

The beauty of imaging

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This month we continue our yearly celebration of the beauty of imaging.

In this issue of *Nature Methods*, we continue our yearly tradition of featuring the Nikon ‘Small World’ Photomicrography Competition winner on our cover. This year’s winning image was submitted by Grigorii Timin and Michel Milinkovitch from the University of Geneva. Using confocal microscopy, they captured intricate details of an embryonic foot of a Madagascar giant day gecko (*Phelsuma grandis*).

On this page, we highlight some of the other captivating images that placed in the top 20, received honorable mentions, or were noted as images of distinction by the judging panel. The winners this year were not only striking but represented a broad variety of subjects. All of the images and more can also be viewed on the Small World [website](#).

The past few years have been stressful for people all over the globe, and particularly for scientists working in laboratories, many of whom have seen their work disrupted and perhaps even set back months or years by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Even when times are tough, it’s important to occasionally take a moment to pause and enjoy something beautiful. We hope our readers find these images as inspiring as we do.

Published online: 3 November 2022

A selection of Small World contest images.

Clockwise, from top left: human colon epithelial crypts, 15th place, captured by Ziad El-Zaatari; juvenile sea star (*Patiria miniata*), honorable mention, captured by Laurent Formery; induced pluripotent stem cell-derived human cardiomyocyte, 20th place, captured by Hui Lin and Kim McBride; coral polyp, 12th place, captured by Brett M. Lewis; adult mouse spinal cord vasculature, image of distinction, captured by Andrea Tedeschi; differentiated cultured mouse myoblasts, 14th place, captured by Nadia Efimova; adult mouse intestine blood vessel networks, 3rd place, captured by Satu Paavonsalo and Sinem Karaman; diatoms, image of distinction, captured by Stephen S. Nagy; red algae, 8th place, captured by Nathanaël Prunet.

