

# Looking at Photos

- What makes a good photo
- Looking at images critically
- Looking at your images

# What Makes a Good Photo\*

- Aesthetics
- Judging Criteria
  - Impact
  - Composition
  - Technique
- Subject Matter

\*Adapted from material  
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# Aesthetic Qualities of a “Good” Photo

- Sharp with crisp detail
- Dense blacks
- Highlights with detail
- Luminous - maximum tonal range
- Smooth tonal gradations
- Realistically saturated colors
- Defects and distractions eliminated
- Tailor print to create desired mood

Short Canson video (6 min) - <http://www.canson-infinity.com/en/e-academy/defining-aesthetics-qualities-good-print>

# Impact - Subject

- First impression - has the WOW! Factor
- Is there a single, clear subject?
- Does the image tell a story or evoke an emotion?
- Is it ordinary or special? Is it more than a record shot?
- Has the judge seen it a hundred times? Is there something unique about your interpretation?
- Good lighting, camera angle, motion, energy
- Am I attached to it because of the memory it brings me and will anyone else care?

# Composition

- Do the elements within frame feel comfortable?
- Is the subject at a 1/3 power point?
- Are there design elements - leading lines, etc that draw the viewer to the subject?
- Can you do something to further emphasize the subject – such as vignette or edge burn or blur? Have you overdone this and made it obvious?
- Are there distracting elements competing with the subject – a bright or dark area, busy background...?
- Is there too much going on – simplify?
- Are the borders clear of clutter? Are objects touching or cut off at the border?
- Is the image straight without distracting distortion or keystoneing?
- Are the horizons well placed – normally at a 1/3 point?
- Can I crop it to improve one of the above?

# Technique

- Good basics – exposure, sharpness, white balance, depth of field
- Is the subject in focus?
- Is the image sharp, but not overly sharpened in post processing?
- Is it well exposed with good tonal range and contrast? Do highlights and shadows have detail?
- Are the colors believable?
- Do the colors pop without being overly saturated?
- Can I enhance the image or correct faults in post processing?
- Can you see the eyes and are they sharp?
- Is the print presented well – clean white mat, appropriate paper, no fingerprints...?

# Competition Subject Matter

The following are a crapshoot

- Portraits – many of our judges shoot portraits for a living
- Wildlife – judges don't understand unless they shoot wildlife
- Abstracts – it's anybody's guess as to how the judge will respond
- Others Artwork – is generally viewed as someone else's art
- Highly Manipulated – over-processed, canned filters, layering...

# Looking at Images Critically

- Objective feedback is a valuable learning tool
- It is easy to get too close to an image
- Inputs from others may help you see image in new light
- These are another's opinions. You are free to agree or disagree.



# Provide Specific Comments

- Need to go beyond “I really like this image”
- Identify what’s well done
- Provide suggestions on how to enhance the image
- Be specific and say why you feel this way
- Make honest effort to evaluate an image as impartially and fairly as possible. Try to set personal preferences aside
- Avoid rude comments
- Critiquing others work will help you better evaluate your own work