

# THE JUDGE'S MANUAL

*A Concise Guide for FCC Judges*

This document provides FCC Judges with valuable information to help them get started in Camera Club judging and for building their skills

Jim Crew (FCC Judge)

February 2010



# THE JUDGE'S MANUAL

# THE JUDGE'S MANUAL

## Contents

The Objectives .....	1
The Levels of Competition .....	1
The Monthly Competition .....	2
The Interclub .....	2
The State Wide Competition.....	3
The National Exhibition .....	3
The International Exhibition.....	3
The Process of Club Competition .....	4
The Audience .....	4
Public Speaking Tips.....	5
Structure .....	5
It's OK to Feel Nervous .....	5
Speak to the Audience not the Photograph.....	5
Don't Describe the Photograph .....	5
Use Plain Language.....	7
Avoid Jargon .....	7
Avoid Clichés.....	7
Speak Clearly .....	7
Modulate.....	7
Timing.....	7
Humour.....	8
Speak with Conviction.....	8
Body Language.....	8
Project Confidence .....	8
Individuals .....	8
The Judging Process .....	9
The Evaluation.....	10
Evaluation Criteria .....	11
Purpose .....	12
Idea Development .....	12
Creativity.....	12
Aesthetics .....	12
Image Quality .....	12
Presentation .....	13
Communication .....	13
Evocation .....	13
Image Effectiveness.....	13

Influences .....	13
Application .....	14
Autonomy .....	14
Completion .....	14
Evaluation Guidance List .....	14
Things to embrace .....	16
Things to Avoid .....	17
Nonsense Rules.....	18
Some Judging Misdemeanours.....	20
A Judging Comparison.....	20
The Awards.....	21
The Rewards.....	22
The Judging Examples .....	23
Visual Language.....	32
Line.....	32
Colour .....	32
Texture .....	33
Shape .....	33
Form .....	34
Space.....	34
Light .....	35
Art Composition .....	35
Definitions .....	38
FIAP .....	38
Black and White (Monochrome).....	38
Nature.....	38
PSA .....	38
Nature.....	38
Wildlife .....	39
Photojournalism .....	39
Human Interest.....	39

# THE JUDGE'S MANUAL

## *A Concise Guide for FCC Judges*

Your first Photographic Judging assignment can be a quite daunting experience as you battle with your nerves in the hope of putting in a fine performance. The guidelines provided in this booklet will help you make the experience an enjoyable one that will hopefully lead to may more worthwhile and informative judging assignments.

The publication is intended to assist inexperienced judges become good judges and good judges great judges. The information in the booklet attempts to give a balanced view of the camera club judging process and to identify what is good so that it can be strengthened and what is not so good so it can be corrected. There exists a large number of very competent judges who do a sterling job but can always benefit from looking at new ideas, they may find value in the information in this booklet. There are also judges new to the process who should benefit considerably from the content of the booklet and yet others who may need to rethink their approach and methods.

The booklet should be of assistance to all current and future camera club judges. There is always something to learn.

## THE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of judging depend on the level of the exhibition or competition. At the lower levels the main objective is to provide a forum of learning and discussion in which photographer, and judges, can learn from the evaluation process and so improve their image making skills. At these levels winning points should be a very secondary objective.

As the level of the exhibition progresses towards international the winning of points or awards becomes the prime objective although there is still an opportunity for learning by carefully looking at the images that win awards.

As a judge you have the responsibility to encourage. The importance of this objective cannot be overstated.

Camera club judges must be prepared to take the lead and bring into club photography a contemporary approach that reflects current trends and techniques and encompasses photography as a means of communication rather than a means of simply recording. To do otherwise means the camera club movement will have no room to grow and develop and remain relevant.

## THE LEVELS OF COMPETITION

Within the amateur camera club movement the need for judging arises at a number of levels. At the first level there is the local club's monthly competition that will usually be an open subject or a set subject. The next level is the local interclub where a number of clubs join in competition with each other.

At the level above the local interclub are the State wide competitions organised by bodies like the Federation of Camera Clubs NSW (FCC). These can be club based competitions in the form of an interclub embracing all member clubs or competitions for individual photographers.

National exhibitions are next highest on the list and are run by committees formed for the purpose and are open to all photographers whether they belong to a camera club or not. At the top of the list is the international exhibition which is open to photographers all around the world.

Each of these levels of competition have different objectives and requirements in respect to the way in which judging is carried out.

## The Monthly Competition

The main objective of camera club monthly competition is to provide a forum where photographers can exhibit their images and obtain constructive evaluation from an independent arbiter. It is primarily a learning process whereby the evaluation given can be used to improve the image or future images made by the photographer and other members of the club.

The club monthly competition may be open subject or set subject or both. If it is a set subject a definition will normally be provided but if it isn't you should ask for one to avoid any confusion about what is acceptable.

The judge is usually required to comment on each image entered. This comment should be a constructive evaluation of the image in terms of its suitability for competition, its ability to communicate and its overall quality and presentation.

To give recognition to images that have good communication and adequate quality the judge will normally be asked to make awards from the images presented. Many clubs will keep score of these awards and give annual trophies to members who have successfully accumulated enough points.

Most clubs also have a print and projected image of the year competition where all members enter their best work from their efforts throughout the year and the judge selects one image from each category as the best for the year.

Most judges start their judging career at this level which is a little ironical as it can be the hardest type of judging task. The reason for this is that it is usually the only form of judging that requires the judge to give a dissertation to explain their evaluation of the image and why they select some images for awards and not others.

However, this requirement is also the most rewarding as it forces the judge to think carefully and analyse fully each and every entry. It also can provide the judge with feedback.

## The Interclub

The interclub competition is organised by club committees to allow two or more clubs to compete with each other. Generally the number of entries from each club will be limited to ten or twenty in each category and there is usually a requirement that no individual

photographer enters more than two images – this is to ensure that the club entry is representative of the work done by a range of members.

The images entered in local interclub competitions will generally represent the better images created by individual photographers. The process of judging is similar to that employed in the judging of the club monthly competition – the judge comments on each entry and awards points relative to the quality and communicative ability of each photograph. These points are totalled to see which club scores the highest.

The local interclub can also be classed as a learning environment as it gives the opportunity for clubs to compare their standard with other clubs. The winning score has more importance than the score in the monthly competition but it should by no means be the sole objective of the interclub competition.

Like the club monthly competition the judge is required to elaborate on their deliberations by providing a commentary on each image and to this extent the task can be very challenging.

## The State Wide Competition

Judging the state wide competition is a little less demanding as it will be done away from and prior to the exhibition and there will usually be a panel of three judges to lessen the burden on any one judge. The judging task, however, will be more challenging as the standard of the images presented will generally be higher and of a more even standard making the task of evaluation and selection more difficult.

The judging panel may be asked to comment on a selection of the accepted images at the exhibition but this will not be to the same detail or depth required for club judging. The learning aspect of this level of exhibition are not as pronounced and are mostly left up to individuals.

## The National Exhibition

The national exhibition will see a very large number of entries from photographers all over the country and these will usually be of a quite high standard. The judging will also be carried out by a panel of judges prior to the exhibition and there will not be any requirement for the judges to give any comment on their deliberations.

Organisers of national exhibitions will require judges to have considerable experience before inviting them on to a panel if they want the exhibition to have the approval of the Australian Photographic Society (APS).

## The International Exhibition

The international exhibition will see an extremely large number of entries from photographers all over the world and these will be of a high standard. The judging will be carried out by a panel of judges prior to the exhibition and there will not usually be any requirement for the judges to give any comment on their deliberations.

To obtain approval for the exhibition from the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and the Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique (FIAP) organisers of international exhibitions will have to select judges with a lot of experience for the judging panel.

At all levels of competition the process of photographic evaluation is generally the same. The most significant difference between the levels is that at the club monthly competition level and often the interclub level the judge is asked to justify their decisions. This is usually done by speaking to the club members but can be by written report or audio tape. A section that gives tips on public speaking is given later in this publication to assist with the speech presentation.

## THE PROCESS OF CLUB COMPETITION

At a typical club monthly competition the following activities take place.

1. Members put their work up on the wall.
2. The judge makes comments.
3. The judge makes awards.
4. The members discuss the awards and may disagree with the awards.
5. The members collect their work.
6. Everyone goes home.

At all of these stages communication in some form takes place.

1. The photograph visually communicates to the judge and the audience.
2. The judge communicates verbally with the audience.
3. The judge communicates non-verbally with the audience.
4. The audience may communicate verbally with the judge.
5. The audience communicates in non-verbally with the judge.
6. The members communicate with each other after the formal judging finishes.

If you have been effective in your communication most members will understand your reasoning and everyone will go home with more knowledge than they had when they arrived.

## THE AUDIENCE

When judging the club monthly competition a most important factor is the audience and how you communicate with it. The major task with this level of judging is how you present the results of your evaluation to the audience.

Speaking to the audience requires some public speaking skill. Although you do not need to be a Toastmaster expert, the application of basic speaking techniques will make your message better understood.

Remember, it is the responsibility of the communicator to ensure effective communication, not the 'communicatee'.

To communicate effectively means that your audience will:

1. Learn from your experience.
2. Appreciate your reasoning when awards are given.
3. Enjoy your judging.



4. Invite you back to do it all again.

## Public Speaking Tips

Only practice will improve your speaking skill. The following discussion gives some public speaking tips you can employ in presenting your evaluation.

### Structure

Open with a thankyou for the invitation to judge and give a brief outline of how you intend to judge – what you will look for in the images.

Follow with your evaluation.

Conclude with a brief summing up and thank the audience for its attention and participation.

### It's OK to Feel Nervous

When put in front an audience we all get a touch of nerves. This is quite normal and quite helpful. Nervous tension causes the body to increase adrenalin and effectively controlled, this will lift your performance.



A nervous reaction to public speaking is something that each of us experience. Overcoming them is a matter of practice and rising confidence levels. There is no shortcut or easier, softer option. In mastering speaking techniques, we must stand a trial by fire. It is very similar to learning to ride a horse or bicycle. If we fall off, we must immediately get on again. Failing to face one's fears in the public speaking arena will reinforce the fear. The result could be a permanent aversion to public speaking.

The actress Ethel Merman was reported to have said “We all get butterflies in the stomach before a performance. The difference between an amateur and a professional is that with the professional the butterflies fly in formation”.

### Speak to the Audience not the Photograph

When delivering your evaluation to the audience face them and speak to them don't talk to the photograph – it can't hear. This requires that you make eye contact with the audience and involve them in the exercise – your message will be much better received and understood. An audience quickly tires of a judge who does not speak directly to them.

### Don't Describe the Photograph

Avoid describing what the audience can see for themselves. If the photograph is a picture of horse the audience will know without you telling them. Concentrate on the message and your interpretation of it – you may make the audience see something they didn't initially see.

Describing what can easily be seen by the audience is an indication that you cannot see any other value in the image. If this is the case you need to be up front and say so. There is nothing wrong in saying that image is not communicating anything to you, provided you

## **THE JUDGE'S COMMANDMENTS**

- 1. BE FAIR, HONEST AND HELPFUL**
- 2. JUDGE ONLY THE PANEL YOU SEE**
- 3. FIND THE BEST PHOTOGRAPH IN THE COMPETITION AND GIVE IT THE MAXIMUM AWARD AVAILABLE**
- 4. CONSIDER THE REAL PURPOSE OF THE CLUB MONTHLY COMPETITION AND PROVIDE HELPFUL CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENT**
- 5. FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE CLUB'S SCORING SYSTEM AND MAKE SURE FOLLOW ANY SPECIAL AWARDS OR POINTS SYSTEM THEY USE**
- 6. KEEP UP WITH CURRENT TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES AND DO NOT DISMISS ANY GENUINE ATTEMPT TO FIND NEW BOUNDARIES**
- 7. SEARCH FOR MEANINGS AND EMOTIONS NOT TECHNICALITIES**
- 8. OFFER ENTHUSIASM AND ENCOURAGEMENT**
- 9. RESPECT THE OPINION OF OTHERS**
- 10. BE COURTEOUS AND CONSIDERATE**

have scrutinised the image carefully. From the photographer's point of view, however, this needs to be done with tact and consideration to prevent the photographer from being discouraged.

### Use Plain Language

It may make you feel like an expert to use long and complex language but there is a risk that some of the audience will not fully understand what you are saying. Use plain English to communicate your thoughts. You should also avoid the use of slang and highly technical terms. The English language is rich enough to achieve this objective. It may sound professional to you to say 'the leading line in this image creates a dichotomy in the subject' when it would be better to say 'the leading line divides the picture in two'.

The language you use should be comfortable for both you and the audience. It's a good idea to avoid bookish language or technical jargon. Rather use words that are natural to you and phrases that are understood by all.

### Avoid Jargon

Photography, like many other endeavours, has a lot of jargon associated with it. There is a good chance that in any club there will be members who are new to photography and they may not understand the jargon – it is better not to risk alienating them by using words they don't understand. If you think an area of an image is too bright don't describe it as having too much 255 (a judge actually said this), say it is too bright or too white.

### Avoid Clichés

Like jargon, there is a large number of clichés associated with the process of photographic judging. It is best to avoid them lest you end up sounding like any number of other judges. Don't use expressions like 'it works' or 'well seen'. English is a very rich language that allows you large latitude in terminology and expression, so increase your vocabulary so you don't have to rely on clichés.

### Speak Clearly

Speak clearly so you can be understood with enough volume to be heard by the last row of the audience – but there is no need to shout.

### Modulate

Modulate the tone, volume and pace of your speech to maintain interest in your presentation and avoid boring your audience. Your message will not get through if the audience is not listening. Don't talk too fast and use pauses for effect and to highlight important points.

### Timing

Be aware of timing and don't talk for too long about each image. The secret is to be concise and economical and avoid saying things about an image for the sake of saying something. Sometimes there is little that can be said about an image and in this case you should say little.

Avoid waffling mindlessly about an image while you struggle to find a key point. How often have you witnessed a judge do this until finally, eureka! "The left hand has been cut off".

## Humour

You don't have to be a stand up comic but if you can inject a bit of humour into your presentation your communication will benefit. An entertained audience is much more attentive and easy with which to communicate.

Don't make the audience, or more importantly an individual in the audience, the butt of your joke. Humour at the expense of the audience will quickly bring you down.

Avoid long stories or jokes. Even seasoned speakers know that funny stories soon become unfunny if they go on too long. If you do have a joke, make sure it is relevant.

I remember once being presented with a photograph of an egret to judge. I thought that the photograph was too tightly cropped, particularly at the top. The bird had its head lowered in the typical crooked neck fashion so to make my point I said, "The bird had to bend down to stay in the frame". This was greeted with much laughter but the point about over cropping was well accepted.

## Speak with Conviction

Speak with conviction as if you really believe in what you are saying. Persuade your audience effectively. If you do this when the time comes to make awards the audience will understand your choices and even some of those who miss out on an award will still feel satisfied and will go away with knowledge they didn't have at the start of the evening.

## Body Language

Develop a style of body language that implies openness and friendliness. Use gestures to emphasize your points and to prevent your presentation from becoming wooden. Point to an image when necessary to make sure the audience can see what you are talking about but don't lose eye contact while you are speaking. If you have to turn to the photographs on display to assess an image stop talking for a brief moment.

Smile when talking about something pleasant and let your face show other emotions as you talk about what you see in the images.

Move around the room so you can engage all of the audience.

## Project Confidence

People are attracted to confidence. Stand up straight. Use relaxed, controlled gestures. Speak deliberately and intentionally. Don't rush through what you have to say. Assume the audience (or at least a majority of it) will like you and will agree with you. If you act confident, your body's feelings will catch up.

## Individuals

Remember—no matter how large an audience seems—it is made up of individuals. If you talk to the audience as you would your best friend you get along just fine.

## THE JUDGING PROCESS

The following outlines the role of the judge in the judging process for a typical club monthly competition with suggestions of what to do and how do it. More detail is provided in the sections that follow.

1. Arrive early to allow time to make sure you understand the club's award system and any special requirements.
  - a. How many levels of award are there?
  - b. Are there any limitations on the number of awards?
  - c. If it is a set subject competition, is there a definition?
2. Arriving early will also usually allow you to preview the print panel as it is being mounted.

At a club I used to visit regularly they would always conduct 30 – 40 minutes of club business before the judging could start. After experiencing this three or four times I decided that next time I would arrive late to let them complete their business. When I arrived they were standing on the footpath and to my great dismay they announced 'good now we can get started' and we went inside to conduct their 30 minutes of general business.

3. After the introduction give the members an outline of how you will be judging the images and what you will be looking for.
  - a. Outline your experience.
  - b. Inform the audience of what you consider to be important in a competition entry.
4. Present your evaluation of each entry.
  - a. What idea do you see that caused the photographer to create the image?
  - b. How well does the image communicate the photographer's message?
  - c. How well has the photographer used visual language?
  - d. Does the photograph satisfy the requirements for competition?
  - e. Is the technical quality sufficient to convey the message?
  - f. Is the image complete or does it require more work?
  - g. Has the photographer used their craft skills to effectively present the image?
5. Announce the entries you have decided to award.
  - a. Make as many awards as you can but remember it is a competition and awarding every entry may not be in the spirit of competition.
  - b. Use the full range of award levels available.
  - c. Make awards as though these were the only photographs you have seen, that is any other competition you have judged is irrelevant.
6. Steps 4 and will need to be repeated for each section.

7. Give a brief summary of your overall assessment of the entries and the general standard.
8. Thank the club and the members for the opportunity and pleasure of judging their photography.

## THE EVALUATION

When evaluating images the concentration should be on photographic concepts, themes, messages and moods with a lesser emphasis on the purely technical. The following quote from Cecil Beaton has some bearing on this approach.

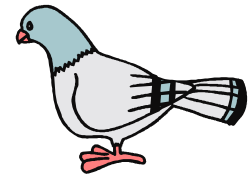
*A technical 'failure' which shows some attempt at aesthetic expression is of infinitely more value than uninspired 'success'.*

Unfortunately when evaluating photographs it is far too easy to concentrate on just the technical factors. If you as the judge declare that the picture is not in focus and it isn't, nobody can disagree. On the other hand, if you say the picture creates a really effective mood somebody in the audience may say they disagree and that no mood is created.

In a purely objective analysis there is a level of safety in your authority but when subjective analysis is embarked upon that safety net is lost – this is one reason why many judges only talk about technical issues.

Photography is all about communication. It is the message it conveys that is important and this should be what the evaluation is all about. The technical characteristics are simply the means by which the message is conveyed.

*Technical characteristics are the pigeon not the message*



When evaluating a photograph we should be looking beyond the purely technical and searching for the meanings, the idea behind the creation of the image and the reason why the photographer created the image. Our evaluation should concentrate on the message and not be a simple objective only analysis.

*Photographic judging seems to be too preoccupied with the "medium" as if a photograph is just a technical exercise rather than an artistic expression. One accepts that probably the medium in photography is more technical than say in painting and that premise warrants some consideration, but if the medium is wholly or largely what is judged, with little attention to the artistic expression, then the whole point of judging is missed.*

*E.R. Sethna*

*PSA Journal, July, 1995*

*Art historians have come to realize that the "evolution" of artistic style, unlike development in the sciences, is not one of continual improvement, but rather expressions of the changing goals and values of those civilizations that create*

*visual arts. Since the beginning of the Twentieth Century (and even earlier), artists have recognized and paid tribute to the styles of earlier masters and modes of creation. To this writer, it therefore seems peculiar that the stylistic guidelines to which amateur club photographers are expected to conform tend to limit themselves to a particularly art-historically blind aesthetic. Needless to say, the process of judging tends to inculcate an aesthetic. As taught by judges hired to assess our competitions these guidelines tend to follow the so-called PSA rules - a misnomer, by the way. Not only do these "rules of practice and composition" tend to ignore the stylistic possibilities open to all creative artists, but by methodically disregarding meaning and subject matter in club photography, they discourage both budding and advanced amateur photographers from participating in one of the most exciting developments of our time- the acceptance of photography as a fine art worthy of commercial and aesthetic recognition. In this way club competition photographers are encouraged to create in an hermetically sealed atmosphere that isolates them from the advances and practices of the wider photographic world -- at least with respect to their competition work.*

*Robert A. Baron*

*From a paper presented to*

*Color Camera Club of White Plains, New York and*

*Westchester Photographic Society, Valhalla, New York*

A technically perfect photograph that has no message has no real reason to exist. Technical excellence alone does not make a photograph that communicates.

Your credibility as a judge and the extent to which the audience accepts the outcome of your evaluation is not simply based on the images you select for award. It largely influenced by the way in which you communicate how and why you decide the results, how you approach the task of evaluation.

The following criteria give guidance on the way photographs should be evaluated.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The headings below provide some evaluation criteria that can be used when evaluating photographs. Not every criterion will be applicable to every photograph – when conducting your evaluation consider only those that are applicable.

**When an artist of any kind looks at his subject, he looks with everything he is. Everything that he has lived, learned, observed and experienced combines to enable him to identify himself with the subject and look with insight, perception, imagination and understanding. The technical process simply serves as a vehicle of transcription and not as the art.**

*Edward Steichen  
A Life in Photography*



When appraising an image we must always be prepared to look outside the square. We must look for the deeper meaning not just the superficial image. Many photographers put a lot of effort into creating their images and they deserve a careful and well informed evaluation that goes way beyond the obvious.

## Purpose

In reality, with modern photographic equipment, processes and techniques all photographs should be successful. The key to how successful depends only on how well the picture fulfils its purpose. A photograph used for the wrong purpose is doomed to fail. For example, the picture of the newest addition to the family will look great and do a sterling job under a fridge magnet but that same picture in a competition will almost surely fail – unless it is the New Idea magazine baby picture contest.

## Idea Development



When appraising an image you should look for the idea that spawned the image and gave a reason for its creation. Why the photographer created the image. To be an effective piece of communication the idea behind the image should be fully developed.

## Creativity

The principal concept of creativity answers the question - are we creating photographic art or just recording what we see? When evaluating the creativity in the image we are looking for more than a photograph that simply records the subject, we are looking for a photograph that interprets the subject. Does the photograph carry a message or invoke a mood or feeling in the viewer?

## Aesthetics

If there is no attraction for the viewers they will not look and the message will be lost. Aesthetics is what urges the viewer to stop, look and communicate. The image should have some quality that urges the viewer to look. This is not necessarily just a pretty picture but is one that is compelling. It is good aesthetics that creates memorable pictures.

## Image Quality

We assess image quality in regard to whether matters such as sharpness, tonal control and colour purity reinforce the purpose of the image. Image quality always needs to be just sufficient to convey the message without confusion. However technical quality alone is not enough to make an effective image.

**An image that has technical quality as its only attribute will have a hard time communicating a message**

The importance of technical quality in an image depends on the subject. Where the photographer has full control over the process, such as in still life images, we can expect to see a higher level of technical quality than in photographic situations that have an element of chance, sport for example.



The PSA definition for photojournalism includes the following sentence.

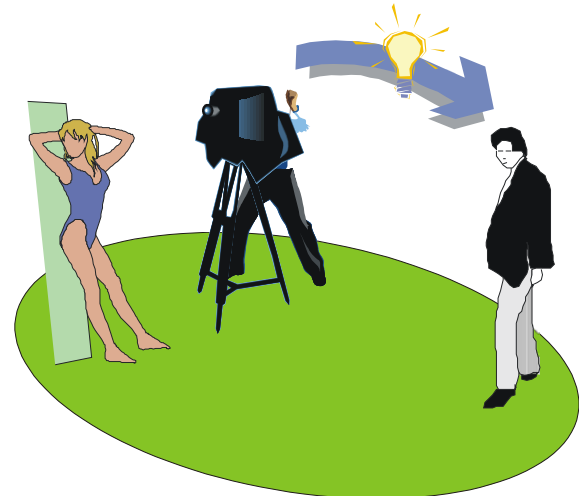
*The journalistic value of the image shall receive priority over pictorial quality.*

## Presentation

Presentation is a measure of the effectiveness of the craft used to enhance the display of the image. Do the mounting, matting, spotting, labelling and nomenclature add to the aesthetics of the image? Presentation should support the image and must not become the image or its message.

## Communication

The prime purpose of a photograph is to convey a communication from the photographer to the viewer, the transfer of an idea, emotion or feeling. A photograph that does not communicate has no valid reason to exist. In evaluating the image the clarity of the communication is assessed. Is the message clear and easily understood? The communication can be a message, a mood or a feeling.



Does the image convey something that has meaning to us that we can relate to, enjoy or condemn? Or does it leave us indifferent or bored?

## Communication

### Evocation



Evocation refers not simply to eliciting a response from the viewer but also the scope and nature of that response. It is important that that a response is obtained – good or bad but not indifferent. Does the image cause the viewer to be challenged, moved, inspired or informed?

Do we have some emotional engagement with the image, its content and its message? If not, why not?

### Image Effectiveness

In terms of image effectiveness we need to appraise factors such as the choice between monochrome and colour, high or low key, lighting quality and direction, landscape or portrait and picture shape. Do the choices made by the photographer make the image more effective in its ability to communicate? Do the elements that comprise the composition all work in concert with each other to create a high level of unity of purpose? For example, does the use of toning enhance the image effectiveness or was it applied for no apparent reason?



### Influences

Can we see in the image evidence of influences drawn from our visual heritage? These influences when present must be respectful of the traditions and conventions of photography but never at the expense of innovation. In all cases the image must be photographic and not simply graphic art.

The question of influences and visual heritage relates to keeping photography photographic. With today's digital imaging and processing there becomes a much finer line between a photograph and an item of pure graphic art. If we are to maintain the essence of photography then there must be some evidence that the image at least started by the use of light in the capture process. Without the use of light as the basis we do not have an image that can be accepted as a photograph; it is "purely graphic art". If it is the photographer's style to create a piece of pure graphic then there are other non-photographic exhibitions that would be more appropriate.

### Application

Is there evidence of a work ethic, some commitment to excellence, some indication as to the personal attributes of the photographer? Issues of substance, of style, a personal philosophy might be relevant. Has the photographer shown pride in their work?

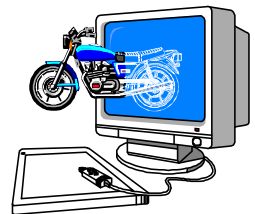
From the point of view of the photographer, being proud of their image means they are satisfied with the work they have done and feel that they could not do better, they have presented the best they can. But we often see images that are presented with dust spots or badly cut or crooked mounts for example. These are not related to not being able to do better but being careless. Such poorly presented images need to be singled out and commented appropriately. By awarding a well executed and presented image you are rewarding the pride the photographer has in their work - even if you do it subconsciously. A lack of pride will most probably be evident because of the carelessness showing through and should be eliminated. On the other hand an image that is technically poor may well be the best the photographer can do and if this is the case it is the judge's responsibility to identify the problem and offer constructive comment to assist the photographer to do better.

### Autonomy

In most club competition an image is presented as a single photograph and so it must stand alone in its communication. We evaluate whether the image conveys a sense that it can stand alone, that it does not require elaboration, explanation, some level of supplementation or additional input in order to communicate.

### Completion

Does the image present in a form or style that suggests some features remain unresolved or incomplete? Is there scope for change, for improvement, for modification, advancement or growth? Photographic images like many other art forms evolve but this evolution must be complete prior to the image being disseminated.



## Evaluation Guidance List

The following statements provide a number of evaluation guidelines that may assist you.

- Is there a message in the image? Is it clear to you? If not, why not? The photograph needs to have something to say that is said with passion.
- Does the image have an uncluttered point of interest supported by strong and simple composition? Are there distracting elements around the subject which could have

been removed prior to exposure or during processing? Could an alternative composition or processing have improved image?

- Does the image make a statement that you can articulate?
- Beware of the sterile technical image where the photograph is a work of impeccable presentation, good composition, correct exposure and totally is sharp throughout yet lacking in message or emotional content.
- Is the quality of the image consistent with the type of photograph? Does the image portray a strong sense of design where there was ample time to consider technical aspects or was the subject more the nature of a Cartier-Bresson style decisive moment where some technical flaws can be tolerated?
- Has light been used to the best advantage? For example the landscape taken under early morning light rather than strong overhead middle of the day sun, the way soft light falls onto the face of the model or a play of light onto shimmering water.
- Is there evidence of skill in the use of a camera? Were the controls appropriately used to optimise the image? For example use of slow shutter, wide or closed aperture to achieve an effect.
- Has the image received correct processing crafted right up to the print stage? An image displaying poor camera exposure and subsequent flawed tonal range does not support an otherwise well captured subject.
- Is the treatment appropriate to the subject matter? For instance, has the application of sepia tone been used effectively on the old homestead. Does the partial colouration of an image of a flower assist in isolating the subject? Does the infrared effect add to the mood of the subject?
- Does the image have a fresh original approach or does it display the same tired overused techniques that merely capture the classic cliché? Creative input is vital in order to avoid the purely technical exercise.
- There is a huge diversity of subject matter, style and treatment. Be open and honest in your appraisal and seek out innovation and imagination.
- At all times try to stress the positive and avoid making remarks that have a negative tone. If you are telling the photographer that some aspect of their photograph is not very good your comments are more likely to be accepted if they are given using positive words than if you use negative words.

<b>Do Say</b>	<b>Don't Say</b>
If you had waited for the light to be from a better angle you would have achieved better detail.	You took this photograph in poor light, you can't get good detail when you don't have a good light angle.
Using selective focus techniques would have helped separate your subject from the background.	The subject doesn't stand out, you have not achieved enough separation in the image.
The photograph would have benefited from having all of its elements going in the same direction. For example the sombre mood would have been enhanced by a lower key approach.	The tonal range doesn't match the mood of the subject. You won't achieve full impact if you don't ensure that your subject matter is cohesive.
The ability of a photograph to communicate is important. Your message would be stronger with the subject matter simplified.	The photograph is too complicated and has nothing to say.

## THINGS TO EMBRACE

While performing your evaluations try to incorporate some of the following concepts.

- Honesty and fairness are basic tenets of photographic evaluation. There is no point in not telling the truth as this can lead to photographers being misled into believing there work is better than it is.
- Use anecdotes derived from your own experiences to illustrate your assessment. This will add credence.
- Study the work of the masters of photography and try to understand what makes their images great. Use this knowledge in your evaluations.
- Develop an enthusiasm and passion for photography. This will assist your evaluation and increase the enjoyment you and your audience will derive from your evaluation.
- Be prepared to embrace diversity in your approach and be prepared to handle a wide range of genres, styles and processing and presentation techniques.
- Be accepting of new and innovative approaches to photography. Understand and accept trends and welcome change in a way that encourages photographers to continue to develop.
- Study the history and development of photography in order to appreciate change and growth.
- Encourage audience participation but remain aware that you are the judge and it is your responsibility to make the assessments. Be careful that the best photographers are rewarded and not the best debaters.
- Use current examples from newspaper or magazine images to add life to your presentation.
- Develop your skills and knowledge to allow you to make helpful suggestions about how a photograph may be improved. You do not have to be expert in all facets of image making as the task is to judge the final presented image not how it was made. But some knowledge is helpful.
- You will not please everyone in the audience so don't expect to. Just be honest and sincere in your evaluation. If the job you do is done well you will be invited back and this is the only true measure of your performance.
- Look for something positive to say about every image, repeat every image. If you only say negative things, no matter how well put, about an image, the photographer concerned will be severely discouraged. It is not difficult to find something positive and it gives the photographer hope.
- Remember you are a guest of the club and it is their rules that apply. Abide by their scoring system and any other requirements they have in regard to how they run their

A well regarded judge once told me about how he was judging at a small club where the standard was not very high. He didn't want to discourage them so he told them that their work was good. They were most surprised when they challenged a large nearby club to an interclub and were well and truly beaten.

competitions. This applies particularly to definitions and acceptance of entries for set subject competitions.

- Gracefully accept any feedback you are given, analyse what you are told and make use of it in future judging assignments. Aim for continuous improvement, and understand that the best way to improve is to solicit candid feedback from as many people as you can.
- Consciously develop a cosmopolitan approach and don't develop a bias for a particular subject or genre. This is not an easy thing to achieve as photographers tend to want to categorise judges as liking landscapes, sports action or any of a number of types of photograph. At a club judging I once gave the top award to a delightful photograph of a young boy of about four. It was truly a well executed shot full of life and character. The next time I visited the club almost every entry was a picture of a young child.
- An effective judging technique is to try to identify a word or short phrase that describes the photograph. This can often help identify the message in the photograph and assist in giving a more detailed evaluation.

### Some Words that May Describe a Photograph

Emotive	Informative	Complete
Suggestive	Peaceful	Serene
Elegance	Meaningful	Whimsical
Thrilling	Stimulating	Imaginative
Arresting	Abstract	Conceptual
Tranquility	Graceful	Inspirational
Illustrative	Compulsive	Seductive
Spontaneous	Sensuous	Compelling
Meditative	Instructive	Sophisticated
Atmospheric	Aesthetic	Metaphorical
Representational	Symbolic	

## THINGS TO AVOID

A good evaluation requires that you avoid some pitfalls, the following highlights some of these.

- It is easy to fall into the trap of becoming inflexible and dogmatic but there is no room for this in judging. A judge must be open-minded, flexible, fair and honest and must judge without prejudice.
- You may not like nature and if precludes you from giving a fair and honest evaluation then you should politely refuse any invitation to judge nature competitions.
- If you accept an invitation to judge then you must leave your prejudices at home. You may not like a particular genre of photography but you must be prepared to fairly evaluate all photographs entered. The worst thing you can do is to announce to the audience that you carry such a prejudice – once stated they will be hard pressed to believe your judging can be fair.
- Don't express an opinion as a fact - You may hate orange borders, but that is an opinion unless you can cite a legitimate reason for your concern (such as that this colour combination may be harder to look at).

- Don't be discourteous - There is never an excuse for being rude. It will make your audience angry and destroy communication.
- Avoid making assumptions, there is a good chance you will be wrong and this will destroy your credibility. For example, don't say 'this image was taken with an 18 mm lens' because it may not have been and it is not important anyway. If the lens was not an 18 mm somebody will know and your credibility will be shot. It would be better to say 'this wide angle shot' – if it is an important facet of the image.
- Don't put yourself down, this may make the audience think your views are worthless.
- Don't dismiss a subject because it is popular and you have seen it many times. There is always a fresh way to photograph any subject. After all there are no new subjects to photograph.
- Avoid advocating that compliance to rules is more important than innovation or communication.
- Categorising images may help the evaluation process but it is not essential. For example, a still life would normally be expected to be of a higher technical standard than photojournalism because the photographer has control of everything –lighting, composition, focus, subject matter – nothing is left to chance.
- Avoid being a size junkie who believes that to be worthwhile an image has to be large. The only photographic factor that is affected by size is the viewing distance. It is content and communication ability that makes an image worthwhile or not.
- Don't fail to see the picture as a whole. For example, a building may possess architectural qualities that are not evident in the individual building materials. It is only when the materials are put together as a structure that the building acquires aesthetic qualities of its own. Similarly, if you dissect a photograph into its components by looking at it as a collection of areas of different objects tones or colours without seeing it as a whole you risk missing the message. How often have you heard a judge comment at great length about a bright area at the edge of the picture, the position of a tree or the placement of hands in a portrait? All done without consideration of the whole image and its message.

While judging a club competition the judge made the comment that it is the judge's responsibility to make a fool of himself – and he did.

## Nonsense Rules

Because of the subjectivity of photography there are few if any hard and fast rules. If there is a good and obvious reason any rule can be broken.

As Edward Weston said, "Consulting the rules of composition before taking a photograph is like consulting the laws of gravity before going for a walk."

Rules are not totally irrelevant and should not overlooked. Rules can provide structure and form to a composition. But, some rules rarely make sense and some no sense at all under any condition – some examples of these follow.

**There must always be an odd number in the photograph** – for example one or three people, one, three or five pebbles. This is really nonsense - the issue is that the subject of photograph should not be divided, regardless of the number of components in the subject



matter. For example, a photograph of a loving couple will contain two people and this will be perfectly acceptable. The subject of the image would be love or eternity and the two people would be subject matter.

**Gates must always be open.** This is OK if the message is welcome, but what if the message is stay out?

**You must never photograph the back of people.** This is a good rule when making portraits but if the people are included in the subject matter as a supportive element then seeing their faces could be a distraction. For example, if people are included to give scale and human interest in a landscape, photographing them from behind will do the trick. If they are facing the camera the photograph becomes a picture of people in a landscape and no longer a landscape with people in it. This is an important distinction. One of the most regarded photographs of all time, Cartier-Bresson's picnic on the banks of the Seine, is clearly composed of peoples' backs.

**The main subject must dominate.** The truth is a photograph should only have one subject so the concept of a main subject is false. The subject may include components of subject matter but the subject should be singular. In simple terms a photograph consists of a subject and a background in a frame.

**The horizon should be on one of the thirds.** This is mostly true but not always. If the photograph gives equal weight to the sky and the land, a horizon in the middle could well be appropriate.

**Monochrome pictures must have a full range of tones.** This may be often true but what if the image is meant to show boredom or impending storm? In portraying boredom a composition of mid grey may do a better job than one that has blacks and whites as well. Impending storm would be better depicted by a strong predominance of low key black tones.

**The photograph must read from left to right.** This rule is based on the way we read printed matter and might have had some truth decades ago when we were a more Anglo Saxon society but in today's multicultural society its validity is extremely suspect, as many cultures do not read from left to right.

**All photographs are improved by cropping.** Although this is a seemingly true statement the fact is that strict adherence to the concept can destroy the message. The inclusion of a good piece of the surrounding environment is often important to the message.

**A photograph should be light at the top and dark at the bottom.** This concept is spawned by the idea that it is what normally occurs in natural lighting – light sky at the top and dark landscape at the bottom. The concept cannot, however, be applied universally as there are many situations that make it inappropriate.

**Monochrome is more creative than colour.** This is said to be based on the premise that as the world is in colour and it would require more creativity to translate it into black and white. The implication being that colour pictures only depict reality and lack creativity. This is far from the truth. The resolution of the matter is in the ideation that caused the image to be made. The decision to go monochrome or colour needs to be made during the visualisation

phase of the picture creation and then all of the creative steps and processes that follow will build towards achieving the goal.

## SOME JUDGING MISDEMEANOURS

Following is a list of what I call judging misdemeanours, actions by judges that are totally unacceptable. They are actual events I have witnessed and all are as true as Gospel.

- A judge, who was a very good photographer, had a unique method for judging 35 mm slides. The judge examined the slides under a powerful magnifying glass and if they were deemed to be sharp enough to make a 20 x 16 print they were accepted otherwise they were rejected – what the picture was about was totally irrelevant.
- A judge on a national exhibition panel declared that if a monochrome print did not display a full range of tones from black to white it was automatically given one. Again this was regardless of what the picture was about.
- In the early days of digital photography a judge declared that if he saw a print in a competition that appeared to be digitally produced it was given zero – no exceptions.
- A judge on a judging panel had a novel method of evaluating. If the photograph was better than he thought he could do it scored 5. For photographs he thought he could match a 3 was given and for those he thought he could better a 1 was given.
- At a club monthly competition the judge decided that the entries were all of a low standard and so gave only a small handful of awards. This was an example of not judging the panel in isolation and not using the awards fully for that single competition.
- A judge stated that he did not like a particular subject because in his opinion it was always presented as lazy and hackneyed. The audience rightly doubted that any images of the particular subject would be impartially evaluated.

## A JUDGING COMPARISON

<b>The Good Judge</b>	<b>The Bad Judge</b>
Is open minded and flexible	Is dogmatic and adheres to rigid rules
Is fair and has no preconceptions	Rejects images because of preconceived concepts
Is accepting of creative ideas and approaches	Maintains old rules and standards
Looks for messages and meanings	Is concerned only with technical matters
Encourages by using the full range of awards	Discourages by not using the full range of awards
Offers constructive criticism and gives helpful advice	Gives only destructive advice and does not or cannot offer helpful advice
Uses the language of photography effectively	Uses meaningless expressions, jargon and clichés
Communicates effectively	Does not address the audience



<b>The Good Judge</b>	<b>The Bad Judge</b>
Is knowledgeable about the history and development of photography	Knows little about photography its proponents or its background
Stays up to date about trends and developments in photography	Sticks to old techniques and refuses to accept anything new
Understands that photography is as artistic process	Has a preoccupation with the mechanics of photography
Talks about the idea behind the image	Describes what the audience can see
Has enthusiasm and passion for photography	Gives the impression that it is all very boring and a waste of time
Is aware that they are a guest of the club and respects the club's requirements	Forces their own ideas and beliefs and ignores what the club wants
Develops a personal style and is innovative in their approach	Emulates other judges
Uses contemporary anecdotes and personal experiences to reinforce their evaluation	Does not have the skill or knowledge to move away from a standardised approach
Treats the audience as an adult group with skills	Is patronising and insensitive
Finds something positive in every image	Has difficulty doing anything more than to criticise negatively
Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.	Has little knowledge of the visual arts
Knows the language of the visual - what makes a photograph interesting - considers foreground, background, subject matter, lighting and framing	Only comments on what is distracting in an image

## THE AWARDS

By definition competition implies that there will be winners and losers. In any competition scenario it is the judge's responsibility to decide the awards. Clubs have differing requirements in respect to awards. These differences include the number and levels of award, the number of sections and grading of photographers. Some clubs have a different award system for set subject. The club should make the judge aware of the system it uses but if it doesn't then you must ask so you can make proper awards when the time comes.

In making awards the following factors are important.

The whole panel presented must be evaluated equally and in isolation to any other panel you might have judged previously. It is not valid to compare the club monthly competition panel with the entries in the national level competition you judged last week.

Regardless of the overall standard of the panel there will always be some entries that are better than others. Even if the standard is generally low, the full range of awards must be

given. It quite permissible and can be very helpful to the club members for you to comment on how their overall standard compares with other clubs but the full range of awards must always be given.

Within the panel there will be one or two images that stand out as the best – these should get the highest award.



There will also be one or two entries that are not up to the standard of the rest – these should be given the lowest or no award.

The remaining entries, the middle order, are then ranked in order and awarded accordingly.

## THE REWARDS

For anyone with a passion for photography camera club judging is a very rewarding pastime. It provides an opportunity to:

1. Observe, analyse and enjoy a large number of outstanding photographs.
2. Meet and discuss photography with a large number of like minded souls.
3. Keep up to date with what other photographers are doing.
4. Learn about your own abilities and standards

## THE JUDGING EXAMPLES

Following are some real life examples of judging; photographs from club monthly competitions, what the judge said and what the judge might have said. The examples represent judges' comments that were not helpful, shallow in their analysis of the images and showed no knowledge of or attempt to understand visual communication. The concentration was purely technical or a substitute for something meaningful to say.

The examples were chosen to illustrate the type of judging we can all do without and do not include any of the many good examples of the worthwhile comments many judges are capable of providing.

The comments about what the judge said are a précis of the evaluation, not a verbatim report which in most cases was rather lengthy but still in the same context as the précis.



### **What the Judge Said**

The judge had two major concerns with this image – the backs of the people should not have been shown and there was too much space on the right hand side.

Both comments were bland and purely technically based. There was no comment about content or message.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

This image gives feelings of peace and serenity, two people enjoying the day by the water. There is adequate environment shown to add the peaceful nature of the scene. Showing their backs gives the image anonymity, it could be any of us enjoying a day by the water.



**What the Judge Said**

Photographs of waves should show large waves at least two metres high. This wave is only about one metre.

**What the Judge Might Have Said**

There is a story here about the effects of nature and how the waves create and form the shore-line. There is movement portrayed in the water and a contrast between the water and the hardness of the rock.





**What the Judge Said**

There is not a lot of interest in old machinery.

**What the Judge Might Have Said**

This image captures a bygone era. The abandoned machinery reminds us of a time when we had a manufacturing industry in this country. The light coming in the windows represents a last ray of hope.



**What the Judge Said**

The judge had difficulty with the railing and thought the image would be better without it.

There was no interpretation of the mood or message.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

This image portrays a feeling of gloom. The greyness depicts foreboding, a journey into unknown hopelessness.

### **What the Photographer Said**

This image is my visual comment on mental illness-depression. The greyness of the image, the figure not quite recognisable as human, walking across a bridge but not towards light, just more greyness and dampness!!



### **What the Judge Said**

There is too much yellow in the picture.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

This is nature at work. The yellow of the flower, the body of the bee and the pollen ball are in total harmony. The bee is acceptably sharp and the soft background provides depth to the image.

### **What the Photographer Said**

Yellow is a very positive colour and given environmental concerns about the decline in bee populations, a photograph of a busy bee buzzing about a golden flower with pollen sacks filled to almost bursting in preparation to making yummy honey, sends a message to me that perhaps there is some hope for the world, at the very least beauty.



### **What the Judge Said**

The judge made some positive technical remarks about this image but had a problem with the ocean liner in the background – he thought it should have been removed.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

The ocean liner in the background resembles a large modern apartment block that contrasts interestingly with the ramshackle architecture of the buildings in the foreground.





### **What the Judge Said**

The gate should be open and the sky is too bright.

No cognisance of the message was evident.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

Somebody has taken care to obey the 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment; perhaps in an attempt to secure their future well being.

The message is about order and obedience in our society.





### **What the Judge Said**

The composition would be stronger if the street lamp and the tree were both pointing towards the centre of the photograph.

This purely technical comment makes no attempt to understand any message the image may contain.

### **What the Judge Might Have Said**

This photograph makes a statement about the incompatibility between man and nature. The composition reinforces the concept because the elements of subject matter are pointing away from each other.



**What the Judge Said**

This photograph is not very interesting and I cannot see any point to it.

**What the Judge Might Have Said**

There is a theme of unity in this image and the firm grip suggests a strong bond between the humans connected to the hands.



**What the Judge Said**

Their faces cannot be seen clearly so you can't see if they are happy or sad and the image should be cropped to get rid of the empty space.

**What the Judge Might Have Said**

There is a strong feeling of anticipation created in this image as the girls all look to something outside the frame. Just what are they waiting for? The group is overpowered by the vastness of their surroundings. The colour adds strongly to the overall feeling generated in the image.

**What the Photographer Said**

At the time of shooting I saw girls waiting patiently, languidly on a seaside rock for their blokes to finishing surfing. The scene is linked to the activity by the vague surfboard carrying figures on the shore.

## VISUAL LANGUAGE

We use verbal language when we wish to communicate using speech by verbalising our thoughts into words and phrases. Similarly we create an image to visually communicate our thoughts. Visual communication requires us to use visual language to visualise our thinking to produce an image.

The elements we include in an image represent concepts in a spatial context, rather than the linear form used for words. Verbal and visual communication are largely interdependent and are the two main means by which humans exchange information. We can also exchange information physically by gesture, facial expression and body language. Although these are also interpreted visually they do not use a physical image.

A drawing, a map, a painting and a photograph are all examples of physical images that use visual language to engage in visual communication. The visual language's structural units include line, colour, texture, shape, form, space and light. Each of these structural units is important. When evaluating a photograph, we need to identify which of these units the photographer used to express a message or to create a mood and how they were used.

### Line

The photographer should recognise the power of the line and should be competent in using it when creating a communicative photograph. How many types of lines are possible? How important are lines to the image?

Lines are paths between two points in space and can be either straight, representing the shortest distance or most direct route, or curved representing a meandering or more relaxed means of getting from one point to another. In a photograph a line can be a real object, for example a road or a fence or it can be an imaginary line between two or more dominant points in the composition. Lines can also be created in a photograph by contrasts of light and shadow or through the use of colour or shape.

Whether actual or imagined, the line is a powerful tool for photographers that allows them to direct where the viewer goes within the frame of the image. Lines can be used to enclose or liberate specific areas of the image and to control the spatial aspects of the image. Lines can also be used to suggest movement or direction and to create depth. The line can strongly affect the mood of the photograph making it calm and relaxed or vibrantly frenetic or rigid or amorphous.

### Colour

Colour, or tone in monochrome, is a very emotional element of a photograph. Colour has a profound effect on human emotions. It can make us feel calm, aroused, amused, angered or sad – or number of other feelings. It could be argued that colour has the greatest single effect on the emotion of a photograph. Terms like "seeing red" and "feeling blue" are part of our language.

Colour can be conditioned by environment and culture in general terms and for individuals their eyesight. But colour is also intuitive and arousing affecting our most primitive instincts.



In terms of photography colour is normally created from the light reflected from surfaces and objects and captured in the photographic recording media being used. It may also be derived directly from the light source; an electric light, a flash unit, sunlight, a candle or fire.

Whatever the source, reflected or direct, the colour will have a certain hue (the named colour such as red or blue), intensity (the purity of the colour) and value (the amount of black or white mixed into the pure colour).

The relationships of the colours in the spectrum can be demonstrated by the use of a colour wheel which can best describe our perception and relationship of colours. A colour wheel has the colours of the spectrum arranged in sequence around its circumference. The colours that are directly opposite each other show the greatest colour contrast. These are called complimentary colours such that the red is directly opposite the secondary green, which contains the primaries of yellow and blue. When complementary colours are placed adjacent one another they have the effect of each making the other appear more vivid. The colour wheel also allows us to see colours that are similar as these lie next to each other on the wheel.

## Texture

Texture is an element of art which refers to the surface quality or feel of an object. It can be described as smooth, rough, soft, hard and so forth. In photography textures are simulated as they can't actually be felt in a normally produced image. They are simulated by the way the photographer uses viewpoint and light.

By choice of viewpoint and the application of oblique lighting the photographer accentuates the surface features of the subject to give a simulated 3D representation of the real life object's surface texture. The finer the surface texture of the subject is the more oblique to the camera position the light needs to be to obtain a 3D effect. The strength of the light also plays a part in the rendering of texture. Strong directional light will generally be more effective than soft shadowless less light.

## Shape

Shape is an important element in both the rendering and seeing of photography. Shapes abound and can be seen everywhere. Some shapes are regular and are given names such as circle or square but most are irregular and infinite. Shapes can be combined to create even more shapes.

Shapes are used by photographers for three fundamental purposes.

1. To depict a real life physical form.
2. To achieve order, variety and harmony in the image.
3. To depict different qualities of mood and feeling in the image.

In photographic terms shape is any part of a real object which is defined and rendered by other elements such as line, texture, colour, space or light. Shapes may be symmetrical or non-symmetrical or a combination of both symmetrical and non-symmetrical. With the use of light to cast edge shadows, flat shapes on a two dimensional surface of an object can create the illusion of three dimensions in a two dimensional photograph.

## Form

In photography the term form describes three dimensional solids and contained spaces within the photographic frame. Form represents three dimensional shapes and has both mass and volume.

The word form has multiple meanings depending on its context.

1. Form can be a verb meaning to shape or order.
2. Form can mean organisation or composition.
3. Visually form can be the representation of a three dimensional object on a two dimensional surface.
4. A form can be a mould in which material is cast.
5. Form can also be the document you complete when sending your images to a competition.

In photography form means the visual representation of real life solids in a photographic composition.

Photographers use form to represent real life three dimensional objects in a photograph that has only two dimensions – width and height. They achieve the illusion of 3D through the use of light direction to create a light side and a dark side on the representation of the form in the photograph.

## Space

The space in a two dimensional photograph is represented as a flat area limited to height and width. There is no actual depth or distance in a photograph but photographers use creative techniques to create the illusion of depth or distance.

Some of the techniques used to create the illusion of depth or distance are:

1. Control of Linear Perspective – though the use of linear perspective distant objects are rendered proportionately smaller than closer objects. Photographers achieve this through the choice of lens focal length and viewpoint. By using a wide angle lens and a close viewpoint close objects will be rendered larger and distant object smaller. A long focal length lens and a distant viewpoint will have the effect of making all objects in the composition a similar relative size.
2. Control of Atmospheric Perspective – through the control of light and colour and the use of atmospheric conditions, such as mist or fog, the photographer can create visual depth in an image. This technique can render distant objects and spaces with less detail and intensity than closer objects. Some colours are recessive, for example pale blue while others have a tendency to jump out – bright reds, greens and yellows. The use of a strong colour for foreground objects and a recessive colour for the distant objects suggests space or distance between the close and distant objects in the photograph.
3. Placement of Objects - the illusion of space can be achieved by placing a large object in the foreground close to the camera. This has the effect of making background objects seem more distant.
4. Overlapping – placing objects in the picture plane so they overlap and recede can suggest space and depth.

## Light

The intensity and quality of light can be used to express mood in a photograph. A predominance of light suggests good, bad, clarity and completeness. Lack of light or darkness is just the opposite, it expresses mystery, gloom, evil and emptiness. The control of light in a photograph can also describe space, define forms, convey feelings, drama, aesthetics and dynamism.

Photographers use light to create a three dimensional illusion in the two dimensional photograph. One of the ways they do this is by choosing a direction and balance of light that creates shadows as it falls on solid forms. If a single light source is used objects close to the light will be brightly lit while other objects further from the light will diminish in intensity. This will give the illusion of space.

Placing objects so that some are blocked from the light causes the shadow of objects close to the light to fall on objects further from the light again creating depth in the flat surface of the photograph.

The effects of light direction and intensity are important for our understanding and appreciation of how three dimensional forms are successfully rendered in two dimensional photographs. Light and shadow are used to define these forms.

Another aspect of light that defines forms is the control of highlights. Highlights in the photograph give it life and contrast and help define the subject in the photographic space.

## ART COMPOSITION

Composition is the process of selecting and arranging subject matter elements within the photographic space to effectively communicate the photographer's ideas and feelings to the viewer. Composition is the major factor involving aesthetics in an image; it can create a strong and interesting photograph, or a weak and confused photograph. Composition can make the photograph readable or unreadable.

The main objective of composition is to combine and arrange forms in the photographic space to produce a harmonious whole that is a meaningful statement that conveys the idea behind the image.

Composition doesn't just happen, when you see a really great photograph it was not the result of some accident or the throwing together forms and a background. It is the result of the photographer's skill, knowledge and careful planning. A well composed photograph causes the viewer to stop and look and effectively communicates the photographer's idea.

There will almost surely be a number of possible compositions for any scene or subject that will be effective. In composing a photograph the photographer decides what the main point of focus will be; different photographers may see the same subject, but each is likely to choose a different composition. Decisions that photographers make in regard to the composition include the placement, orientation and size of the point of interest; should it be moved or made larger, clearer, stronger or brighter.

Composition allows the photographer to control which part of the image the viewer will linger over. This is achieved by choosing and placing a definite focal point and then leading the viewer by the use of visual language either directly or indirectly through the photograph.

An important compositional tool is the use of tone – it is well established that light tones attract and dark tones recede. Effective use of light and dark tones will emphasise the focal point of the subject matter.

Before pressing the shutter, the photographer needs to have an idea; without an idea it is difficult for the resulting photograph to have real purpose or message. Before even pointing the camera the photographer needs to determine the subject matter needed to illustrate the subject and the composition needed to effectively arrange the subject matter. Other decisions to be made about the final image include:

1. What mood is going to best convey the message?
2. What emotions need to be evoked?
3. What is the most effective viewpoint?
4. Have all of the possible distractions been removed?
5. Is the composition completely resolved or are there areas of incompleteness apparent?

Only after attending to these issues it is time for the photographer to press the shutter and capture the image.

In photographic terms there is a large number of compositional rules – Rule of Thirds, Golden Mean, Leading Lines, Balance and so on. Most of these were derived from painting art and are well known to most photographers. At a higher more artistic level there are other compositional tools available the main ones are:

**Image Area.** The Image area is the surface within the four borders of the photograph that is used to contain subject matter. The image area defines the placement of the objects that make the subject matter, how they are arranged and how big they should be. An important aspect of the image area is its shape. As well as width and height, consideration of the relationship of these dimensions to each other is important. This ratio should match the shape of the subject – a tall subject needs a tall thin image area while a wide subject requires a wide or panoramic image area.

**Depth.** Because photographs are generally two dimensional the illusion of depth or distance (third dimension) is required. Illusionary depth creates a three dimensional effect in the two dimensional photograph, making objects feel closer or further away. When the creation of the feeling of depth is carried out effectively the finished result will not appear flat in the photograph.

**Line.** In photographic composition line plays two important roles. Line can be used direct the viewer through the photograph to the point of interest. Line can also be used to create depth in the image.

Lines can be imaginary created by the placement of objects or forms within the photograph, so that the viewer is lead to the focal point by moving from one object to the next or they can



be actual lines created by objects – a fence or a road. In a well structured composition the lines lead the viewer but will not allow the viewer to keep going all the way out of the photograph.

**Value.** Value in a composition relates to the lightness or darkness of an area or shape contained in the composition. The value given to an object, shape or form in the composition will have a bearing on its importance or weight. Light objects will generally attract the viewer to a greater extent than dark objects, although this attraction is also influenced by the placement and area given to the objects. To gain equal attention from the viewer a dark object would have to be considerably larger and more dominantly placed than a light object.

Value also relates to the overall feel or tone of the image – is it low key or high key? The key of the image has a profound effect on the mood. High key suggests feelings like happiness, hope, enchantment, success, inspiration and rapture while low key suggests feelings like doom and gloom, despair, fear, disaster and failure.

## DEFINITIONS

The following definitions from FIAP and PSA of some photographic categories are provided below for the benefit of judges. It should be noted that these definitions are current at the time of publication but are subject to change by the controlling bodies. Judges should check the relevant controlling body's web site for the current version. (FIAP - <http://www.fiap.net>, PSA - [www.psa-photo.org](http://www.psa-photo.org)).

### FIAP

#### Black and White (Monochrome)

A black and white work fitting from the very dark grey (black) to the very clear grey (white) is a monochrome work with the various shades of grey.

A black and white work toned entirely in a single colour will remain a monochrome work able to stand in the black and white category; such a work can be reproduced in black and white in the catalogue of a salon under FIAP Patronage.

On the other hand a black and white work modified by a partial toning or by the addition of one colour becomes a colour work (polychrome) to stand in the colour category; such a work requires colour reproduction in the catalogue of a salon under FIAP Patronage.

#### Nature

Nature photography depicts living, untamed animals and uncultivated plants in a natural habitat, geology and the wide diversity of natural phenomena, from insects to icebergs.

Photographs of animals which are domesticated, caged or under any form of restraint, as well as photographs of cultivated plants are ineligible.

Minimal evidence of humans is acceptable for nature subjects, such as barn owls or storks, adapting to an environment modified by humans, or natural forces, like hurricanes or tidal waves, reclaiming it.

The original image must have been taken by the photographer, whatever photographic medium is used. Any manipulation or modification to the original image is limited to minor retouching of blemishes and must not alter the content of the original scene.

After satisfying the above requirements, every effort should be made to use the highest level of artistic skill in all nature photographs.

### PSA

#### Nature

Nature photography is restricted to the use of the photographic process to depict observations from all branches of natural history, except anthropology and archaeology, in such a fashion that a well informed person will be able to

identify the subject material and to certify as to its honest presentation. The story telling value of a photograph must be weighed more than the pictorial quality while maintaining high technical quality. Human elements shall not be present, except on the rare occasion where those human elements enhance the nature story. The presence of scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals is permissible. Photographs of artificially produced hybrid plants or animals, mounted specimens, or obviously set arrangements, are ineligible, as is any form of manipulation that alters the truth of the photographic statement. No techniques that add to, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements except by cropping are permitted. Techniques that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the nature story or the pictorial content are permitted. All adjustments must appear natural.

## Wildlife

Authentic wildlife is defined as one or more organisms living free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat. Therefore, landscapes, photographs of zoo or game farm animals, or any living subject taken under controlled conditions are not eligible for Wildlife competitions.

The preceding definition of authentic wildlife is additional to and used in conjunction with the general nature definition.

## Photojournalism

Photojournalism entries shall consist of images or sequences of images with informative content and emotional impact, including human interest, documentary and spot news. The journalistic value of the image shall receive priority over pictorial quality. In the interest of credibility, images that misrepresent the truth and model or staged set-ups are not permitted. Techniques that add to, relocate, replace or remove any element of the original image, except by cropping, are not permitted. Techniques that enhance the presentation of the image, without changing the photojournalism content, are permitted. All adjustments must appear natural.

## Human Interest

Human Interest includes the definition for photojournalism in addition to the following.

Human Interest is defined as an image depicting a person or persons in an interactive, emotional or unusual situation, excluding sports action.