

Judges opinions

I know that some of our members do not always agree with a judge's decisions and want to discuss their images with that judge. Unfortunately this is usually not possible when the Projected Images are judged Long Distance. On P.I comp. evenings we can have a bit of fun and interject with our comments. Also our members can tell us their thoughts about images which is a wonderful teaching / learning experience.

When the prints are judged on site the judge can be asked by the photographer **WHY?** Most judges are happy to explain their reasons for the way they have assessed the image.

Do not forget that if an image, in one judge's opinion, is not worth an Honour or a Merit, and a club member believes that it **is** a worthy image, it can be entered in another competition for a second opinion.

If anyone wants to have a discussion with a judge about an image, it is possible to get the nitty-gritty from the judge on the night if he/she is present.

Judges are human and have their own *subjective* opinions about photography. It is **very difficult** to remain *objective* which is the reason that big Nationals and Internationals (and many clubs' end of year judgments) will have 3 to 5 judges giving their opinions. The totals of their points awarded are added together to give a fair assessment of each image's value.

We are *very lucky* to have good judges available to do on-site and long-distance judging. At HBPC we have had many judges who have guided us forward with their comments.

Most judges show respect to each image; it may be a first attempt and not photographed "well". However, in every image there is a positive element and this must be "built upon" with comments which will teach and not offend.

I do distance PI and Print judging and it requires time and much thought. Often there is an excellent image which grabs one's eye immediately and requires very little comment, then at the other end of the spectrum, there is an image which needs assistance; a kind and guiding word may help the novice photographer take a better image next time.

All that I am really saying is "it is not as easy as it looks"

Remember, it is only a game and like football, the umpire, who is not infallible, makes the call.

Text Fran Cross LAPS PSQA

SHYLOCK: "O noble judge! O excellent young man! O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!"

With thanks to William Shakespeare Merchant of Venice

JUDGING PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

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Improving one's photographic images comes from knowing what the viewer expects to see. A judge at a photo contest is looking for specific features. They are usually Impact, Technique, Composition and Interest.

"Impact" is the first impression. A great impact makes the judge think "WOW!" before any analyzing. This is known as the wow factor. Sometimes it is caused by the subject matter itself. It can be whatever distinguishes the photograph from others taken of the same subject.

Prize winning images are often unique versions of the subject matter. Photos taken in the middle of a sunny day are not unique. Judges will not be impressed.

It helps to make an effort to create a version that looks different from an eye-level snapshot. Looking up or looking down on the subject differentiates from a photograph taken at eye-level. So does holding the camera closer to the ground. Telephoto, wide angle and macro lenses put a different perspective on the subject. The time of day, the season and the weather contribute to the uniqueness and impact of the subject matter.

A perfectly exposed, sharp photo can lack interest due to ordinary subject matter. People are excited by the unusual.

Composition plays a big role in the judge's mind. Composition needs to set off the main subject and the supporting subjects.

Dramatic versus static. Static is much less interesting. A motionless composition might have equal margins around the subject and no angled lines and curves. A straight-on picture of a building for example. An exciting image is dramatic. It may be exceptionally colorful, at an angle or in an unusual composition.

The image needs to be sharp where it is supposed to be sharp. Sharpness is the result of good focusing techniques and a good tripod. Both aperture and shutter speed are factors in sharpness. When a judge does not see expected sharpness in the right places, the image's score will suffer.

A judge expects no distractions which compete with the main subject as the center of interest. The background should compliment the main subject and not be of equal interest. Judges do not like "busy" images.

Exposure should look neither too light nor too dark. A judge expects the photographer to know how to expose for any lighting conditions. If a judge sees dark snow, for example, the photographer's skill to compensate for exposing snow is questionable.