These stunning drone photos really put humanity in its place

It may be a cliché, but drone photography really does offer a new perspective on the world.

Winners of the 2018 Aerial Photo and Video Contest from SkyPixel (an online photo-sharing community owned by Chinese drone maker DJI) show how. The pictures and videos put architecture, nature, and humanity on display from unexpected heights and angles. The resulting imagery is stunning, and might make you rethink your place in the world.

Just consider it for a second. Where are you standing or sitting right now? What would it look like if you could see yourself from a distance? What surrounds you?

This year's winning photo in SkyPixel's contest was taken by Deryk Baumgärtner using a Mavic Pro (above). It's typically beautiful, showing the island of Le Mont-Saint-Michel in France, just off the country's northwest coast. The island has been occupied since at least the sixth century, and has a long, rich history. It's also unbelievably picturesque, with a central abbey that rises like a fairy-tale castle through the mist.

Nominated photo; "Summit for the team, Mont Blanc"
Photo: Mathis Dumas

People's Choice; "Lofoten." An aerial view of a soccer pitch on an island in the Norwegian archipelago of Lofoten.

Photo: □□□

Other winning photos and videos from the contest have a similar theme, showing islands of humanity engulfed by nature. Sometimes those islands are literal, as with Le Mont-Saint-Michel, and some times they're metaphorical, like a shot of a team of skiers reaching the summit of Mont Blanc on the border between France and Italy (above). The skiers have come a long way, but the vista ahead of them shows how tiny they still are.

Islands of humanity surrounded by nature

In other photos, this relationship between humanity and nature is inverted. Take the mind-bending photo of Hong Kong's harbor (below), where the image has been warped so that the city's skyscrapers and apartment blocks wrap around a small bubble of sky. It's not an exercise in realism, but it gives a strong impression of the denseness of the city.

I could go on, but it's best just to see these images yourself. We've selected some of our favorites below, and you can check out the full selection from SkyPixel here:

Winner – architecture category; "Not a small HK island"
Photo: Panvelvet

Winner – fun category; "Flowers on the water"
Photo: Khánh Phan

Winner – nature category, "Hungry Hippos"
Photo: Martin Sanchez

Winner – sport category; “Running through the sand dunes”
Photo: Trung Pham

People’s Choice; “Infinity Road: Summer vs Winter.” A montage of two photos of the same road in different seasons.
Photo: Michal Sadowski

People’s Choice; “Red Train”
Photo: Sebastianmzh
https://www.theverge.com/tldr/2019/3/31/18286772/drone-photography-beautiful-nature-skypixel-aerial-storytelling-contest-2018-winners