

The Accidental Judge

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Agenda

- About Me
- The Job of Judging
- The impact of new tech on judging

A Bit About Me

Back History



I've been interested in photography from a very young age. My father had a Reprographics company and was always bring home the latest gadgets. I particularly remember his excitement about the latest Polaroid cameras and Golf Ball typewriters, so I guess it's in my blood.

Very recently I discovered that he was responsible for the addition of photos on Property Particulars in the late '60's. We were living in the East End of London, and my parents wanted to move to a more rural location, dad found a house and showed mum the blind details.

He developed a half-tone camera (images made up of dots) by combining Polaroid parts with other camera parts and sold them by the thousands to Estate Agents across the South East and London.

Apparently Hamptons were the first Estate Agents in the country to go colour, which was a very expensive 4 plate process.

Very Early Days



I was given my very first “proper” camera when I was about 11 a Voightlander which seemed incredibly complicated and I struggled with the numerical aspect of a manual camera and focusing! I dabbled in photography for many years, attracted as much to light and shade then as I am now but I was always looking for something new or a different angle. At least my composition seems to have been reasonable at this tender age even if the technique was a bit lacking.

Loose Connection



In the 80's I modelled a little for my brother who was lucky enough to be able to take Photography as an 'O' Level at school – I was very jealous!

I modelled too for Photography Students at College for where my best friend and I thought it would be quite fun to study Beauty Therapy! Could have been Interior Design or Photography but no I chose Beauty therapy. The course was great having beauty treatments under fluffy pink blankets for 2 years but it wasn't for me and I quickly moved on to study Photographic and Catwalk Make-Up in Holborn. While trying to break in to this industry I met a whole host of very unpleasant people and photographers and so I was put off the whole idea of photography, it was way too cutthroat for me.....so I became an Estate Agent!!! Closely followed by Car Salesman!!

Fast Forward



Fast forward to 2004 – I'm married with a 7 year old and a 4 year old and looking for something to do to give me a break from talking kids all day long.

I'm also taking a lot of photos, all of them.

A neighbour introduces me to EHHPS where I quickly settle in.

20's



A Judges Journey

Frustration

The Judges Course

The Accidental Judge

A couple of years in at EHHPS and I'm starting to get increasingly frustrated by what I considered to be a lack of vision and creativity from many of the judges we were inviting, I thought that their fixation on rules was stifling the creativity of some members, including myself.

If it didn't tick the "rules" box it was swiftly dismissed. Butterflies, Birds and Damsel Flies were the only images getting the highest scores which was starting to get a little tedious.

Then a like minded club friend Mary Ward said she was going to go on the judges course and why didn't I go too, it would be fun, she said. I thought it might be an idea to go and see if I could find out more about what makes judges tick and some insider info and insight.

So I went, and had a completely terrifying weekend in a classroom with Stan McCartin, Peter Jackman and Peter Prosser. After going through a ton of flip charts we had to stand up in front of the class and the judges and critique several prints that were stacked up around the room, we were then told they were the judges own images!!

No pressure!

Shaky, fidgety, nervous sweat so I stuffed my hands inside my jeans back pockets and hoped for the best and that they wouldn't see me shaking. – and I still find it tough to face the audience today.

At the end of the whole process they announced who had made it through as judges, me and Craig Bellis from Field End. Oh my God, I was a judge!!! How did that happen? Stan became my go to person and mentor, he was a delight and I could talk to him about

anything.

The Job of Judging

- Being A Judge
- Nerve Wracking and Rewarding
- Timing Is Key
- Keep It Light Hearted
- What's Good? / What's The Story?
- Assess and Advise
- Stay Broad Minded and Not Subjective
- Only Ever Judge Against The Images On The Night

I still struggle to face the audience.

Timing Is Key, too fast and members will feel cheated/unsatisfied with critique, too slow and they'll nod off! I always say to organisers, please speed me up if I'm waffling, they are more aware of the time usually than you are.

Keep it light hearted, a little humour goes a long way but never be rude or offensive.

There is usually something good in every image and every image tells a story to me, so even though you are telling the audience what they can see I are trying to make them see it the way I do, which may be a slightly different interpretation. Pick out POI And areas which work and why, point out possible improvements, where an image can be further strengthened and areas that don't work and don't add anything and so by removing altogether can make a picture stronger (white skies)

might work better if...
Cropped (especially edges)
Removal of unnecessary clutter
Addition of focal point
Rendered B&W
More/less saturation
Depth Of Field
Composition
Focus

Stay Broad Minded always, If presented with something new, embrace it, applaud the author for their bravery/creativity/thinking outside the box. Never quosh creativity even

if its not for you.

Its fine to say, I've seen this kind of/this view before but you cannot judge against it, only what is in front of you. Determine the highest scorers 20"s ASAP and mark against them.

What Judges Are Looking For

WOW FACTOR, LINGER LONGER, DYNAMIC,
POWERFUL, STORYTELLING, SERENE, CLASSY,
SASSY, ATTITUDE, ACCURATE, ARTISTIC,
QUESTIONING, INTRIGUING, BALANCE,
HARMONY, EMOTIVE, DOES IT
WORK?.....DON'T FORGET ABOUT
PRESENTATION

COMPOSITION

Format (Square, Portrait, Landscape)



Composition is the starting point of any image, how subject matter is shown and placed within given parameters.

Is the format appropriate for the image, which one makes the most of an image? For example a landscape images doesn't have to be in Landscape format.

Is it a creative viewpoint or just taken from standing height? Does this matter? Could a different angle improve the image?

Is it cluttered? Would it benefit from items removed or a whole section removed.

COMPOSITION

Leading Lines



If the image is architectural getting the right angle can make a huge difference. Are there leading lines to draw you in? Is there something at the end to get to? If not the image can become frustrating.

Do they have anchor points to any of the four corners? Is there symmetry or balance? Are the verticals straight and the horizontals level? Have the rule of thirds been applied?

Architectural images generally need to be crisp and sharp and often work very well in black and white, especially if the colour palette is already limited.

Is the depth of field used appropriate? Is there depth to the image? Is it sharp front to back? Does it need to be?

Foreground/midground/background point of interest. Short depth of field?

COMPOSITION

- Negative Space



Paloma and Kaloni by John Clare, EHPS



HSL102 by Peter Silver, Buckingham

Negative space can be both powerful and important.

Crop of horse and use of negative space above to emphasise colour and give a sense of scale, informing with little or no information. Creative and contemporary.

Travelling boat/bird/aircraft/ generally good if they have space to move into. The faster the object is the more space it needs? How does the boat look if it's on the left edge?

COMPOSITION



Personally I think this is still a great shot, edgy tension. There seems to me to be more of a sense of urgency and speed.

COMPOSITION



Benjamin Graham UK Landscape Photographer of The Year 2017

Most judges would say a horizon level needs to be on a third. Yes it does work and nicely

COMPOSITION



Benjamin Graham, UK Landscape Photographer of the year 2017

Bifocated Horizons

Ben would say it's not where the horizon lies it's all about balance and colour, shape and form

COLOUR



Natural Desaturated Over saturated Colour Toned Colour Popped Black and White
Sepia

Does it work? Could it be stronger if altered?

Is the white balance correct? Does it look overly warm or too cool?

THE USE OF COLOUR

Wind Power by Felicity Holden, Amersham



His Aqua Dream by Debbie Ram, Watford



Auburn Glow by Dennis Durack, EHHPS



Red Burst by Kristin Mason, EHHPS

These images show a strong use of colour and saturation without being over saturated, the colours retain a certain amount of realism

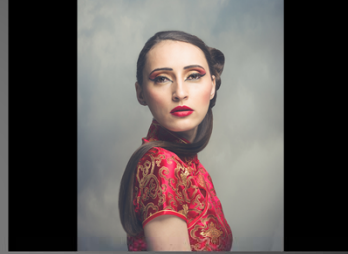
THE USE OF COLOUR



Missy by Karen Helle, EHHPS



The Sweet Shop by Jeff Haynes, Field End



Byzantine Beauty by Shaun hodge EHHPS



Last Light by Ray Higgingbottom, Gerrards Cross

TECHNIQUE

- Focus
- Soft Focus
- Exposure
- Shutter Speed
- ISO
- Depth of Field

Focus

Eyes Buildings

Soft Focus Creative effect, has it worked? ICM

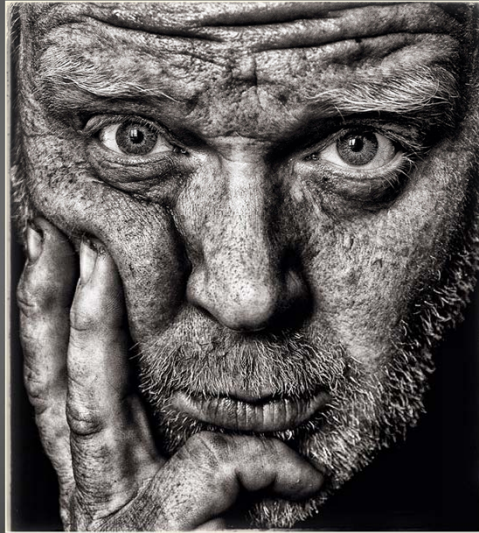
Exposure Under of over again creative High Key/Contrasty

Shutter Speed to freeze fast moving objects or creative blur effects (milky water)

Iso Is the correct for light conditions? Is the image grainy? If so is it appropriate for the image? Creative

Depth of Field shallow Allows a point of focus to stand away from the background or if a landscape allows everything to be sharp

FOCUS



Eye Contact by Craig Poltock, Field End

If the image has eyes be it human or otherwise, even if nothing else is sharp the eyes absolutely must be. Eyes are the first part of a face that we are drawn to.

SOFT FOCUS



Ivory by Chris Andrews, Imagez

Depth of Field

MOTION BLUR



Flamenco by Dennis Durack, EHPS

Motion Blur, shutter speed has been sufficient to freeze the details in the face and feet but slow enough to allow the swirling fabric to give a sense of motion

ICM (Intentional Camera Movement)



ICM seems to be having a resurgence lately. It's been around for decades and was particularly prevalent mid century and even earlier, these two black and white images were taken by Arthur Siegel in 1940

EXPOSURE

- Over Exposed
- Under Exposed
- ISO

If the F Stop is too high Overblown Highlights where detail is lost in the bright areas.

Can be used to creative effect High Key

Under Exposed where dark areas have turned blocky with no detail in the shadows

Silhouette

The higher the ISO the more grainy effect. A higher ISO is required in dark conditions, tripod will allow a higher ISO and slower shutter speed to allow more light in

Grainy images can be used for creative effect and again were popular mid century

Generally works better in black and white, colour grain = noise

Rules

- Guide only
- Supporting structure for the basics
- Not a checklist
- Vary according to genre
- Understanding

So the rules in photography, pretty much are much the same as they are in art and indeed film. There are many but they should not be treated as mandatory a check list to be conformed to and they vary according to genre.

Abstracts, Natural History, Reportage/Street Photography

Breaking The Rules

- FOR EVERY RULE THERE IS A PHOTO THAT BRAKES THEM AND STILL WORKS!
- DON'T GET HUNG UP ON RULES

Future – Phones And Drones

- Changes in camera technology
- The speed of these changes
- iPhones and Go Pro's
- Manipulation
- Apps
- Drones

Cameras are getting increasingly smaller, Mega pixels constantly increasing and now everyone has a camera in their pocket, on their phone. This is changing the way we see and record the world, photography has never been easier and anyone can take a photo but you still need to have a creative eye and produce images that incorporate all this.

Images were always manipulated in the darkroom, digital intervention has speeded up the process and made it cheaper and accessible to all. Photoshop, Lightroom, Apps, filters.

Drones are now allowing us to see the world as a helicopter would previously and they too are getting smaller.

Drone Photography



Sea Sand and Shadows by John Clare, EHPS

These two images were taken by John Clare on a recent trip to Portugal by a Mavic Pro 2 Drone which has a Haselblad camera and retails for about £1300 the cost of a good lens! It is fully controllable both the drone and the camera via an App on a mobile phone. The top image was The Daily Telegraph's The Big Picture Winner this week!

Judging this new movement in photography has to move on as quickly as the technology is changing. Photography is not simply a case of ticking off a list of requirements it is about mood, emotion, shape, form, colour and balance.