

## **A Judges View – Charles Summers** *(and my marking system)*

When assessing at a photograph I will generally look for three main points. These are:

- Impact - 6 Marks. Normal range is 2 ó 6 with 2 being little impact and 6 being very strong.  
How much initial impact have? Does it grab your attention and HOLD it?  
Is the image more than a mere snapshot?
- Composition ó Is it pleasing to the eye. - 6 Marks.
- Technical detail. ó 6 Marks. 1 mark for each of the elements listed below
- Two additional marks are awarded for liveability and presentation.

***Technical detail breaks down into several points and these are:***

1. Focal point ó Is there a clear focal point or is there several?  
Does the Main Subject stand out from the rest?
2. Is the photograph sharp in the right places? Is differential focus required?
3. Framing ó Is the image well contained within the frame?  
Is there excess space around the main subject?  
Is the overall image cluttered?  
Has the best format been used? (Portrait, Square or Landscape)
4. Tonal Range ó Mono: Strong blacks to pure whites  
Colour: Light and shade or a colour contrast  
Is there brilliant saturated colours or gentle gradation?  
Is the White Balance correct?  
(no signs of an Orange, Yellow or Green casts)
5. Exposure ó Overall is the shot correctly exposed?
6. Shutter Speed ó Has the correct shutter speed been used for this type of shot?  
Would a faster or slower speed improve the overall effect?  
Has panning been well executed?

***Different types of photographs need differing thoughts and listed below are what might be looked for by some if not all judges.***

### **Landscapes:**

1. Viewpoint: Has the author chosen the best viewpoint? Would a few steps right or left made a difference? Are there intrusions breaking into the photograph that could have been avoided? e.g. Pylons. Is the horizon level?
2. Weather: Has the author chosen the right day and weather conditions for the particular shot. Should it be dramatic or tranquil? Was the image taken at the right time of day?
3. Composition: Is the overall design pleasing to the eye? Does the image avoid wasting space? Does the image include elements from near, far and middle distance?

## **Portraiture:**

1. Has the shot been successful? Is it just a pretty shot or does the photograph bring out the character of the sitter? Is the sitter natural or relaxed? Has the correct lens focal length been used? (wide angle = oversized features) The best focal length is around 105mm.
2. Lighting: How well has the lighting been used? Are the shadows in the right places? Is it free from red eye? Are there any catchlights?
3. Background: How important is the background? Are props (if any) required?
4. Detail: Does everything relate well to each other? Is jewellery or make-up required? Is the pose right? (Hands etc.) Is the sitter's expression right? Is the expression forced or natural?
5. Sharpness: This type of shot demands sharpness in certain areas, particularly around the eyes. Are they? It is better if the whole face is in focus. Is it? Has the image been over sharpened?
6. Portraits are not restricted to humans.

## **Sport:**

1. Movement: Is movement or signs of speed important to this shot? Different sports different handling.
2. Space: Position within the frame; has it been well handled? Is there space to move into?
3. Sharpness: Has panning been well handled?
4. Shutter Speed: Is the subject frozen or not? Should it be?
5. If a ball is part of the sport e.g. rugby or football, can you see it?

## **Still Life:**

1. Composition: Does it all hang together well? Has the author used the available props well?

Remembering that everything is in the full control of the photographer is the final image successful?

## **Natural History:**

1. Sharpness in the right places ó centre of flowers, eyes of animals etc.
2. Good separation from the background (if required)
3. Does it comply with the agreed rules on what "Natural History" should be? (Animals in captivity etc.)  
"Natural History" is the recording of organisms including plants or animals in their environment. No techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements except by cropping are permitted. Colour images can be converted to grey-scale monochrome

## **Record Shots:**

1. Technical aspect is most important in this type of shot.
2. Information about the subject should be considered (including trade material)
3. Pictorially, is it good?

## **Composite Images**

1. All elements must be the work of the same photographer ó Nothing can be taken from stock images or the internet
2. Are all elements correctly scaled in relation to each other?
3. If shadows are included, are they all correct with the light source? (Any lighting faults should be easily seen)
4. How convincing is the final image?
5. Is the final image down to good photography or good computer skills? Has the author made a poor image, caused by poor photographic skills, better only by his or her knowledge of Photoshop or other manipulating software?

## ***Taking all of the above into account is the photograph***

- A good idea or has it been ill thought out? Is it just a snapshot?
- In need of improvement in any way?
- Appealing to others apart from yourself? Does the image communicate with the viewer or is it just a nice picture? How might it be improved?
- Does the overall shot provoke any thoughts for the viewer? An example might be a landscape where the path leads out of shot. Where is it going?
- Liveability i.e. Would you be happy to hang it on your wall or more importantly, would someone else?

*Remember at the end of the day it doesn't really matter what a judge says about your photograph, valuation is not an exact science it is an opinion! If you like your photograph that is all that matters!*

*Happy picture taking!*