

# THE GRAND RAPIDS CAMERA CLUB JUDGING GUIDELINES

## A. SCORING CRITERIA

Judges may score from 6 - 15

15) A judge's highest score. A fifteen is an image of highest quality in all technical and compositional respects, with impact. Impact is exhibited when a photograph is striking and has an *immediate* and *strong* effect on those viewing it.

14) The image is better than the previous score of 13, however not quite a 15.

13) The image is better than a score of 12 (above average)

12) An above average image. The image is excellently lighted and superbly composed with no noticeable technical flaws in such things as focus, color, slanted horizons, distracting backgrounds or empty foregrounds. All elements of the image work together.

11) The image is better than the previous score of 10, however not quite a 12.

10) The image is better than a score of 9 (average).

9) An average image. This image is properly exposed, correctly focused and has good composition. It is acceptable, but does not generate any special interest or stir emotions. Technical flaws are not immediately obvious.

8) Some technical flaws are apparent in the image.

7) The image is better than a score of 6 although still shows significant technical flaws.

6) A well below average image. This image exhibits several technical flaws in such areas as exposure, focus and composition.

99) Judges will score a 99 if they feel the image does not meet the category criteria for judging. The score keeper will then call for a discussion. A re-vote will require at least two judges voting nine to disqualify the image. If an image is disqualified, it may be re-entered at a future competition in the appropriate category.

0) A judge shall vote 0 if the image is their own or that of an immediate family member. The other two judge's scores will then be averaged to determine the point value to be assigned to the image.

If any of the judges scores are out of range, (*over the high score of 15 or under the low score of 6*), the scorer will ask that the image be re-evaluated and the resulting score will replace the original.

Scoring is used to separate competition entries into groups of similar quality, thus allowing honors to be given, and standings to be defined. The judging process however is more than just scoring for honors. It provides a maker with feedback as to how successfully he or she may 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 our judge's perspective on the image at that particular time.

## **B. CATEGORIES**

**ASSIGNED:** The Grand Rapids Camera Club board members select a subject for each month of the competition year as the "assigned" subject. The assigned category is designed to challenge a member's photographic skills and to encourage them to photograph images that they may not have normally. A member should be rewarded for a fresh and creative approach to the assigned subject. As a judge, that should be your 1<sup>st</sup> consideration. Remember that the subject must be the dominant feature. Next a judge shall evaluate the quality of the image as indicated in our scoring criteria. An image that shows the assigned subject as the primary subject of the image, is done creatively, and is above average with no technical flaws should receive a high score. On the contrary, a member should NOT be given a high score regardless of the quality of the image, if it doesn't fit the assigned category. All possible digital manipulations are permitted unless the assigned subject specifically calls for the image to be captured and submitted as a nature or photojournalism image within the assigned category.

**CREATIVE:** The creative category is for manipulated and enhanced images and those where the maker's creativity comes into view in the final image. Images entered should be unique and different, perhaps out of the ordinary. A photographer's creativity can either be in how the photo is taken or that the final image is created using Photoshop or other image editing software. In the Creative Category a judge's main criteria for scoring is in how well the photographer shows his creativeness and skill in the final image. If the image is entered in the creative category, but does not illustrate anything particularly creative, a judge shall give it a lower score even if it is a great image in its own right. This category is meant to be scored 1<sup>st</sup> and foremost on its creativity.

**OPEN:** All images, regardless of the subject matter or technique are eligible in the Open category. All digital enhancements and manipulations are permitted in this category. A judge shall evaluate the quality based on proper composition, exposure, and sharpness of the image as indicated in our scoring criteria.

**MONOCHROME:** As with Open, all images are eligible in the Monochrome category. Monochrome is defined as black and white or varying tones of only *one* color. A judge should look for proper composition, exposure, and sharpness without technical flaws. In addition it should display good tonal range within the image.

**NATURE:** Any image that is presented in a manner that does NOT depict the influence of human habitation (the hand of man). This category includes such subjects as botany, zoology, geology, etc. The addition of an element that portrays the subject's natural habitat is acceptable. Examples would include a shore bird on a piling, robin in a lawn, or

a barn swallow in a barn. Subjects that do NOT qualify include domestic animals, horticultural varieties of plants or hybrid plants. This definition does not limit nature photography to wildlife subjects. Landscapes and shots taken at the zoo or nature centers are also acceptable, keeping in mind that they shall not show the hand of man. Landscapes can now also be entered in the “Scapes” category. Either is acceptable. Computer manipulation and enhancement of images in the Nature category is allowed, however the use of such shall not call into question the integrity of the image. If a member enters an image in the Nature category representing something that is not normally present in nature or where the image is visibly manipulated, a judge shall vote a nine (9) to generate a discussion. Extremely oversaturated and overworked images are not normal in nature and should also generate a discussion among the judges. It is a judge’s responsibility to make decisions to disqualify an image in question fairly and without prejudice. If in doubt, the image should be scored as presented. A judge should look for proper composition, exposure, and sharpness without technical flaws.

**PHOTOJOURNALISM:** This type of picture or series of pictures tells or illustrates a story, such as those used in the news media and periodicals. This includes subject matter such as spot news, contemporary life, human interest, sporting events, documentaries etc. A member can enter from one to 4 images. If entering one image it must stand alone and tell the story in its own right. When entering a series of images, the story should be presented in chronological order. A judge’s 1<sup>st</sup> consideration should be in how well its story is presented to its viewers. If the entry does not tell a story as it’s presented it should be given a lower score. An image or series of images that tells a great story and is a good technically should be rewarded with a great score. Any technique or digital manipulation that tends to deprive the picture of its spontaneity should be avoided.

**PORTRAITURE:** This category is for *human* portraiture. Any photograph of a male or female, regardless of age, could be considered. Although it would usually be a head and shoulders or an above the waist photograph, the entire human form can be included. The definition of portrait in the dictionary is “an image of a person in which the face and its expression are predominant.” Both portraits taken in a studio and outdoor environmental portraits are welcomed. When judging a portrait, a judge shall look for pleasing skin tones, good lighting, sharpness, composition, background and how the subject is posed. At times a portrait is presented as soft focus by the photographer and shall be judged as such. Studio portraits and some environmental portraits will show a “catchlight” in the eye when done properly.

**SCAPES:** A landscape is defined as a wide or extensive view of a scene or scenery. It refers to all the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of aesthetic appeal. Many landscapes show little or no human activity, instead featuring subjects such as strongly defined landforms, weather, and ambient light. As with most forms of art, the definition is broad, and may include urban settings (cityscapes), seascapes or waterscapes. It is about the overall view, a place, not an object, person or animal, although they can be present in the image. It becomes something else when the dominant part of the image is the object rather than the scenery. Scapes should be judged based on the overall quality of the image and how well it fits the category.

## C. DIVISIONS

**DIGITAL:** Entries should have impact, a strong center of interest and a background that does not distract from the main subject. Not all are going to have all the desired qualities of perfect technique and composition. Proper exposure is critical. Detail should be seen in both shadow and highlight areas unless it is evident that the photographer's intent is to the contrary. Examples would be soft focus or low and high key images. Since complete control is possible with digital images, consider the following additional points:

- Although digital images are not matted and mounted, if a matt or decorative or artistic border is included in the image, that treatment should also be considered when scoring the image. Decorative borders and artistic touches are not acceptable in the Nature category.
- Post-capture enhancements and manipulation must also be considered when scoring digital images. They should be done carefully. The skill in using them should be considered in scoring the image. These treatments should not distract or detract from the image itself.

**PRINTS:** Remember that only the very best of images should be made into prints. The same guidelines that apply to digital should be applied to prints with the following additional considerations:

- In black and white prints, look for shadow detail.
- In color prints, look for detail in highlight areas, unless it is evident that the photographer's intent is to the contrary. Examples would be soft focus or low and high key images.

## A SYNOPSIS FOR JUDGES

*A Judge should . . . . .*

- Be open to freshness and new vision, and not assume that the only successful competition images are those which fit a certain time honored mold. He or she 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.
- Be consistent, decisive, upbeat and positive.
- Be willing to reward both freshness and creativity along with technical excellence.
- Be receptive to all images. Strive to remove personal bias and not unduly favor or penalize images based upon their subject matter, the difficulty of the shot, or knowledge of the maker.
- Apply scores consistently so that all images given a certain score can be expected to be of comparable quality. He/she should not succumb to the temptation of changing his/her standards midstream. No matter whether individual judges' scores as a whole are perceived by the audience and "high" or "low" the consistency is perceived as fairness.

- Use the entire scoring scale effectively to differentiate images.
- Be sensitive to a maker's feelings but the judge must still be honest. 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 deflation of another maker whose work truly deserved the higher score. That maker 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, but honest appraisals. An image should be scored a 2 if it exhibits technical flaws, such as obvious over or under exposure, is out of focus or shows very poor composition.