



Focusing on...

Everyone's a Critic

Cheryl Jacobs Nicolai

Critique is something near and dear to my heart. There's nothing like an outside perspective on our work to understand where we are as artists, and how to get where we want to be.

I think, though, that there are misconceptions about what critique is and isn't, or maybe what it should and shouldn't be. For that reason, the word "critique" tends to strike fear in the hearts of vulnerable artists. I'd like to address a few points for your consideration.

Critique does not have to be brutal and abrasive to be effective. I really do not understand the mentality that a mean critique is somehow more effective. I feel just the opposite; an unnecessarily abrasive critique tends to instantly put the "critiquee" on the defensive, and the hurt feelings can prevent the critique from really being absorbed. It is possible to be just as honest and frank without ripping holes in the self-esteem.

Let's say you went to your hairstylist asking for advice on how you could improve your look. Would you want the feedback to start with, "Well, your current hairstyle is ugly and makes you look like a troll?" Of course not. It's not necessary.

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~ CALENDAR ~

MARCH

- 05 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 11 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 23 Newsletter items to Sheri
- 25 Program: Diane Miller and Tania Amochaev: HDR and tone-mapping; Elvira Lavell: PSA 7:00pm

APRIL

- 02 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 06 Board Meeting 7:00pm, LBA&G Center
- 08 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 22 Program: Black and White Salon, with Marty Knapp 7:00pm
- 24 Newsletter items to Sheri

MAY

- 07 Competition entries due 12:00m
- 13 Competition Meeting 7:00pm
- 21 Newsletter items to Sheri
- 27 Program: Clark Olmholt, Color Management 7:00pm

~ EXHIBITIONS AND ONGOING CALLS TO ARTISTS ~

EXHIBITIONS, ETC.

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

Here is an opportunity for you to participate in and experience competition in world-wide exhibitions. These Exhibitions are open to every photographer.

Depending on the individual exhibition, the categories are: Color Projected Images (digital and slides), Electronic Imaging, Nature (general and wildlife), Photo Travel, Photo Journalism, and Prints, and sometimes special categories and themes. Some exhibitions are EID only, some are slide only and some are dual projected competitions.

Each Exhibition has a closing date and an entry fee, and most produce a catalog of the accepted entries. Usually 25-30% of the entries are accepted and exhibited in their local areas. European Exhibitions are noted for producing beautiful color catalogs with award winning entries.

Most Exhibitions have printable entry forms available on www.exhibitionforms.com/. Personally, I have had successful entries in European Countries, India, United Kingdom, and Asia Exhibitions, to name a few.

The Photographic Society of America (PSA) supports only those International Exhibitions that conform to the standards of the PSA Society. These are listed in the back of the PSA Journal or on the PSA website (www.psa-photo.org/competitions).

Congratulations to Joe Simons, who has earned two PSA Stars in Color Projected Image Category and three PSA stars in Nature Division Exhibitions.

Note that PSA conducts only one Exhibition each year. This is held in August and the accepted images are exhibited at the annual PSA conference in September.

Check out www.psa-photo.org/competitions for more information.

You may also request more information from Elvira Lavell, EPSA, club PSA representative. (See SRPS roster for Elvira's contact information)

ONGOING CALLS TO ARTISTS

Santa Rosa Recreation and Parks

Department: Exhibits at Finley and Steele Lane Community Centers and City Hall. To apply, go to Finley Community Center, 2060 West College Avenue, Santa Rosa, to pick up an application. Community Center hours are Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 7:00 pm and on Saturday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm. For further information, call 707-543-4512; contact is Tara Matheny-Schuster, email tmatheny_schuster@srcity.org

The Atrium Gallery at Marin General Hospital mounts four shows a year of "healing art." The gallery is looking for local artists for future shows. Previous artists have included Ernest Braun. Send slides and SASE to Wende Heath, Institute for Health and Healing, PO Box 8010, San Rafael, CA 94912.

National Photography Exhibit

Transference of Light

DEADLINE: Friday 7 May 2010.

Exhibit: 2 July - 1 August

Location: Santa Cruz Art League, Santa Cruz, CA.

Juror: Brian Taylor. Juror will grant \$1000 in awards.

Up to three entries/\$40.

Prospectus: www.scal.org /or send SASE to SCAL, 526 Broadway, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Info: cindy@scal.org 831-426-5787

~ MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION ~

SPRS WEBSITE

<http://www.santarosaphotographicsociety.org/>

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION AND CORRECTIONS:

Contact Sheri Prager, Editor, The Positive Print

See SRPS roster for email address

~ PROGRAM MEETING ~

25 March 2010

The March 25th program will be presented by our own Diane Miller and Tania Amochaev. They will demonstrate HDR and Tone Mapping. They will have demo images and show us how those images were created.

After the break Elvira will have a short PSA program to share with us.

~ New Members ~

SHANTI KNAPP

BARBARA NEBEL

DIANA JEX

WELCOME!

FEBRUARY COMPETITION RESULTS

GENERAL

Level B

- 1st Fun at the beach Linda Thomas
- 2nd Sunset Over Penobscot Bay Joan Palmer
- 3rd River Otter with Fish Ken Hutchins

Level A

- 1st Walking the Sonoma Coast T J Mills
- 2nd mustard farm 2 Jim Oswald
- 3rd Cactus Flower IV Dick Weston

Level AA

- 1st Flying Wood Chips Drew Jackson
- 2nd Woman With Beads at Samye Monastery S Prager
- 3rd Clouds Over the Louvre Marilyn Caven

Level M

- 1st Lillies and the Bullfrog Marilyn Brooner
- 2nd Buddhist Pilgrim Deprung Monastery H Bruensteiner
- 3rd Fading Amaryllis Releasing Pollen Edmond Bridant

CREATIVE

Level B

- 1st Isanjo magic Terry Connelly
- 2nd Mystical Forest Phil Wright
- 3rd None awarded

Level A

- 1st Two for Lunch Robert Walker
- 2nd Rastus Lorna Peters
- 3rd None awarded

Level AA

- 1st Catastrophe - Magnitude 7.0 Marcia Hart
- 2nd Shell Beach Bluff Vista Marcia Hart
- 3rd None awarded

Level M

- 1st Global Warming Edmond Bridant
- 2nd Bishop Gold Marilyn Brooner
- 3rd None awarded

NATURE

Level B

- 1st The Sun setting on Half Dome Rodney Jonk
- 2nd Nuthatch foraging Anne Abrams
- 3rd None awarded

Level A

- 1st Snoozing Elephant Seal T J Mills
- 2nd Hygrophorus autoconica Adele Wikner
- 3rd None awarded

Level AA

- 1st Nesting Pelican Liz Lawson
- 2nd Sunrise Tufa Drew Jackson
- 3rd Egret Lifting Off Joe Simons

Level M

- 1st None awarded
- 2nd None awarded
- 3rd None awarded

2009 End of Year Winners AA—General

**"IN A TOUGH SPOT"
BY GARY SAKÉ**



MANY THANKS TO JANE BARON FOR JUDGING THE FEBRUARY COMPETITION.

~ FIELD TRIPS 2010 ~

**Saturday 27 March 2010
San Francisco**

NOTE: This field trip was originally scheduled in February but was cancelled due to rain.

Field Trip via ferry boat to San Francisco and Chinatown and North Beach. Ferry leaves at 11:40am from Larkspur and arrives in San Francisco at 12:30pm. Cost is about \$15.00 round trip (half price with senior discount). Parking is free for the day at Larkspur ferry terminal. Carpooling is encouraged.

Photo ops from ferry boat and of course all through the city and especially the back streets of Chinatown. Rain cancels.

Optional meet up for a meal in Chinatown or North Beach before getting to last ferry that leaves at 7pm from Embarcadero.

Wanda Lee
(see club roster for contact information)



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Critiques that include the word “can’t” are rarely valuable. I hear this a lot. *You can’t center your subjects. You can’t use high contrast. You can’t compose your shots like that. You can’t have that much DOF. Can’t, can’t, can’t.* This is art, folks. There are very few things that *can’t* be done successfully. An effective critique will not tell you what you can’t do; it will help you identify your tendencies so that YOU can decide how you would like to address those issues. A good critique-giver will help you understand why certain things generally work, and leave it to you to decide what is right for you.

The best critiques take into account your personal taste and what you are trying to accomplish. Critiques based solely on the preferences of the critic will only tell you how to make that person happy. It’s much more valuable for you to get feedback on how to achieve the results YOU want. I may personally prefer muted color, but if you love saturated color, my job is to help you do saturated color well.

A truly effective critique should help you identify opportunities for improvement and direction in your entire body of work — not just nit-picking little things in individual images. At the end of the critique, you should have a very clear idea of what you want to achieve and how to achieve it. And a really good critique will also help you understand what you do well, so you walk away feeling positive and motivated. It is at least as important to understand your strengths as it is to understand your weaknesses.

Critique should never be accepted blindly. You’ve heard me say it before. Just because someone said it doesn’t make it so. It’s up to you to listen to what is said, consider the point of view of the critic, and decide if and how you will act on it. Only you can truly understand your sense of beauty and what you want your work to say. Apply what it makes sense to apply. You should never have to worry about offending the critic; the critic who demands gratitude and obedience is (generally) just plain old insecure.



I'll break the rules if I want to, thank you.

Photo Tips o' the Day

- The surest way to become a photographic trend setter is to completely disregard all photographic trends.
- Do ONLY what you want to do. People who don't understand are not your target clientele / audience. So what?
- In your quest to create the best images you can, don't forget that sometimes it's the snapshots that mean the most.
- The only photos we can ever really regret are the ones we never make. Stop thinking about shooting, and shoot!

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- **Your photographic style should not be determined by fear of trying new things. “Scared” is not a style.**
- **Never apologize or make excuses for your work. We are rarely as good or bad as we think we are.**
- Work with your personality, not against it. It’s OK to be shy in your sessions. Learn to make it work for you.
- Shoot what intimidates you. Seek out the subjects/sessions that are hardest for you. That’s how we grow.
- **When in doubt, simplify.**
- There is only photographic rule that should never be broken: respect your subjects.
- You can either build your business by having a unique style – or by being the cheapest. Which sounds more fun?
- Don’t worry that you aren’t creative enough. Express yourself deeply and allow your work to be what it is.
- **Perfectionism and high standards are not the same thing. Perfectionism is ego with a dash of self-doubt.**
- Nobody but you can make your photographs. If you don’t do it, no one will, and those moments will be lost.
- A portrait session is a beautiful dance between photographer and subject; if either doesn’t participate, it’s just a recital.
- Photograph according to your own artistic compass, and gain the clients who value it. Never apologize for your style.
- **If at first you don’t succeed, you probably need a light meter.**
- You do not need the latest and greatest gear. It’s an expensive distraction. Learn to effectively use what you have.
- Know your technique so you can forget about it. Luck is nice, but a terrifying thing to rely on.
- A successful portrait is a side effect of a strong human connection. What are you giving for your subjects to respond to?
- Sharpness is overrated. There’s a place for a gentle, subtle print. Eyelashes do not have to look like weapons.
- Every time you photograph someone, you tell them, “You’re important enough to remember.” Make the most of it.
- There is perfection in imperfection. Don’t be afraid to show character and experience in your subject’s faces.
- Your technique should never upstage your subject. It should enhance the image, not take over.
- Photographers need to be photographed. It teaches us empathy for our subjects. It isn’t easy to be in front of the lens.
- **There is no such thing as bad light. There is only light that is used badly.**
- **It matters little how great your portraits are if your clients don’t have fun. The session should be its own reward.**
- A great portrait is a side effect of a strong human connection. Be a person first, a photographer second.
- It does not matter how good your post processing is if you start with a badly lit image! Good lighting is KEY.
- **Everything you need to know about lighting can be learned from your catchlights and shadows. You must know how to read them!**

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What Every Aspiring Photographer Should Know

These are my thoughts, nothing more and nothing less.

- Style is a voice, not a prop or an action. If you can buy it, borrow it, download it, or steal it, it is not a style. Don't look outward for your style; look inward.
- Know your stuff. Luck is a nice thing, but a terrifying thing to rely on. It's like money; you only have it when you don't need it.
- Never apologize for your own sense of beauty. Nobody can tell you what you should love. Do what you do brazenly and unapologetically. You cannot build your sense of aesthetics on a consensus.
- Say no. Say it often. It may be difficult, but you owe it to yourself and your clients. Turn down jobs that don't fit you, say no to overbooking yourself. You are no good to anyone when you're stressed and anxious.
- Learn to say "I'm a photographer" out loud with a straight face. If you can't say it and believe it, you can't expect anyone else to, either.
- You cannot specialize in everything.
- You don't have to go into business just because people tell you you should! And you don't have to be full time and making an executive income to be successful. If you decide you want to be in business, set your limits before you begin.
- Know your style before you hang out your shingle. If you don't, your clients will dictate your style to you. That makes you nothing more than a picture taker. Changing your style later will force you to start all over again, and that's tough.
- Accept critique, but don't apply it blindly. Just because someone said it does not make it so. Critiques are opinions, nothing more. Consider the advice, consider the perspective of the advice giver, consider your style and what you want to convey in your work. Implement only what makes sense to implement. That does not make you ungrateful, it makes you independent.
- Leave room for yourself to grow and evolve. It may seem like a good idea to call your business "Precious Chubby Tootsies"....but what happens when you decide you love to photograph seniors? Or boudoir?
- Remember that if your work looks like everyone else's, there's no reason for a client to book you instead of someone else. Unless you're cheaper. And nobody wants to be known as "the cheaper photographer".
- Gimmicks and merchandise will come and go, but honest photography is never outdated.
- It's easier to focus on buying that next piece of equipment than it is to accept that you should be able to create great work with what you've got. Buying stuff is a convenient and expensive distraction. You need a decent camera, a decent lens, and a light meter. Until you can use those tools consistently and masterfully, don't spend another dime. Spend money on equipment ONLY when you've outgrown your current equipment and you're being limited by it. There are no magic bullets.
- Learn that people photography is about people, not about photography. Great portraits are a side effect of a strong human connection.
- Never forget why you started taking pictures in the first place. Excellent technique is a great tool, but a terrible end product. The best thing your technique can do is not call attention to itself. Never let your technique upstage your subject.
- Never compare your journey with someone else's. It's a marathon with no finish line. Someone else may start out faster than you, may seem to progress more quickly than you, but every runner has his own pace. Your journey is your journey, not a competition. You will never "arrive". No one ever does.
- Embrace frustration. It pushes you to learn and grow, broadens your horizons, and lights a fire under you when your work has gone cold. Nothing is more dangerous to an artist than complacency.

(This article was found at <http://photodino.wordpress.com/?s=advice>)

~ FORUM FEATURE ~

C or G ?

18 February 2010

Marilyn Brooner

You can't ID this flower, but not a thing has been done to it... It would probably get thrown out of creative... and if it's not identifiable it shouldn't be in Gen. I have a lot of macro work and nowhere to enter it???? Would appreciate your thoughts.



Greg Gorsiski

But I know it's a flower. Maybe not what kind, but a flower is a flower.

Diane Miller

WOW! Love it!! You said if it's not identifiable it shouldn't be in G? It's identifiable as a flower even if you don't know what kind. Nothing is altered to the point of making it beyond observed reality. (Soft focus to this degree is still observed reality.) It's not abstract enough to be C. Definitely G. Definitely a winner. Let me know when you're going to enter it. I'll enter N that month.

Terry Connelly

One thing I love about your work Marilyn is that it always has such a softness. It also has just the right amount of sharpness though to make it perfection. I would say G also. Beautiful shot.

Marcia Hart

This is great, Marilyn! And, it sounds like there's a lot more where this one came from. One more vote for G. 'Dew Drop on Lotus Petal' or whatever. Sure seems like an identifiable subject to me. More!!!

Howard Bruensteiner

I completely agree that this could be entered in General. It's a flower and a water drop... no question about that. But looking back this is the kind of image that was commonly entered in whatever creative categories we used to have before Photoshop. It may not compete well with what can be created today but it would still be appropriate in our current Creative category.

Diane Miller

In slide days, yes, it might have been C, but with all the powers of the digital darkroom, C has gotten a lot more creative, and I think this image is a lot closer to G. C is altered reality these days.

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Jerry Meshulam

I think it could go in either category. If you look at the definition of C though, it certainly fits there:

Images acquired through **straightforward photography but which render a subject in a manner not usually perceived** or photographed may be included in the Creative category.

I agree though that with the current use of PS it would be more appropriate in G. As far as I know, we don't disqualify entries in G and C, only Nature.

Diane Miller

The question with this image, and many others, is to what degree they render the subject in a manner not usually perceived. Look for some clarification coming soon to help narrow the gray area a little. I think if you got close enough to this flower, maybe with reading glasses, you would perceive it just as the camera did.

Ken Hutchins Jr

I would have to say G; with a magnifying glass I can observe this.

Howard Bruensteiner

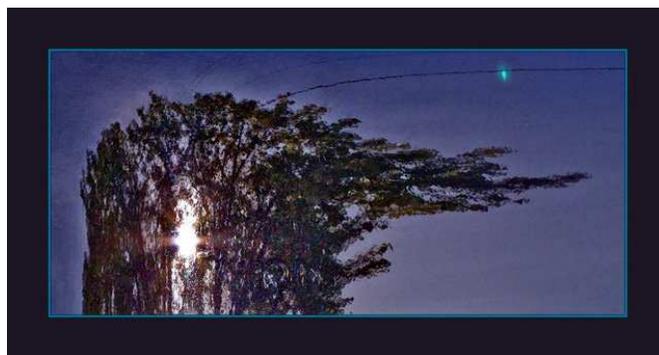
This whole idea that a photo of something we can see as is (even with a magnifying glass) does not belong in the Creative category is very unsettling to me... to the point of my seeing it as being Photoshop elitist. If that's what the club wants this category to be, then call it Photoshopped, or Photo Based Graphics, or Photo Painting, or Altered Reality as Diane mentions... but not Creative. Straight creative photos... those that do not use slow shutter speeds, or camera movement, or filters in front of the lens... have long been part of the art of photography. Excluding from a Creative category a truly creative work that is in reality a straight photo is just wrong.

I looked for some examples I could provide and found these from the 365 year. I'm not saying that any of these are prize winners, but EVERY one is a straight photo that would look the same if I took the camera down from my eyes... although with some I would need strong reading glasses. And I did employ the usual use of curves and levels and color correction in Photoshop... but not to the point of altering the reality the camera captured any more than a printer could adjust saturation and contrast in a wet darkroom.

So may I ask the same question? Are these C or G?



1: Taken looking through a window to a garden but the window also reflected the view out the picture window on the opposite side of the room behind me.



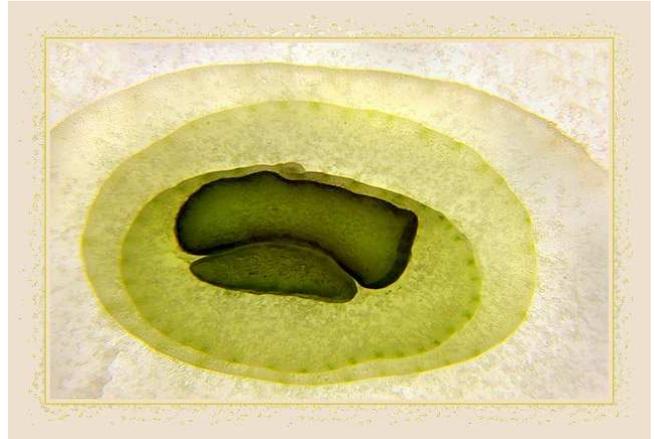
2: Trees reflected in the paint on a car in a curved body part.

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3: Palm fronds silhouetted in front of a window that was reflecting another window that was also reflecting the palm fronds. And somewhere in this light path there was a screen.



4: A slice of onion laying on the UV filter mounted on the front of the lens on the camera.



5: A pond reflection.



6: This is an apricot.



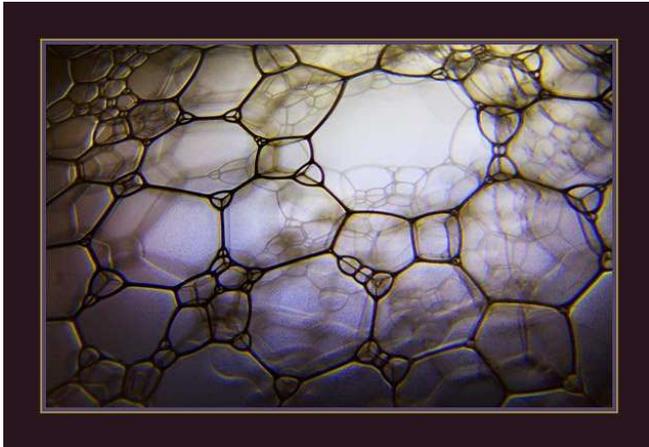
7: A reflection in a window in a business by the Sonoma County Airport of the corporate landscaping across the street.



8: A bevelled mirror on a wall in a room at the Super 8 in Ukiah reflecting a print on another wall.

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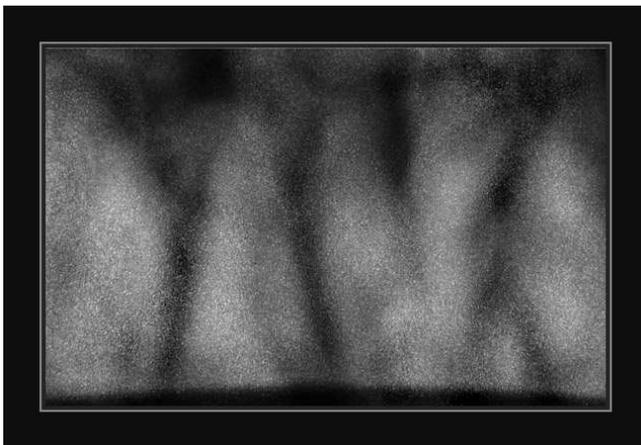
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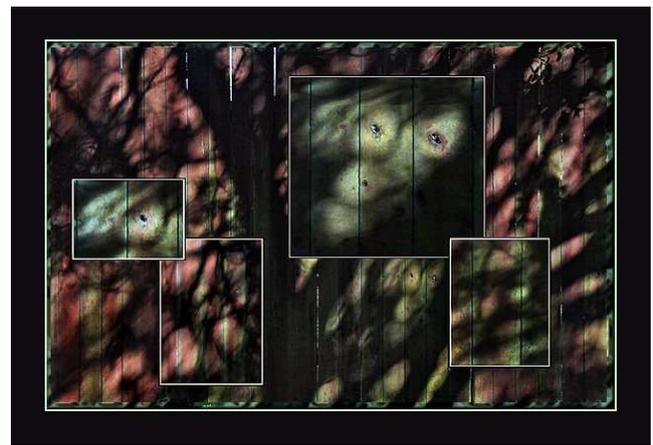
9: Dishwashing detergent bubbles laying on the UV filter mounted on the front of the lens on the camera.



10: The peak of a waterspout coming up in a fountain.



11: A reflection of something I can't remember in a car's paint job.



12: A picture of a fence with areas of the background picture duplicated, resized, framed, and then pasted on the original view.



13: A plastic insect on an aquarium decoration.



14: Rain running down a window. The OOF lights are on a Christmas tree indoors.

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15: Close up of a goose.

Diane Miller

For me, some lean more to C, some to G. I think it comes down to a gut reaction, not something you can easily describe, especially in guidelines. A straight shot that looks like it isn't straight -- I'd put it in C. There is a huge gray area, but there is always the consideration of how is a judge going to perceive it. The category rules contain some language that is more guideline than rule. We have found it makes judging easier and more fair if apples and baseballs are judged separately. But, like so much in life, for many images there aren't pat answers and there isn't a right and wrong.

Howard Bruensteiner

Diane, I don't disagree with your comment quoted above at all.... particularly the last sentence. What gets to me is when I read comments that indicate that an image HAS to be "Photoshopped" to qualify for the Creative category.

If I want to enter an image in Creative that hasn't been distorted by Photoshop, I think I should be free to do so. And if I haven't done a good enough job and can't compete with the fanciful creations submitted by other members I'll accept my lower score and that will police the category.

If you want only "paintings" then I would suggest you start another category or rename this one. But then those that enter in General will feel it's unfair if one of my "normal" photos as seen above is entered in their category.

Gary Saxe

Howard - I agree with you 100%.

Marilyn - I think you could go either way with this very nice image. After all it took a creative way to look at it in order to make the image.

In the many years that I have been in the club I have seen a lot of images that were made in a very creative way that came straight out of camera. If someone is not sure which category it goes in try it anyway and let the judge be the judge.

Diane Miller

Where is anyone reading or hearing that an in-camera creative effect HAS to go in G? That's not a rhetorical question -- show me and I'll try to get it fixed.

A committee has been very busy making further clarifications to the rules and they will be posted soon. Nothing has changed any intent, but some confusing and possibly misleading language has been cleaned up.

There has also been some mis-interpretation of the degree to which silhouettes are not allowed in N. That has been clarified. The intent always was to follow the PSA rules for N, but the rewording of the PSA language that was done many years back may have been misleading. We hope it is now fixed.

Drew Jackson

Not enough has been said about how hard you have worked to make the rules clear. Kudos to you for doing so much work behind the scenes. I vote to double your pay.

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Diane Miller

Thanks, Drew, but a group of people have been involved: Off the top of my head I think of Marcia, Phil Hann, TJ, Jerry, Janet and Kay, with valuable input from Alan and Elvira. And Greg has made many valuable points in discussions here on the forum to help clarify thinking about the categories. I'm sure I have left some people out -- I apologize for faulty memory. Everyone who has expressed an opinion or raised a complaint has contributed in some way.

Cleaning up the rules has been like pruning a badly overgrown tree. The more things you clean up the more you see that needs to be cleaned up. It has been a process. Probably never will be completely finished.

Terry Connelly

Your photos Howard certainly make this conversation more concrete. What I found as I looked through these was that the question that came up for me when I felt a photo was more creative was "How did he do that?" I hate it when a judge asks that, but.....there you are. For me, most of these did fall into creative with these exceptions: 6, the curves that must be someone's rear end. Not a lot of mystery here as to what it is. 10, Very lovely rain, but it is rain. Got a little trickier for me at this point, 13, the bug. My feeling is, if the bug were PS into another photo C but if it is indeed a bug on a miniature Greek temple then it would be a G for me. From what you said it then would be a G. The last one is very cool and though I could see it as a C, personally I would put it in G because it didn't make me ask the "How did he do that." Unless there is a filter that gives it that cool texture that I am not aware of. If you hadn't made your initial statement I may have chosen C.

Conclusion, haven't got one! But for me it seems very dependent on the piece itself. I think you have made a terribly important point here though, one that has increased my understanding, and that is that "Creative is about more than just a paint program or PS". Creative can and does happen in camera as well. For what it's worth what just flew through my mind was "with manipulation." It seems to me that what I saw in the photos I felt were C was that there was some degree of camera manipulation. I am just learning so much of this all though so I could be completely off base on that?

Marilyn, thanks for asking this question. Too bad more people don't do forum to learn from the information here. Maybe Positive Print can bring it to a larger audience.

Howard Bruensteiner

I've added captions to all of the images I offered as examples above. Reflections are the most common explanation for the other than perceived reality of these images, but there were other ways the camera captured the non reflected scenes.

Terry Connelly wrote:

What I found as I looked through these was that the question that came up for me when I felt a photo was more creative was " How did he do that?" I hate it when a judge asks that, but.....there you are. For me, most of these did fall into creative with these exceptions: 6, the curves that must be someone's rear end. Not a lot of mystery here as to what it is.

No, #6 is an apricot.

Terry Connelly wrote:

10, Very lovely rain, but it is rain.

No, it's a fountain spout.

Terry Connelly wrote:

The last one is very cool and though I could see it as a C, personally I would put it in G because it didn't make me ask the "How did he do that." Unless there is a filter that gives it that cool texture that I am not aware of. If you hadn't made your initial statement I may have chosen C.

Actually I lied. The goose's eye did have a Photoshop filter effect applied. But this is very recognizable and not really very creative. So should it be allowed in General even when a filter effect has been applied?

Terry Connelly wrote:

For what it's worth what just flew through my mind was "with manipulation." It seems to me that what I saw in the photo's I felt were C was that there was some degree of camera manipulation. I am just learning so much of this all though so I could be completely off base on that?

But in all of these images there was NO camera manipulation beyond an extension ring for closer focus... except perhaps the fast shutter speed stopping the water drops coming up from the fountain in #10. If slow shutter speed can be thought of as altering reality as seen by the human eye, then a stop action fast shutter will also capture that which our eyes cannot see.

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Terry Connelly

Oops! Good thing I already know half the time I don't know what I am talking about. And I felt so smug too!

6. There is no other word for this, in my mind, other than creative. Really, really like this photo so much. Not only for all the obvious artistic reasons but because it challenges our perceptions, which to my way of thinking is one of arts main objectives. It made me think! I still came to the decision that I would place it in G.

10. Clever, but it's still water to my mind.

The goose.....good question. To my mind it still could be either.

What you have presented here is very, very thought provoking Howard. It has opened my eyes to just how challenging this dilemma is. Thank you.

Diane Miller

Bottom line: C vs. G will often be a very subjective decision, and we've seen in other posts that there are a variety of opinions on any given image, and that sometimes the opinions change on further thought. The rules contain guidelines to try to help people keep apples and baseballs in separate baskets for the sake of better judging. These guidelines are being further clarified (we hope) and will be posted soon.

The forum is a great place to get other opinions when the maker can't decide. It will never be as simple as a straw vote, but the comments can help clarify your thinking.

Howard Bruensteiner

Terry Connelly wrote:

10. Clever, but it's still water to my mind.

Yes, but it is portrayed in a way that our human eyes can never see it. It's rendered in "in a manner not usually perceived", as the phrase in the rules that Jerry quotes states. I don't think it's all that creative either but it does satisfy this part of the concept of the category as the rules definition states. This is really the same as a blurry long exposure water image. Should a blurry waterfall be entered in Creative? I would say yes, but I would score it low.

Lets look at this even further. The rules also have this statement: The final image should be substantially different from the original image.

That statement disqualifies ALL of the image examples I offered above except perhaps #12. And it contradicts the rules statement Jerry quoted: Images acquired through straightforward photography but which render a subject in a manner not usually perceived or photographed may be included in the Creative category.

Diane Miller

The sentence "The final image should be substantially different from the original image" has been removed from the C definition in the rules revision now being worked on. It was a contradiction and should have been caught a year ago when we simplified the rules. There has been way too much pruning necessary to catch everything in one pass.

I don't think the macro shot above is that different from what anyone could see with strong glasses. Yes, it is more magnified than we usually see. But substantially the same. Blurred water, if the rest of a landscape is presented without distortion, doesn't go very far beyond reality. Camera motion blur would be different because it is blurring the whole image. Maybe we need to tweak words a little more. But guidelines can only be set to a degree.

Ken Hutchins Jr

Howard, you bring up some excellent points and I'm glad of this discussion. So is it the creative artistic of the subject presented (in camera) or the creativity applied to the photo afterward?

What is the "spirit" of the Creative Category?

I'm going to be clumsy with my words but are we going to reward (and encourage) Photoshop expertise for the creative category or the creative aspects of the photo itself? Some "Creative" shots have now become everyday (waterfalls) and maybe belong in G.

Creativity for creative sake? Low points. Creativity to create, tell or enhance the story, High points!

Howard, Diane, Jerry, and all, I really value your thoughts on this subject. It's not clear cut as I originally thought.

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Marcia Hart

What is the "spirit" of the Creative Category?

And, then there are the judges who put their own spin on it. More than one states with regularity that they want to 'feel some emotion' - either positive or negative - when they view a C image.

Howard Bruensteiner

About in-camera vs. "darkroom" editing... I don't think anyone ever said it should or needs to be either. A photographer's personal style may gravitate toward one or the other, and they may speak more in terms of their preference when they discuss their images, but often both methods are employed.

Soft focus flowers like the image Marilyn started this thread with used to be common in Creative, although most did not have an identifiable element like the water droplet. But blurred waterfalls never were common in the Creative category. They went in General. To me the degree to which blurred water dominates and abstracts an image would be how I decide where to place an image like that. If only the water with an abstracted reflection or pattern was shown without an in focus leaf or rock I'd most likely decide on Creative.

I like your way of looking at how to score a Creative image. It's real easy to take a nice picture and give it a Creative look. But when the creative effect fits in with and enhances the subject, that's special.

Marcia Hart wrote:

And, then there are the judges who put their own spin on it. More than one states with regularity that they want to 'feel some emotion' - either positive or negative - when they view a C image.

Seems to me that this criteria is a good one. But I would think that it should apply to all images... Creative, General, and even in Nature where emotional content could carry an image well beyond strict documentation..