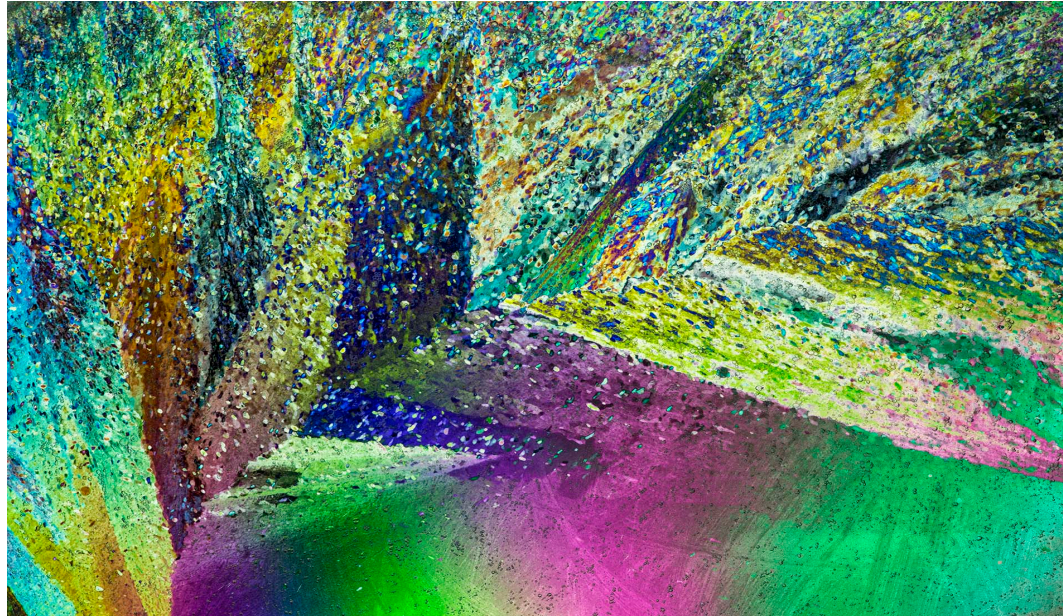


You Be the Judge



Diane Schofield

- How many times have you heard that photography is an art form?
- How many times have you heard that images should tell a story?
- How many times have you wondered why the judge did not choose your image?

According to Bill Katzenstein, a great photograph and sure winner evokes awe, a sense of wonder and admiration that returns with anticipation when the picture is viewed again. It should also have minimal technical flaws.

- Photography has two huge advantages over other art forms. It captures a moment in time, and is instantaneous. It has had an enormous impact on social media.
- Photography gives everyone the ability to:
  - be creative
  - interpret their environment
  - record history
- An image can be a documentary and still be an art form. It all depends on the photographer's interpretation and imagination
- Three elements impact on all photographic competitions:
  - The Photographer
  - The Competition
  - The Judge

## The Photographer

- Is your mind open to new ideas?
- Are you a planner or a snapper?
- Do you become overwhelmed by the environment or situation and start snapping?
- Is your camera gear ready – settings? correct lens? lens cover removed? battery charged? spare formatted cards? spare batteries?
- Are you aware of your environment?
- Do you read the light and the angle of light?
- Do you look behind you when taking sunsets?
- Do you look for distractions?
- Do you consider the possible angles for taking the image?
- Do you keep it simple?

Plan the image before taking it.

Like an author, you decide what and how information should be presented. Sometimes. It is even necessary to build an image. Frank Hurley, was a famous Australian photographer who, amongst other things, recorded World War I. He was frustrated by the fact that he was not able to capture a complete battle scene, so he did a composite of 4 plates to show this overview. He planned the final image. He was also censured by the war historian!

<http://aso.gov.au/titles/documentaries/frank-hurley/clip2/>



- Some people will like your work, whilst others will not value it. You will always have the purists, and at times, censors who will insist on certain styles etc, but the world would be a poorer place without the work of the masters.



No. 11 1952 Jackson Pollock He renamed it "Blue Poles" 1954. It is now worth \$1.3 billion!

## Competitions

Competition is fierce and you will be expected to produce top quality work. Technology has enabled you to refine your images and to share your experience through your work.

### Plan for the competition:

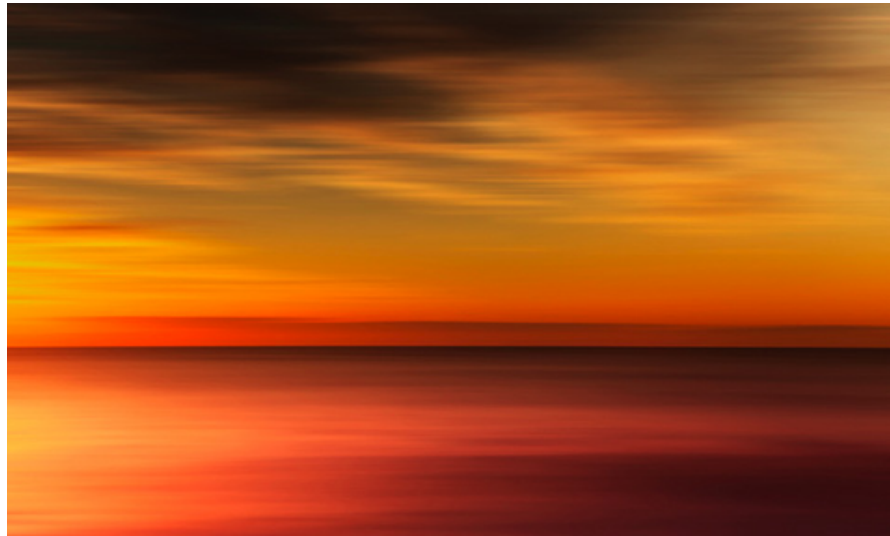
- Do you allow plenty of time for preparation?
- Do you select the most appropriate image for the type of competition?
- Do you carefully process the image?
- Do you rely on the title to tell the story?
- Are you dispassionate when showing others your image?
- Do you take note of constructive criticism and act on it?
- Do you make final adjustments?
- Do you review the image?
- Do you print with care ?
- Do you make adjustments recommended by judge?

## How can you improve?

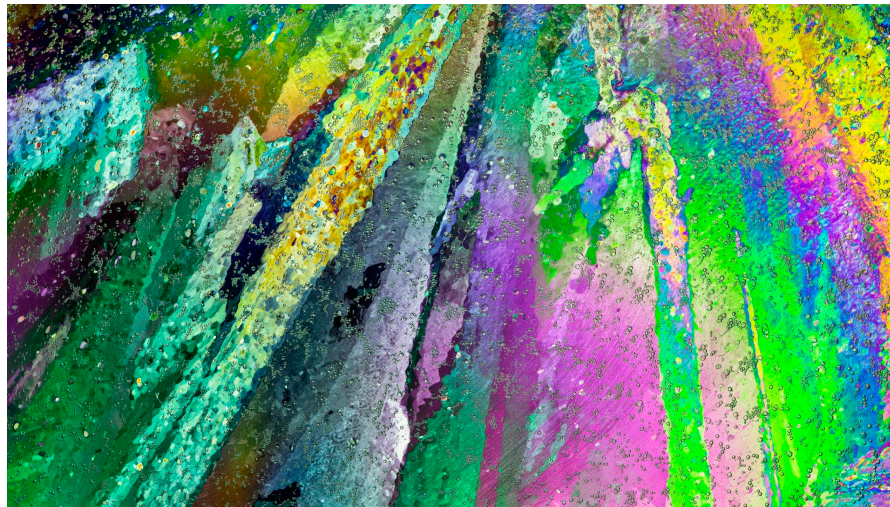
- Life-long learning should not be a new concept to you
- Study others' works
- Experiment
- Ask club members about their techniques
- Attend workshops
- Read journal articles
- Visit galleries
- Follow tutorials offered on the Internet
- Grapple with the technology
- Be patient
- Be passionate
- Persevere
- Look at some images that you took 10 years ago and compare them to recent images
- Challenge yourself, dare to be different, and above all else retain a healthy sense of humour



Dare to be different



Photographer Alfonso Calero



Creatively approaching abstract photography by Simon Bray

<http://photography.tutsplus.com/articles/creatively-approaching-abstract-photography--photo-6665>

- Follow this advice and you will not stagnate and become bored with your hobby. Remember “the only dud photograph is the one not taken” *Ken Duncan*
- Finally, should you wish to read an excellent article on photographic rules, visit :
- <http://www.digital-photo-secrets.com/tip/3372/18-composition-rules-for-photos-that-shine/> *18 Composition Rules for Photos That Shine* by David Peterson
- “Remember, the composition is important, but also rules are meant to be broken. The main point is to enjoy yourself while you’re photographing and photograph in your own way and your own style.” Steve McCurry

## The Judge

So now we come to “the dreaded judge” whose critiques may or may not help you.

- Never forget, you are all in the same boat, being judged under the same conditions.
- Judges are human
- They experience weaknesses like the rest of us
- Some judges have “hang-ups” :
  - making assumptions
  - rules - such as rule of thirds
  - the number of birds that should be in an image
  - whether the birds should face the same way
  - images should be read left to right
  - images should be cropped within an inch of their lives
  - use a pop-up flash to get a highlight in a bird’s eye

## Examples

### Intimidation by Roy Killen



#### Judge's Comment:

“On realising that it was not a shadow under the wolf’s haunches but blood and that it had been severely wounded, I gathered that the intimidation was by the crow who knew the cub was too wounded to fight it off and not the other way round. On the surface the wolf cub appears gentle but behind the façade they both wait for the coming death. The stillness is really confronting. Great documentary work. If it had been sharp I would have given it an honour”.

## Open Sesame by Diane Schofield



Judge's comments:

"Your timing is certainly good. Whether a slightly earlier shot would have worked better is a matter for debate."

"A good example of early evening photography with tone and a suggestion of detail in the sky. While it works reasonably well as a monochrome image I suspect it may be more spectacular in colour."

The bridge opens between 1 – 3 am to allow cargo barges to sail up the river in St Petersburg. The image was taken at 2am (Midsummer) !!!!

So what is the magic solution to overcome these problems?

Live with it and learn from it. Unfortunately, the world is not perfect. Imagine the feelings of an innocent person when the judge and jury get it wrong!

Seriously, one of the main duties of a judge is to give helpful advice

“ Listen carefully to every comment that a judge (or anyone else) makes about your images, then think about why they made these comments. The simple answer is the judge makes comments because of what he/ she sees (or does not see) in the image and that will be influenced by their photographic experiences, judging experiences, life experiences, etc. If the judge does not see whatever you wanted them to see, then your image has failed to communicate effectively to the judge and possibly to others.”

Roy Killen

Judges work under stressful conditions, especially at club meetings:

- Time:

Most clubs are only able to meet at the venue for a limited amount of time. Sometimes the meeting begins late and/or runs overtime.

Members may dally over their tea break.

Often there are technical glitches and administration problems etc.

It is not uncommon, especially in large clubs, for a judge to have to assess and comment on an image in less than a minute.

- Lighting:

Lighting is generally atrocious, so subtleties in images may be missed.

- Human Element:

There are many factors to consider when assessing an image. Foremost is to remember that it is another person's experience and the judge has no idea under what circumstance that the image was taken, the reason for taking it, the decisions for end processing or even the time of day that it was taken.

- Consistency:

The judge has to be objective and consistent.

- EDI (Electronically Displayed Image):

EDI - In a club's monthly competition, the judge is able to spend more time to judge the images. However, this is not possible in EDI International, National and Regional competitions.

EDI has another possible problem and that is the Judge's monitor. How good is it and has it been calibrated?

- The Image

Poor images are problematic. The Judge should not only draw attention to the problems, but should find something positive in the image to encourage the photographer to strive harder.

Just describing an image is a "cop out."

- The Audience:

The audience can be intimidating by:

making comments from the floor

making assumptions that a judge specialises in a certain area and of course will make more awards in that area

disrupting judge's train of thought

The audience factor is rare, but it has happened.



## Common image problems

- Focus and depth of field
- Exposure
- Grain / Noise
- Highlights or hotspots
- Dark areas lacking information
- Crooked horizons
- Over saturation
- Overuse of HDR (High Dynamic Range)
- Over sharpening
- Warped perspective
- Composition – vacant space with no information; cluttered image; clipped objects; unbalanced; uneven lighting; distractions etc
- Monochrome – tonal range
- Poor printing

- Impact – does the image leap out and grab the viewer’s attention? Does the image show imagination, creativity and innovation?
- Storyline – the story projected by the image is important, especially in Wildlife and Nature competitions. An image should not be reliant on the title to tell the story. Like other art forms, some images are so abstract that they do not tell a story

Judging is no easy task. So why judge - judges have their own reasons. I do it to give something back to the photographic community, for it has given me the incentive to enjoy a fantastic hobby.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my appreciation for the input, advice and images given by:

Roy Killen

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Helen Walker

Colin Schofield

## Judging Criteria

There are 4 elements in judging an image:

1. Looking at the total image
  2. Ideas behind the image
  3. Communication
  4. Technical aspects
- 
1. Looking at the total image (can't see the wood for the trees)
    - What impact does the image have on the viewer as a whole?
    - Do you become fixated on one aspect of the image?
  2. Ideas behind the image
    - Are the ideas creative?
    - Are the ideas original?

### 3. Communication

“Like other forms of communication, photography is an interaction among people both face to face or distant.” Gleason, T. (2008). The communicative roles of street and social landscape photography. *Simile*, 8(4), 1-13.

- Is the message clear and obvious?
- What immediate impact does the image have on the viewer?
- What emotions are felt by the viewer?



Napalm Girl Photographer Nick Ut 1972

Further reading: Ballinger, Holly B. (2014) Photography : a communication tool

[http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1155&context=art\\_design\\_theses](http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1155&context=art_design_theses)

4. What technical aspects enhance or detract from the communication process?

- Has the photographer effectively captured and used the light?
- Is the image balanced?
- Does the monochrome image have a good tonal range?
- Does the perspective need to be adjusted?
- Is the colour attractive? Has it been oversaturated?
- Has the image been well composed? Does it need cropping? Has it been cropped too severely? Reverse it?
- Can the viewer see noise or grain in the image?
- Has the photographer correctly focused on the subject?
- Has the correct depth of field been used?
- Does the photographer effectively use lines to guide the viewer through the image?
- Has the photographer correctly exposed the image?
- Does final presentation and printing enhance the image?

Next on the agenda – Audience participation

*Did the Judge get it right?*

A series of images before judging and re-edited after judging

*Do you know what you are studying?*

A mixture of photographs and art work

*You be the judge!*

Groups are set up in judging panels to judge images using the judging criteria.

Groups to comment on winning images