Training for Judging Images

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Why we Judge Images at Meetings

It's natural for photographers to seek feedback on how they're doing.

Judging is one tool we have for assessing and comparing large numbers of images.

- But, it has to be done well and consistently to be useful.

- Thus, we conduct judge training .

Benefits of Being A Judge

- Good way to improve your own photography
  - Develop a critical eye as to what elements in an image work, and what does not.
- Ability to look at an image in an unbiased way
- Develop skill to express observations of a photograph in a meaningful and constructive manner.
- Be of service to your fellow photographers

Context of Club Judging

- Judging originated in selecting images for Salon competitions
  - Salons: Exhibitions of photography
- PSA is a major sponsor of photographic Salons
- Judging in clubs largely follow the PSA model
  - Give each image a ranked score

Context of Club Judging

- Over time certain types of photographs do well in competitions

- These became known as "Salon" photographs

- They are largely the types of images shown in clubs today

Salon vs Other Types of Photography

- There is a range of photographic "schools"
  - Commercial, Fashion
  - Contemporary, photo projects, photo essays that often have a social context.
  - Documentary, Journalistic ,Sports, Street
  - Fine art
  - Salon, Pictorial
- Most images shown at PPS are Salon and Pictorial
  - but include some documentary and fine art.

Characteristics of a Salon Image

- An emphasis on:
  - Craftsmanship (exposure, focus, post processing)
  - Composition (clarity of subject, balance, lack of distractions)
  - Beauty and atmosphere (lighting, contrast, harmony)
  - Originality
  - Story, mood

Characteristics of a Salon Image

- Typically includes a variety of subject matter:
  - Landscape, nature, portraits, still life, abstract, graphic, sports, etc.
  - Altered reality
  - Subject matter is not limited

How do we go about Judging

- When shown an image, the challenge is to be able to decide on a fair score quickly.

- How do we do that?
  - There are some principles to guide us to foster consistent judging.

Principles of Judging

- Use the judging scale as described
- Judge each image as a whole
- Analyze instead of just responding
- Set aside personal biases
- Be consistent

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Principles of Judging

- Use the scale as described
  - PPS uses a judging scale with clearly defined criteria.
    - Revised in 2022 to be consistent with the revised 4Cs criteria.
  - You should get to know the scale well and practice using it.
  - Other clubs may use different scales and criteria.

The Revised 4Cs Judging Standard

5. Noticeable problems offset strengths
6. Okay but with minor problems
7. Solid: Average 4Cs quality
8. Strong: rewards viewing
9. Outstanding: an exciting image

The Revised 4Cs Judging Standard

- 4Cs adopted using half points

1 - 4	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	7.5	8	8.5	9
Not used in 4Cs scoring	Noticeable problems offset strengths		Okay but with minor problems		Solid; Average 4Cs quality		Strong; rewards viewing		Outstanding; an exciting image

The Revised 4Cs Judging Standard

5. Noticeable problems offset strengths

6. Okay but with minor problems

7. Solid: Average 4Cs quality
   - 4Cs guidance is to judge toward "typical" images

8. Strong: rewards viewing
   - 4Cs standard becomes subjective

9. Outstanding: an exciting image
   - 4Cs standard becomes subjective

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

5. Noticeable problems

6. Okay but with minor problems

7. Solid; a competently presented image

8. Strong: composition, lighting, etc. enhance image design

9. Outstanding: Visual elements coalesce around a unified image.

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

5. Noticeable problems
   - Technical: Out of focus where clarity is needed, inappropriate exposure
   - Composition: Poor organization of elements, distractions, poor framing
   - Intent of image may be hard to discern

Judging Scale Examples

5. Noticeable Problems

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

6. Okay but with minor problems
   - Technical competence - appropriate focus, depth of field, exposure
   - Composition: Poor use of composition to indicate intent.
   - Distractions take away from intent.
   - Post processing artifacts interfere with image quality.

Judging Scale Examples

6. Okay but with minor problems

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

7. Solid: a competently presented image
   - Technically well done, appropriate focus and exposure
   - Composition brings attention to the elements that give the image meaning
   - Lighting and color appropriate for the image, good tonal range

Judging Scale Examples

7.   Solid: a competently presented image

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

8. Strong: composition enhances image design

   - Technically well done. Exposure settings enhance the image design.

   - Composition emphasizes the subject or meaning of the image.

   - Lighting enhances the subject, message and or mood

   - Subject is isolated by luminance/ brightness or by contrast in color.

Judging Scale Examples

8. Strong: composition enhances image design

The Revised PPS Judging Scale

9. Outstanding: Visual elements coalesce around a unified image.

   - Technically correct in every aspect

   - Every element in the frame relates to the subject and contributes to the story.

   - Context enhances the story/theme

   - Composition and lighting create visual impact

   - Image has substance

   - Fresh, innovative

Judging Standard Examples

9. Outstanding: Visual elements coalesce around a unified image.

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Principles of Judging

- Judge each image as a whole
  - Take an image's best and worst attributes into account, but do not use one or the other as the sole basis for judging.

Principles of Judging

- Judge each image as a whole
  - For example:
    - An image that has great composition but bad lighting is not as good as an image that handles both well, and is better than an image that handles neither well.

    - Because there may be a minor problem in an image does not mean the whole image should be downgraded below a 7 if the rest of the image works well.

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Principles of Judging

- Analyze instead of just responding
  - Identify the positive attributes
    - Technical competence
    - Subject/idea emphasis
    - Lighting
    - Impact
  - Identify the negative attributes
    - Technical problems
    - Composition problems
    - Post processing problems

Analyze instead of just responding

Technical competence

⬅ Problems:
Focus
· Insufficient depth of field
Exposure
   · Blown out brights
   · Blocked up darks

➡ Strengths:
   · Sharp where it needs to be
   · Good exposure
   · No noise

Analyze instead of just responding

Compositional competence

⬅ Problems:
- Framing
- Balance
- Distractions
- Indistinct subject

➡ Strengths:
· Lighting
· Subject separation
· Color contrast

Analyze instead of just responding

Overall competence

Strengths:
- Technical
  - Sharp focus
  - Good exposure
  - Good tonal range
- Composition
  - Subject separation
  - Balanced composition
  - Dynamic diagonal movement

Problems:
- Busy background
    Or is it context?
- Lighting is OK

Analyze instead of just responding

Overall competence

Strengths:
- Subject separation
- Good color contrast
- Good depth of field
- Good tonal range
- Balanced composition

Problems:
- Focal point slightly in front of flowers
- Flat lighting

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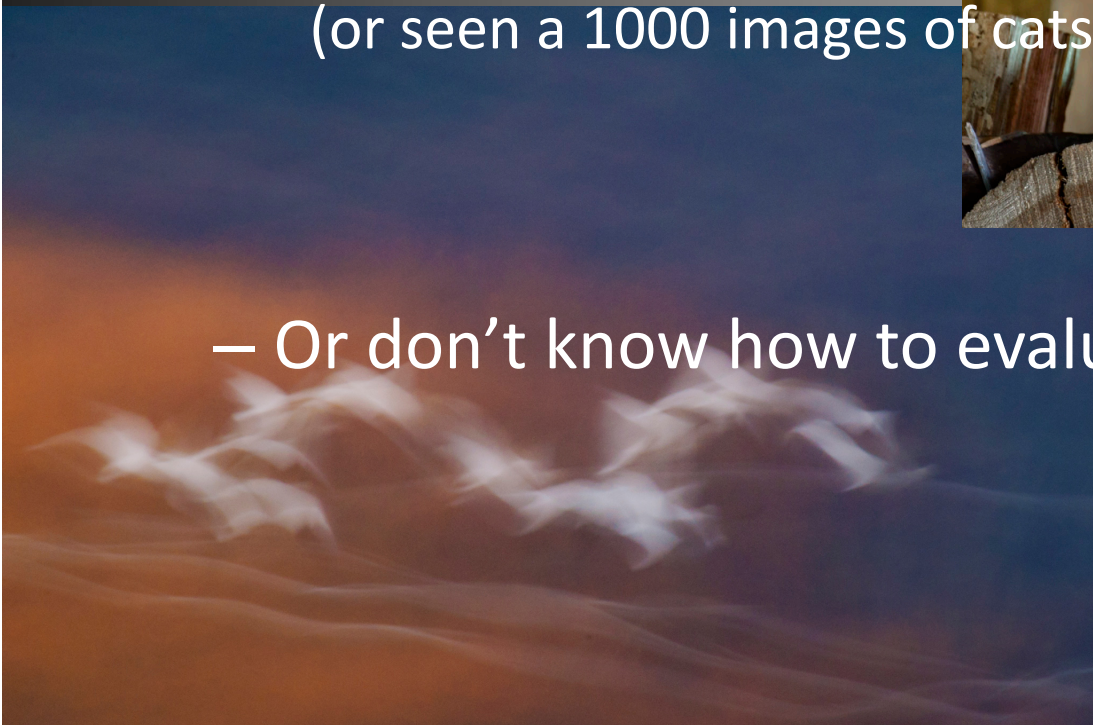
Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - We all have our favorite subjects and photographic styles.
  - We also have notions about what we like and don't like in photography.
  - We need to set those biases aside when we are judging.
    - This is the hardest part of judging.

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - We all have our favorite subjects and photographic styles.

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases

    – Perhaps you don't like pictures of cats
      (or seen a 1000 images of cats)

    – Or don't know how to evaluate abstracts

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - Prefer landscapes to Street scenes

- Evaluate every picture as it is.

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - We all have our favorite subjects and photographic styles.
  - We also have notions about what we like and don't like in photography.

- Photo styles:
  - Bold colors vs B&W

- Photo styles:
  - High key vs low key

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - Just because an image holds no interest for you should not impact the score

Principles of Judging

- Set aside your personal biases
  - Don't get hung up on the "rules."
    - Composition "rules" can make an image more effective, but following them is not a necessity.
  - Hubris: This is how I would have done it.
    - I could do it better

Principles of Judging

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- Set aside personal biases
- Be consistent

Principles of Judging

- Be consistent
  - Do not change the way you are evaluating images in the middle of a judging session -
    - even if your scores are noticeably higher or lower than the scores of other judges.
    - Doing so would unfairly distort the results.
  - Use the judging scale as intended to be consistent with other judge's scores

How we Judge Images at PPS
(At live meetings)

- Three judges are selected for the meeting
  - An alternative judge is designated to cover when an image maker is one of the selected judges
- Images are briefly reviewed
  - Gives the judges an idea of the range in quality of the images.
- Judges then individually score each image
  - PPS Uses a scale of 5 to 9

How we Judge Images at PPS
(At ZOOM meetings)

- Three judges are selected for the meeting
  - An alternative judge is designated to cover when an image maker is one of the selected judges
- Images are sent to the judges to score
  - Judges have several days to review and score images
- One of the Judges tallies the scores and returns score-sheet to meeting moderator
- Scores are read when image is shown during the ZOOM meeting

The PPS Judging Scale

5. Noticeable problems

6. Okay but with minor problems

7. Solid; a competently presented image

8. Strong: composition enhances image design

9. Outstanding: Visual elements coalesce around a unified image.

Giving Commentary

- Comments by judges help makers understand scores given

- Helps makers to know:
  - what they are doing right
  - areas for improvement

Giving Commentary

- How to comment on an image:
  - Express you comments as personal opinion
    - Start your comments with phrases like:
      - To me this appears to be ....
      - For me
      - In my opinion
  - Point out the attributes that are effective in expressing the meaning.
  - Point out attributes that could be improved.

Are You Ready to Judge?