

# Judges Newsletter - January 2018

**Hello Everyone** and welcome to a New Year.

## **BIOS:**

Please look at the PSQ website and click on the tab "Accredited Judges".

<http://www.psq.org.au/accredited-judges1.html> You will see if your Biography is there by a line "Link to BIO" under your name.

If it is there, is it current and correct?

If not, please take the time to send a Bio to our Web Admin, Fran. [psqweb@gmail.com](mailto:psqweb@gmail.com)

Feedback from Competition Secretaries is that the Bios are actually read and acted on for choosing Judges for some competitions.

## **DATE CLAIMER:**

### **JUDGES FORUM, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2018.**

The final bits have clicked into place for the Judges Forum to be held at the Chermside Public Library on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March from 9.00am to 4.00pm. There will be a small cost for lunch. More information to come.

The idea of the day is to get as many Accredited Judges and Understudy Judges as possible to attend.

## **Programme.**

**Emeritus Professor Roland (Roly) Sussex OAM.** Keynote speaker

Roly is Emeritus Professor of Applied Language Studies at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies of the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. Sussex hosts a talkback program on language and linguistics on ABC radio in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory and writes a weekly column, "Wordlimit", for *The Courier-Mail*.

He will be talking on the use of the English Language with respect to Photographic Judging.

**Dr GAY CREBERT, B.A. (Hons.), M.Ed., Ph.D.**

Gay has a personal commitment to lifelong learning, and has gathered several degrees in English and Literature along the way. She taught at The University of Queensland, in the English Department; then moved to academic staff development at Queensland University of Technology; and later at Griffith University.

The one constant throughout her life has been a compulsion to paint. From an early age, Gay learned painting in a variety of media from a number of highly respected and revered

art teachers, whose influence, both collectively and individually, has played a large part in her continuing love of painting and drawing.

Gay also enjoys making photographs, applying her artistic knowledge to the art of photography. She also enjoys writing, and is a member of Scribblers.

**John Elliott.**

John has 30 years experience as a self-employed as a writer, photographer and documentary maker. His work has focused mostly on Australian culture, the bush and music. He was Slim Dusty's preferred photographer for many years and produced the images for 20 of Slims album covers. John will be discussing choosing and making an analysis of a good shot.

Finally, there will be an open "round table" forum for all attending to raise any subject they feel is appropriate to judging.

This could be queries on definitions, how does everyone else handle a subject/problem, where to find particular definitions, what is being done right or wrong, what do you want the Judges Exec to do for you, do you want to receive these newsletters or whatever subject you want to raise.

The last time a forum of this type (PSQAs and USJs only) held, it was in Redlands several years ago. I attended and was completely blown away by the event.

This is being staged to bring Judges together, to learn from/enjoy the speakers and to present an opportunity for Judges to talk freely and frankly.

Please make time to attend.

**Now two thought provoking articles.**

The first by Keith Seidel is quite thought provoking and very much on subject.

The second by Ian Poole deals with photo competitions and life in general.

Enjoy.

John Blessas  
Chair  
PSQ Judge's Executive

# JUDGING PHOTOGRAPHS FOR EXHIBITIONS/COMPETITIONS

Judging of photographs is inherently subjective. We all know what we like and what we don't like and how that varies between individuals.

When judging photographs the first thing a judge must do is to forget the subjects that he/she likes and judge all picture types equally. The aim is to objectively rank the pictures presented against each other and some basic standards.

## The Basics

Photography is a visual art medium that captures a three dimensional scene and presents it in two dimensions. The key to a striking picture is usually the use of angled light to produce a 3d effect in the picture or to create a mood.

Early and late light generally produce the best 3d effects and colour saturation this light exaggerates shape and textures in photographic subjects. Middle of the day light generally flattens 3d separation because of the short, overhead shadows this usually reduces the impact of photographs.

A good photograph will be well:

- **Exposed**

Highlights will not be 'burnt out' and have some detail; likewise shadow detail should not be blocked out with no detail some detail in shadow areas is generally preferred unless the picture is a silhouette.

- **Composed (1)**

The elements in the picture will be pleasingly arranged and taken from an interesting angle ideally a picture that looks 'right' to the viewer is well composed. Strong compositions and viewpoints that are not always at eye level usually have an impact a 'wow' factor that is evident on first viewing.

- **Composed (2)**

The centre of interest (or main subject matter) is presented simply or without visual distractions. Distractions can include objects that partially obscure the centre of interest, or light/colour patches that take the eye away from the centre of interest. Be wary of strong highlights and bright colours that surround the centre of interest the viewers eye is always attracted to the brightest or most colourful part of a picture.

- **Focussed**

By the use of either aperture (for depth of field), or point of focus, the photographer can direct the viewer to the most important part of the picture.

- **Saturated**

Colour pictures may appear natural, moody or vibrant. The most important thing here is that the colours work together and do not clash or look obviously 'tweaked'.

Soft or muted saturation in a picture taken on a sunny day will usually indicate over exposure.

- **Toned**

Monochrome pictures rely on the gradation of tones to create their impact and tell the story. Shadow detail and highlight detail is evident in the best monochrome pictures.

Most often you will be asked to judge black and white, but sepia and blue toning are also common.

A picture that looks flat and lifeless will generally be lacking in tonal range and/or contrast and will lose the effect of light creating 3d or mood impacts.

- **Presented**

framing, matting and picture quality must not contain obvious errors or technical faults. Matts/borders must be straight, balanced and the border colour must not clash with the picture

Print quality (or the projected picture) will have no obvious blemishes or technical faults that detract from the overall impact.

Presentation quality should be used as one factor to separate equally rated pictures at the selection of awards.

- **Created**

Creative and manipulated pictures often break some of the exposure and saturation guidelines above and should be encouraged.

When judging these pictures, a rule of thumb to use is that if you can see the detail of the technique used, more than seeing an overall enhancing effect to the final picture, then the technique has not worked as it should.

After all that you are allowed, as a judge, to find the picture interesting and reward that in the points you give.

Originality and creativity is to be encouraged but creativity starts in the camera, not just in the computer. Creativity is the total design, composition and execution of the picture making not just the application of 'Photoshop' type filters in the computer.

### **Photographer's Own Work**

Another issue of both originality and integrity is that pictures that copy another person's art are not allowed and can represent plagiarism and copyright breach. A picture of a painting, mural etc with no added elements is not acceptable.

A picture of public art (eg. Sculpture) or using elements of such an art work as part of a creative composition are a grey area

Judges should always apply a common sense test to this issue. If you are unsure, it is better to reflect this in the points allocated and keep the picture away from the awards. The key test is has the photographer used, altered or added to the public art in a way that has some originality or creative merit.

### **Point Scales**

Most club judging is given out of a 10 point scale, but you may occasionally be asked to judge out of 15 or 20.

Most national and international exhibition (panel) judging comprises three judges each judging with a 5 point scale.

Many clubs now use 10 point scales for panel judging as this usually provides for a better separation of the top ranked images.

### **Club Judging**

The main aim here is to provide positive feedback on the picture's quality and impact within the set available to be judged (where commentary is involved). Use the point scale to separate the pictures in the set:

1-4 Obvious technical problems in picture capture, production or presentation. Comments should be sensitive to 'newer' photographers offering suggestions for improvement.

5-6 A picture with only minor blemishes but without pictorial strength.

7-8 A good picture almost worthy of recognition for minor awards (merit/highly commended)

9- 10 Strong visual impact with evidence of creative composition, use of light, viewpoint. Should not contain technical blemishes. At this level pictures are also often separated from the 7-8 range by a sense of originality and the quality of processing and presentation.

### **Panel Judging**

The main aim here is to select the best pictures for acceptance and display in the exhibition.

Photographers are rewarded by having pictures 'accepted' into an exhibition.

If you are in any doubt about the suitability or eligibility of any image seek guidance from the exhibition director. This applies equally to section definitions, issues of 'other's art' and same image/plagiarism

Here, as one of three judges (usually), the 5 point score is applied as follows and aggregated for a total score.

1. Obvious technical problems in picture capture, production or presentation.
2. A picture with only minor blemishes but without pictorial strength.
3. A good picture worthy of acceptance into the exhibition
4. A strong picture almost worthy of recognition for minor awards (merit/highly commended)
5. A very strong picture that you consider worthy of consideration for major trophies

Often the panel will review the highest scoring pictures for trophies/awards and may alter the order of the highest scoring pictures after review. Often a minor technical or quality issue is apparent at review that is not noticed on initial judging.

Such a review process is always to be encouraged as it is better to get the best pictures to the top awards rather than stick purely to the initial point scores.

Acceptance percentages vary at different levels of exhibition. A national exhibition will usually accept and display 25% of pictures, an international may be even less. At a club or local level, the acceptance rate may be 60/70%, depending on the space available to hang the exhibition.

### **Competition Photography**

Competition photography is challenging in that it is an art form that is accessible to all, but has technical and artistic considerations in the judging. Everyone can take a photograph, but not everyone can make a good picture.

The successful competition images are often simple in composition and have an impact on the viewer because they can make something special or even spectacular out of everyday subjects.

Judging photographic competitions and exhibitions is an enjoyable experience, and I often find that I get ideas and inspiration from the work that I judge.

Good Luck

Keith Seidel EFIAP, MAPS, SSAPS  
originally prepared February 2009  
[www.kseidelphoto.id.au](http://www.kseidelphoto.id.au)

## Failure

(Ian has kindly given his permission for use of this article.  
It's also allowed by the copyright holder, f11 magazine.)  
Please look up <http://www.f11magazine.com> online.)

The plane trip home to Brisbane from Sydney takes about 75 minutes and during that entire time I pondered the complete failure of my entries in the recent Australian Professional Photography Awards.

Four photographs entered and not one getting a silver award! Disappointing to say the least; chastening certainly since I had judged other photographers work constantly over three days.

In my humble opinion one of the entries was the best shot I had taken in a decade.

But hang on a moment – my placing of entries into the very system that I had just actively participated in was not a failure, but a vindication of the system that I have promoted and supported for over thirty years.

This led me to take a closer look at the concept of success and failure.

As photographers we have many methods of judging success. Maintaining a viable business that keeps customers coming back, pays the mortgage on life's necessities, supports a partner and family – surely they are measures of success?

For the amateur photographer it may be a case of participating in an active camera club, entering competitions and improving one's technique.

With the average person having an intelligence quotient (IQ) of over 100, you don't need a membership of Mensa to realise that there are many pathways to measuring success. For some it is physical possessions – sports car, medium format digital camera, fast processing computer.

For others it is winning competitions. Good grief it could even be garnering Facebook 'likes'! But there is a success in returning effort into an organisation or club that has given you support over a period of time. Even giving effort back to an industry that has supported you well over a lifetime.

As a teacher it is a joy to be confronted by a former student who is now a practising and successful photographer. One of my current business partners is a former photography student now recognised world wide for his photographic prowess. He certainly didn't learn his water-based skills from me, but he did get imbued with genuine excitement for photography whilst working in my environment. I will claim success credit for some of that.

I have now reached a point in both my life and my career where I well know my own limits. Being 'photographer of the year' will never feature on my curriculum vitae, but having my photography judged by a panel of my peers is a valid method of assessment of personal visual output. But I will continue to teach, mentor, assess, write and think about photography.

And yes, I will put my four best images in front of the 2015 judges.

Count on it.

Ian Poole

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