

"EVALUATION – SELF AND PEER APPRAISAL OF IMAGES"

This tutorial is based on original material prepared by Des Crawley, with additional notes prepared by Jim Crew and Michael Smyth. this brief tutorial is intended to introduce the photographer to the criteria used by image evaluators to assess the value of images being reviewed. All materials Copyright.

INTRODUCTION

The process of self and/or peer evaluation of photographs is a valuable way to assist the photographer during the image making process as it will help them think about their image in a number of different ways. The most important aspect of all image making is having a clear idea, message or concept you wish to convey to others. This idea or concept is what you will be assessing your processed image against and is the most important aspect of your image making. Without a clear purpose or idea, your images will be weak and lacking in purpose.

These criteria are also used by peers, associates and the general public in looking at our images. You should understand that the non photographers amongst our friends and family generally have no idea about image making. Most people think we are merely recording machines and they will have no concept of creative image making. Some uninformed people call the process of image processing and enhancement "cheating" with our images because what we present for critique bears little or no resemblance to "Reality".

Most non photographers fail to realise that photography is about the exchange of ideas, emotions messages and can also have political and social implications. Photography is all about visual communication, not reality. Photographs cannot and never have been "real" in any objective sense.

Documentary photography is about more or less objectively trying to record events or places with little or no interpretation. Images used in legal or scientific endeavours should be as objective as possible, however for the vast majority of photography, realism or objectivity has little or no place.

Guidelines for Evaluation – self and peer.

All evaluation should be done in consideration of our five pillars of art photography.

1. Conceptualisation
2. Capture
3. Process and enhancement
4. Evaluation
5. Output

Evaluation Criteria

The Criteria set out below form the basis of all image evaluation. Read and think about how these criteria apply to your images. We hope you find it useful.

Ideation

When appraising the resultant image the appraiser should be able to see the ideation that spawned the image and gave a reason for its creation.

Creativity

The principal concept of creativity answers the question - are we creating photographic art or just recording what we see?

Aesthetics

If there is no attraction for the viewers they will not look and the message will be lost. Aesthetics is what urges the viewer to stop, look and communicate.

Image Quality

We assess image quality in regard to whether matters such as sharpness, tonal control and colour purity reinforce the purpose of the image. Image quality always needs to be sufficient to convey the message without confusion.

Presentation

Presentation is the effectiveness of the craft used to enhance the display of the image. Matters of mounting, matting, spotting, labelling, nomenclature, spacing, panel relationships are assessed under this appraisal factor.

Communication

The prime purpose of a photograph is to convey a communication from the photographer to the viewer. A photograph that does not communicate has no reason to exist.

Evocation

Evocation refers not simply to eliciting a response from the viewer but also the scope and nature of that response.

Image effectiveness

In terms of image effectiveness we need to appraise factors such as the choice between monochrome and colour, high or low key, landscape or portrait and picture shape.

Influences

Can we see in the image evidence of influences drawn from our visual heritage? These influences when present must be respectful of the traditions and conventions of photography but never at the expense of innovation.

Completion

Does the image present in a form or style that suggests some features remain unresolved or incomplete? Is there scope for change, for improvement, for modification, advancement or growth? Images like many other art forms evolve.

Application

Is there evidence of a work ethic, some commitment to excellence, some indication as to the personal attributes of the photographer. Issues of substance, of style, a personal philosophy might be relevant.

Autonomy

Does the image convey a sense that it can stand alone? That it does not require elaboration, explanation, some level of supplementation or additional input in order to communicate.

Purpose

In reality, with modern photographic equipment, processes and techniques all photographs should be successful. The key to how successful depends only on how well the picture fulfils its purpose.

Having considered the above criteria as they apply to your images, you may find that you now have a clearer idea of how well your images are working, plus you may have an idea of whether your images need more work before they are completed.