

Guidelines for Judges

Summary

Monthly competitions are grouped into four categories – Pictorial/Open, Creative/ Altered Reality, Nature, and Themed. Each Category and Class (B, A and AA) shall be judged separately.

Judges in our regular monthly competitions are asked to provide no more than 30 seconds of constructive criticism. Judges should score each image on its own merits against only the other images in the same class and competition. The main objective is to provide the photographer with some concrete ideas about how the image could be improved. It is preferable to say “the photographer might have considered this or that,” as opposed to “I would have done this or that.”

Scoring

Five factors should be considered in arriving at the score for each image:

- Impact: Interest, emotion, immediacy, drama, appeal
- Originality: Creativity, style, unusual perspective, uniqueness
- Technical quality: Focus, depth-of-field, exposure, framing, lighting, contrast, shadows, highlights, detail, use of color – white balance, hue, saturation
- Composition: Storytelling, center of interest, leading lines, curves, use of color, lack of distracting elements, simplicity
- Relationship to theme: Only for competitions with assigned topics

In scoring an image, judges should not rely on their personal likes or dislikes for any particular subject or photographic technique. Points should not be deducted simply because the image depicts a subject that is frequently photographed.

While the full range of scores is 0 to 30, each image should receive a point score between 18 and 30.

Ideally, the scores for each Class and in each category should be distributed across a broad range from the highest to the lowest as opposed to a narrow range (e.g., all 23-26 or 27-30). There is no required scoring curve that must be followed, but consistency in scoring is essential.

Scoring Ranges

18-21 range for an image of below average quality

22-25 range for an image of average quality

26-29 range for an image of superior quality

30 for an image of exceptional quality that stands out among others

In any class and category, it is within the judge's discretion whether to score any image as a 30, and

whether to score more than one image as a 30.

If the judge does not believe a particular image complies with any of these Competition Guidelines, it

is appropriate to award a score of 18 rather than a score of 0 to 17. All scores awarded by the judge are considered to be final.

Categories

Gateway follows New England Camera Club Council's (NECCC's) Information for Judges, which states, "Scoring one type of subject (for example, nature) higher than others or failing to give credit to one type of photograph, for example, creative photographs, because you don't personally shoot or care for such photographs does a disservice to the competitors." All types of images, therefore, are meant to be judged equally.

Pictorial/Open: Any image that is the maker's work is permitted even if the image would qualify in another category.

Creative/Altered Reality: The emphasis is on imaginative skill and originality. This category is about altering what can be seen by the human eye in a creative way, rather than taking a photograph of a quirky or creative subject. It is not required that the image be recognizable as an object, place or person; it may abstract.

Creative images must have been obviously manipulated or modified during or after exposure with experimental, digital, in camera, or darkroom techniques. Composite or merged multiple images and collages are acceptable for creativity even if each component is not altered reality as long as the end image is clearly not a single image and represents altered reality.

Images whose sole creativity is infrared, monochrome, High Dynamic Range (HDR), or use of wide angle or fish-eye lenses, or long exposure are not eligible in this category. Techniques such as panning/zooming or unique staging ALONE are NOT considered creative UNLESS they are used to create an abstract effect.

This category is about altering a normal photographic image in a creative way, rather than taking a photograph of quirky or creative subjects.

Techniques or effects that alter reality must be evident. Scoring, however, should be based on the overall impact of the effect and resulting image, not on the amount of manipulation required to achieve the effect.

Nature: While sharpness and technical quality are essential, the story-telling value of the image is of paramount importance. In addition:

- There can be no “hand of man” visible in the Nature category (roads, fences, buildings etc.), unless a human element is integral to the Nature story (owls in a barn, tagging on birds etc.).
- No techniques that add, relocate, replace, or remove pictorial elements (e.g., rocks, debris etc.) except by cropping are permitted.
- Techniques that enhance the presentation of the photograph without changing the nature story or the pictorial content or without altering the content of the original scene are permitted, including HDR, focus stacking and exposure control (dodging/burning. Also, techniques that remove elements added by the camera, such as dust spots, digital noise, and film scratches, are allowed.
- Feral and domestic animals, human created hybrids and cultivated plants and flowers are permitted so long as they appear to be in the wild.

Themed: The most important criteria in scoring this category is to reward images that capture the essence of the theme, as spelled out in the definitions provided.

APPENDIX – Themed Categories

The themed categories for 2022-2023 are as follows:

September – Black and White

October – Color

November – Abstract

January – Shadow

February – Still Life

March – Pets and Critters

April - Texture

May – Architectural Detail

The definitions of each themed category are as follows:

Black and white

There is more than one definition of black and white. For our competitions, a black and white image may consist exclusively of black and white or may include shades of graytone (grayscale) that may range from dark (black) to light (white). A black and white image is a monochrome image, but not all monochrome images qualify as black and white. An image will not qualify as a black and white image if it contains tones, shades or hues of color other than black, gray or white.

Shadow

A shadow is the absence of light – therefore plays a part in photography by creating contrast or grading. A shadow is formed when something comes between the light source and the surface. If the light hits the object from the same angle – this will create a dark shadow with well-defined edges.

Shadows form anchor points and add compositional elements. When they're very intense, a shadow can be the primary element of the composition. The introduction of a shadow into the image immediately adds a dimension of creativity and makes the photo more graphic. It adds depth and dimension, which gives a two-dimensional image a third dimension. It provides an avenue that allows us to reach into the photo and touch the elements.

Abstract

In general, abstracts are created in-camera or in post-processing by removing the context from the subject being photographed. This can be accomplished by zooming in, blurring, blending, focusing on a small section, exaggerating or distorting an aspect of the subject, or otherwise using color, light, shadow, texture, shape and/or form to convey a feeling, sensation or impression. The subject of the photograph may be an identifiable object, but should be rendered in a way that the identity of the object is secondary to aspects of form, color (or tone), lines, shapes, or texture. That is, the subject may be recognizable, but the photograph should not be representational.

Pets and Critters

"Think about pets and critters as the antithesis of nature. It is a category that includes all those animal shots that we love that are not eligible for nature. It is for shots that may include hand of man in the image with pets, and service animals. It also may include the squirrel hanging from the bird feeder or animals that are obviously in a zoo or urban environment. It could also include manipulated artistic renditions of animals. The main subject must be the animal.

Still Life

Still life photography is the depiction of inanimate subject matter, most typically a small grouping of objects, organic or inorganic. Still life photography, more so than other types of photography, such as landscape or portraiture, gives the photographer more leeway in the arrangement of design elements within a composition.

Texture

Depth, good contrast, and patterns are what define textures in photography. Texture can create an image and can captivate the viewer on its own. You simply have to get close enough to show all the textured detail, and you have to find patterns in the texture, so that the viewer remains engaged.

Camera angle as well as direction and properties of light (hard/soft) can increase or subdue the intensity of texture. Texture can be lit to create a sense of depth within a scene. Adding depth can help to draw the viewer in to an otherwise flat, two-dimensional photographic image.

Color

A common definition of color is the property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eyes as a result of the way the object reflects or emits light; the appearance of a thing when light strikes it. Color is a quality that can be measured visually by characteristics defined as hue, saturation and brightness. Color theory regards green, blue and red as primary colors and recognizes yellow, purple and orange as secondary colors which may be produced by mixing primary colors. This category requires that the image contain any color, primary, secondary or otherwise so long as a single color is the dominant element in the image. An image which meets this requirement but also contains other colors beyond the single dominant color is permitted.

Architectural Detail

This category includes any specific feature or features of building design and construction, inside or out. The architecture can be residential, commercial, religious, monumental – anything. Details could include a doorknob, interesting ceiling or decorative exterior features. The only limitation is that the structure should not be shown in its entirety