez. “You see intimate, vulnerable emotions in a family situation. They didn’t feel super-created in the way that images of youth seemed more curated and concerned with how they look.”



For the most part, these photographs appear natural, with family members engaged in casual activities such as eating, drinking and playing outdoors. There is a lightness to the images. “Family is one of the most valued relationships for this group of people. The pictures showcase their harmonious relationships with family members, bonding and showing care and love,” says Chan.



Men are often seen as actively involved in parenting in the photographs, and playing an equal role to women in taking care of and playing with the family children outside the home. “Fatherly roles are becoming more extended,” says Fernandez. “The photos of men with their kids feel sincere and vulnerable, not staged — unlike images you see in the media.”





“Engaging in simple activities with children not only allows parents to show their love and understanding, but helps cement the parent-child bond

Chan

There is also an emotional immediacy to the images of fathers with their children, with many of them showing obvious joy and connection. “They are heart-warming and there’s a lot of warmth and affection,” says Hromas. “You can see a closeness, sometimes they are embracing. It’s not unlike the images of women with their kids.”

Parental bonding was, for the most part, seen in outdoor settings, with families hiking together or playing on the beach. Engaging in simple activities with children not only allows parents to show their love and understanding, but helps cement the parent-child bond, says Chan.

Outdoor environments also allow for physical touching — not only of trees and rocks, which is known in psychology circles as “grounding”, but also between family members in the course of play and sport. “The beach is a good place for families to come together,” says Hromas. “There is more opportunity to be physical in these spaces.”

Romantic relationships are not hugely apparent in this submission subset, and while some photos show couples holding hands, they are in the minority. What’s more, couples are mostly engaged in casual activities, such as walking together or appreciating nature, with the photographs more about bonding and companionship than romance.





“There is a line of intimacy and inappropriateness around couples,” adds Fernandez. “We see stronger emotions and displays of affection in the images of children.”

Food, of course, is used to cement relationships the world over, and many images captured families, loved ones and friends gathered around tables. “We see a lot of food for bonding, fulfilling the need to have a feeling of abundance in the gathering,” says Chan.

“There is a line of intimacy and inappropriateness around couples. We see stronger emotions and displays of affection in the images of children

Fernandez

And let's not forget that the taking of photographs also helps bring people together and improves social interactions. Unsurprisingly, then, many images feature people gazing at smartphone screens, their expressions suggesting happiness as they relive a shared moment.

"Smartphones are becoming the tools of mediating our social life," says Kim. "Even when interacting with each other face to face, even when together in person, we have these devices to share certain emotions, to share memories and initiate conversations."



In this way, smartphones help strengthen and maintain relationships, though some images seem to show family members scrolling on their phones and not engaged with each other. "It's paradoxical [because] for many families this is their way of their bonding," says Chan. "We must be wary of saying they have no bonding or connection, because this may be the way they connect."

ULTRA-WIDE-ANGLE WITH ANTI-DISTORTION

Huawei was the first phone maker to introduce ultra-wide-angle photography. The Huawei Mate 50 Pro features a 13mm ultra-wide-angle lens with a 100x digital zoom capability. The ultra-wide-angle lens has a 120-degree field and 2.5cm ultra-macro option, which works with an anti-distortion algorithm to enhance the experience.



MASTER THE SHOT

When photographing large groups of people, be wary of using a wide-angle lens, which can distort the edges of the image. Step back if you can and use a tighter focal length instead. Photographing two people can be notoriously tricky. Avoid having them stand side by side and try different positions, such as one forward and one back, or one sitting and one standing.





IDENTITY

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

IDENTITY



1 Women in their 20s are most highly visible in the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions, with twice as many females as males appearing from this age group.

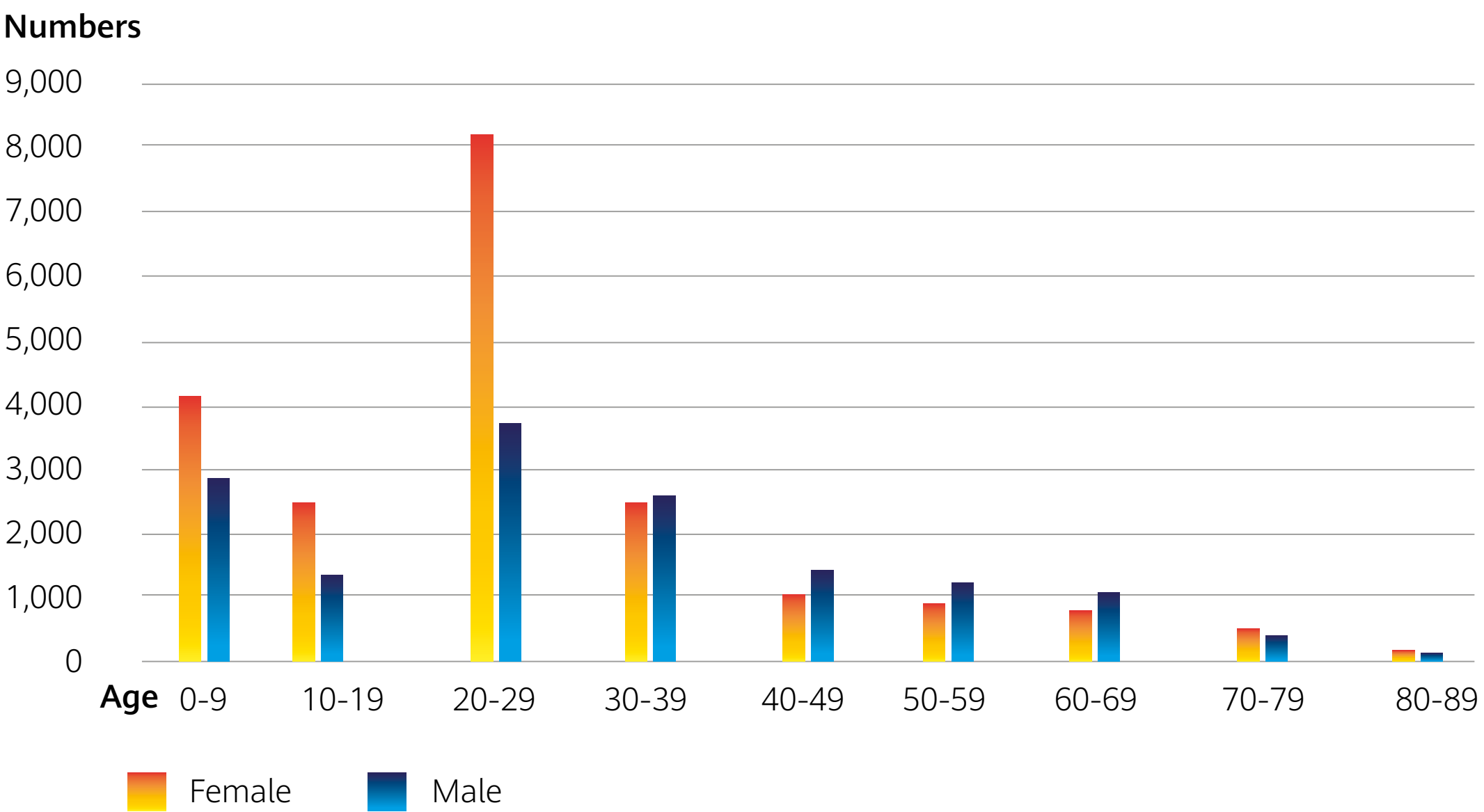
2 People become less visible in middle age, especially women. While males aged 40 to 60 account for 30.4 per cent of the images of men, only 10.7 per cent show women in midlife.

3 Women in their 20s often pose in ways reflecting that they are valued in society for their youth and beauty. They are often in control of the images, however.



There is not a huge disparity in the numbers of men and women in the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions but a gulf opens up with age. Women are highly visible in their 20s — more than twice as many women as men feature in this age group — and there are significant differences in the way the two are presented.

YOUTH & VISIBILITY



Before we go any further, it is important to acknowledge that the images were analysed based on normative ideas of gender, with the analysts not privy to the individuals photographed.

Women are seen posing more often than men and in ways that focus on their youth and beauty — qualities that society values most in females. Women are also strongly associated with nature and many shots present them in fields or with flowers — or both. Most photographs were taken in everyday scenarios, not on special occasions, with many often reflecting corporate or advertising images.





“Women are more conscious of their image,” says Hromas. “They want to look pretty and appealing. The clothes are thought out, very orchestrated, and sometimes there are filters on the skin. The gaze is off-camera.”

While we have no way of knowing whether each image was created by a man or a woman, or what they intended to do with the images, Fernandez cautions against assuming that conformity to a feminine ideal suggests a lack of agency. “Women have more sense of self in how they represent themselves and within that there is empowerment,” she says.

“ **Women have more sense of self in how they represent themselves and within that there is empowerment**

Fernandez



Kim draws attention to images that challenge the male gaze, a style he refers to as the “reverse gaze” and in which the female subject stares defiantly at the camera with an uncompromising look, such as one shot of an elderly woman with a heavily lined face.

“This gaze tells us that she knows a lot about the world,” Kim says. “Women’s bodies ... are commodified, and photographs have contributed to that for more than 100 years. But the reverse gaze challenges that, it shows how the conventional male gaze can be undermined.”

Men pose in different ways to women in the submissions and are more often active, whether they are building a campfire, working in the home or talking to someone off camera.

“For men it is less about aesthetic appearance and more about the things they do, their job, how much money they make, how smart they are, what sport they play,” says Fernandez. “We allow men to have more freedoms than women, particularly in the visual sphere.”

Both men and women are less visible in middle age, and this is especially true of women. While men aged 40 to 60 account for 30.4 per cent of the images of men, only 10.7 per cent of the pictures of women show them in midlife.



For men it is less about aesthetic appearance and more about the things they do, their job, how much money they make, how smart they are, what sport they play

Fernandez



MULTI-SPECTRUM SENSOR FOR VIVID COLOUR DETAIL

With the help of a multi-spectrum colour temperature sensor and the AI AWB algorithm, Huawei manages to better recreate colours, texture, light and shadow, bringing out the radiance of people's skin even in backgrounds with complex light conditions. This can retain the delicate texture of the skin, restore vivid details and use light and shadow to make the face more three-dimensional.

People in this age group are mostly seen in the context of family. Rather than taking pictures of themselves, the middle-aged are more likely to take photos of, or with, their children, yet the images are still constructed.

“They want to portray themselves as good parents and show the importance of having well-behaved children,” says Chan. “They seldom show photos of their children having a temper tantrum or throwing food around. Most of the photos are of happy kids. We can see they are good parents.”





MASTER THE SHOT

Excellent portrait photography reveals something unique about the subject, or an aspect of their character that is rarely seen, so they need to feel safe, comfortable and relaxed. Having too many people around may make the sitter feel self-conscious, so keep numbers down or restrict things to just the photographer and subject. Experiment with the direction of the sitter's gaze — a direct look into the camera can be powerful.



YOUTH

TOP
THREE
INSIGHTS
YOUTH

1 Adolescents obtain a sense of belonging through their peers. The group selfie is a way of forging inclusion and acceptance.



2 Young children are full of energy, their movements are spontaneous and unpredictable. When they do sit still for the camera, there is often a shyness to them, but it is not the self-consciousness of teenagers, whose images are often well crafted and curated.

3 Inter-generational images, where a child is seen with an elderly person, speak to the presence of the child's parent, who most likely composed the shot to capture both a moment in time and the cycle of life.





“There is a dynamism to the pictures of young kids. They are often hard to control, their movements unpredictable, and that spontaneity is a powerful agency

Kim

Young children do not often pose for photographs, rather they are moving targets and an explosion of energy that charges across the frame. As they become older, they become more self-conscious and aware of their appearance, and their images are more crafted and curated.

“There is a dynamism to the pictures of young kids,” says Kim. “They are often hard to control, their movements unpredictable, and that spontaneity is a powerful agency.”

Fernandez observes that when children do sit still for the camera there is often a shyness to them, but it is not the self-consciousness that comes with social pressure, as seen with teenagers. “Kids tend to be more sincere in their emotions and do not mask them,” she says. “If you want images with emotion, go to the pictures of kids, or of kids with adults.”



Kids tend to be more sincere in their emotions and do not mask them

Fernandez



In their teenage years, young people begin to develop and experiment with their identity. This can be most obviously be seen in the “selfie”, says Chan.

“This is the time for young people to find themselves,” she says. “It is normal that adolescents are more self-centred. They are concerned with their physical appearance, especially their face. Selfies are a way for young people to seek attention and approval. They are more concerned with external validation, reassurance that they look good, than knowing their inner self.”



This is the time for young people to find themselves

Chan

Adolescents tend to imitate and obtain a sense of belonging through their peer groups and group activities with their friends are a very important part of their lives, Chan adds. A group of young friends squeezed into a frame, shoulder to shoulder, for a “group selfie” is a way of cementing friendship and forging a sense of inclusion and acceptance.

Before the popularity of selfies, group shots entailed one person stepping out of the group to take the picture, but with selfies you see everyone, no one is left out, and the group itself is actively involved in constructing the shot as they arrange themselves in the camera display.



“There is a closeness to a selfie,” Fernandez says. “They get discounted a lot, but there is so much agency in how you are seen and constructed. The selfie has become so important that phones are now designed to make it easier to take selfies. We don’t often treat them with the respect they deserve. A person taking one can really own their representation. They have more control over their image, more say over their identity.”

Hromas says smartphones are unleashing an autobiographical revolution, with selfies playing a central role. As with most things in the digital era,



there are positive and negatives to this, and Hromas wonders: “Is the selfie about private memories or the ultimate symbol of the narcissistic age?”

“Some people would argue the selfie is about a visual diary, others would say it is empowering as it means that people are in control of their own image,” she says. “There is no denying they are hugely popular and we see a lot of them in the NEXT IMAGE Awards.”



The contrast delivers the message that the young will be the future generation, and the old will be the ones to hand over to the younger generation

Kim

The selfies in NEXT IMAGE Awards are often enhanced with heart and flower stickers, or cartoon characters, sometimes judiciously placed to hide an element in the photo, and other times to convey a message, perhaps of cuteness or romance, says Chan.

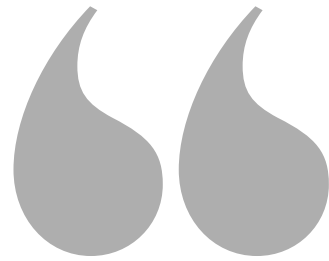
There are some striking inter-generational images in this subset, where we see a child posing with an elderly person. The focus is usually on their faces, the youngster's youthful skin contrasting with the wrinkled features of the older subject, underscoring the gulf between the generations.

Kim says the photographer in each case was likely a parent of the child: "The contrast delivers the message that the young will be the future generation, and the old will be the ones to hand over to the younger generation."

Essentially, the images of children with adults produce some of the most heart-warming and emotively powerful shots in the NEXT IMAGE

Awards. “The relationship between grandparent and child is a beautiful thing,” says Hromas. “It’s the cycle of life.”

Chan observes that the images of the elderly are for the most part of men and women with obvious wrinkles, their maturity and age are impossible to ignore. While the young have clear complexions, the occasional use of filters has made their skin appear even smoother than in reality. “The heavily lined faces make for a romantic view of the elderly,” Chan says. “Perhaps the photographer thinks the wrinkles make for a more striking image. It’s an archetypal view of old people.”



The heavily lined faces make for a romantic view of the elderly

Chan



MASTER THE SHOT

Selfies shot from a slightly higher elevation tend to be more flattering. Note that the direct flash from the phone can be harsh, especially in low-light situations, so consider using an inexpensive, hand-held LED light. A high lumen output mimics natural daylight and gives great photography results. Look for an LED light with a brightness rating of about 1,000 lumens.

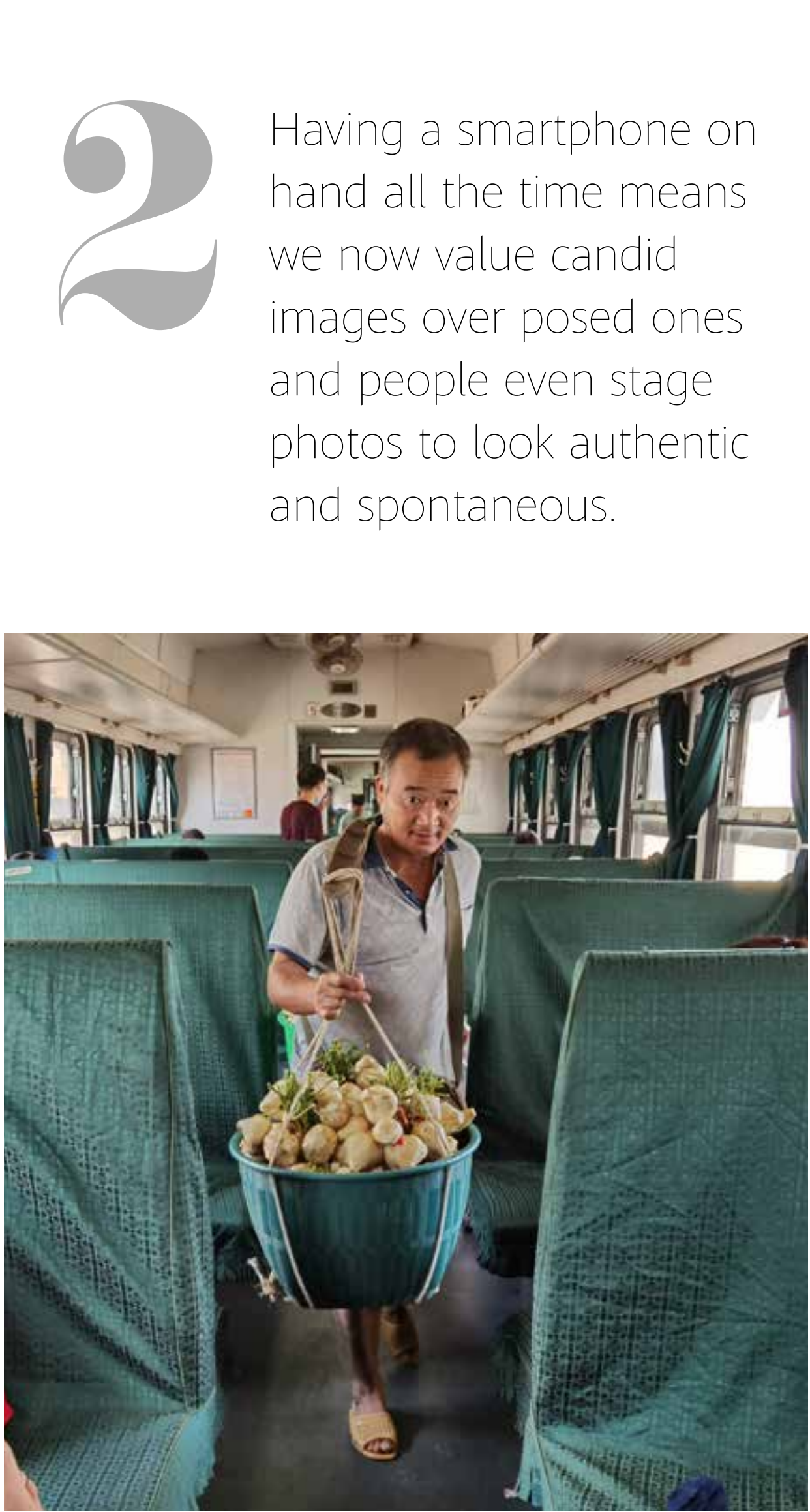




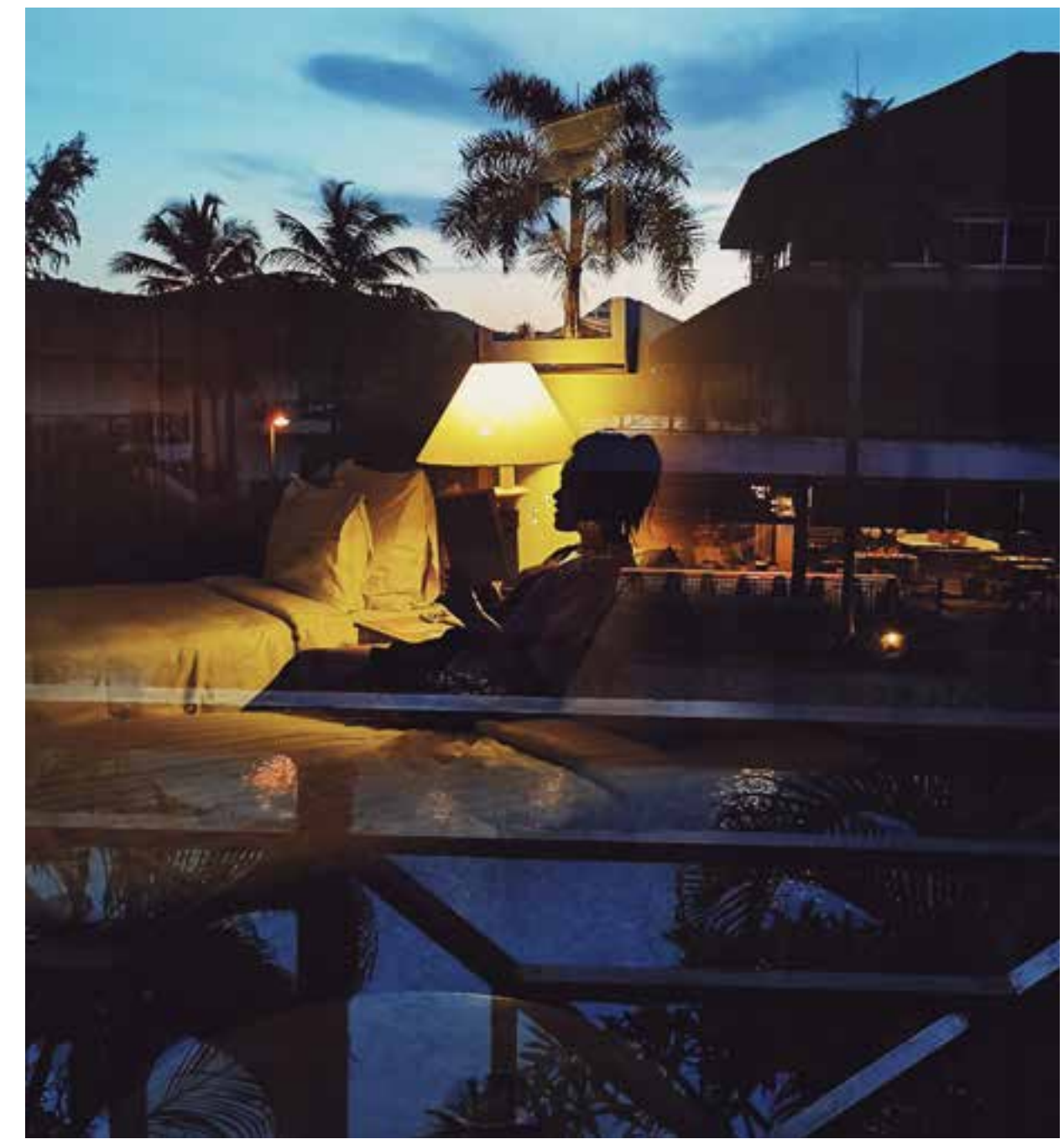
EVERYDAY



1 Pockets of beauty and happiness are to be found in the everyday and otherwise mundane. The act of taking the photograph can give a moment value and meaning.



2 Having a smartphone on hand all the time means we now value candid images over posed ones and people even stage photos to look authentic and spontaneous.



3 Everyday images, often snapped instinctively with little forethought, can turn up some unexpected treasures and surprises.

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

EVERYDAY



The everyday is generally considered mundane and routine, but these images show us that life often produces moments of excitement, charm and intimacy. “It is here that we see pockets of beauty and happiness,” says Fernandez. “There is joy and relationships, community and fun.”

While photos taken from afar can find joy in the everyday, it is in the close-ups, usually taken indoors, that we see the real magic in small moments. While the subject matter might not necessarily be immediately attractive or interesting, it is the photographer’s perspective that adds the value.

“ It is here that we see pockets of beauty and happiness — there is joy and relationships, community and fun

Fernandez



“These quiet moments in the everyday — walking down the street, passing a flower — are made beautiful because the photographer has given them meaning through the act of photographing them,” says Fernandez.

An ethnographer is someone who studies different peoples and cultures, their customs, habits and differences. The challenge for the traditional



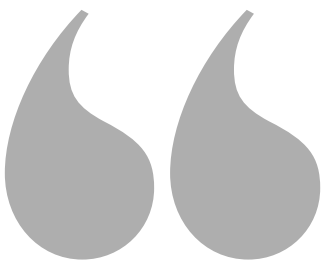


ethnographer was to not be observed as they raised an unwieldy SLR camera with a bulky lens, but the modern ethnographer — and everyone with a smartphone can now play this role — can pretend they are scrolling while they snap a discreet shot.

“As a result, these photos show us very unstaged images of people going about their everyday errands,” says Kim. “Photos showing the impassive faces of passengers standing or sitting on a metro car, or waiting at the platform, demonstrate the smartphone camera’s anonymous and permeating nature as a recording medium.”

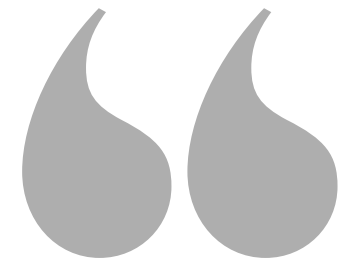
Many of us spend much of our days surrounded by strangers, notably as we travel to and from work. It is a space so familiar that we often do not pay much attention, and yet the daily commute is where we see the most striking images in this photographic theme.

“There is nothing as soul-wrenching as commuting, with everyone packed together,” says Fernandez. “It’s so impersonal, socially weird, and yet it can have unpredictable moments of the sublime and breath-taking. Composition and lighting can show the beauty in the mundane of, say, a man leaving a station or blurred commuters changing trains.”



There is nothing as soul-wrenching as commuting, with everyone packed together

Fernandez



They deliver truths that the photographer didn't recognise at the time, and it's the task of the viewer to interpret them afterwards

Kim



The images taken on a daily commute stand out as unique in the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions by delivering a truth that artificially arranged compositions cannot convey, says Kim. And Fernandez believes that having a camera with us all the time, enabling us to capture authentic emotions and actions, is changing the way we take photos.

"It means we have the option to take pictures of different things, of everything, and we now see people staging photos to look authentic or spontaneous because we value the everyday more," she says.

Often taken quickly, snapped in the blink of an eye, these images routinely turn up visual treasures. "They deliver truths that the photographer didn't recognise at the time, and it's the task of the viewer to interpret them afterwards," says Kim. "Those are the kind of truths you don't get in an artificially arranged composition."

Smartphones are now almost an extension of the human body and many of us walk around gripping our phones in our hands. The devices are so ubiquitous, in fact, that they actually populate many images. They are not the intended subject but background detail: a man riding a motorbike has his phone pressed to his ear; a pedestrian strikes out across a road crossing, all the while gazing at her mobile.

“We see people holding their smartphones very tightly,” says Kim. “They unconsciously think these phones are very important in their life, they don’t want to lose them. Not just because they are expensive, but because they connect them to the world.”





It harks to the genre of documentary photography that seems somehow more sincere

Hromas



And more than a few of the images in the everyday theme were shot in black and white, or later converted to black and white. “It harks to the genre of documentary photography that seems somehow more sincere,” says Hromas. “By making the image black and white, it gives it gravitas, making it seem a more important, serious image.”

TRUE-FOCUS FAST CAPTURE

Many of the moments people want to keep in their lives involve children, pets or sports, but capturing a subject in motion is not easy, and photos may come out blurry. The Huawei Mate 50 series features high-speed focusing, zero-delay shutter, intelligent exposure reduction and motion-blur reduction technologies, helping users to capture all the action with ease.



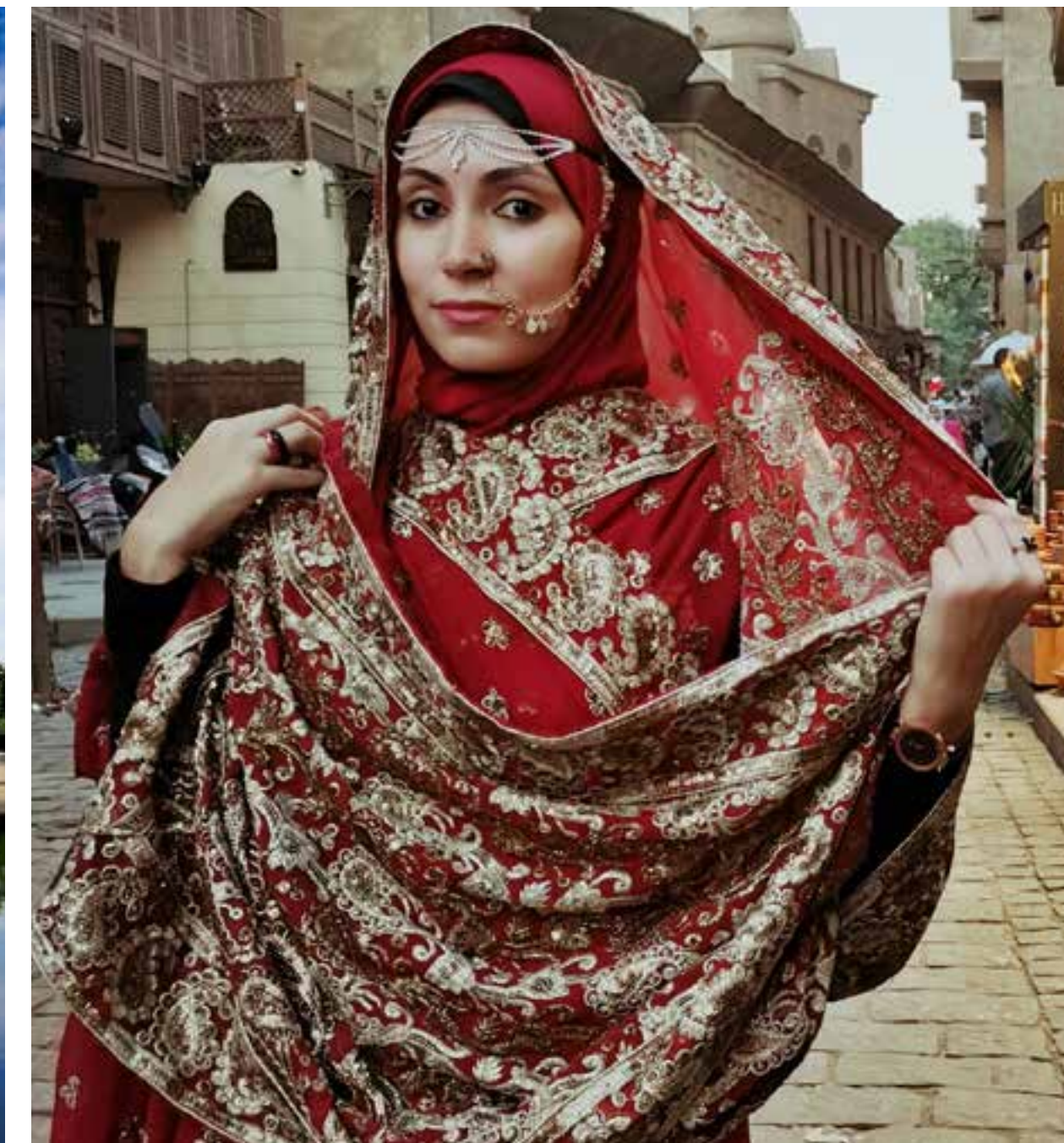
MASTER THE SHOT

Reconsider your everyday surroundings and you could shoot something extraordinary. Try to steer clear of stereotypes and clichéd imagery to get a unique take on a place. Don't be afraid of the ugly and unattractive — such scenes and subject matter can tell a deeper story and be thought-provoking.





CULTURAL HERITAGE



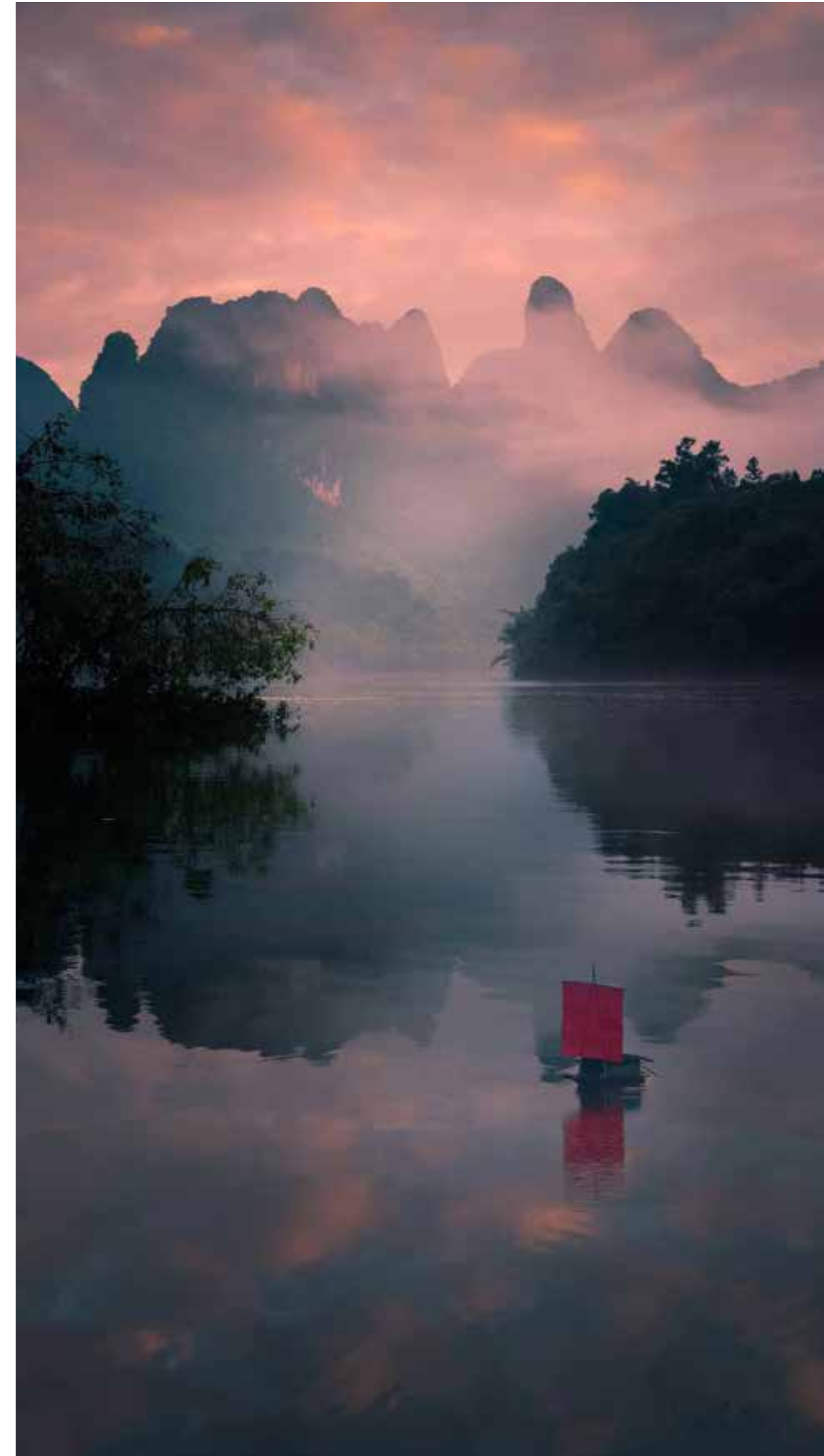
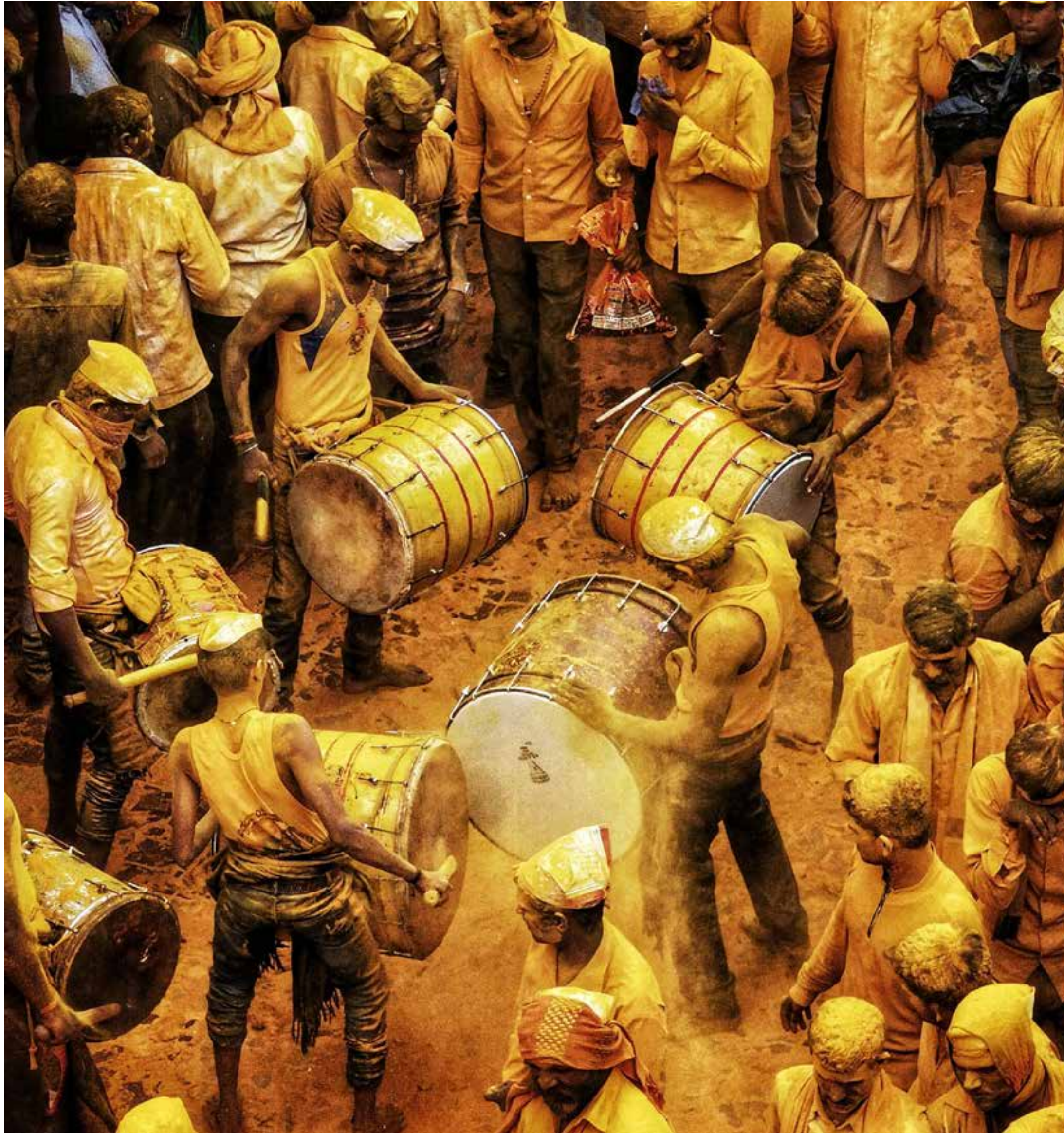
1 In the search for authenticity, particularly in rural towns and villages, the photographer often stages shots to recreate a nostalgic view of the past.

2 Many photos taken at cultural heritage sites are framed so that the photographer appears to be the only person there. These shots perhaps unconsciously mimic the tourism marketing they saw before their visit.

3 The images show more women in traditional clothes than men, which may be because females have long been used to represent ethnic or national identity.

TOP THREE INSIGHTS

CULTURAL HERITAGE

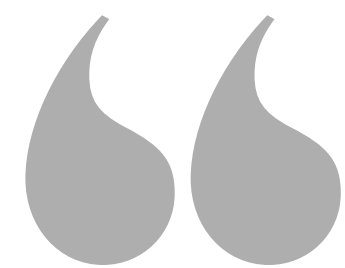


Cultural heritage can be seen in both the bold, noisy spectacle — a temple ablaze with strings of coloured lights; a young man with his arm raised above a ceremonial drum — and in quieter moments, often in scenes of rural idyll.

There are many examples of the former, with heritage sites transformed into tourist destinations that attract large crowds, especially on holidays. These sites are usually marketed with brochures and advertising, and Fernandez says that many of the images appear to be attempts to replicate such promotional materials.

“They are taking the photo in a specific way, trying to eliminate the hordes of tourists, and creating a romantic idea of the destination — the same tourist stereotype that they were sold,” says Fernandez.

In one image of a woman raising her smartphone to take a picture of a Buddha carved into the side of a mountain, the tilt of her phone suggests that she has chosen to exclude the many other tourists. “Often people want a photo without other people in it, so it appears they are the only ones at the site,” says Fernandez. “But by omitting the people, it may be hard to tell the scale of the Buddha.”



Often people want a photo without other people in it, so it appears they are the only ones at the site

Fernandez





Cultural heritage in more remote areas also offers insights into what draws us to such places — and how we consume and share the experience. “This is the opposite of the spectacle but fulfils our nostalgic and romantic constructions of the past,” Fernandez says.

Kim says that at these quieter sites, which are often in the countryside, tourists seek out what they believe are authentic features of the destination: a farmer ploughing fields with a water buffalo, or an elderly woman bent over a wooden loom, for example.

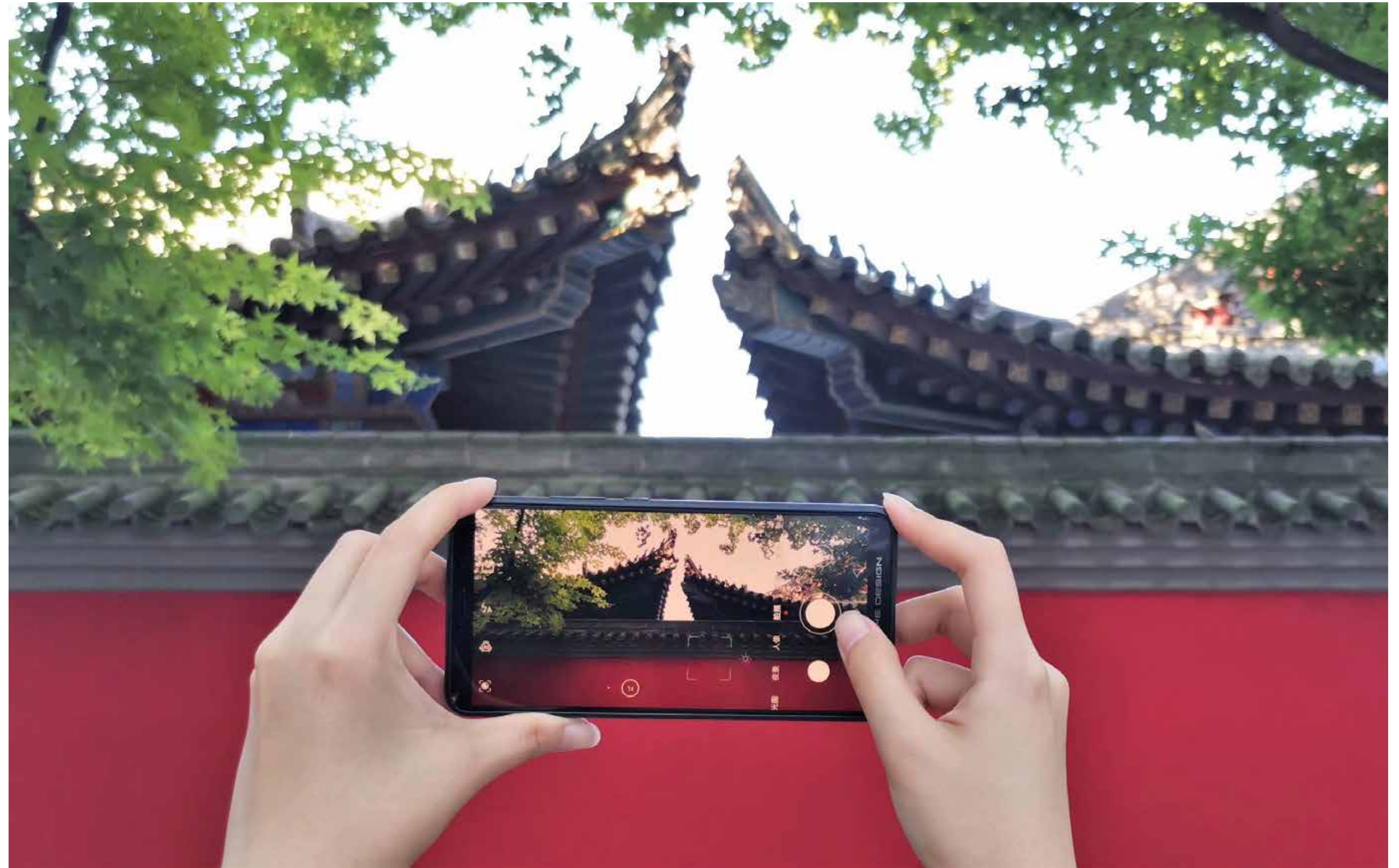


“The resident service providers of the destination make their best efforts to perform authentically, even though they are already living a very similar lifestyle to the tourists in the modernised world,” says Kim, who also suspects that the visitors are well aware that the locals no longer hold fast to the lifestyle and traditions of the past. They seek out such representations to share on social media nonetheless.

“As proof of being there, at the authentic destination, the photographer plans, designs and composes what will be put in the frame, how those objects will be shown, and what kinds of special effects they can mobilise to get the best result,” Kim says.

And as at the large cultural heritage sites, the photographer often frames the picture to leave out other tourists. “Sometimes they get family members in the frame,” says Kim. “They want it to appear that they and the cultural heritage are the only two parties confronting each other.”

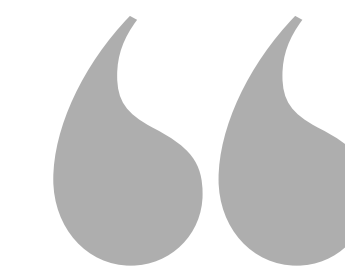
On the drive to recreate the past and the traveller’s quest to find and record exotic places seemingly lost in time, Hromas notes that there are far more resulting photographs of women than men in traditional attire. “Do women like to dress up more than men?” she wonders.



There is certainly a trend for female travellers to pose in ethnic dress in compositions that they then share on social media, and perhaps on dating apps. But this does not address all the pictures of women in traditional clothing.

“Women have been used as the carrier of indigenous, ethnic, cultural or national identities in photographic representations, and this has a long history,” says Kim. “Even in the contemporary era, we see similar ways of women’s overrepresentation in the photography of cultural identities. Women are an easy representational tool to summarise cultural identity.”

Beyond the obvious photographs of cultural heritage as spectacle in the NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions, Fernandez says it is also communicated in smaller, more subtle ways, such as through food. “It permeates through everything and is a subconscious construction of identity,” she says.



Women have been used as the carrier of indigenous, ethnic, cultural or national identities in photographic representations, and this has a long history

Kim





MASTER THE SHOT

Whether exploring a foreign culture with ancient traditions or a culture closer to home, try not to disrupt the natural flow of proceedings. Aim to capture candid moments and facial expressions that cannot be rehearsed. Sometimes the best shots are not of the main event or festival, but of what is going on backstage and on the fringes. They might even be of the spectators themselves.

TECHNOLOGY



TOP THREE INSIGHTS

TECHNOLOGY



1 Humans are social creatures that need to connect to feel a sense of security and safety, and smartphones facilitate that connection.

2 When we see older adults using smartphones in mainstream media, they are often the brunt of jokes about their inexperience with technology. This is an outdated cliché — older adults are well adept at using smartphones.



3 A quirky aspect of the digital era is that when we encounter beauty, we derive satisfaction by recording it. We appear to want “ownership” even if we never look at the image again.



Technology is such a huge part of our lives that it can be seen in many NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions, for the most part in the background rather than being actively used. The significant exception is the mobile phone.

“Smartphones are seen being used and enjoyed, for entertainment, to escape into and to connect with. They are part of people’s daily lives,” says Fernandez. “Mobile phones in some of the images are present as if having another person in the frame.”

Human-computer interaction (HCI) is the study of how people interact with computers, and to what extent computers are developed for successful interaction with humans. Every picture in the NEXT IMAGE Awards could be seen through HCI as a literal lens into how people engage with technology. The image is the result of the interaction. But we also see people interacting with their phones, often when someone is pictured looking over their friend’s shoulder at their mobile.

“When we are face-to-face with friends, we can use the phone to show pictures taken a few days ago, which might be a conversation starter,” says Chan. “Mobiles are a good medium to facilitate connection. When friends gather and take a selfie to record the moment, it serves the purpose of connection. People are social creatures, we need to connect to feel a sense of security and safety.”

People are seen using phones and taking photographs with them in ways we would expect, but what the NEXT IMAGE Awards analysts also

“When we are face-to-face with friends, we can use the phone to show pictures taken a few days ago, which might be a conversation starter

Chan



found — and found striking — was the number of pictures of older adults holding phones, which is not often seen in mainstream media.

“In a popular culture setting, what we get when we see older adults using phones is that they are either being marketed to or they are the brunt of a joke,” says Fernandez. “That trope is outdated and clichéd. In these images we see older adults using phones just fine.”

There is also a fashion for photographing people taking photos, often putting the subject’s viewfinder into sharp focus so that we can see what they are seeing.

“This glimpse into someone’s perspective, seeing what they are looking at, it’s like peeking into their inner thoughts,” says Fernandez. “We are seeing how the technology is being used in daily life to achieve happiness and personal goals.”



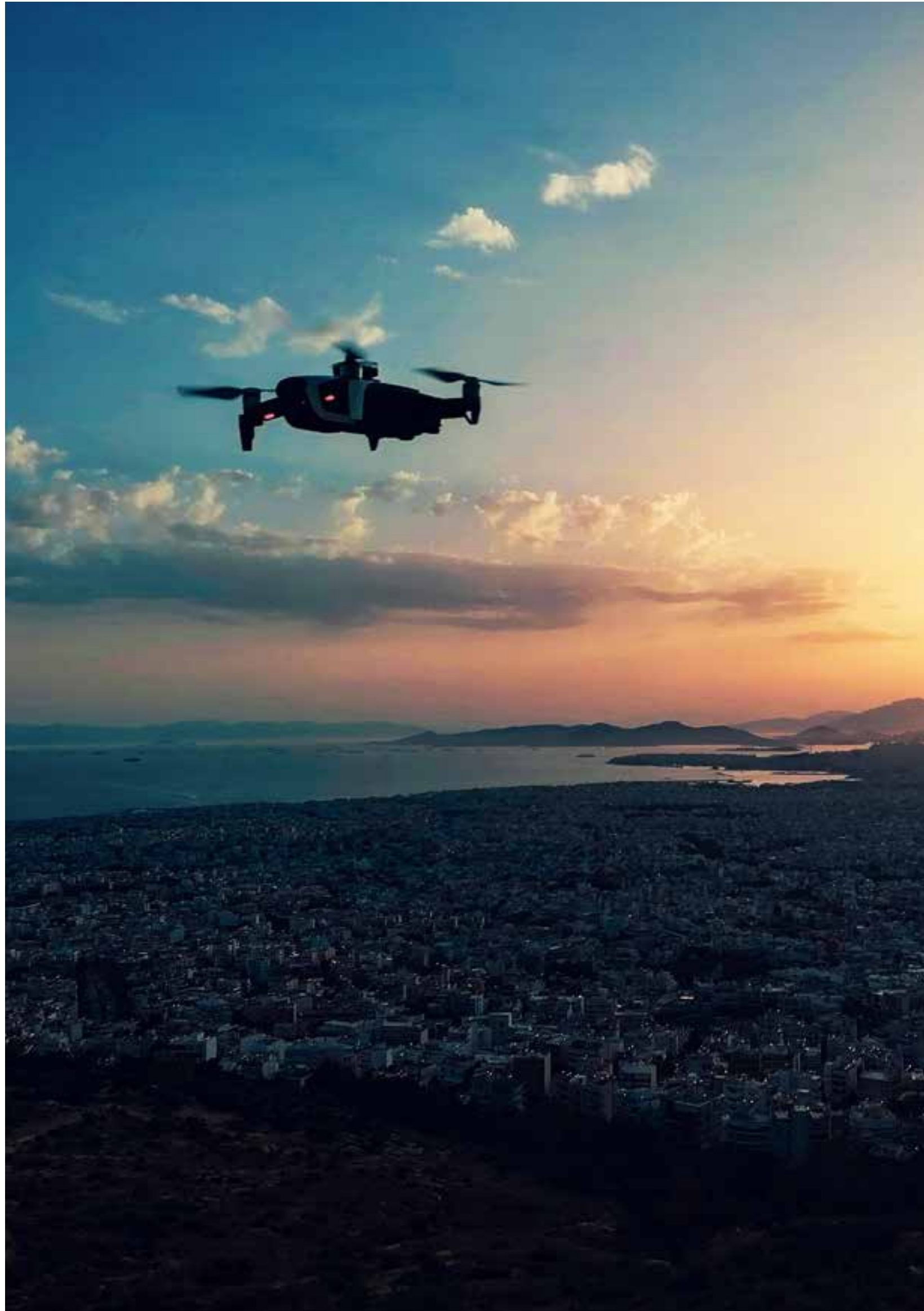
This trend is well illustrated in a picture of people raising their phones over the heads of others to video a dramatic light show. We not only see the giant flowers projected onto skyscrapers in the distance, but we also see the spectacle on the many display screens.



This shot is arguably more interesting than one with a clear view of the illuminated high-rises because it shows the backstage and the press of people eager to record the moment, and it gives a sense of the atmosphere.

Such light shows, like sunsets, are short-lived, so why do we use the time capturing them rather than savouring the moment? Kim suggests it comes from a desire for “ownership”. Though we can never actually own a sunset, and we may never even look at it again, we gain satisfaction from the ritual of recording it.

“It’s a quirky aspect of life in this digital era that this is how we feel satisfaction when we encounter beauty,” says Kim. “We can generate as many images as we want — and we do. Beauty is not everlasting, it’s short-lived, so it’s something to be captured and preserved in a different form.”



While humans can use technology, we find it hard to grasp how technology works, Kim adds, and for this reason he believes photographs are the favoured tool for recording the magical capabilities of machinery. In a submitted image of cars passing under an urban bridge, the vehicles are blurred, giving a sense of power and movement.

Kim sees machines as serene and solitary, like the drone as it hovers over a city at dusk or the lone yellow truck travelling through a vast desert. “Technology and technological infrastructure don’t have to be related to human emotions, but they give us a solitary feeling,” he says. “That feeling is linked to a certain admiration for those technological servants that are calmly doing their duties.”





MASTER THE SHOT

You will need darkness to “paint with light”. Once it is dark or you are in a blacked-out room, use a glow stick or torch and a long exposure to create amazing light trails, or use multiple coloured lights sources to boost the wow factor. The Light Painting Mode on Huawei smartphones selects a long exposure and adjusts the aperture for you. There are four creative modes to experiment with: Light Graffiti, Traffic Trails, Silky Water and Star Trails.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



TOP THREE INSIGHTS

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



1 Photos of people engaged with or in awe of nature showcase sustainability on an individual level. They can be more impactful than bolder images in remote regions.



2 Images of the natural world not only demonstrate the photographer’s good fortune — being in the right place when nature is at its best — but serve an archival role.



3 Images concerning a sustainable future, from melting glaciers to banks of solar panels, showcase a slowness to life that resonates with the medium of photography.

From mountaintop wind turbines silhouetted against a dusky sky to industrial plants belching smoke, the images in the NEXT IMAGE Awards cover the full environmental spectrum. At one extreme they provide an optimistic outlook of a sustainable future, at the other they evoke a sense of dread. But even the gloomiest images raise awareness.

“We are quick to see sustainability as a political issue, but when you take a greater step back, everyone values nature, no one wants to destroy it,” says Fernandez. “We are part of nature, and we are affected by it and value it, and that’s what we see in these images.”





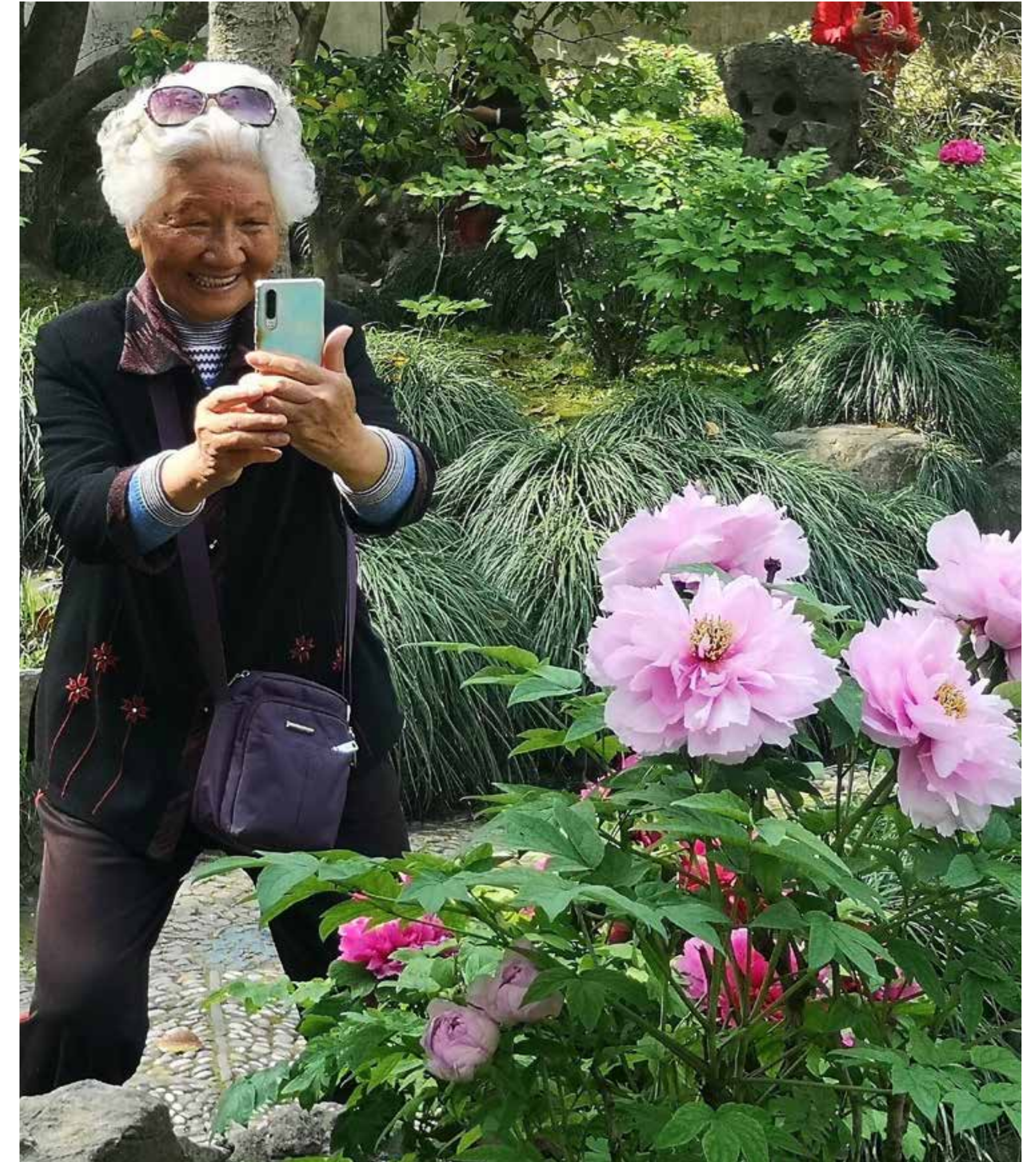
As previously highlighted, the NEXT IMAGE AI tagged 80 per cent of NEXT IMAGE Awards submissions as being in the “nature” theme, so there can be no denying it is something that people are drawn to and value.

“We hark on about climate change a lot, and it’s become so ubiquitous that we don’t realise it’s there,” says Fernandez. “We don’t notice the little impacts it has on our lives. Unlike face masks in the pandemic, it’s not as tangible.”

Sustainability broadly, in fact, and climate change in particular, appear to have an image problem — visualising them is not so easy.

A picture of a polar bear trying to balance on an ice sheet is now a tired cliché, and new ways may be needed to illustrate such existential threats. The analysts found that images in this collection reflect that process, as people look for relevant stories in their own backyards.

Take the NEXT IMAGE Awards photo of two young girls squatting on the ground, clearly engaged in the natural environment. Or the obvious delight in an elderly woman's face as she photographs a clutch of pink peonies. In both cases, the joy and awe on display for the natural world speak to a sustainable future.





Fernandez says it is rare to visually trace the environmental issue to the individual, usually associating it with sprawling factories seen from afar. In a photograph of what appears to be a teacher drawing a student's attention to fruit growing on a tree, however, by zooming in and getting up close and



personal with people in their local environment, we see sustainability on the personal level and this can be more impactful than bigger stories in remote places. "It gives a positive view of sustainability — 'look, our children are learning about nature' — and it feels like the next generation will be better," says Fernandez.

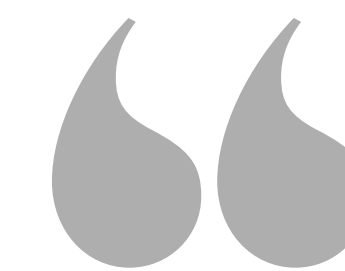


The tag for sustainability showed up many images of wind turbines, but Fernandez suspects this is likely more reflective of the way the AI was built than anything else. There were so many pictures of wind turbines, in fact, that Hromas wondered whether it was a new genre of landscape photography.



“People are photographing them a lot,” Hromas says. “There is a sense of pride about the wind turbines, almost an adoration of this object, and they are visually interesting, too.”

Kim says that images ranging from melting glaciers to banks of solar panels also showcase a slowness to life, which he believes resonates with the medium of photography. “The photographer



There is a sense of pride about the wind turbines, almost an adoration of this object, and they are visually interesting, too

Hromas

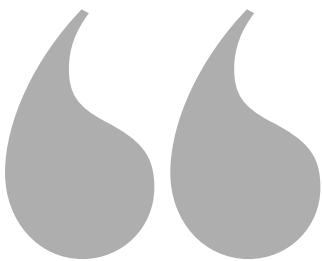
is usually on foot, they use their own hand to take the picture, their own ways resonate with this slow life,” he says.

And when people take pictures that show that nature is changing, they are not only demonstrating that they were there at a particular moment, they are also documenting it. “Cameras are witnesses to what’s happening in the world,” says Kim. “The practice of taking a picture is archiving, trying to preserve something.”





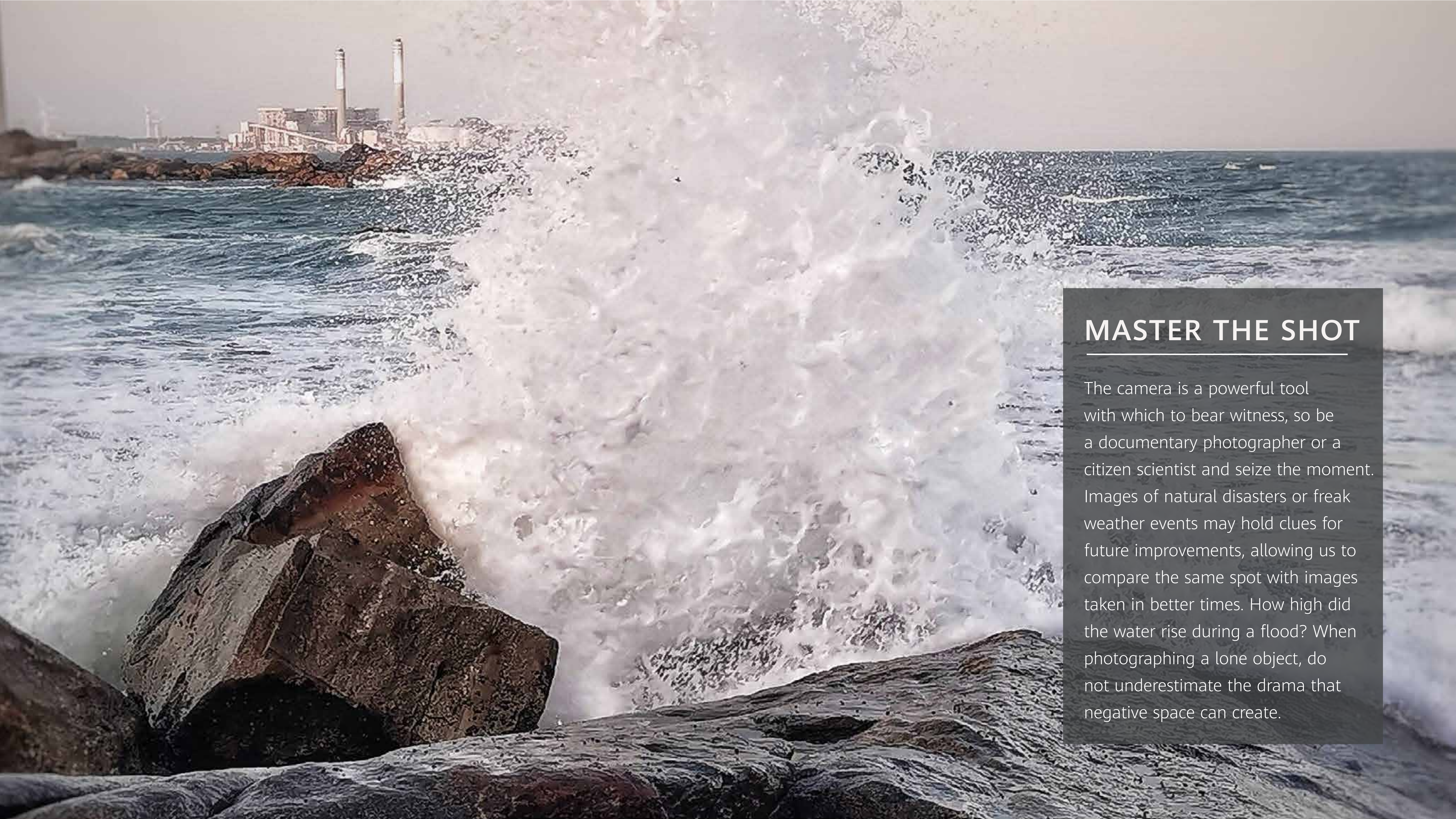
Ultimately, the images in the NEXT IMAGE Awards demonstrate how smartphones are being used as a global participation tool, inviting people to share their stories and allowing everyone to take part. Climate change stories will increasingly be told by the people who have the sensitivities and narratives of what’s happening locally.



Cameras are witnesses to what’s happening in the world

Kim





MASTER THE SHOT

The camera is a powerful tool with which to bear witness, so be a documentary photographer or a citizen scientist and seize the moment. Images of natural disasters or freak weather events may hold clues for future improvements, allowing us to compare the same spot with images taken in better times. How high did the water rise during a flood? When photographing a lone object, do not underestimate the drama that negative space can create.



The most notable videos in the NEXT IMAGE Awards fall into two categories — travel vlogs and those making good use of the timelapse function.

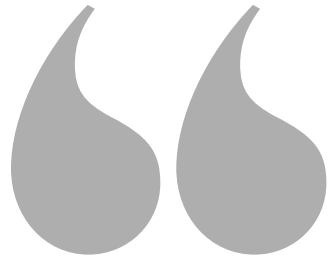
Kim was especially impressed by the travel vlogs, many of which focus on cultural heritage sites, draw on the conventions of that genre and employ sophisticated technical and editing skills. “They know how to present heritage sites to look majestic





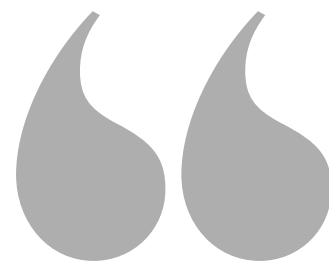
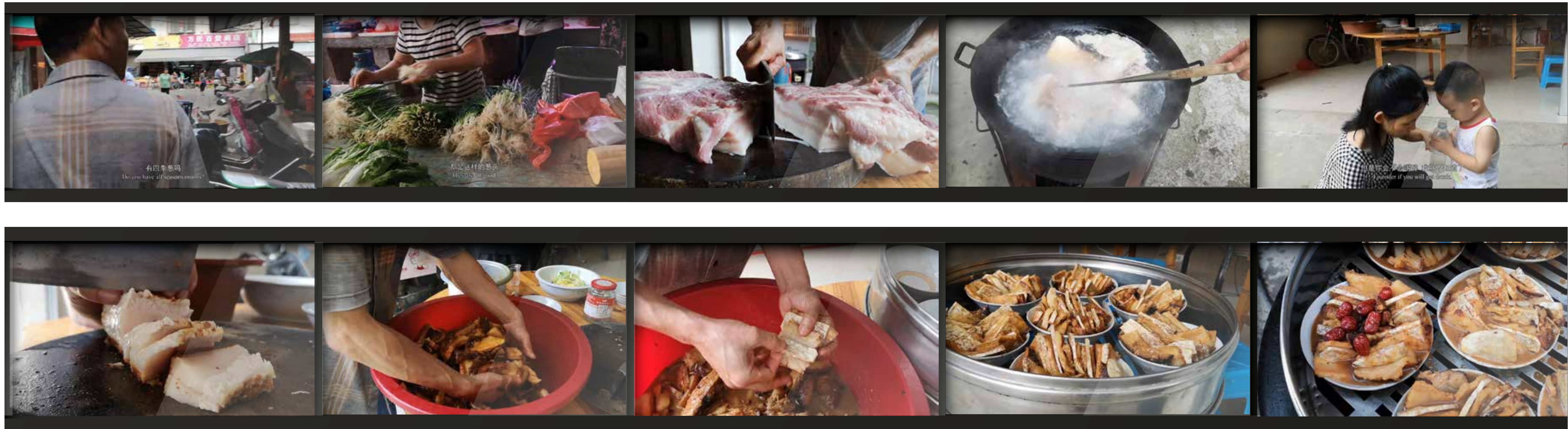
and magical,” he says. “These vlogs can compete with any professional travel documentary show on TV.”

Timelapse photography is also used to excellent effect, particularly in the natural environment. A blue-sky day that turns grey with the approach of a storm makes for dramatic viewing, as does the sun rising beside a harbour wall as people go about their morning rituals of strolling, practising tai chi and fishing.



They know how to present heritage sites to look majestic and magical. These vlogs can compete with any professional travel documentary show on TV

Kim



The difference between an amateur and a professional is that the amateur often gets caught up in the technical side of things, but unless you have a good idea it's not going to work

Hromas

And simple observations make for poetic portraits of the natural world, such as in the movement of long grass as the wind whips across a field or a close-up of raindrops on a window pane.

The key to a successful video is have a strong narrative idea, says Hromas. "The difference between an amateur and a professional is that the amateur often gets caught up in the technical side of things, but unless you have a good idea it's not going to work," she says.



THE FUTURE OF PHOTOGRAPHY





NICHOLE FERNANDEZ

“I see people already becoming more careful and conscious about how they take photos of other people, and I expect we will see more of this. Just because we can take a picture doesn’t mean we should. People may consider whether they post a photo of their child online. To own someone’s picture is not necessarily an ethical thing and there is the question of representation. Are we representing this accurately? Representation is never a fact, it’s always an opinion.”

HAN SANG KIM

“I noticed that some of the photos submitted for this competition had people’s faces smudged out and I expect we will see people become more sensitive about capturing someone’s photo — facial identity is a kind of bio data. In South Korea, taking a picture of someone in a public space can lead to legal disputes.”





JESSICA HROMAS

“People everywhere are armed with smartphones and they will be used to bear witness. Many of the images in extreme weather events have come from citizen journalists. Whether it’s a flood or a wildfire, people are being directly affected by these events and they will continue to happen. Those images will be shared — and that shares experience and knowledge and raises awareness.”

CINDY CHAN

“I see some people becoming more mindful in their photo taking, engaging with the subject matter — looking at it, feeling it, being sincere and more present — before they record the moment. Mindfulness is already a hot topic for many people, and I could see photo taking with a Zen attitude, a more mindful attitude, catching on. It would be healthier. This is photography as a meditation, a mindfulness experience, slowing down and being present.”



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THE TOP 10 TAGS

AI-powered software analysed the photographs and videos submitted to the NEXT IMAGE Awards and found these to be the most popular themes

									
Nature	Outdoors	No people	Sky	Day	Architecture	Beauty in nature	Plant	Built structure	Cloud
80%	78%	73%	58%	49%	47%	43%	42%	39%	36%

