



Photographic
Society of
Queensland

Judges Newsletter – February 2021

Welcome to all for the second Judges Newsletter I have put together.

I always think about a friend of mine who was a principal of a school, I had a friend called Keith. I will never forget him. The first day I met him, I said hello and asked the typical Australian question, "How are you going mate?" I was stunned at the answer. He replied that if he had gone to a doctor this morning, he would be in hospital right now. I felt very sorry for him. My back, mate, he told me. I spoke to another mate and told how sick our friend Keith was and how bad his back was. He replied by saying, it's back this week and the week before it was his neck and the week before it was his shoulder. I understood.

The ones I felt sorry for were the kids in his class. How could he enthuse the kids when he was so negative.

It carries over to all society.

Stan Bowles.

What it was like in the olden days. I was visited by a good old mate who brought me over some magnificent backgrounds and some rolls of background paper. We were talking about weddings and portraits. He used to work for another photographer who employed five stringers. He would give them five (5) rolls of film to photograph a wedding and the rule was that each photographer would have to produce 180 good quality shots for the bride and groom. If you were not successful, you didn't work for him for too long. Failure to produce good quality was just not an option.

I thought about the photographers of today with the digital camera and photoshop. How much art can be done now? I just wonder how the albums of the past could be compared with those of today.

I once listened to David Oliver, a grand master of photography. He was given a Nikon D3 camera. He was asked how many shots he would now do at a wedding with the suggestion of a couple of thousand. He said never ever would he do that many shots as it was too costly. Some reminded him it was digital. He said it was still too costly as someone had to look through them all.

Over the last few weeks, I have had some fun and enjoyment out of photography.

I went to Noosa Camera club with Warren Veivers where he presented on impressionism in photography. It was real fun and it was terrific to see my friend Sabine Nogly. The people at Noosa were absolutely wonderful to us. On the way up there, Warren stopped at Peregian where we went on to the beach and Warren and I photographed some rocks with the water running over them and beautiful patterns were made.

I also went to Caloundra with Daryl Fisher who was the judge, It was a pleasure to sit with Ralph Brown during the judging. Jerry Gibson is doing a really good job as President and making people feel welcome. Once again a most welcoming club. Many people made us feel most welcome.

Warren went to Toowoomba Club to judge and was made welcome by Tryg Helander. Warren said he really enjoyed the evening in Toowoomba.

Peninsula Camera Club was where I was on 12 February and I was there as a judge. What a beautiful club this club is. I made the comment to them that I haven't seen any club that does the excellent work Peninsula does in black and white. What a welcoming club Peninsula. More come comes after.

A wedding I photographed on Valentines Day.

I was teaching photography for Murriajabre. My job was to make the students excited and want to get more enjoyment out of life. There was a young lady there and we were quite friendly. I always told when she got married I would photograph her wedding for free. About three weeks ago, she asked me to do her sister's wedding and I of course I agreed. It was a really special wedding. The mother of the bride, the bride and her sister had carers provided for them. I worked harder at that wedding than any wedding I have ever done.

There were two makeup artists. One was the official makeup artist and the other was an American lady who had been a professional photographer who had done much study with Bambi Cantrell one of my absolutely favourite portrait and wedding photographers. The lady had also done much professional makeup study and had her qualifications in this.

She was a most interesting and competent woman. I asked her if when she applied her makeup to the bride did she believe she was doing art. She said that was a most definite yes. I asked her did she believe I was photographing her artwork when I was photographing the bride and again a most definite yes. She also said a no if someone else had messed up the makeup. I asked did she mind if I photographed her artwork and no she was quite happy and proud of the fact I was. I explained to her that some people believed I wasn't photographing artwork.

Her answer was that some people own cameras but they are not photographers. Some people own makeup gear but they are not makeup artists. She is a makeup artist. She also said that many people are not makeup artists. She also said there are not many people who don't understand makeup artistry in any way. One of my friends reminded me of the Bob Dylan lyric "Don't criticise what you don't understand".

Only the night before I had been a judge at Peninsula Camera Club and there was a really good shot of a ark skinned lady and it was ruined by an area of highlight on the forehead. It was entered by Michael Stefanini. He said he had tried everything he knew to get rid of that area. I suggested to him translucent powder. I asked the makeup artist about this. She showed me her translucent powder kit. I was amazed when she showed me her kit of about twenty colours and how she would be able to perfectly match the colour of the powder to the skin. I only wished I had met her before I did the judging. I would have been a better judge.

At Aspley Camera Club.

As you all know we are having the subject Abstracts as a set subject. So everyone would know about the subject we had a talk done by Peter Law and that absolutely wonderful young lady Di Hodge to do a talk. Di was an art teacher and also a top photographer.

Peter gave these two quotes from a photographer who specialised in this area: Aaron Siskind 1903 - 1991.

a. As photographers, we must learn to relax our beliefs. Move on objects with the eyes straight on, to the left, around to the right. Watch them grow large as they approach. Group and regroup as you shift position. Relationships gradually emerge and sometimes assert themselves. And that's your picture.

b. As the image or vocabulary has been extended, the emphasis of meaning has shifted from what the world looked like to what we want the world to mean.



Excerpts from a recent ACC Club presentation titled: Demystifying Abstraction

Set Subject Descriptor: ABSTRACT

An abstract image is an attempt to express an emotion, sensation or impression and does not attempt an accurate depiction of visual reality. It may involve the use of colour, light, shadow, texture or shape to achieve this.

An abstract image may isolate a fragment of a natural scene in order to remove its inherent context from the viewer, or it may be purposely staged to create a seemingly unreal appearance from real objects.

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There are a range of broadly identifiable kinds of abstraction in photography. Images can be abstract in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons.

It's not difficult to capture abstract images. It's just a matter of gaining a better understanding of what abstract photography really is, what makes a good abstract photo, and letting your creative juices flow.

Consider the basics elements and principles of design: use of shape, colour, pattern, line, texture (low to high relief), contrast, proportion, repetition, emphasis, rhythm, negative space, movement, variety, unity, scale, harmony, balance, negative space, geometric or organic elements etc. Also think about the format of your work – square, rectangle, irregular, circle/oval, triangle...

Ready-made Abstractions can be found in both natural and made-made environments. Alternatively artists can produce abstractions by further manipulating the above or creating their own abstractions using the multitude of postproduction techniques available.

Some things to think about:

- ✓ You can keep it simple or make it complex – although remember less is often more.
- ✓ Composition - While many commonly observed photography rules don't apply, a good abstract photo always has a clear, structural design. A lot of thought goes into the order, placement, and balance between shapes, patterns, textures, and even colours within an abstract image. These factors greatly affect the visual weight of the photo, establish and complement the point of interest, and influence how viewers look at it. A well-composed photo uses these visual elements to achieve a common goal and output.
- ✓ Angle of View – get creative and experiment! Try shooting straight up or down...through other objects, through frames, windows, a hole in the wall...lie on you back and photograph a sky scraper...try multiple exposures...
- ✓ Lighting - depending on how it is used, it can emphasize, dramatize, or give prominence to subject forms, details, or areas within an image. The direction and power of the light source can also play a huge part in directing the presentation of the subject and setting the tone for the shot. Many of the

most mysterious and intriguing abstract images have silhouettes, backlighting, and interesting shadows.

- ✓ Audience – elements of abstraction have the power to invoke emotions, memories, responses – both positive and negative. Is it a feel good image, or an image to invoke debate, influence social change or make a statement about an issue? An important point to remember is the power of compelling abstract art lies in the response of the viewer. You cannot control this as the audience will bring to their interpretations of an abstract work their own perspectives and points of view – for this reason the image will remain alive and active and open for evolving perspectives over time, which means it takes on a life of its own. These interpretations may be influenced by such things as environmental, social, demographic/ethnic, personal, psychological and historical factors.

What response/visual impact would you like to achieve? Your work may make the viewer feel calm, serene, confronted, uneasy, joyful, whimsical, empowered and thoughtful, perplexed, shocked...

Key words which will provide food for thought – these may be used in isolation or in combination with others – it all depends on how simple or complex you wish the image to appear.

Distort, warp, reassemble, defragment, repeat, re focus, reconceptualise, isolate, repeat, scale, use directional lines, reverse or flip, curl, spiral, ripple, flow, drip, zoom in, highlight, fade, mirror, reflect, dissect, frame, grid, go beyond the surface (what lays beneath, remains hidden? Out of sight? Is Inferred?), add discord.

In summary, the aim to understand how each of these design principles actually impact your work. Studying how other artists/photographers have implemented these ideas to structure their own designs is also an incredibly valuable tool in learning to create better images. An understanding of the theory which is embedded in every image which may have been produced intuitively saves a lot of trial and error.

Abstract photography is a genre that allows great creative freedom. You don't have to worry about sticking to rules and following strict technical guidelines. Sometimes breaking or bending the rules can produce amazing results. 'The result is an extraordinary and varied body of work in which the compositional traits and subject-matter of traditional photography recede from view'.

Sources:

<https://www.adorama.com/alc/abstract-photography-for-beginners-9-tips-for-capturing-stunning-abstract-images/>

<https://expertphotography.com/complete-guide-abstract-photography-112-tips/>

Also good to reference not only current contemporary photography artworks, but also the work of early abstract photographers such as Man Ray, László Moholy-Nagy & Alfred Stieglitz.

<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/abstract-photography/>

Presenter: DIANNE HODGE (Email: hodgedi@hotmail.com)

Visual Arts Educator (B Ed, Secondary Visual Arts & Geography, Associate Diploma Visual Arts)

Dianne has over 40 years' experience as an artist & educator, working across Prep to University & various Community Education Projects.

Following is a discussion point made by Britcher

JUDGING CLUB MEMBERS PHOTOGRAPHS

The Membership of the Panel of PSQ Accredited Judges consists of a diverse group of people from all walks of life, but they have at least one thing in common, a passion for making Significant Images. What constitutes a Significant Image depends on an individual's personal interests and journey through life, whether they are the Author, the 'Judge', or any other viewer. In other words we all have knowledge and experiences that influences ones thoughts, appreciations, and decisions which incorporates any biases one may have.

When we are invited to Judge, I believe we are aiming to assist the Members from what knowledge we have, to inspire and educate them in their ongoing endeavours, based on our own individual journey. How we achieve that varies with each individual judge, some members are trained teachers, but most simply share what knowledge they have. But what we all do is a two stage process, that of making an Adjudication at home, followed by a Critique at a Club Venue.

Again this is a process where we usually have our own individual style. My decision making is derived from some personal points of view. One being that Grading is not a Qualification it is simply a separation of skill level within a Club. The number of grades depends on the size of the Membership and how diverse the skill level may be within a Club. After 40 years on the judging panel, I've learned that skills displayed within a Club can vary quite noticeably from one meeting to the next.

As photographers we all go through stages of development. No matter how we are graded, the challenges presented - in particular by the variety of Set Categories - will often present difficulties based on opportunity, family life, choice of equipment, weather conditions and the list goes on. Those who are resilient and dedicated enough will often be the ones who are successful more often.

So as a judge I simply go through the set of Images from each invitation, and assess the overall standard by dividing into three maybe four groups, that will be how the Images are awarded based on the Honour, Merit, Acceptance, Out Of Category [OOC] system that most Clubs use. To achieve that, there has to be a distinct demarcation displayed in Skill level within that set of Images. Sometimes a distinct demarcation is not there for an Honour award. At a monthly Club Level I don't hold the view that the Bar has to be set at a certain height. Panel Judging for EOY, Regional, State, National & International Competitions is for me where a Bar is set.

During the critique of the Images, I use the awards to reward an Author for any aspect that shows they are presenting some sort of Emotive Effect that has lifted an Image above and beyond. The higher the award, the better an Image is on that occasion IMHO. How one articulates their view is the crucial aspect of any Critique. Telling an Author something is wrong, in a medium where there is no 'Right or Wrong', is not the best way to express a POV. What determines 'Good Art' depends on the eye of the viewer. Expressing a preference for doing something in a different way, is more likely to encourage than discourage an audience to your way of thinking.

Bob Britcher AFIAP AAPS PSQA - 22nd February 2021.

Final thoughts.

What have you done since your last judging to make you a better judge?