

Low Light

Box Art Group Competition, January 2025

Critique 10th April

Being mindful of the lighting of your work is very important. Many of you will have heard me banging on about contrast and how important it is to give your work depth. You may also have heard me saying that photographs tend to even out the colour and contrast and the artist needs to compensate for that in their work.

Lower light levels are particularly difficult to show accurately in photos, but this is the time of year when the lighting is low everywhere, both inside and out, hence this subject for the competition.

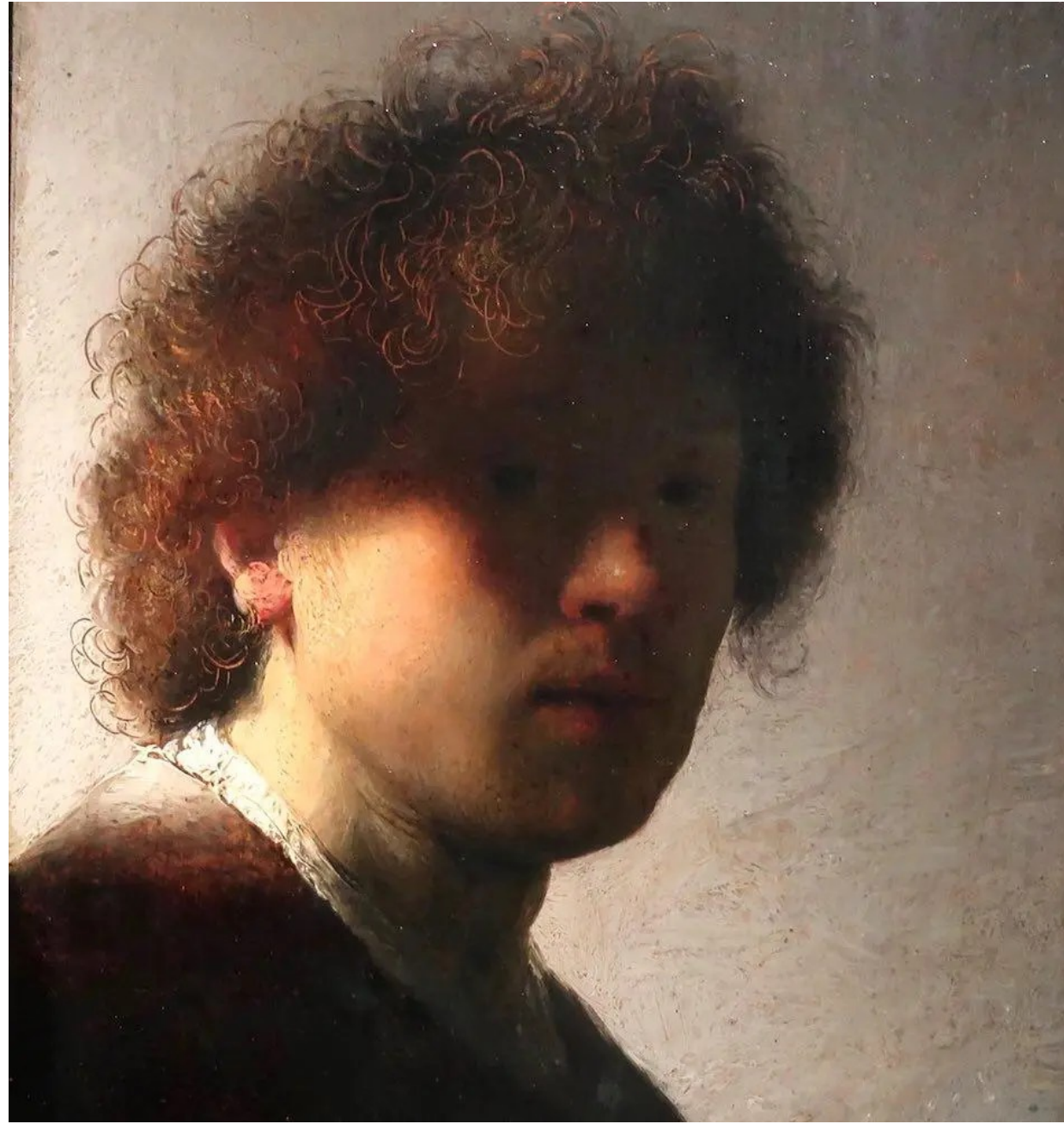
I have given you some examples of work where the contrast is high and some where it is low, but they all describe lower light levels. The Impressionists are particularly known for their attempts to depict all kinds of light and the Expressionists for bending the images further to challenge the viewer.

You don't need to be making accurate depictions of light if you can get your point across in a different way. That being said, it can be a real challenge to mix the exact colour for a particular atmospheric effect.

I suggest you have fun, experiment and see what happens.



Portraiture



Two Rembrandt self portraits
This one shows a thoughtful young man, his face lit up with youth and hope, against a pale background. The light hitting the face is bright and lowlights up the background behind



Rembrandt as an old man emerges out of the darkness, with an expression of resignation. The source of light is much less bright and is concentrated on the top of the forehead.



Portrait by Hazel Sean. Here the artist has used very little detail on the face, relying on the use of shadow to show an expression that is hard to read. The colour in the headwear and the way the light hits the face and shoulder against the soft colours of the background show great sensitivity to the subject.

Landscape



Jeff Sudders



Marc Hanson

Josef Herman



Each of these three artists has relied on a single strong colour to highlight the time of day and to create drama and atmosphere

Night scenes



Moonlight landscape. John Nash

Strong, bright, contrasting colours have been used in three of these landscapes, with dark heavy shapes giving drama to the lit forms.

The Nash painting is much more subdued and the lighter tones are muted, although the shadows are strong. It represents the indistinct night colours.

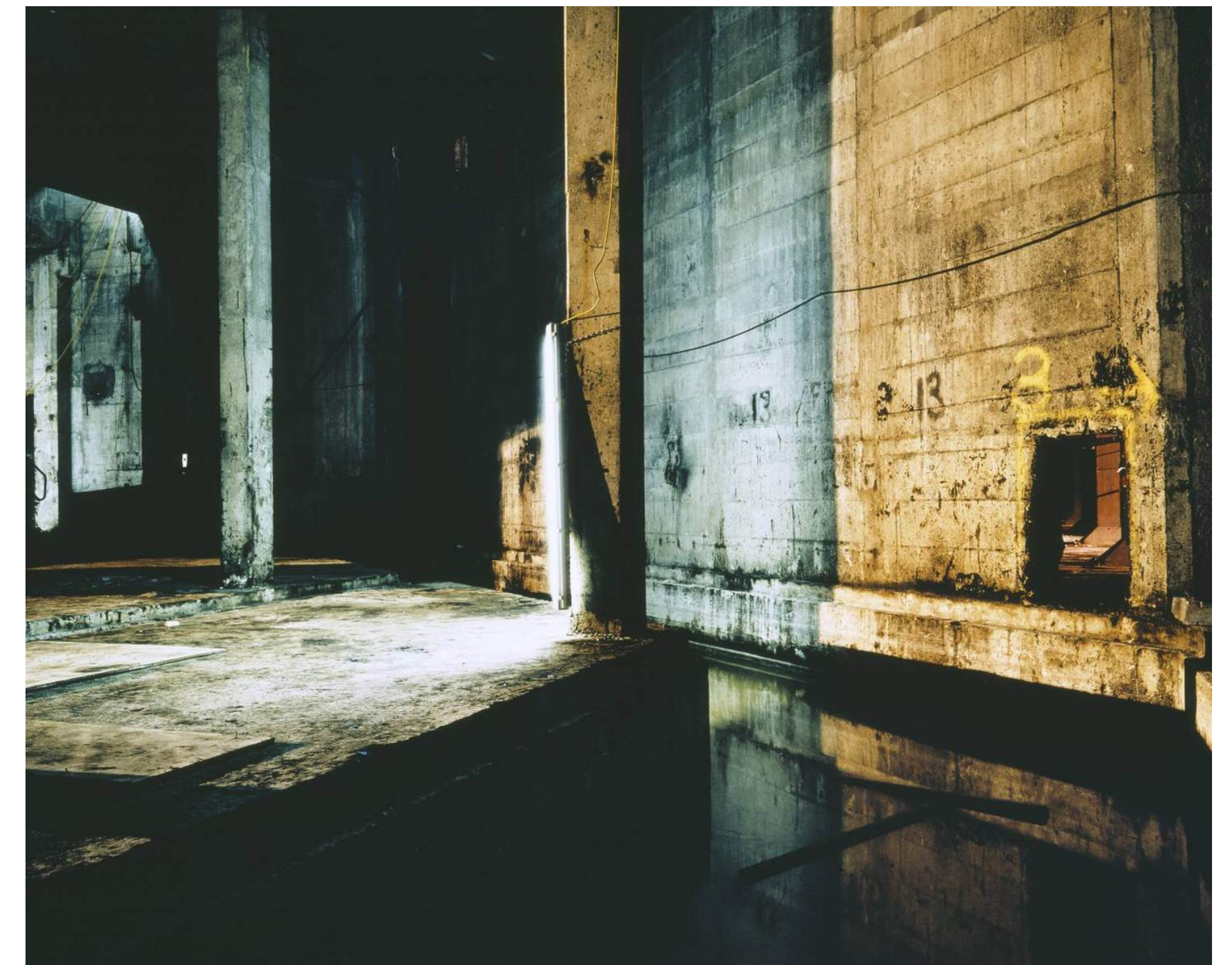


London Dusk. Mark Todd



Moonlight. Samuel Palmer

Narcissus. Christine Sullivan



Atmospheric effects



Jeff Sudder



Stanley Spencer



Casper David Friedrich

Keeping a very limited colour palette can produce a muted colour effect

However, strong colours and contrast can do the same



Kim Hunter



David Battison



Graham Sutherland

The same applies to interiors as exterior subjects



Van Gogh



Flemish School





Patrick Caulfield

How you approach the subject is up to you but you might want to think about how the winter affects the light, both inside and out; the cosiness of a dark room with a lamp causing a pool of light to light half the face of the occupant or the glow of a fire being reflected in ornaments or causing a shine on the cat stretched out in front of it.

Snowy days can have a particularly yellow sky when the sun isn't shining, the opposite of the bright blue and white light of a sunny day. Strong colours can suggest low light if there is enough contrast, whilst soft colours give you misty landscapes, muted skies and grey sunless days.

Colours don't need to be representational, it would be good to play with different colour combinations to see what happens.

All media are accepted including photography, painting, printmaking, collage, and so on. If you have made it and it fits the brief, bring it in.

Critique is Thursday 10th April. Try to make your work anonymous (not signed, for example). Work does not need to be framed.

Beth Jenkins Jan 2025

