



## HOW TO REDUCE JUDGES' CRITICISMS by Roger Wates

*First published in Tonbridge Camera Club's excellent twice-yearly "Grain" magazine.*

### Judges have to be critical, but why make it easy for them?

I have been interested in photography for many years and in the good old days I developed and printed both in black and white and colour. My photography blossomed with the advent of digital camera technology when in 2000 I obtained my first digital compact camera. Then in 2001 I purchased a 3.3MP Canon D30 in preparation for a holiday in southern Africa, then progressing to my current Canon 5D Mk III.

I joined the Tonbridge Camera Club in 2006 after I visited the annual exhibition and was very impressed with what I saw; a much more diverse subject matter than I was used to, a real eye opener. Since being a member, my photography must have improved, as I am now a permanent member of Class 1 for both prints and PDIs. Between then and now I have observed and noted many of the more common comments and criticisms that seem to be judges' favourites.

After all, the primary function of a camera club in my opinion is for members to 'improve' their photography/image making. In order to achieve this it is necessary to have some measure of the 'quality' of their work. This is not easy, as any form of art is very subjective but as you are reading this you probably do, or intend to, enter club competitions and develop your photographic ability. Club competitions seem to be a useful if not perfect tool for achieving this measure of 'quality'.

So if you are new to our camera club and intend to progress from our Class 3 through to a permanent member of Class 1 and maybe acquire distinctions, here are my observations in the form of a checklist with a few explanatory notes that may help to reduce point-losing 'oversights'. Of course there is no need to take notice of any of them and just do what you want to do artistically. But at least being aware of them may be useful as a reminder of what to ignore.

Entering pictures in competitions requires considerable effort by the photographer, especially for prints, and to see your best efforts criticised can be, at best, character building. I remember feeling quite hurt initially with what I thought were unjustified comments. But in the cold light of the next day I realised that maybe the judge did have a point.

I have tried to list my point-losing criteria roughly in order, but this obviously does vary from judge to judge and, I suspect, the same judge at different times.

**1. Focus** – If the image is a portrait it is vital that the eyes or at least the nearest eye is in sharp focus. If it is, say, a close-up of a flower, at least some part should be in sharp focus for the eye to settle on.

**2. Blown highlights** – Another easy one for a judge. There are obviously some exceptions to this, i.e. spectral highlights, with the sun reflecting off shiny surfaces, or artificial lights at night etc. But otherwise be careful.

**3. Too tight cropping** – Give the subject room to move into or look into the picture. Alternatively crop really close in so there's no mistake as to what is intended.

**4. Over-sharpening** – Especially don't try to compensate for poorly focused or soft images.

If the image is to be a print and is not as sharp as you would like, try printing it smaller (within reason). Or save it for the Small Print competition.

**5. Bland areas** – In landscapes in particular don't leave too much of what a judge may describe as 'uninteresting sky' or 'bland foreground' visible that doesn't add interest to the picture. If there is, say, a featureless white or grey sky visible, crop it out.

I have however seen some lovely pictures where this 'rule' has been abandoned to good effect.

**6. Make the picture look 'right'** – Even if the picture is correct geometrically or colour wise, a judge won't necessarily know this. A slightly sloping field in the foreground of a landscape may give an uncomfortable feeling to the viewer. An unusual dominant colour in a scene may look like a colour cast. You may of course have a colour cast, so always view your prints under daylight conditions. Ideally your monitor and printer should be profiled.

**7. Crooked horizons** – Water tends to find its own level, so show it that way. It's amazing how many club pictures I have seen with this problem.

**8. Converging verticals** – Some judges subscribe to the myth that verticals should be vertical and should not converge. Verticals do converge due to perspective, i.e. go to a 'vertical vanishing point', but some judges don't seem to know this. However, perspective distortion is a reality, which can be caused when the camera is not square on to the subject and appears worse with wide-angle lenses.

I have seen many articles that show how to 'correct' converging verticals particularly regarding tall straight-sided buildings. The results appear to me to make the building appear wider at the top. I find what works for me when correcting excessive convergence is to adjust the amount of correction by eye until aesthetically correct. This usually means that the verticals are not absolutely vertical, but look natural.

A possible exception to this is record photography, where the emphasis is on portraying the object with total accuracy together with technical excellence. Maybe for camera club purposes it is better to stick with smaller more manageable subjects and avoid the problem altogether.

So you have a choice (for non-record photography) of making the verticals correctly converge, or have them absolutely vertical to avoid judges' criticisms. Your call!

**9. Irrelevant objects** – Try not to include objects that do not add to, or maybe more importantly, distract from the main subject of interest. This is especially true if the object is dissected by the edge of the picture. I think of it this way: if I were to attempt to paint the scene that I wanted to photograph, would I include everything I could see? Probably not, so why include it in the photograph if it can be avoided?

**10. Black backgrounds** – If the subject is a close-up of a flower for example, avoid a solid black background. Some judges like black backgrounds, some don't. Always try to have at

least some out of focus detail just visible preferably complimenting the main subject.

**11. HDR/tone mapping** – Avoid excessive HDR/tone mapping, or any other 'artistic' effect, some judges are just not appreciative. It's too much of a gamble. Play safe.

**12. Light edge areas** – Avoid light areas near the edges of the image. Some judges don't even like dark areas or high colour contrast areas near the edges, if they contrast too much with the main subject. Judges tend to say these areas 'draw the eye' away from the intended point of interest even if you don't think they do.

Additionally even if there aren't light areas near the edge, it is sometimes helpful to slightly darken the corners/edges with a soft-edged vignette. This can help to concentrate the viewer's attention on the intended subject. I find it surprising how little is needed to produce the desired effect, it shouldn't be obvious so don't overdo it. Toggle the effect on and off to see the difference. Adobe Camera Raw 'Post Crop Vignetting' is a good tool for achieving this.

**13. White borders around PDIs** – Most judges will adversely comment on white borders if they are thought to be unnecessarily wide. However, the technique of adding a border may be useful where the image has a dark background and the edges would otherwise be ill defined from the projector background. To achieve this isolation a border need only be one or two pixels wide and preferably of a mid-tone colour sampled from the image itself.

**14. Colour saturation** – Don't be tempted to boost colour just to give more impact, it can be beneficial but often isn't. If the image is a landscape, judges love to pick on 'digital-green' grass. If you really think more colour is required, first try reducing the saturation by quite a bit, let your eyes adjust, and then return the saturation to as it was before. You may decide the colour is just fine as it is. I find this technique is useful to help decide on other tonal adjustment settings as well.

**15. Composition rules** – The 'rule of thirds', which is possibly the most, well known, is a reasonably good guide, but only a guide, and has many exceptions. At least a judge is less likely to criticise the composition from this perspective.

**16. De-spot** – Remove any sensor dirt spots that are visible especially in areas of low detail like sky etc. Blemishes like this have a habit of becoming more visible when viewed on the club projector or print-viewing box.

**And finally – Enjoy your photography and don't be too hard on judges. There are good ones and not-so-good ones but they all try to do their best. Try to put yourself in their position.**

**Any, or all, of your Club Members can register at [www.pagbnews.co.uk](http://www.pagbnews.co.uk) for FREE e-news**

We all have views on club judges based to a large degree on our relative successes or failures in competitions. However, how often do we stop to consider what it is that makes a judge a 'good judge'. This obviously includes a good knowledge of the photographic craft. A bit of diplomacy and the ability to let people down lightly, not being overly blunt, is regularly emphasised as being a perquisite for judging. There are a whole range of other factors that really good judges possess, although these are not always obvious and rarely recognised or discussed. This article is an attempt to address some of these points and hopefully define criteria by which we should appoint and assess judges.

Quite a number of the Federations offer training for aspiring judges. The Judging Seminar offered by the L&CPU is a good example, offering an excellent introduction to judging focusing on image appreciation and providing a (diplomatic) critique. Like many other events of this type, it does not fully address the wide range of skills and attributes good judges should possess.

It is all too easy to fall into the trap of slagging off judges but it is my intention to be positive and instructional, hopefully entertaining and maybe even amusing. We don't always have to take competitive photograph seriously. It is also a plea to those of you who meet what I believe to be the requisite criteria for a judge to go away and think about putting your name forward. Club photography needs good judges.

What makes a good judge? Hopefully, through my discussion, with examples of competition images that have done well and others that have not done so well, this will become apparent.

*Nocturne in red and blue (1)* whilst abstract, was not just thrown together, it was 'crafted' using sections of several light trail images and was entered into a "Low Light" competition. This is a bit of a spoof, parodying the work of James McNeil Whistler. Whistler created a series of impressionist paintings in this vein, e.g. *Nocturne in black and gold*. These were sombre images, executed at night with just the odd coloured highlight. This image has a strong diagonal and there is generally a pleasant arrangement of light elements. It scored 10 points (out of 20). Maybe not unexpected, but what was surprising was no mention by the judge of the attempt at the harmonious or pleasing arrangement of the image elements or any reference to Whistler or his *Nocturne* series. Now some of you may be thinking that that is forgivable: not everyone is clued up on their art history.

However the next bit of evidence is really damning and clearly demonstrates the judge's 'general ignorance', to quote Stephen Fry. *The road to Narnia(2)* scored only 13 points, despite being a fine image: good composition, good lighting and a great natural effect. To my mind all it needed was a faun at the end of the path and it could have been a winner. The digital image came up on the screen, the judge looked at it, the title was read out and the judge then commented "I don't understand this". Where had this judge been for the past 60 years! I don't want to downplay the literary merits of the *Narnia Chronicles*, but they are more popular culture than high brow literature. How can someone not have heard of the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe!

An image which would generally polarise the opinion of judges is *Hanging in the wardrobe (3)*, which is a pastiche of a work by Dominic Rouse and this was exhibited in an open competition. Without a doubt the image is challenging, designed to elicit an emotional response, usually along the lines of 'disturbing' or even 'scary', with the sanity of the author often questioned. Love it or hate it, it is a very good piece of work, but you know something is wrong when a judge ignores the emotional aspect and starts discussing the textures in the image!

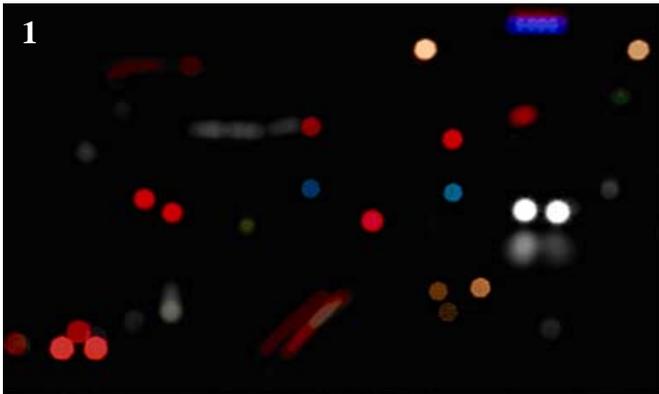
The ability to handle and respond to emotion is one of the great challenges for judges, thankfully some have no problems at all. Take for example; *And then they took my wife and children (4)*. The dark eyes, the face drained of life gives the image a great feeling of sadness, underpinned with a very emotive title. This image gained a first place in a Portraits & People class and was considered best print in the club's annual competition.

What should be clear from this short discourse is that just having a good knowledge of photography, whilst absolutely essential, is not the only criteria in assessing a judge's worthiness. Equally important is the ability to understand and respond to the emotional message in an image. It is also important for judges, and all photographers for that matter, to maintain an appreciation of modern trends and fashions in photography. You don't have to like it but you should be aware of it and value it. Most critically, a judge should possess a broad appreciation of the visual arts in general and not just photography. I would like to think that as a matter of course judges would be familiar with the photographic masters of the past 170 years and their key works, my experience however suggests that this is not the case.

I think it is essential for a judge to have some appreciation and knowledge of the other arts, literature, music, poetry, theatre etc. It is only through having this broad awareness of art and culture in its many forms that a judge can understand the visual allusions which often crop up in photographic work and particularly the titles of images. If this were books we were assessing, we would expect the judge to be 'well read'; I am not sure what the visual equivalent is: 'well pictured', 'well viewed'? Whatever the term, a good judge needs to have this breadth of understanding and knowledge if he is to avoid looking the fool.

I am sure that some assessment of a photographic judge's 'education' could easily be built into a training or assessment process.

**Whilst undoubtedly critical, I would like to think that this short article has not been the usual diatribe on judges and judging but has illustrated some of the attributes that all judges should possess. Judging is not something that should be entered into lightly and I believe that more stringent criteria should be used in the appointment of judges and that all judges should regularly question their ability.**



Brian gave several other examples but unfortunately we do not have space for them all. For the full essay look for the Articles Section at - <http://www.lcpu.org/lcpu/downloads.php>

**We photograph and print for our own pleasure** and to the quality we can manage, which is like peeling an onion - get through one layer to find another one underneath.

**Constructive criticism is always welcome.** Most clubs have those who are very good, with years of experience, some to whom money is not a problem but we also have those who may have saved sufficient money to buy their equipment from a charity shop. I have always tried to let people down gently, suggesting how things could be improved, to give them a lift and encouragement. Some judges, unfortunately, think that they too can walk on water. They do not know how to talk to people, for their improvement, and they have no right discourage those with lesser talents. It is a pleasure to listen and learn from those who show more than a little humility. Bob Brierley

**One out of focus image is a mistake  
Ten out of focus images are an experiment  
A Hundred out of focus images are a style.**

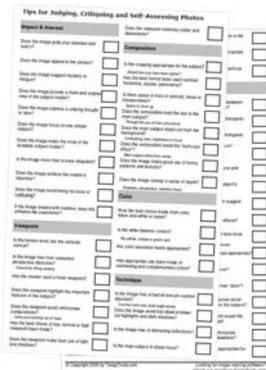
**but a judge may only see one!**

Paul Powici

<http://www.paulpowici.com>

**ADVICE ON THE WCPF WEBSITE** A Judge should not initially look at how the picture was made but why the image was made in the first place and what the photographer was trying to show. He/she should be looking at and into the image and responding to its emotional content. This is not to say that the technical aspects of the photograph should be ignored. These play an important part when comparing one picture with another prior to making a final decision and the technical attributes/problems of the images can offer the opportunity for comment. Full article at -

<http://www.wcpf.org.uk/pages/judges-and-judging.php>



**You can download a free check list to evaluate and critique your own photographs or judge those by other people from -**

[HTTP://WWW.TANGOTOOLS.COM/INFO/JUDGING.HTM](http://www.tangotools.com/info/judging.htm)



### A MANIFESTO FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

you and your camera

capturing the **FLICKER** of an eyelid, the **BEATING** of a wing, a **DROPLET** of water, a **HEARTBEAT**, a **SMILE**  
precious moments that vanish before you even realise they existed

COLOUR COMPOSITION LIGHT  
APERTURE SHUTTER SPEED ISO  
FLASH FOCUS LENS SLR DIGITAL  
FILM FISHEYE POSITIVE NEGATIVE

*none of these matter*

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I was judging a Still Life competition and one picture was really lovely. It was a scene very reminiscent of a Turner painting but not what I would have classed as Still Life. I commented on this and a loud voice from the front row said, "It is a Turner."

"Pardon," said I.

"It is a Turner," continued the gentleman in the front row, "I photographed it from a book."

I explained as nicely as possible that a photograph of someone else's art in a book did not really fit into the spirit of Still Life as a competition theme. He wasn't highly pleased.

<< ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW FROM

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**Some General Considerations.** At a recent club night we all benefited from trying to look at our pictures through the judges eyes and we trying to get under the skin of this character we call THE JUDGE. The very name conjures up an image of someone who is both critical and negative and this is far from a true picture of the average judge. We have to accept that some judges are better than others, remembering that they themselves are members in their own clubs and do the job voluntarily for no more than travel expenses.

Kermit the Frog confessed that 'It's not easy being Green'. Having done some judging myself I have to confess that it's not easy being a judge, regardless of colour. I just haven't found a way to say it in song. Yet!

The judge can only please a very few (the winners), and club members are sometimes justifiably critical of the judge for giving a superficial assessment of their work. Judges know all too well that they are also being judged, as they perform their task. You don't have to be a masochist to be a judge but it certainly helps! If, the entrant gets no helpful feedback then it's understandable that they will feel little benefit from entering the competition. This is not always the judges fault but he/she will attract most of the ensuing flak.

**Some General Requirements.** So, what do we have a right to expect from our much maligned judges? I read the following extract from the letters page of a well known photographic magazine which gives one point of view. *'To judge and criticise constructively demands a depth of knowledge at least equal to that of the author of the work. In the case of a competition, the judge's expertise should at least equate that of the best exhibitor'*. This appears quite reasonable at first reading but if it were applied as the norm I fear we would find ourselves with an acute shortage of judges. There must be an entry level for judges. They don't all start off as experts though it is hoped they will improve as they gain more experience. There is no easy solution. Set the bar for the judge a little lower, remembering that our photography is a 'fun' activity and that competitions are best not taken too seriously. Whatever height we set the bar, I think the following notes would be a minimum requirement that would satisfy most of our club competition needs.

1) Any aspiring judge should demonstrate a love, even a passion for good photography and be able to appreciate, and be familiar with, its many styles and forms.

2) A personal track record of good photography at an advanced level is essential otherwise his remarks would be based on theory and little practice.

3) Highly desirable would be a good working knowledge of a wide range of photographic processes. To be able to talk with the authority of experience would be a valuable asset.

4) A judge should try to be constructive and find something positive and encouraging to say even about a picture he may not like, especially in the Beginners and Intermediate groups.

You might find someone who could tick all the above boxes and yet make a poor judge. The final requirement is perhaps the most important of all. The ability to express oneself clearly and communicate in a way that is helpful to the audience, is a skill that most judges strive to attain. Most of our comments about judges hinge on the presence or absence of this skill which does not come naturally to many.

**The Judging Process, and things the judge will look for.** I can only speak for myself, and the following comments are guidelines that I have followed in my limited career as a judge. They are not exhaustive but might give you food for thought when preparing your entry for club competitions, to avoid disappointment.

**IMPACT** There may be exceptions but most pictures will have an immediate impact on the judge. Sometimes favourable, sometimes not. Does the picture have real 'eye appeal' or is it gimmicky? Does it show a fresh approach or only repeat what others have already done? Does a special effect cover up an underlying poor picture? Has the photographer shown any originality in their treatment of the subject or is it following a well worn path? Traditional can sometimes equate with 'boring'. The experienced judge will know in the first few seconds where the pictures strengths and weaknesses lie and hopefully point these out to us. Over time and with careful attention to the judges critique we can learn to avoid the common pitfalls

and improve our chances of higher ratings for our work.

**CAMERA CRAFT** If the photographer is not making the best of the situation with his camera it will come across in the print and the judge will jump on it. Who is in control of the camera, the photographer, or is everything set on AUTO? Don't expect to salvage a poorly taken picture with Photoshop. It seldom works. Exposure, focus, and carefully chosen depth of field, are some of the building blocks of good camera technique with no shortage of books and magazines offering help to the beginner in understanding the technicalities and jargon.

**COMPOSITION** This is not a technical but an aesthetic consideration and weakness in this area accounts for a high level of judges comment. Many otherwise good pictures fail for lack of good composition. Photoshop provides tools that can help us to improve on our original choice of camera viewpoint. There are some general rules of thumb regarding composition that the newcomer would do well to acquaint themselves with and these are part of every photographers learning curve.

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY** Some will dispute that this should be a consideration. Imagine a

judge faced with two superb photographs. One, a landscape where the photographer could wait for the lighting to be just right and the clouds to move into the ideal place in the frame. All the time in the world to set the right exposure and point of focus. In the second shot the photographer has caught a fleeting moment of action, enabling us to see the detail of an event that happened in the twinkling of an eye. There can only be one 1st place. Which one wins? The technical demands for both pictures might be the same but the instant response of the second photographer deserves an extra point and for me, merits the winning place.

**Some Conclusions.** Some judges make it look so easy and others struggle. This is unlikely to change while we continue to try and apportion marks to something as subjective as a photograph. Most of us took up photography because it was 'fun' and allowed us to express our creativity, such as that might be. We would do well not to lose sight of that original motivation by getting hung up about this or that judges comments.' Please yourself' by all means but be open to the constructive comments of others and be willing to learn from your mistakes.

**A Word to Judges** All of us sitting in the audience listening to your comments on our work would dearly love to be in that coveted 1st, 2nd, or 3rd group at the end of the evening. More than that, we want to learn something from your remarks that will help us make better choices next time we are faced with a great picture opportunity. It's not all about points. The whole exercise should be a learning experience and you are 'the teacher'. You only have a short time to say something meaningful, so please don't waste it by describing the picture, or by reminiscing about yourself. Try to avoid the repetitive use of stock phrases such as 'well seen', and please don't talk to the picture. Take a long hard look at it, decide what you want to say, turn to the room and talk to us. All that said, you were willing to come and give us the benefit of your experience and many of us are the better for it, even if your remarks are sometimes not what we'd hoped for. Like the rest of us, you too are on a personal journey, and nobody said it would be easy. **Thank you!**

**and Finally** We all know instantly whether we like a picture or not. To be able to spend around two minutes explaining exactly why is a very different story, especially if there are another 50/60 pictures to be considered in the same session. My final word on judging is therefore, 'Don't knock it till you've tried it'.

**Never undervalue the concept of the judge as a teacher, and to some extent, an entertainer.**

**Every judge should travel with a mentor: someone who can be relied on to give a brutally unvarnished opinion in the car going home. In the words of former PAGB Executive member Sylvia Keith, 'everyone needs a wife'. Fortunately I have one of those, and she is used during the preliminary glance at prints, and during the interval, and afterwards. Those are very useful comments for me.**

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This disclaimer normally appears in every issue of e-news but can I particularly stress it here. This issue contains many opinions which are NOT PAGB policy and which I personally disagree with! However, it has been fun collecting them.

**I have often thought that if photography were difficult in the true sense of the term — meaning that the creation of a simple photograph would entail as much time and effort as the production of a good watercolor or etching — there would be a vast improvement in total output. The sheer ease with which we can produce a superficial image often leads to creative disaster.**  
*Ansel Adams from "A Personal Credo" (1943)*

# WHAT JUDGES SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR?

## 1. DO I LIKE THIS PHOTOGRAPH? WHY?

*Perhaps 50% of the decision*

Does it tell a story?  
Does it make a statement?  
Does it elicit an emotion  
It doesn't need to be a big statement. Could be "What a pretty flower."

Is it creative?  
Does it show the subject in an unusual attractive way?  
Does it use an interesting, fresh approach?  
Does it utilise interesting techniques?

But ... what could be changed to do this better?

There is a "rightness" about good pictures which is difficult to quantify and which often defies the "rules".

## 2. SUBJECT MATTER AND CONTENT

*Perhaps 25% of the decision*

Is this something that will provoke interest in others?

Something the viewer may not get to see – due to travel opportunity/early rising/field craft/etc.  
Something you don't notice because it is ordinary or familiar but shown in a new way.

The decision is subjective. How do you compare (say) -  
a Dramatic Landscape v a Displaying Bird v a Striking Flower v a Pretty Girl (or boy)

## 3. PRODUCTION VALUES (NOT THE TECHNICAL STUFF).

*Perhaps 25% of the decision*

Everything that goes into the creative process.  
How was it made? How difficult was it? How much thought went into it?  
What makes it different and/or better?  
Composition  
Lighting  
Colour (or not)  
Perspective  
Viewpoint  
Depth of Field  
Angle of view

## 4. TECHNICAL (CRAFT, EXECUTION, PRESENTATION) *Takes points off or moves you down*

Is the focus accurate and the exposure appropriate?  
Is the centre of interest (subject) the sharpest point?  
Is it appropriately sharpened? Is it "over sharpened"  
Does the Depth of Field enhance the subject or distract from it?  
Does the overall (and specific area) contrast suit the subject?  
Are dark areas blocked up?  
Are bright areas burnt out?  
Are the colours pleasing? (Not necessarily correct).

Good Technical Quality and Technique do not in themselves ensure good photographs but without them you reduce the chances considerably that the judge will view your work with respect. Equally if a judge does not point out technical deficiencies it suggests a lack of qualification to do the job.

**Mainly though Judges should constantly strive with their comments to encourage club members to take even more, and even better, photographs and to have FUN doing it.**

One judge at our club referred to *VIRGINETTING* instead of *VIGNETTING*. He used this word all through the evening and no one had the heart to correct him.

Below are the 12 elements that the Photographic Exhibitions Committee (PEC) of the [Professional Photographers of America](#) (PPA) provides as guidelines to print-competition entrants. Based on fundamental precepts for judging a photograph or other piece of fine art, these guidelines are meant simply to give entrants a basic understanding of what constitutes a good image. (published 2009).

**Impact** is the sense one gets upon viewing an image for the first time. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion.

**Creativity** is the external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.

**Style** is defined in a number of ways. It might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds.

**Composition** is important to the design of an image, bringing all of the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends.

Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.

**Print Presentation** affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used should enhance the image, not distract from it.

**Centre of Interest** is the point or points on the image where the photographer wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centres of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific centre of interest and the entire scene collectively serves as the centre of interest.

**Lighting** (the use and control of light) refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is manmade or natural, proper use of lighting should enhance an image.

**Subject Matter** should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image.

**Colour Balance** supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Colour balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.

**Technical Excellence** is the print quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Sharpness, exposure, printing, mounting, and correct colour all speak to the qualities of the physical print.

**Technique** is the approach used to create the image. Printing, lighting, posing, paper selection and other elements are part of the technique applied to an image.

**Storytelling** refers to the ability of the image to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect his own message or read her own story in an image.

*Read more at -*

<http://blog.lexjet.com/2009/05/28/twelve-criteria-used-to-judge-print-competitions/>

I recall a competition held in Kent where an image of Machu Picchu (Peru) was presented to the judge. The judge's summing up was that, the image was pretty good, but the light let it down, as it was overcast and a bit misty when the photo was taken, and suggested that the photographer should go back when the light is better and retake the shot. The comment amused the audience!

**Some thoughts from long ago when I was involved in drama productions -**  
Engage the audience by speaking directly to them. Smile and enunciate. Always leave them wanting more. You are only as good as your last show. There is plenty of evidence that a lecturer (or judge) will be perceived as good if they can be sufficiently charismatic to persuade the audience to their opinion - almost regardless of what that opinion may be.  
*Mark*

## JUDGING PHOTOGRAPHS OF PEOPLE TAKEN IN A STUDIO

Photographing people in a studio means the photographer is in complete control: able to direct the pose and light the model in a sympathetic or dramatic way. Of course we all see things differently - there is no "Best Way" but there is always room for improvement, and this article may allow judges to offer a few hints and tips that could help make the pictures just a little bit more pleasing.

**The Background** This is just as important as the subject. Many photographers choose to use a material background and too often this is full of creases - made worse if side lighting has been used.

Another problem can be an over lit background, particularly if it is white. Many photographers, make it far brighter than the model and, if the model is wearing white, the clothing will appear dull, even greyish. If white, or pale colours, are being worn then the background needs to be lit at the same exposure, or slightly duller, than the model to ensure they seem crisp and bright. Too bright a light on the background can also cause flare - light bouncing back and giving a dull flat look to the model.

Placing the model too close to the background often results in shadows that don't enhance the image. Ideally you need at least a six foot gap. This way shadows go off to the side and don't appear in the final image. This kind of setup also allows you to light the background independently of the model.

**Lighting the Model** Very hard to cover this in depth without writing a book, or two, but here are a few basics.

Does it matter if there is more than one catch light in each eye? If it bothers you then suggest they are removed in Photoshop. Catch lights can be the judges' best friend, helping you to work out what type of lighting has been used and from what angle.

E.G. A square catch light means a softbox. Umbrella shape means a shoot through umbrella. Umbrella shape with a black dot in the middle indicates bounced light from a brolly (the black dot being the strobe).

Hair lights or Rim lighting is often used and if not done correctly this can result in very burnt out areas. This can be checked easily on the camera screen and the lighting turned down until a good balance is achieved.

Balancing fill lighting to the main light. This is often done more or less at the same exposure which can result in flat lighting, and can produce

awful cross shadows on the face, particularly noticeable on either side of the nose. Again checking the light ratios on the camera screen can enable the photographer to alter the balance of the lights to create a pleasing result. A nose shadow across the cheek can also be unattractive and usually indicates that the main light should have been set higher.

**The Pose** This depends on the type of image being created, but like any composition there are a few basic points that can help make the subject look better.

A head a shoulder image is improved by having the head and shoulders at different angles. Taking this a step further if more of the body is included then a pleasing effect can be achieved by having the hips at another angle. An 'S' shaped pose often works well. If the head is at an angle then it looks better if the nose doesn't break the cheek - line. Fingers look more graceful when together.

Generally it doesn't look right if cropping is done through a lower limb: if the elbow is included then have the hand in too, if the knee is in shot then include the foot.

Getting the model to stretch slightly can eliminate creases in the skin - often seen in the neck - and rolls of fat. If all fails then fix in Photoshop or cover with clothing, or in the case of the neck long hair can conceal these unwanted lines. Many portraits can be improved by getting the model to sit up straight thus giving better poise by removing the 'round - shoulder' look.

**Expression** Forced and unnatural? This is often the result of the photographer not working quickly enough and not talking to the model. The mouth can smile but the glint goes from the eyes if not captured straight away. A more natural smile can be achieved by making your model smile rather than asking them to do so.

**Clothing** Unless the logo on the clothing is important to the final image then it's usually best to avoid them as they can distract from the rest of the image. Mixing black and white clothing can result in problems with lighting and getting detail in both can be hard. If it seems the photographer has struggled in this area then suggest they don't mix the two. Creases and labels showing through should be spotted before the image is taken but once more Photoshop can come to the rescue.

**Make - Up and Jewellery** Make - Up needs to be checked carefully. Lipstick on the teeth is not

desirable, nor is 'blobby' mascara. Shiny areas on the face can be toned down with foundation. A heavily made - up face can look wrong if other flesh on show isn't made - up to a similar tone, most noticeable in a headshot when the shoulder is uncovered and included in the image. Jewellery often produces distracting highlights, so it is wise to avoid it if it's not an important part of the image.

**Photoshop - friend or foe?** Photoshop can be used to correct areas of the image and there are obviously many enhancements that can be done with it such as bringing out details, removing bags under eyes or cloning out spots, scars, clothing marks, and tattoos. It can also be used to whiten teeth and brighten eyes – this latter area is something that in my mind many people go too



**Studio Judging contd.**  
far with, making the whites of the eyes too bright. Flyaway hairs can be removed. New backgrounds can be added. Colours can be changed. Skin can be softened - this is also something easily overdone, giving an almost plastic appearance to the flesh, making the model look like a mannequin. If softening skin tones can be overdone then so can over sharpening, it's generally not a good idea to bring out every pore in a woman's face.

**Final Comments** Hopefully I have offered a small insight into what can make a studio image of a person more pleasing to the eye, and hopefully this will help you when next asked to give some constructive comments on studio photography.

**Steve Myall** EFIAP

## JUDGING POOR PICTURES CHRIS FORSTER EFIAP FBPE DPAGB

We all enjoy looking at interesting, well-executed photographs. However, it is a fact that camera club judges will have to spend much of their time considering average or poor pictures. What advice should we give?

Firstly, we should agree on a standard for "good" photographs. Any photograph that is technically adequate has some merit but, since the camera does most of the work for us these days, we should try to move beyond "point and shoot". I feel that club photographers should be aiming to achieve photos that would be likely to be accepted at national exhibitions. A judge who is asked to compare a photograph to exhibition standards obviously has to have personal experience of work at this level. This is not always the case and is, in my opinion, a major cause of poor judging at camera clubs. So, let us assume that we know what a good picture contains, how do we comment on pictures that fall short of this standard? Judges are required to give useful, honest assessments in order to separate good pictures from bad pictures and to be able to explain their decisions to an audience. Judges are not required to make friends or to maintain egos.

On seeing a picture, all people will have an instant reaction. This is very important and a judge must consider why the picture caused such a reaction. You must not hide your emotions, a picture might, for example:

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| -Delight  | What exquisite lighting. What lovely colours.       |
| -Intrigue | What is this person doing? How did you set this up? |
| -Confuse  | I don't understand this. Why did you take this?     |
| -Bore     | No centre of interest. Seen it all before.          |
| -Disgust  | Environmental damage. Starving beggars.             |
| -Astonish | What an amazing event. How did you capture this?    |
| -Dismay   | Ordinary picture. Poor quality.                     |

Continued on next page

Strong emotions may be positive or negative, but both may add to the strength of a photo when combined with a strong story telling content. A judge must recognise the emotive content or story telling aspect of the picture, but note that emotions will vary from person to . Next a judge should consider how well the story has been told by considering composition and content. Lastly the judge should consider technical quality. I consider the emotive content to be most important, the layout of the picture next and the technical quality after that. Unfortunately, it is much easier for a judge to talk about the technical aspects and I believe that this is the second major cause of poor judging.

Let's consider a couple of examples. You are presented with a small print of a cute child eating an ice cream. The background is cluttered with slightly out of focus people and what looks like fairground equipment. The bright sunlight has burnt out the child's white hat and left the eyes in deep shadow. There is a small patch of light sky in the top left hand corner. What would you say? Your heart sinks when you see the picture, because you know it is miles away from exhibition standard, but you don't want to upset anyone, especially if the parent is in the room!

First, emotive content and story telling. For many people, the picture will remind them of their own children and fun days out during the Summer. In other words, the emotive content is strong. However, most people will not know this particular child and, unless the ice cream is about to drop onto someone's bare tummy, the story telling aspect of the picture is weak.

Next consider composition and content. The child eating the ice cream is the focal point of the picture. Has the child been visually isolated or placed correctly relative to other objects in the picture (maybe another jealous child looking on)? The background is distracting and weakens the composition. Could a different viewpoint have been chosen? Could the bright patch of sky have been excluded?

Lastly, technical quality. There are obvious exposure problems with both the highlights and shadows. A judge can offer advice (maybe move the subject into shadow, possibly use fill-in flash to reduce the shadow). A larger aperture could have been used to simplify the background by putting it more out of focus.

Some judges will mention the bright patch of sky first and keep coming back to it. They may even hold up bits of card to try to crop the area out. They may mention the messy background, and nothing about the story. They know it is not a good picture, but don't really explain why. Let's consider another example. A print of a pleasant

landscape comes up on the easel. It was taken with a wide angle lens and the weather was rather dull. The top third of the picture is filled with quite interesting looking clouds, but the foreground is rather dark. There are a couple of people wearing red anoraks in the lower left hand corner walking out of the picture. The whole image is not very sharp. What would you say? Most judges would have mentioned the figures first -should they be there, does the red distract, should they be walking into the picture? They would then have inspected the print from two inches away and pronounced "it's not as sharp as it could be but it doesn't really matter. A nice enough landscape, but there are better pictures here tonight, 15 out of 20" - little help to anyone!

You know that this picture is not up to exhibition standard but most of us enjoy walking in the countryside, or at least enjoy the idea of freedom to roam. We can identify with the disappointing lighting (been there, done that!). The emotive content of the picture is quite strong but the story telling aspect is lacking. (Why were you there on that day? Which path were you taking? Did you go to look at lovely Spring flowers or Autumn colours?). Next, the composition is rather poor. There is no strong focal point and no lead in lines. The lack of suitable lighting has made it impossible to get any feeling of depth, drama or contour. Maybe by using a longer focal length lens to concentrate on just part of the landscape would have strengthened the composition. The size of the figures would determine if they are a distraction or if they give a useful sense of scale. Who cares which way they are walking? Really the best advice is to find a good viewpoint and return to it when the lighting is more photogenic.

Lastly technical quality. Even on the obviously dull day, the exposure range between the sky and ground was too great. Advice may be given to overcome this (use of graduated filters, concentrate on the ground or the sky, mix different exposures in post processing). The dull day has probably led to the use of a slow shutter speed and, without a tripod, could easily have lead to camera shake and hence the lack of sharpness.

If you judge poor pictures badly, then you will help no-one, you will annoy both good and bad photographers by giving inappropriate marks and you will lose respect. You will also probably not enjoy judging as much as you could. It needs some practice, but it's not difficult to judge correctly. When an average or poor picture comes before you, judge it as you would a good picture. You do not need to start off with praise and then damn it with details. Express what you see and what you feel. Judge it and then mark it appropriately. Don't shirk your responsibility.

*See two pictures by Chris Forster on the next page.*



*Poor Amongst Riches and Past and Present by Chris Forster* *EFIAP FBPE DPAGB*

## LEARNING TO JUDGE PHOTO COMPETITIONS - DAVE HIPPERSON

These are only extracts from Dave's articles – you can read them all at <http://davehipphotos.wordpress.com/>

**It is an extraordinary experience to hear someone dissect a photo for the first time particularly if it is not one of yours. In fact *particularly* if it is not one of yours!**

Taste and personal preferences are involved of course but before that there are some very simple rules of the road to be observed on the subjects of composition, colour and light that help the judges come to their final decision. It's all very digestible and not a bit like those stuffy types you hear droning on about traditional art. Those first few photo competitions were a revelation. In a way I have been judging ever since. Now I see pictures when I am walking down the street, in people's houses, in books and papers on the television.

**The First Workshop** This was tough! My experience of club competition was only eighteen months. I had done moderately well but become particularly interested in the way visiting judges performed and in some cases, it has to be said, positively entertained. I simply couldn't wait to try this myself so I had enrolled for this short series of 'judging workshops'. They were at Amersham and run on behalf of the CACC. Although friendly and encouraging,, this workshop was run professionally by people who knew exactly what they were. There were eight students and three tutors. That would not have been intimidating in itself had all three of them not been absolute top of the range photographers / judges!

In a moment I am going to have to stand up in front of the other students plus Rye, Mark and Jimmy and perform. The first print I am going to have to judge and score, is brought and placed on an illuminated easel. I need to examine it again as the first time it was amongst all the others and probably not as well lit and I wasn't taking anything in anyway. However now I also have to disseminate my *wisdom* to the audience which means facing them and smiling. Actually all I want to do now is to go to the toilet. Hopefully and very soon, the ground beneath me will come to my rescue and swallow me. It's not a lot to ask.

**A little later**..... Each of us had had a go at judging a picture and thankfully most of us have made various levels of a hash of it. After a de-brief it was now obvious that there were a couple of us who were clearly promising. Sadly I was not one of them. Intelligent people at my Club have quite clearly been duped by my confident gesticulating into thinking that I must know what I am talking about. Trouble is the super professional aura that surrounded that first judging workshop and the levels of concentration necessary attenuated this enthusiasm momentarily if not quashed it altogether and all that I was left with was... well nothing really!

**The Second Workshop** I have to admit, I wasn't looking forward to going back. Since the first session a month ago a couple or three of the original eight *had* dropped out. That encouraged me a bit as it was now obvious some others were even more petrified than me! The entire afternoon – close on four hours - was spent with the five of us up on our hind legs for most of the time wrestling with what we were supposed to be seeing, and then politely commending images that we inwardly didn't really like and would have rather not have been shown. The beauties of course were much easier until you realised that what you thought was a great shot no one else did!

By the end I have to admit to having been quite happy to have gone on for longer but much of that was because I felt the inquisitors almost enjoyed my rather unconventional take on the job. I left feeling I had been myself but that I needed another year in competitive photography to hone my observational skills.

**I got the call to say I had passed less than 12 hours later which made up for having been nicked for speeding on the way home!**

**Finally– Doing It!** Anyone who has survived a judging workshop will have done the tough part. The real thing is much more pleasant. My very first performance was thankfully at a club who were both friendly and well. Lighting, acoustics seating – everything faultless. On reflection I think I got the right images at the top – they did turn out to be from the most experienced members but of course that shouldn't necessarily be the case. At the half dozen or so clubs that I have visited since I have enjoyed enormously being treated as if I knew what I was doing, so it has all gone rather well.

**What I have discovered** might help those of you that have been thinking of giving this a go. To start with you will be worrying the most about repeating yourself or saying 'nice', 'juxtaposition', or 'sharp in the right places' too often. Try not to dwell on concerns about this too much as it can tighten you up. The right dialogue will come quite quickly. As a judge you have been invited to score or rank the images – that's the most important aspect – the scores.

**The first important trick is to be able to absorb the elements of the image** (good and bad but most important good) and hopefully establish what the author is trying to say and why. To get this every time takes practice but you don't have to do formal judging to practice. Visit shops which sell pictures and cards, select some at random and explain to yourself their strong points. You best not do this out loud! See how quickly you can grasp the strong points of each image. The strong points being important especially as it is with these we start before we criticise. You have plenty of time to think of all the ways the image might be improved.

You first convince yourself before you can convince anyone else , so in the words of Carly Simon .....

“You walk into the party  
like you are walking up to your yacht,  
Your hat strategically dipped across one eye  
Your scarf is of apricot.”

**It is important that you give the impression that you are relaxed** and in control and have done this loads of times before. That is not to suggest you should be cocky but a confident looking judge engenders confidence in the audience which relaxes them. Always show the utmost respect towards the images, and hence the authors, you are judging.

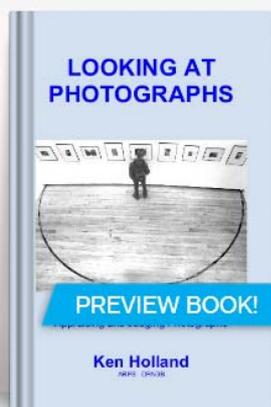
**The problem with prints** is that to look at them in detail you have to face away from the audience. Try to absorb the relevant bits that you want to talk about and then stand facing the audience and talk without *even looking back at the print*. This is difficult but it gets easier with practice

**This isn't stand up comedy but** it helps to remember you are the entertainment. The beauty of it all is that you don't have to remember a script – they supply that with their images – you just have to think of something interesting to say and don't be afraid to sound enthusiastic. After all as judges we are in a very privileged position of being invited to look at photographers' best work. Remember the image is how they wanted to show it to you even if it might not be to your exact taste. If you see a stand out shot in the bunch let the audience know how excited you are by it. Don't be afraid to really heap on the praise if you know you are looking at the shot that will win the night.

*Washing Line by Dave Hipperson*



# KEN HOLLAND – LOOKING AT PHOTOGRAPHS



Ken has published a very interesting book on this subject which we think all experienced judges, novice judges, potential judges and even competitors will find thought provoking. I asked for a few words and he has sent me this checklist which gives a flavour of the book

<http://www.blurb.co.uk/b/2932165-looking-at-photographs>

“Many of us have spent years listening to judges in Camera Clubs, and have our own views on it. I have judged for many years and been involved with seminars to encourage new judges. Nowhere have I found any useful published guidelines for judging. We all have our own views on judging but I hope this brief checklist might be useful.”

<b>DO</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Watch good judges at work</b></li> <li><b>Ask why a picture was made, not how</b></li> <li><b>Appraise, assess and analyse</b></li> <li><b>Evaluate the whole image</b></li> <li><b>Talk about emotional aspects as well as technical</b></li> <li><b>Manage your time</b></li> <li><b>Make three positive comments about each image</b></li> <li><b>Smile often</b></li> <li><b>Suggest ways an image might be improved</b></li> <li><b>Assess the quality of the photography</b></li> <li><b>Remember it's not an exact science</b></li> </ul>
<b>DO NOT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Pass judgement</b></li> <li><b>Repeat yourself</b></li> <li><b>Lecture</b></li> <li><b>Explain how a picture was taken, or made in Photoshop</b></li> <li><b>Display your personal prejudices</b></li> <li><b>Criticise</b></li> <li><b>Insist on the “rules”</b></li> <li><b>Try to crop every image</b></li> <li><b>Display too many irritating mannerisms</b></li> <li><b>Touch the image with your fingers</b></li> <li><b>Dissect an image into small pieces</b></li> <li><b>Praise mediocre work too highly</b></li> </ul>
<b>PLEASE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Be confident and enjoy it</b></li> <li><b>Be brief and concise</b></li> <li><b>Be honest</b></li> <li><b>Be a “critical friend”</b></li> <li><b>Be modest</b></li> <li><b>Be open minded</b></li> <li><b>Be punctual</b></li> <li><b>Be helpful and encourage high standards</b></li> <li><b>Be fair</b></li> <li><b>Be informed and unbiased</b></li> <li><b>Be friendly, humorous, light-hearted and respectful</b></li> <li><b>Be entertaining and interesting</b></li> <li><b>Be enthusiastic</b></li> </ul>

More details of this and my other books: <http://www.lowenna.co.uk/> Ken Holland ARPS DPAGB

## FISHING FOR JUDGES BY RICHARD SPEIRS DPAGB

Does it surprise you on club competition nights that the judge frequently spots problems with pictures that you never even knew were there? It happens to me more often than I would like to admit and I suspect that a lot of it is due to our "love affair" with our own pictures. So how do judges spot these problems when we frequently don't? It may surprise you to know that experienced judges can effectively evaluate a picture in around 4 to 5 seconds - around the time they have at exhibitions and awards events. During that seemingly brief period they appraise composition, technical qualities, suitability of the paper used and importantly the emotional content of the photograph.

Perhaps you think 4 seconds is too short to take all those issues on board? Well think about the last club competition you viewed,

how long did it take you to get an idea of what the judge was likely to say about each picture? I bet it was around 4 to 5 seconds. The big difference between large competitions and club nights is that in the latter the judge has to talk about each of the pictures shown. Although he or she may have initially evaluated your picture in a few seconds they will then have spent considerably longer ranking it against the others in the contest and deciding what to say about it. Often that means that the slight fault you have left will become "bait" to "hook" the judge and lead to your work being ranked lower than you had hoped. Let me illustrate what I'm on about by a few examples.

Firstly this picture of foxhounds desperate to get out a Land Rover and be with their friends.



I was concentrating on their eyes, tongues, ears and position in the picture. The judge that evening praised the picture and then said "shame about the rivets" What rivets? I'd never seen the blasted rivets in all the times I had worked on the picture. He was right and removing it took a few seconds. This was a case of leaving "Judge Bait" in the picture and getting what I deserved.

In the next example the original picture, Fig 1, was taken at Blists Hill Victorian Town Museum and I subsequently worked on it to add atmosphere. I wasn't 100% happy with the final version. There was something nagging at the back of mind which made me uneasy with the finished result. I entered the print, Fig 2, in a postal portfolio without re-assessing why I wasn't totally satisfied with it.

The first person to comment on it was a well known NCPF judge who I respect greatly. He liked what I had done but said he thought it was too heavy on the left. Needless to say all the other members of the portfolio picked up on this and said the same thing. When I read their comments I knew exactly why I had felt uneasy about the picture. The solution? Flip the image, Fig 3, and it has since scored far better.



*Continued on the next page*

For the final example, again the original, Fig 1, again taken at Blists Hill in one of the cottages, BUT this time I spent considerably longer working on the finished article, Fig 2, to remove potential "Judge Bait".



So is there a moral to this tale? Hopefully so, Judges are fellow photographers and when you give them your pictures to assess they will spend a significant time studying them, particularly to identify the "soul" of the picture as well as all the usual technical bits. Hopefully the majority of judges will be supportive of your efforts but if you don't spend sufficient time checking and re-checking what you have produced to remove eye catching elements any judge worth his or her salt will re-act to the "bait" you have left. So if you don't like Judge Fishing spend time ensuring that your photograph is presented in the best way possible to show not only your camera and computer skills but also what inspired you to take the picture in the first place. A little extra time spent in preparing your final image will hopefully bring significant dividends.

## **AN ANALYSIS OF JUDGING BY EDDIE SETHNA FRPS EFIAP**

The late Eddie Sethna had all the skills required to examine and comment on judging practices and produced a very detailed paper which you can read here –

<http://www.monolandscapes.talktalk.net/judging.htm>



The paper is too long to publish in e-news but I have included some slightly edited extracts.

“The importance of judging or evaluating cannot be denied. Where would club photography be without competitions, exhibitions and the granting of Distinctions? And yet, judges are almost invariably the object of criticism and denigration and rarely of praise. Knocking of judges by lecturers and writers has become endemic, but few have tried to study the subject and improve it. Talks and articles on judging usually amount to individuals stating how they judge and seeking to justify their method as the best without making any effort to compare their own techniques with those of others, and without trying to evolve from observations credible principles of judging.”

**NEGATIVE ASPECTS** Eddie thought that “negative aspects of judging could be summarised as -

**“Overvalued ideas.**

This term, borrowed from psychiatry, describes well a common failing which arises as a consequence of a judge having an idea which he currently wishes to promote as being very important in picture making. Invariably the idea is valid but when held with great fervour, the judge becomes so preoccupied with it that he neglects all other aspects of the picture

**Failure to see the picture as a whole.**

A fundamental principle established by Gestalt theory is that the whole is not the sum of its parts. This is best explained by a couple of examples. When one appreciates the beauty of a building, the architectural qualities it possesses are not there in the individual bricks it is made of. The same principle should apply to a photograph. When seen as a whole it will have qualities which far transcend the parts of which it is made. Regrettably, in photographic judging it appears that some judges look upon pictures as if they are just a collection of areas of different tones or colours. They dissect the picture, closely scrutinising different areas rather than respond to the picture as a whole.

**Critical rather than constructive approach.**

Many judges work on the premise that judging means finding out what is wrong and that the best picture is the one with the least faults. Comments from such judges can hardly be constructive. The most important belief in psychology is that people learn only when rewarded and, if that be the case, emphasis must be on identifying good features and on constructive advice.

**Too much consideration given to effort in getting or making of the picture.**

Many judges feel that in their marking they should include the effort on the part of the photographer either in getting the picture or in the making of it. It is hard to justify this approach. If effort put in by the photographer is included in judging, then why not a host of other considerations that would affect the

picture-making, such as the equipment a photographer can afford; the amount of travel he can manage; or even his height which might be an advantage to him in taking pictures.”

**POSITIVE ASPECTS** In good judging Eddie found that three attributes of the pictures were taken into account and suggested how these should be weighted.

**“What the picture communicates - The Message - with a weighting of 50-60%.**

Appreciation of all art, including a photograph, is not primarily an intellectual exercise but an emotional one, which may be pleasurable, depressing, moving or frightening. It is the feelings, emotions and mood that a picture conveys which is the core of the 'message' and should form the basis of evaluation of a picture. Good judging is done more by the heart than the head, with the ability to feel a picture and not just visualise it. It is the buzz and tingle which one experiences on seeing a good picture which is at the heart of judging.

**The content of the picture - The Medium - with a weighting of 30-35%.**

Has the photographer the ability to see what subject lends itself to a good photograph? What appears good to the eye does not necessarily make a good photograph. How often does one not see a really good photograph of a subject which many of us would not have dreamt of taking? Even when a subject is quite commonly selected for a photograph, like a portrait or a landscape, it is the choice which the photographer makes that will determine the success or failure of a picture. Often it is the uniqueness or rarity of the subject which will make it interesting and worthy of high marking.

**The technical aspects of the picture - with a weighting of 10-15%.**

It can be argued that technical merit of the picture should be a prerequisite to assessment of artistic qualities which has been so strongly emphasised up to this point. In a sense this is true but in reality it does not present difficulties.

**My conclusion**

Although I have stressed the three paramount criteria by which a picture ought to be properly judged, this by no means implies that there should be rules for what judges should like or dislike. Judging is, and always will remain, a subjective exercise.”

*Eddie Sethna*

# COMPETITION PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ALL

(suggested class changes)

I have an idea of a solution to the argument of what I would call the class wars, where photographers are in conflict over where the borders of traditional photography ends and creative photography starts. My views are that we should encourage all styles of photography, but not necessarily allow them in the same competition melting pot which is currently a very hotly debated topic. It is quite clear to me that some sort of solution or common ground needs to be found, to allow competition photography to evolve without the current climate of backbiting and sour-grapes syndrome. Putting aside my personal bias on the situation I have listened to lots of different photographers views and have modified my ideas in the formulation of my suggested changes. **Derek Doar**, Nottingham & Notts PS

*I currently see that we have photography split into 4 types.*

- 1. Images created from a single capture.**
  - 2. HDR and PANORAMIC Images created from more than one capture and merged together to look like one capture.**
  - 3. Images created from more than one totally different captures and merged together to look like one capture.**
  - 4. Images created that look surreal due to montaging or added artwork.**
- In competition circles OPEN COLOUR currently embraces all of the above types of photography as the word OPEN suggests.**

*I am suggesting that the Open Colour class is replaced by 3 new classes*

- 1. Natural Colour**
- 2. Photo Realistic Colour**
- 3. Creative Colour.**

**If there is an Open Monochrome class it could be replaced with the same Natural, Photo-Realistic and Creative classes.**

We need rules to go with my suggested classes and I have created a set of rules that still allows the much needed latitude. I have on purpose, kept the rules as short as I can because too many rules increase the effort needed by competition organizers to police them.

## **Natural Colour:**

A "Natural" image is one that has been created from a single capture and without major digital afterwork. The integrity of the subject must be maintained and the making of major physical changes to the image is not permitted. You may not, for example, import parts from another image. (**HDR** from a bracketed set of the same image and **Panoramas** from a panned set of the same scene are viewed as a single capture)

## **Photo-Realistic Colour:**

A "Photo-Realistic" image is one that has been created from more than one image, but looks like a single capture image. The ability to create seamlessly merged images is encouraged in this class, but the end image should look similar to a single capture image.

## **Creative Colour:**

Open Creative Colour is a class that allows the photographer to manipulate images by the use of montages, changing colour, form, shapes, sharpness, etc., to make an image more surreal or less realistic than it would otherwise be. (The use of HDR techniques without further montage or manipulation would not be included in this class.)

*Please do not write to the Editor on this subject. e-news has already covered this matter extensively and will not be reopening the debate.*

# Sony World Photography Awards

Call for entries

2014



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