

TRI-STATE IN FOCUS

Tri-State Photographic Society

December 2008

A Wall at The Covington Show
by John Kubler



The Change That Never Was

In my book a change can only be accepted and contributed to if a crisis exists. A crisis that needs to be resolved. We never really had a crisis, just an opportunity for some minor adjustments. With the distraction behind us, we are now ready to get back to taking and sharing pictures. To all the members debating scoring rules and judging dissatisfaction, I can only quote Bill Gate's Rule 1 (from his 11 rules): "Life is not fair -- get used to it!"

You have perhaps established your own New Year's resolutions. How about some related to taking pictures, such as:

- I will get better at shooting perfectly exposed images, with minimum need for post processing.
- I will shoot more close-up and get real good at controlling depth-of-field.
- I will get my image files in order.
- I will do my own projects and not try to copy previous winners.
- I will (finally) read the manual.

Have a great photo year!

Mogens

December Pictorial - Open (Informal)

Slides - Tyro

1. Dave Leiby Senegal Weaving Pattern

Slides - Accomplished

- 1 John Deering Sky Light
2. John Devine Anatomy of a Barn
3. Mark Kraus Locust Beetle

Prints - Tyro

- 1 Nancy Beers Bright Colored Scarves
- 2 Donna Loughry Friendship Trashcan
- 3 Becky Kempf Stripes and Checks
- 3 Mary Jo Offutt Bricks & Stripes

Prints - Accomplished

- 1 Richard Jones Zebra Stripes
- 2 John Jackson Red Wagon Christmas

December Nature - Open (Informal)

Slides - Tyro

- none entered

Slides - Accomplished

- 1 Wilda Everman Blue Flower
- 2 Mark Kraus Squirrel
- 3 Garry Walter Green Snake
- SD Wilda Everman May Apple
- SD Mark Kraus Winter Deer

Prints - Tyro

1. John Kubler I'm Looking at You
2. Joy Sallee Hiding Jack Rabbit
3. Donna Loughry Hairs of Palm
4. Nancy Beers Mist & Frost
- SD John Kubler Working Bee

Prints - Accomplished

1. John Jackson Sandhill Crane
2. Bob Ihrig Cascade
3. Margaret Jones Flight
- SD John Jackson Seed Pod

TRISTATE PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY COMPETITION CATEGORIES - 2009

<u>Pictorial (1st Friday)</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Nature (3rd Friday)</u>
Voting on Competition Issues	January	Insect Close-Ups Slides/Informal Prints
Horses Slides/Informal Prints	February	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	March	Animals Longer Than 8 Feet In Length, Width, Height, Or Wingspan Slides/Informal Prints
Timepieces Slides/Informal Prints	April	Birds In Flight Slides/Informal Prints
Open Slides/Informal Prints	May	Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides
Working People Slides/Informal Prints	June	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	July	Ducks Slides/Informal Prints
Boats Or Ships Slides/Informal Prints	August	Mostly White Or Mostly Black Slides/Informal Prints
Open Slides/Informal Prints	September	Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides
Wheels Slides/Informal Prints	October	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	November	Sea Life, Flora Or Fauna Slides/Informal Prints
Two Photos Of Same Subject (Before/After, Seasonal, Etc.) Slides/Informal Prints	December	Open Slides/Informal Prints

Reminder:
Limit 1 print for Competitions.

*Additional print(s) will be for
Display and Discussion.*

TRISTATE PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY COMPETITION CATEGORIES - 2010

<u>Pictorial (1st Friday)</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Nature (3rd Friday)</u>
Open Slides/Informal Prints	January	Wild Animal Babies Slides/Informal Prints
Books Slides/Informal Prints	February	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	March	Sand Slides/Informal Prints
Rural Images Slides/Informal Prints	April	Peaks Slides/Informal Prints
Open Slides/Informal Prints	May	Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides
Nightscapes Slides/Informal Prints	June	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	July	Animals With Antlers Or Horns Slides/Informal Prints
Musical Instruments Slides/Informal Prints	August	Poisonous Or Venomous Slides/Informal Prints
Open Slides/Informal Prints	September	Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides
Hobbies Slides/Informal Prints	October	Open Slides/Informal Prints
Open <i>Formal</i> Prints/Slides	November	Raptors Slides/Informal Prints
Architectural Detail Slides/Informal Prints	December	Open Slides/Informal Prints

December 2008 PSA Color Projected Image Competition in Group 'D'

(Unknown number of clubs competed)

Tri-State earned 69 points.

Our 53 point score placed Tri-State in fairly mediocre position. The max. scoring per slide is 15 points.

5 pts. - for technique

5 pts. - composition

5 pts. - impact

No.	Title	Maker	PSA Score
# 1	"Temple Boat"	Caroline Statkus	09
# 2	"Tall Stacks Fog"	John J. Szabo	11
# 3	"Fiddler on the Porch"	Richard Jones	12
# 4	"Joanne"	Bob Ihrig	14 H.M.
# 5	"Nature's Fireworks"	Wilda Everman	12
# 6	"Rusty Chain"	Jerry Carpenter	11

The judging club (for Group 'D') was Portland Photographic Society
Estacada, Oregon

We think we have it bad, as per John Devine: "In early December, they(Oregon) suffered several feet of snow followed by floods and finally sheets of ice."

Activities

Programs/Presentations

February - Alaska Wildlife in Katmai National Park
March -
April -
May -
June -
July -
August -
October -
November -
December -

Field Trips

If you have field trip destinations you would like to see the club go to, let Jerry Carpenter know.

Refreshments

February - Bob & Becky Kemp
March - Mark Kraus, Jerry Fritsch
April - Donna Loughry, Margaret Jones
May -
June -
July -
August -
September -
October -
November -
December - Everybody

March Club Show & Exhibit

Our 2009 Club Show & Exhibit will be at Sharon Woods March 21 thru March 29, 2009.
March 21 will be the day for putting up the display,
March 29, 2009 will be the day for taking down the display.

If you have questions or can help please contact Joy Sallee or Richard Jones.

If you have questions or would like to sign up, please talk to Katherine Miller or Wilda Everman.

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Judging Images Handbook

Introduction

We would hope that this handbook, compiled from the perspectives of many seasoned judges, will be helpful to not only guide current judges and prospective future judges for Tri-state competitions, but also will enlighten competition participants and the membership at large so that they better understand how their images are being judged.

The Job Of Being A Judge

In reality, all Tri-state photographers are judges. They judge and critique their images even before they release the shutter. They judge when they edit their work after it is processed. They judge competitions privately as they observe others who are willing to take the task to a public level by volunteering to be an official Tri-state judge. Tri-state is an organization whose vitality is dependent on the willingness and generosity of its members, and it is a responsibility of all members to be willing to judge a competition when asked.

A Judge Provides Helpful Feedback

One important part of the judging process is scoring. Scoring is used to separate competition entries into those placing first through sixth, honorable mention, and entries. The judging process, however, is more than just scoring for honors. It also provides a maker with feedback from other photographers as to how successfully the maker might have been in creating a striking image. While the numerical score does provide some feedback to a maker, a score should not be considered to be a definitive evaluation of photographer's work. It is simply one judge's perspective on that image at that particular time. Every judge tries very hard to be consistent and hold to a standard but admittedly at another time he or she could very well score an image differently. At a different time, a judge may see elements he or she did not see before or be impacted differently. A judge's point of view undeniably is a product of his

or her own personal history, study and experiences. Is it any wonder that others might disagree with a judge's assessments since their experiences will have been different? As much as everyone would like scoring and judging to be an exact science, it must be recognized that it is a personal assessment of an art form.

After the competition is scored, judges are asked to comment on and critique images. When commenting on an image, judges should strive to respect the dignity of the maker, recognizing the positive elements of the image, giving commentary that is uplifting and helpful while still being honest about perceived weaknesses.

While a judge should be sensitive to the maker's feelings, never being mean-spirited, the judge must still be honest. Some judges are not willing to give a low score, or any negative feedback because they fear that such will be demoralizing to a maker. A judge giving inflated "feel good" scores should realize that his or her unwillingness to give the low score that is deserved often results in the demoralization of another maker whose work truly deserved the higher score and is now having his or her work placed in the same category as a decidedly worse image. True learning does not come from false complements (or inflated scores) but honest appraisals.

A Judge Assesses An Image On Its Own Merit In An Unbiased Way

A judge should be aware that most competitions judged are considered to be "general pictorial". A general pictorial division mixes images of a wide variety of subjects and techniques. Consequently, judges, in all fairness, need to score each image based on that specific image's own merit.

Every effort should be made to judge without bias as to the subject matter, the maker, the club, the technique employed, or what has been seen previously. A judge will undoubtedly, be faced with the challenge of having to judge, objectively, subjects not favored, makers whose work is recognized (such as a spouse's), images already seen previously, subjects the judge has photographed. Tri-state asks judges to set aside their personal biases as completely as is humanly possible. While there is,

undeniably, always some subconscious bias in every human being, judges should be personally committed to trying to be as objective and unbiased as possible.

In Nature or theme-based competitions, images entered are not as broad in content and technique as in general pictorial competitions. As judges assess the images in such competitions, they will be asked to keep in mind the importance of the content of the image. It is important that the unique rules of such competitions be understood by those who judge them and that they be willing to abide by them. A judge should make him(her)self familiar with Tri-state's published competition rules especially the procedures for challenging or disqualifying an image.

In print competitions it is assumed that judges also consider the quality of the printing technique.

A Judge Assesses Skill, Craft and Artistry

A judge is asked not only to be analytical, using long accepted standards of what makes a technically good photograph, but also is asked to be open to freshness, artistry and successful "breaking of the rules"; that is, to be in touch with the emotional impact that an image has in addition to its technical merits.

Rather than simply assessing the technical merit of an image, judges should be willing to ask themselves questions such as: Does the image work as a whole? Does it evoke some emotion in the viewer such as surprise, shock, despair, love, sadness, sympathy, humor, fear, curiosity, or peacefulness? Is the image beautiful, clever, controversial, imaginative, or thought provoking? As judges grow in confidence and experience, they increasingly become aware of such factors in addition to assessing the standard technical areas of composition, exposure, and focus. They often become more holistic, assigning a score because of an image's overall positive impact and its success in achieving its goal (as perceived by the judge) rather than approaching their task simply as a one of finding fault.

A judge who is keeping an eye out for "freshness" and "emotional appeal" might caution him(her)self that what might seem trite or cliché to an experienced long time photographer and competition attendee, may indeed be a first-time fresh and exciting experience for the photographer who perhaps had never achieved such mastery of a particular subject or technique before. Just because a judge has seen (and possibly even photographed) a subject many times does not mean that the photographer has. The judge may be seeing the photographer's first image of that subject, or of such quality. For that

photographer, this IS an original image. To always expect something to be truly original (or at least original to that judge) places an unfair burden on the photographer and results in disappointing a maker instead of recognizing and rewarding what the maker has accomplished. The judge then is guilty of not judging the merits of the image as it is presented, even though that is precisely what he or she is being asked to do.

On the other hand, a judge who is not open to freshness and new visions, and assumes that the only successful competition images are those which fit a certain time honored mold, also is doing a disservice to photographers. Photography is not a static art form. While a photographer should be encouraged to grow and experiment with his or her personal photographic interpretations, it is the judge's job to objectively assess the success or failure of those attempts. Judging should be honest but not stifling. Judges should be willing to recognize those photographers who bring new life, spirit and vision to an age-old craft and thus to the organization as a whole.

While judges should base their judgment calls on a knowledge of sound photographic practice, they also should be willing to recognize skilled craftsmanship, artistry and even a personal vision which might be different from their own.

A Judge Applies His/Her Assessment In A Consistent Manner

Judges should use a full range of scores and should be supported when they are willing to objectively do so. Each judge will have his or her own unique personal perspective that can be just as valid as that of a judge who chooses a different score. If the expectation were that all judges would score the same then there would be no need to have 3 judges. Even though Tri-state has a score range from 0 through 10 to be used by a judge, it is wise to remember that in effect this becomes a range of 0 through 30, or more realistically 15 through 30, using the scores of three judges.

A judge should not succumb to the temptation of changing his or her standards "in midstream" such as when a competition is not strong and a judge suddenly decides to give higher scores even when the quality does not warrant such, or when a different class is being judged.

Since judging an image, as well as creating it, is a very personal and subjective experience, no maker should ever feel that their own personal vision should suffer from either receiving a particular score or hearing the personal perspectives of a judge. The way that images are assessed

in a few brief moments at a Tri-state competition is not necessarily the way that the image will be assessed in another competition, by another panel of judges, or by the public, or in an entirely different venue like a gallery showing, or for use in a publication.

Indeed it is the rare judge who will not find there to be disagreement with his or her score or commentary at one time or another. Despite disagreements, a judge should always feel that his or her efforts are appreciated and are treated as valid as one person's perspective. Likewise an entrant should feel that his or her photographic efforts are also appreciated. Even though being a judge may sometimes seem like a thankless job, judges may take solace in the fact that they are given the power to bring pleasure to photographers, either because they made the maker realize that his photographic efforts have not gone without appreciation, or because the maker now feels that he has learned more about how his work might improve. Being a judge is indeed a privileged responsibility.

Viewers of a competition should show courtesy, respect and gratitude to all judges who are willing to give of their time and put their assessments on the line.

Scores

In order to help promote consistency, Tri-state believes that the following guidelines about applying specific numerical scores will be helpful to all members and especially to less experienced judges as they seek a foundation for developing their art of judging.

The scores of 4 or less do exist and may need to be used in only rare cases when warranted. So a score of 5 will begin this discussion.

Score Of Five

This image may have several significant flaws any one of which might be responsible for a score of 6. On the other hand, it may have one flaw but it is an extremely serious one, as for example, the exposure is very bad (more than a stop over or under exposed), or perhaps the whole image is not sharp (not only is the subject of the image not in focus but nothing is quite in focus), or perhaps the subject is not recognizable due to motion.

SCORE OF SIX

This is an image that would have been a 7 if it were not for a significant flaw. The flaw might be, for example, over or under exposure by one half to one stop,

a subject that might be out of focus when it needed to be in focus, an unintentionally blurred image because of subject or camera movement, that the composition is cluttered to the point of distraction, or distracting elements which are overwhelming. Additionally a spotty print with fingerprints, a digital image with dust spots or a dirty slide should be considered to be a flaw if it appears that the maker was at fault. However, a judge should not penalize a maker for a presentation flaw which appears to be a result of mishandling while the image was not under the maker's control.

Score Of Seven

A 7 would be awarded to an image that has no significant technical flaws, but which likewise has no significant strengths. It is **acceptable**, but does not generate any special interest or stir emotions. It is the quality of image that we would expect that most hobbyists should be able to take as a minimum standard. It has the technical proficiency that modern auto-exposure, auto-focus cameras allow. The maker has made a correct exposure in a non-difficult lighting situation and the subject of the image is sharp. However it lacks those elements towards which image-makers who are working at polishing their craft should be striving; for example, achieving technical excellence, showing a knowledge of the importance of choice of subject, of good lighting, of dramatic composition, of handling depth of field effectively, of eliciting emotional impact, or of exhibiting freshness and creativity.

A 7 also would be awarded to an image that did have one of the strengths just mentioned (which might have earned it an eight) but that strength has been neutralized by a flaw.

Score Of Eight

This is a **good solid image**, an image towards which every Tri-state member should be striving as a minimum. Such an image is technically correct and more. It exhibits AT LEAST ONE element towards which photographers who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (for example, showing a knowledge of the importance of choice of subject, of good lighting, of dramatic composition, of handling depth of field effectively, of eliciting emotional impact, or of exhibiting freshness and creativity). The elements of the image work together. If there are flaws, they are minor and compensated for by other elements in the image. For the most part, images that score an 8 do

not break the “rules”. If a rule is broken, it is broken with intention and works to enhance the image. A score of 8 is the first step above a technically correct but otherwise uninspiring image that would warrant a 7. It is the start on the path towards the high impact image.

Score Of Nine

An image that scores a 9 is a **very strong image**. Such an image is technically correct and much more. The elements of the image must work together. If there are flaws, they are minor and hard to find. Obvious flaws must be compensated by other elements in the image. Images that score a 9 may break the “rules”. When the rules are broken, they are broken for impact. Technical excellence, is expected to a high degree in an image scoring 9. Difficult exposures, effective use of selective focusing and depth of field, as well as other advanced photographic techniques are commonly found in such an image. The image exhibits SEVERAL elements towards which those who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (see “8” above). The difference between an image that scores a 9 versus one that scores an 8 is how strong the image is. A 9 is a really strong 8.

Score Of 10

An image that scores a 10 is an **exceptionally strong image**; i.e. true photographic excellence. It need not be a perfect image, just a very, very strong image. Such an image is technically correct and much, much more. The elements of the image must work together to form a whole that is far greater than the sum of the parts. There should not be any obvious flaws. Images that score a 10 may break the “rules”. When the rules are broken, they are broken for impact. Technical excellence, is expected in an image scoring 10. Difficult exposures, effective use of selective focusing and depth of field, as well as other advanced photographic techniques are very common in such an image. The image exhibits MANY elements towards which those who are working at polishing their craft should be striving (see “8” above).

While the score of a 10 should not be given out without very good reason since it implies true photographic excellence, if a judge feels that an image knocked him or her out of their chair and/or that they were awestruck and immediately fell in love with it they should give it a 10 with no apologies to anyone. Makers should not be made to feel that a 10 is impossible to achieve.

Personal Scoring Strategies And Philosophies

While the guidelines outlined above should be helpful in understanding what a score might mean, it is true that each judge will develop personal strategies which allow them to quickly and fairly arrive at a score in the brief time they are given. Each judge must develop an approach with which they feel comfortable. Judges have shared several of their philosophies and strategies and some are included here in order to help those who wish to develop their own, and to help others understand what might go on in the mind of a judge.

Judges who take a holistic approach may start by asking themselves how much initial impact does the image have? Do they see it as an “oops!”, an “OK”, a “nice!”, a “wow!” or a “knock your socks off!” Perhaps only after taking note of their initial reaction do they look at individual elements that go into making the image, elements that might not have been noticed in the overall first impression.

Judges may start by asking themselves how well has the maker achieved his or her goal (as it appears to be conveyed to the viewer)? Does the image “say” something? How successfully has it been “said”? Does the image work as a whole? Such judges do not dwell on flaws unless those flaws obviously detract from the message or the goal of the image.

Some judges, especially the less experienced, might wish to use a more mathematical approach. A score might be arrived at by working upwards, accumulating points for the strengths of an image, or by working down, deducting points for weaknesses in the image. Using the first strategy, a judge might start out considering that if to a blank image has been added an out of focus, overexposed, unidentifiable subject, it would earn a 5. It could earn a 6 if it is identifiable but not focused properly or the exposure is slightly off the mark. When proper technical aspects are achieved, a score of 7 would be given. As the technique and creative aspects improve, points should be added to the score in a positive or cumulative manner. In the other direction, scoring occurs by deducting points from the top as flaws in the image are observed. In this situation, everyone’s image would initially start with the top score of a 10. Working in this direction assumes that each photographer is capable of creating a photo worthy of a 10.

Some judges are always looking for a 10 in a competition, hoping to be able to find one even though they may not. This approach is certainly more positive

than assuming that a 10 means perfection and therefore generally should not be given.

One of the most common approaches is to start at the baseline 7, a judge first asking him(her)self, "Is this an acceptable or an unacceptable image?" If it is acceptable, then they may ask, "How strong is it?...not very (7), somewhat (8), very (9), extraordinarily (10)?" If it is unacceptable, then it is a 6 (or lower in extraordinary situations). The more mathematically inclined, after determining whether the image is or is not acceptable begin adding or subtracting from 6. If it is an unacceptable image, they subtract one point for focus, exposure, poor color rendition, confusing composition, etc., two points for any two, and three points for any three. If it is an acceptable image, they add points for such things as compositional strengths, lighting dynamics, creativity, etc.

Many of these assessments may seem overwhelming and time consuming to a novice judge. Novice judges should find that this can be done quite quickly as their experience increases. It is important that any judge take the time necessary to give an image a fair analysis. Even some very seasoned judges are wise enough not to allow themselves to be unreasonably rushed.

No matter what strategy a judge decides works best for that particular judge, Tri-state hopes that the result will distinguish between images which are faulty, acceptable, strong and very strong, rewarding fairly the work of its member photographers, and encouraging them to strive for the finest images possible.

A Synopsis For Judges To Keep In Mind As They Approach A Competition

We hope that judges will:

- Strive to remove personal bias and not unduly favor or penalize images based upon their subject matter, the specific technique used or a knowledge of the maker.
- Apply scores consistently so that all images given a certain score can be expected to be of comparable quality no matter in which class they are, or what technique was used to produce the image.
- Use the entire scoring scale effectively to differentiate images.
- Base the score on the merit of that particular image rather than those that surround it, those you have taken, or those you have seen before.
- Be willing to reward both freshness and creativity along with technical excellence.

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Tip Of The Month:

When Do I Upgrade To A New Digital Camera And Why?

I will assume that you do not print larger than 11"x14" and that you are not cropping the images more than 20%, like most members of the club. Also, if you are shooting with a compact camera, but really want a DSLR this may not apply, but read along anyway.

So, what to look for? Unlike what the manufacturers would like you to believe; once you are at the 6 mega pixel level it is not about the pix' anymore. For the format you print you don't need more. The reason for upgrading to newer models (which very likely will come with more pix') is the improved software in the camera. While the sensors

are changing primarily in pix numbers, it is still RGB array CMOS and CCD technology. The improved image quality and control capability in the latest generation of DSLRs comes from the new software, such as Nikon's Expeed.

I have a hard time seeing the difference in sharpness and color quality in 8"x10" prints from my 6 MP FUJI and my 12 MP Nikon D300. When it comes to focus and exposure controls, it is a different story, the newer camera is clearly winning out. Bottom-line, do not buy just for more pixels, look for the improved software.

Mogens

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