

Introduction to Judging and Critique of Images

Competition is not about prizes, it is about learning to make better images, understanding how your images compare and how to raise them to the next level and the next. All in the pursuit of the perfect image.

The Jurors Duty to the Maker

The importance of Challenges/Discussions as each juror/viewer sees (or doesn't) what others see, obligation to point out plus and minus

A great and unique capture has to be ***made*** into a Merit Image, Advantages of old school and making the image, old days a hurried image was 5 minutes and much thought went into correct capture, See Moonrise Hernandez, today easy to snap 1000 images an hour

The difficulty of the capture has nothing to do with the quality of the image but it can make it unique

In order to grow Comparison must be to the worlds best, not within the local pool

Goal is to teach and learn what makes a great photograph and how to talk about it

There are variables from one juror panel to the next

Scoring

What, Why and How a Merit Image (80 points or better)

Rob Smiths guide to scoring placement

Critique

Twelve Elements and the language of talking about images, we are all here to learn and must speak the same language

The advantage of image preview and prepared critique for digital and digital for print in the learning

Practice Scoring and Critique

Show 10 images from PPA with challenges and critiques and then show 10-20 PCC images for scoring and critique with advance viewing

Moonrise Hernandez

From Ansel Adams, in *Examples*:

"I had been photographing in the Chama valley, north of Santa Fe. I made a few passable negatives that day and had several exasperating trials with subjects that would not bend to visualization. The most discouraging effort was a rather handsome cottonwood stump near the Chama River. I saw my desired image quite clearly, but due to unmanageable intrusions and mergers of forms in the subject my efforts finally foundered, and I decided it was time to return to Santa Fe. It is hard to accept defeat, especially when a possible fine image is concerned. But defeat comes occasionally to all photographers, as to all politicians, and there is no use moaning about it.

I glanced to the left and saw an extraordinary situation—an inevitable photograph! I almost ditched the car and rushed to set up my 8×10 camera. I was yelling to my companions to bring me things from the car as I struggled to change components on my Cooke Triple-Convertible lens. I had a clear visualization of the image I wanted, but when the Wratten No. 15 (G) filter and the film holder were in place, I could not find my Weston exposure meter! The situation was desperate: the low sun thinking about bracketing several exposures, when I suddenly realized that I knew the luminance of the moon—250 c/ft². Using the Exposure Formula, I placed this luminance on Zone VII; 60 c/ft² therefore fell on Zone V, and the exposure with the filter factor of 3x was about 1 second at f/32 with ASA 64 film. I had no idea what the value of the foreground was, but I hoped it barely fell within the exposure scale. Not wanting to take which deserved a duplicate negative, I swiftly reversed the film holder, but as I pulled the darkslide the sunlight passed from the white crosses; I was a few seconds too late!"

Trials and Tribulations of Image Competitions and Juried Shows

I am inspired to write this after experiencing the Northeast District PPA image competition 2019 which is a prelude to the International Photographic Competition. For me these follow judging and critique at local camera club levels (First Light CC and Portland CC) throughout the year and then the annual State Competitions for Maine PPA and New Hampshire PPA. I take feedback at each level to tweak my images with what I hope are improvements based on feedback of my peers with the ultimate goal of coming up with 4 exceptional images for the International Competition.

A few times a year I enter juried shows the most prominent of which is The Maine Photography Show that selects 100 images for hanging from about 800 images by 300 plus photographers. Most of these shows have 1 juror making selections and as a result the selections can be drastically different from what another juror might choose. I have seen many outstanding works by consistently fabulous image makers not make the cut. Knowing it is the vision of one person it is important to submit a variety of work to avoid any aversion or prejudice an unknown juror may have.

The camera clubs usually have 3 jurors or judges who provide scores and give critique. Three jurors will help to override these personal biases a single juror may have but it is certainly not flawless.

Once we get to the Professional Photographer (PPA) competitions there are five jurors with a moderator. Most of these are wedding or studio photographers that shoot in some kind of controlled environment or lighting. These jurors have some level of formal training that takes a few days and is based on the Twelve Elements of a Merit Image. As a result the scoring is fairly consistent and the 5 individual scores are reasonably close to the average and if not there can be a challenge and a discussion will ensue and a rescore after each discusses the negatives and positives. In my mind a good system as it is amazing what some see that another does not. One judge may see sharp focus and another calls it too soft.

At the just completed NE District PPA I entered 4 images judged at the State levels and The scores varied as follows:

Image 1	State 94	District 81
Image 2	State 92	District 78
Image 3	State 88	District 80
Image 4	State 88	District 84

In my mind an unacceptable variance for images 1,2 and 3 as each was judged by a panel of five at each level.

The goal for me at least is to go to the International with 4 images above 90 or as close to 90 as possible with the ultimate goal of having all 4 images reach Loan status. These kinds of results present a real conundrum. I have others to choose from but don't know what to expect.

As photographers we strive for the perfect image within the confines of our own tastes. Competitions and Critiques have been a way to get past the emotions and biases each of us have about our "Babies", our personal creations. Critique although often painful helps us to see past the blinders we each wear when it comes to our own work. We just hope the critiques are consistent and fair as we continue the pursuit fo the Perfect Image.

Scoring Groups

Exceptional 95-100

Superior 90-94

Excellent 85-89

Deserving of Merit 80-84

Above Average 75-79

Average 73-75

Acceptable 70-72

Marginal 60-69

Below Standard 0-60

		<u>Guide to placing in Scoring Groups</u>	
		<p><u>General Guidelines for the Judges/Jurors</u></p> <p>>>>>></p>	<p>Technical elements are Objective. All other Elements are Subjective. Because of subjectivity judges will have different opinions but they must leave their personal prejudices at the door.</p> <p>Judges first decide level and then a score in that level. <u>Judges are duty bound to challenge scoring discrepancies and discuss their supporting factors or concerns that may move an image up or down.</u> Make your point or counterpoint via the challenge and listen to other judges carefully. To maintain integrity of the system scores must be accurate in their assesment. For general guidelines see PPA Juror Charge video. http://www.ppa.com/competitions/content.cfm?ItemNumber=7430</p>
1% 50%		Exceptional 95-100	At the last Northeast district PPA comp only 2 out of 600 received a 100 score or 1/3rd of 1%. These images are hitting on all 12 cylinders/elements.
		Superior 90-94	<u>Only 1% reach a Superior or Exceptional Level.</u> The Cream of the Crop. These are images I would buy. These images must be unique. The technical qualities must be perfect. They will vary only in Impact or visual delight.
		Excellent 85-89	A step above a merit image but not quite Superior or Exceptional.
		Deserving of Merit 80-84	50% are this level or above. These are images I would hang if they were mine. A merit image is a very good image with virtually no faults . Technically they should be excellent with the only real difference in Impact and Creativity and Style. <u>Merit worthy images must be strong in all 12 elements.</u> The pros strive for Merit Images and are proud when they receive this level.
		Above Average 75-79	50% are this level or below. Very good images that may have some technical issues or lack in presentation or creativity. These images may be very strong technically but lack impact or uniqueness. <u>These images can be missing the mark in one or several of the 12 elements.</u>
		Average 73-75	
		Acceptable 70-72	
		Marginal 60-69	
		Below Standard 0-60	

Title:			
Category/Theme:			
Date:			
<u>12 Elements reference</u>	<u>Defining the Image</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1,9,12.	Impact, Subject, Story Telling (0-25)		
	Wow factor Eye Candy Emotion Story Telling		
2,6,7,11.	Creativity, Style, Presentation, Technique (0-25)		
	Different, Special Personal Style Presentation Techniques shoot and process		
3,5,10.	Technical, Light, Color Balance (0-25)		
	processing and manipulation focus, sharpness Capture quality of light Light impact on image color, saturation, tonality presentation		
4,8.	Composition, Center of Interest (0-25)		
	Center of Interest Rules		
Total			

Image Work Sheet

	<u>Image Name</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Impact,Story,Subject</u>	<u>Creat, Pres, Technq, Style</u>	<u>Techncl,Light,Color</u>	<u>Compostn,Centr interest</u>
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						
22						
23						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						

Judges Summary Work Sheet

Resouces for great images and gear review

<https://printcompetition.com>

<https://1x.com>

<https://web.500px.com>

<https://www.thespiderawards.com>

<https://gurushots.com>

<https://www.colorawards.com>

<https://www.naturesbestphotography.com>

Top photogs in your genre of choice

<https://www.outdoorphotographer.com>

<https://www.dpreview.com>

<https://maineppa.com>

<https://www.ppa.com>