

The Classical Association Photography Competition 2023



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Supported using public funding by
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In honour of the Classical Association's 2023 President, Professor MM McCabe, we tasked entrants to our CA Competition with taking a photograph inspired by one of the following themes: 'Shadows in the Cave', 'Living Well', 'Being Wrong' and 'Democracy', all concepts discussed by the ancient philosopher Plato.

Plato's most famous work, *The Republic*, discusses many ideas that have been hugely influential, such as the Allegory of Cave, the Theory of Forms and the Philosopher-Kings, and we gave entrants the chance to take part in debates that have been going on for millennia by showcasing their interpretation of what these concepts, such as 'eudaimonia' ('living well') and 'demokratia' ('democracy', literally 'people power') meant to them.

MM's fellow judges are award-winning photographer Max Barstow and broadcaster Sonita Alleyne, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. We hope you enjoy perusing the category-winning images and some of the shortlisted entries: make sure you vote for your 'People's Choice' winner at the end!



The windows of the Acropolis Museum reflect the wall of the Acropolis and the columns of the Parthenon – a clearly recognisable, but distorted, reflection of reality, as the shadows in Plato's cave are. The museum itself was built to mirror the visitor's ascent up the slopes of the Acropolis, and the top floor presents the Parthenon's sculptural decoration (a mixture of originals and casts) in the same alignment as the temple, reflecting their original locations as viewed through the gallery windows. But can the picture of the ancient reality presented inside this – or any – museum ever be more than a reflection as distorted as the one seen on the outside?

Anna P Judson

Shortlisted

Shadows in the Cave

Junior Category Prize Winners

Under 11



I wanted to take a picture of this strange piece of art at Storm King in New Windsor, New York because it looks like a puzzle which needs solving and you can't tell if we are real or shadows or just reflections.

Bessie Goulding Shadows in the Cave

Winner



We visited family in Poland and on the way back, we stopped to explore the spectacular ice cave Eisriesenwelt in Austria. Its crude appearance and incredibly old-fashioned manner of perceiving things captivated me. We strolled about with lights in our hands, blowing frigid air. I admired the raw beauty of it, as well as the lovely surroundings.

Nel Dziki Shadows in the Cave

2nd Prize



Making mistakes is the first step of learning. Being wrong can relate to everyday situations, such as taking the wrong path. However, that path may not be the wrong way, rather a different one that leads to a whole new series of events. My photo is taken from the hiker's perspective, sometimes even a map can't help you. It is down to you to figure out a new route. The point I am attempting to make is: being unsure of something is okay, it helps you to learn.

Beth Armstrong Being Wrong

3rd Prize

Senior Category Prize Winners

Aged 12 — 18



Winner

This photo gives me the sense of reflection from a distance that ought to be done after you have been wrong. Plato believed being wrong is a consequence of ignorance, but it is often said that ‘the best way to learn is from your mistakes’. To learn we must make mistakes, and humans make many. Therefore, the most important part of ‘being wrong’ is the stage shown in this photo: analysing what was wrong and why it was wrong, rather than foolishly focusing on the mistake. The bright stars remind me of the synapses firing in the brain as she thinks and evaluates. Distance and hindsight are necessary for the process, and the gap from the bustling, bright town shows the space to look back on what was wrong.

Amelia Colquhoun

Being Wrong



2nd Prize

I think photography is showing people a view and my photos are a good side of living in Iran. In the darkest and hardest days the only one who can help us and make us happy is ourselves.

Mahsa Katami

Living Well



3rd Prize

This photo shows how often when people view you as ‘being wrong’ this is not necessarily the case as you could just be perceived as different to the norm. In a world where everything is black and white, bright colours would be viewed as wrong, whereas from a different perspective bright colours are nothing out of the ordinary.

Livia Hilhorst

Being Wrong

Open Category Prize Winners



Overall Winner

My picture was taken in Cathedral Cave in the Lake District. With Plato's Allegory of the Cave in mind, I originally planned to take a portrait of my friend casting a shadow. But while setting up my camera, a tour party of children entered the cave. I made a long exposure (40 secs) and after checking the camera's LCD I felt this was a more interesting, conceptual, interpretation of the theme than my original idea. The moving figures reminded me of Plato's prisoners chained inside the cave and the torch light hinted at Plato's fire. I also noticed that one of the party was separate from the others and thought that this suggested a prisoner trying to escape from the cave.

David Travis

Shadows in the Cave



2nd Prize

I prefer Martha Nussbaum's translation of eudaimonia: flourishing. It's an intricate, interconnected inner working guided by virtue and good. Flourishing in nature and in human existence depends on a beautiful and difficult balance like the one found in this Matrix building. Virtue Ethics always makes me think of that balance that Aristotle mentions in his Nicomachean Ethics, painfully and beautifully accurate.

Mariana Sequera

Living Well



3rd Prize

The shadows on the wall represent an illusion of reality that the people viewing the wall try to interpret without understanding the truth; that the shadows are only shadows. The world is only as big as we can imagine.

Colin Page

Shadows in the Cave

The Shortlist



This photo was taken at Knaresborough Castle where I met this gentleman in a mobility scooter. The Keeper of the Ravens at the castle wears chain mail and lets tourists meet the ravens. The man explained that he came every day to help with the birds; he loved the ravens and they would sit on his scooter waiting for their turn to be fed. On this occasion the raven had impatiently pecked his cheek and drawn blood so had been admonished. They both showed their disapproval by turning away from each other.

Laura Drury

Being Wrong



From within the shadows of the cave, man is blinded by the light, but by shielding his eyes can see the pillar of knowledge to escape the darkness of ignorance.

Peter Laurence

Shadows in the Cave



Shah Md. Shahidul Islam Shahi

Dinajpur, Bangladesh,

Being Wrong

When I took this photo in a brick field in Narayanganj, I felt a mix of emotions: sadness, anger, and frustration. The image of two boys carrying a two-wheel van to transfer bricks captures the harsh reality of child labour in the brick-making industry. The root causes of child labour are often poverty, lack of education and inadequate social protection for families. In this age they should be playing with friends, studying and pursuing their passions, not working in fields or factories.



The twisted hawthorn, whose branches have coiled together in shared coexistence. No one branch more important than the other, which together provide a platform on which the leaves can flourish and sustain the whole tree.

Peter Laurence

Democracy

Living Well for me means striving to live well physically, mentally and spiritually: not just existing or surviving. Seeking a space away from the madness of the modern world where one can contemplate on their sense of purpose.

Colin Page

Living Well



I took this photo of a frosty window as the frost partly obscures the view. In this sense, the frost is like the reflections of shadows on a cave wall; an imperfect image. However, a photo itself isn't actually the real thing, so this links back to the shadows in the cave. How do you even know if the world is but shadows?

Jasmine Wales

Shadows in the Cave

Darkness and Light, and all shades in between. The Whole in One. Any part excluded from the whole leads in time to destruction. Just as Eris exacted revenge for not being invited to the wedding, so all must have a voice and be heard. The suppression of opposing points of view in recent years is indicative of how far democracy has fallen, that unelected organisations were permitted to impose mandates upon the populace without recourse.

Russell Goodwin

Democracy



The Shortlist



I think this photo links to the theme 'Being Wrong' because sunglasses make you see all dark, therefore you are not allowed to see the light or the truly marvellous things. Plato believed that beams of light emitting from the eyes permitted us to see, so sunglasses will block that light and that freedom causing you to be misunderstood by others for what you see.

Dhiya Veldi Under 11 Being Wrong

Living Well in Iran



My friend and I went for a trip for a day and seeing her in front of the yellow door with that smile made me think there are some lights in our dark world.

Mahsa Katami

Living Well in Iran

This photo gives me a kind of non-Iranian vibe and with so many difficulties in my country I really needed to give some hope to other Iranians that we will pass these days. **M Katami**



Plato's concept of living well and achieving happiness is based upon several characteristics. These seem to apply to my 96 year old mother, who is a concentration camp survivor and who is now blind, disabled and resident in a care home. Throughout her life she has had to face unimaginable adversities, but has dealt with them through her courage and has emerged with wisdom and a sense of justice and inner harmony. Despite the many challenges she has had to cope with, I consider that in Plato's opinion she has indeed lived her life well and achieved a state of Eudaimonia.

Peter Flegg

Living Well

